United Nations Expert Group Meeting

Innovative methods to measure the impact of COVID-19 on mortality through surveys and censuses

Abu Dhabi, 23 – 25 August 2022

Background

Population censuses and household surveys have been the main sources of data for estimating mortality among both children and adults in countries with incomplete or unreliable systems for civil registration and vital statistics. While there is a long history of directly and indirectly estimating adult mortality level based on relevant questions included in censuses and surveys (e.g., household deaths, survival of parents and siblings), such methods might not be suitable for measuring the impact of COVID-19 on population mortality levels.

Under the Technical Advisory Group on COVID-19 Mortality Assessment established jointly by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN-DESA) and the World Health Organization (WHO), a working group was created to provide recommendations to national statistical offices on innovative methods in collecting time-sensitive and reliable data through censuses and surveys in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Recommendations of the Working Group will help to fill data gaps in adult mortality estimation in the context of COVID-19 and to build a more agile and resilient statistical system in preparation for future crises (pandemics, natural disasters, etc.).

Members of the UN-DESA/WHO Working Group come from national statistical offices, academic institutions and international organizations. As an initial step towards elaborating a set of recommendations, the Group prepared a stocktaking paper on existing practices in using censuses and surveys for measuring adult mortality, which is available as a background document for the 53rd United Nations Statistical Commission. As the next step, an expert group meeting will be organized by UN-DESA Statistics Division, in collaboration with the DESA Population Division and New York University Abu Dhabi, to discuss and agree on a set of recommendations on improving the overall adult mortality data collection through censuses and surveys.

Objectives

The meeting will discuss and agree on a set of proposed recommendations for censuses and surveys based on ongoing research and experiments, and particularly in low-income and middle-income countries. These recommendations will seek to (a) improve adult mortality data collection in terms of quality, availability and timeliness; and (b) generate census and survey data that could be used to measure the impact of epidemics, pandemics and other disasters on adult mortality. The proposed recommendations would cover innovations in questionnaire design; interview methods and sampling strategies, as well as integration of surveys and censuses with other data sources on mortality (e.g., civil registration, health information systems).

Expected outcomes

The meeting is expected to agree on a set of proposed recommendations for censuses and surveys to improve the collection of adult mortality data in terms of availability, quality and timeliness. The set of recommendations will be further refined following a global consultation with national statistical offices later this year. The revised draft recommendations will be submitted to the UN Statistics Commission. An executive summary presenting the expert group’s recommendations in abridged form, and signed collectively, will be submitted to a peer-reviewed journal for publication and dissemination.

Format

Hybrid

Participations
Experts from national statistical offices in low-income and middle-income countries, academic institutions, regional, relevant regional and international organisations will be invited.

**Preparation for the meeting**

A paper containing draft recommendations, rational behind and guidance on implementing those recommendations will be prepared and circulated before the expert group meeting. The paper will be prepared by and in consultation with members of the Working Group and other interested experts.