

United Nations Regional Workshop on the 2020 World Programme on Population and Housing  
Censuses: International Standards and Contemporary Technologies

20-23 March 2017, Lusaka, Zambia

**Conclusions and recommendations**

1. The workshop was conducted by the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) in partnership with the African Development Bank, Regional and national offices of the UNFPA, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the Central Statistical Office of the Republic of Zambia which hosted the workshop. Population and housing census managers and methodologists from Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Namibia, South Africa, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe participated in the workshop.
2. In the opening session, Mr. Srdjan Mrkić, Chief of Demographic Statistics, UNSD outlined the importance of promoting international standards and guidelines; Ms. Mary Otieno, UNFPA Country Representative in the Republic of Zambia, stressed the importance of relevant statistics for sustainable development monitoring; Mr. John Kalumbi, Director, Central Statistical Office of the Republic of Zambia welcomed participants and introduced Ms. Auxilia Ponga, Permanent Secretary, Development Cooperation and Monitoring and Evaluation. Ms. Ponga formally opened the workshop and in her opening remarks challenged the participants to apply contemporary approaches in producing statistics, including the use of non-traditional data sources.
3. The participants expressed their appreciation for the organization of the workshop and to the Central Statistical Office of Zambia for its hospitality. They emphasized that the workshop was quite timely taking into consideration the momentum that is being built in regard to the implementation of the ECOSOC Resolution on the 2020 World Programme on Population and Housing Censuses, which stipulates that each Member State conduct at least one population and housing census in the period 2015-2024.
4. In that context, the participants outlined that the workshop is timely also from the point of view of the adoption of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and the role it assigns to statistics in general and population and housing censuses in particular. The participants highlighted also the fact that the African Union inaugurated the 2063 Development Agenda, placing additional emphasis on the need for accurate quantifying instruments for monitoring its implementation.
5. The workshop welcomed the revised version of the *Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing (Revision 3)* as well as the revised *Handbook on the Management of Population and Housing Censuses (Revision 2)*. The participants re-iterated that the *Principles and Recommendations* represent a cornerstone for national census planning and implementation of 2020 round of population and housing censuses. It also outlined that in the context of regional activities full compliance with the concepts and recommendations contained in these volumes has actually become a political instruction, as per the decision of SADC Council of Ministers taken at a meeting in August 2015.

6. The workshop took copious note of and expressed appreciation for the global and regional activities aimed at executing the 2020 World Programme on Population and Housing Censuses as presented by the workshop's organizers and partners, namely the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the African Development Bank (AfDB). The participants welcomed this coordinated initiatives and the efforts invested by the contributing partners, both in the context of providing internationally adopted methodological framework for conducting population and housing censuses and in the context of directly supporting efforts to enhance national capacities in the field of census-taking and implementation of international standards.
7. The workshop expressed specific interest in the expeditious establishment and functioning of Centres of Excellence for Population and Housing Censuses throughout Africa. The workshop also welcomed the initiative to jump-start the functioning of the African Census Coordination Committee, the terms of reference of which were adopted in 2015.
8. In the context of the forthcoming censuses in participating countries, the workshop noted with appreciation that the regional development partners, primarily UNFPA and AfDB, provide substantive technical support by dispatching census experts as per requests from countries. It also emphasized that similar efforts should be made in investing in capacity building of census personnel in these countries that could then deliver the necessary services.
9. Discussing possible and potential obstacles for successful enumeration in the 2020 round, the participants stressed the lack of access in a number of affluent communities – so called walled communities – that were increasingly reluctant to cooperate in the 2010 round and are expected to cause even more challenges in the 2020 round. A number of approaches were debated, such as, the strict implementation of the census legislation that is mandating cooperation with the enumeration under the threat of penalties, developing on-line census questionnaires as incentives for residents of these communities to cooperate, shortening the questionnaire to the very basic variables, and increasing publicity campaign in those communities. The workshop concluded that more effort needs to be invested in developing appropriate and efficient strategies to ensure as complete enumeration as possible, including the enumeration of populations in informal settlements.
10. In discussing operational aspects of population and housing censuses in the 2020 round the participants outlined concerns regarding the availability of competent work force for enumerators. This is a particularly relevant point taking into consideration that tablet computers are expected to be widely used and working with them can be an obstacle to particular classes of potential enumerators not familiar with touch screens. With regard to the implementation of data collection with handheld electronic devices, it was stressed that the criteria for recruitment of enumerators and supervisors be carefully reviewed so as to maximize the number of field workers with familiarity with electronic devices and basic IT skills. It was also recognized that providing extensive training to enumerators and supervisors on operating tablet computers, navigating the questionnaire and transmitting the data was indispensable for successful outcome.
11. Quality assurance and quality control of all the segments of the population and housing censuses are prominently displayed and elaborated in both the *Principles and Recommendations* and the

*Handbook on Management*, the workshop noted. In that context, it recommended that measures to ensure high quality of both the processes and outputs needs to be embedded in all the population and housing censuses in the participating countries in a permanent and sequential manner (that is, that each subsequent phase of the census can be initiated only when the previous one met the quality standards). The workshop stressed that comprehensive census quality assessment reports need to be produced by each country that undertakes a census in 2020 round, following the quality assessment dimensions presented in the UNSD guidelines.

12. Along the same lines, the workshop noted that peer review experiences that include reviewing of census planning by census managers from neighboring countries is a strategy worth pursuing in this census round. It also called upon development partners to consider including support for peer reviews in their capacity building activities.
13. The workshop highlighted the importance of protecting census data confidentiality and recommended that countries take additional measures when outside contractors are involved in census operations. Besides establishing contract terms that reference clearly the scope of the project and monitoring outsourced projects against specifications, it was important to put in place careful control, including legally strict memorandums of understandings, to ensure that confidentiality is not compromised.
14. The workshop took copious note of the list of internationally recommended topics, definitions and classifications for population and housing censuses as presented in the revised *Principles and Recommendations*. The workshop concluded that certain concepts – such as, for example, usually resident population – might not be applicable in participating countries in the 2020 round of censuses due to a combination of increased migration and cultural and traditional approaches to family ties.
15. In the process of discussing international recommendations, the workshop concluded that the new concept of work, as adopted by the Conference of Labor Statisticians in 2013 requires additional methodological guidance for implementation in the 2020 census round.
16. Disability characteristics was another core topic in the latest revision of the international recommendations which workshop participants highlighted as placing a considerable challenge to collection in the 2010 round censuses. The workshop noted that discrepancies often resulted in the outputs from censuses and disability surveys and that this required further methodological research in improving comparability.
17. The workshop clearly underscored the fact that mapping is one of the critical phases of the census, both in terms of planning and execution. This is particularly relevant in terms of providing timely technical assistance to those countries that require it. While considerable experience in the application of Geographical Information Systems (GIS) has been acquired in the 2010 census round, there is still a need to specifically focus on this census component due to the extensive workload, complexity and ever increasing number of new applications, including for dissemination of statistics.
18. The workshop noted that all participating countries will use GIS technology for the purpose of mapping operations for the 2020 round of censuses. In that context, the workshop participants urged UNSD to produce the revised *Handbook on Geo-spatial Infrastructure for Population and Housing Censuses* as soon as possible. It also welcomed the initiative by UNFPA which is in the

process of negotiating less expensive access to satellite imagery with a corporate provider - with the outcome of the negotiations to be shared with countries as soon as they are completed. The workshop also noted that in countries where cloud covers hamper visibility on the ground, aerial photography may be preferred to satellite imagery for use in census mapping.

19. In terms of using tablet computers for field data collection, the majority of participating countries intend to apply this approach for enumerating households. In that context, the workshop recommended and urged that the current initiatives by the regional development partners in enabling sharing of these devices between countries – and some exchanges are taking place at this very moment – are instituted as a matter of priority as they make considerable sense in terms of experiences in 2010 round of censuses.
20. In the same context, the workshop emphasized the need to exchange existing knowledge on the use of tablet computers in surveys and censuses, especially from the point of view of testing the functioning and features of the Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI) and identifying the advantages and disadvantages of different software solutions used to implement this application. In this regard it was urged that the guidelines developed by the UNECA on use of CAPI should be disseminated to countries and made available at its website.
21. The workshop recognized that the use of tablet computers along with Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI) technology is already quite widespread in the countries in the region. The essential motive for the use of CAPI and portable devices lies in the fact that it results in cost savings, faster processing of data and improved quality of resulting statistics.
22. At the same time, the use of this approach has to take into consideration several issues that need to be properly addressed well ahead of time, such as battery life, electronic questionnaire design, data transmission and security, testing, loss of devices, extensive additional training of enumerators and, of course, the initial cost of acquiring them. It was also emphasized that during the design of electronic questionnaires with CAPI software, it is critical that subject matter specialists work closely with application developers so as to ensure proper wording, layout and design of the collection instrument.
23. The workshop noted with satisfaction that a careful strategy has been developed in participating countries that introduced CAPI and portable devices in their data collection practices: extensively test and pilot CAPI, use them in surveys first, further adjust and refine procedures and practices, and only then consider using them in full-fledged population and housing census.
24. The workshop paid particular attention to the relationship between the population and housing censuses and the generation of the Sustainable Development Goals indicators. It concluded that census statistics is critical for producing SDG indicators; a number of indicators cannot be produced without census data in the numerator. A much larger number of indicators cannot be generated without census statistics as denominator.
25. Finally, the participants welcomed the organization of this workshop, emphasizing its value at this stage of the 2020 round of censuses and urged the organizing partners to organize follow-up workshops on other aspects of census operations throughout the census decade.