

UNITED NATIONS SECRETARIAT
Department of Economic and Social Affairs
Statistics Division

ESA/STAT/AC.104/8
12 August 2005
English only

United Nations Expert Group Meeting on the
2010 World Programme on Population and Housing Censuses
22-26 August 2005
United Nations, New York

Working Group on Promotion of Censuses: Making Value Visible
Key Issues Raised
(Report of Working Group 3)*

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Working Group on Promotion of Censuses: Making Value Visible Key Issues Raised

1. Uses of censuses

- a. The portion on the uses of census data can emphasize on its use to analyze geographic disparities across the country.
- b. The portion on housing may also refer to the importance of collecting social and economic data at the household level i.e. remittance flows, involvement with customary/traditional social-economic obligations since specific individual responses cannot be aggregated to a “collective household response”
- c. Emphasis of the utilization of census data to monitor national commitments to international agreements like the Millennium Development Goals maybe considered.

2. Media for disseminating census results

- a. The revisions can include latest IT devices in dissemination like CD ROMS. It must also include a generic statement to consider the latest devices be considered in the dissemination of the results.
- b. The growing importance of GIS systems in the overall dissemination program may be added. There is the significant challenge of improving dissemination by customizing products to fit different needs, including using Geographic Information System (GIS) technology for data dissemination and in planning census outputs
- c. Suggested new paragraph after 1.132
In addition to printed publications, inclusive of maps and other cartographic materials, greater emphasis should be placed on providing more user-friendly and user-relevant access to census data. At the most basic level, this would mean spatial access to census data and tables, in the form of fully interactive population geographic information systems, as even the best designed and most comprehensive tabulation and analytical reports cannot anticipate every conceivable tabulation permutation specific users may require. It could also be extended to placing fully encrypted and “depersonalized” census data files on national census office websites, thus putting the onus on data utilization in the hands of the user. Empowering data users to search, compile and calculate has the potential to increase the use of census data exponentially, thus, legitimizing its costly collection in the first place, and diverting costly production and dissemination costs to better and more frequent data collection.
- d. Guidance on providing census files on line can also be considered. There is the challenge of enabling increased access to data such as by making those available free of charge, including on the Internet.

3. Issues in dissemination of census results

- a. Cost consideration must be highlighted in the dissemination of census results. Suggested inclusion in paragraph 1.237

While the issue of cost recovery has become important to many statistical organizations, this aspect should not distract from a major statistical agency output, which is to facilitate, not hinder, data access and information dissemination.

- b. How can the issues of privacy and confidentiality be addressed so as not to hinder the dissemination of census results? Suggested new paragraph after 1.247

To increase utilization of census data, dissemination via computer media ought to provide users with maximum flexibility, including access to customized interactive tabulations. While privacy and confidentiality provisions have their place in protecting the identity of individual respondents, these provisions should not distract from their principal objective, which is to facilitate and safeguard, not to hinder data access and dissemination.

- c. Microdata for academic research are normally requested after a census. Guidelines in the preparation will be useful.
- d. Censuses are not 100% accurate. Moreover, in case of sample censuses, how will the accuracy of estimates be addressed during the dissemination of results?
- e. The portion can include design of census products according to different groups of users, e.g. the central government, the general public, academia, media, particular subgroups like children, and the private sector, according to their current and foreseeable future country circumstances.

4. Separate section on census public relations

- a. Will consolidating the different aspects on encouraging public cooperation, users' conference, dissemination, etc. be more relevant and useful? The new section can include the following:
 - i. Developing appropriate tools to access and use census data
 - ii. Encouraging the use of these tools
 - iii. Demonstrating the benefits of using census data
 - iv. Additional marketing capabilities to census offices.
- b. How can the interrelations between the early phases of census planning and the subsequent development of census products and future data utilization be further clarified?
- c. The census provides counts of basic units. While population counts maybe readily adopted by the data users, there is a challenge on how the census office has gained the cooperation of the populace as the census day nears. A suggestion on how to measure the extent of cooperation of respondents or usefulness of the public relations campaigns can be helpful.

5. Issues in gaining public cooperation

- a. There is the challenge on the education of users, the public and key stakeholders of the census to gain cooperation. Guidelines on dissemination and public relations and possibly the development of brochures encouraging a public dialogue and educating users with regard to what data will be available and how they might benefit from its use maybe suggested.

- b. In many countries, the gargantuan resources required to undertake a census results in reducing the budget for census promotion. In some projects, partnership with the private sector has been explored to handle certain aspects of marketing a product or service (social mobilization). To what extent can the private sector be tapped financially to assist in the promotion of censuses to gain public cooperation? Will the objectivity of the census office be put at stake on?