



## REGIONAL WORKSHOP ON THE 2020 WORLD PROGRAMME ON POPULATION AND HOUSING CENSUSES: INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS AND CONTEMPORARY TECHNOLOGIES

Ankara, Turkey, 12 – 15 March 2019

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The workshop was jointly organized by the Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries (SESRIC) and the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD). Representatives, population and housing census methodologists and managers from Albania, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Gambia, Indonesia, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Malaysia, Turkey and Uganda, as well as representatives from Tajikistan's and Turkey's UNFPA country offices participated in the workshop. At the opening, the workshop was addressed by H.E. Amb. Musa Kulaklikaya, Director General, SESRIC and the representative of the UNSD. The workshop was chaired by Mr. Srdjan Mrkic, Chief, Demographic Statistics, UNSD.
2. The participants expressed their appreciation for the organization of the workshop and emphasized that it was very timely taking into consideration the momentum that is being built in regard to the implementation of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Resolution on the 2020 World Programme on Population and Housing Censuses, stipulating that each Member State conducts at least one population and housing census in the period 2015-2024.
3. 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.
4. The workshop welcomed the revised version of the *Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses* as well as the revised *Handbook on the Management of Population and Housing Censuses*. The participants re-iterated that the *Principles and Recommendations* represents a cornerstone for national census planning and implementation of the 2020 round of population and housing censuses. They also recognized that in the context of regional activities, full compliance with the concepts and recommendations contained in these volumes has become of utmost importance. The workshop also welcomed with appreciation the *Guidelines on the Use of Electronic Data Collection Technologies in Population and Housing Censuses*, as well as the draft *Handbook on Measuring International Migration through Population Censuses*, recognizing their value for the preparation and conduct of censuses in the 2020 census round. All four volumes were introduced and their contents elaborated during the workshop. The workshop also concluded immediate necessity of Russian translation of the *Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses*.
5. The workshop took copious note of, and expressed appreciation for, the global and regional activities presented by UNSD and SESRIC aimed at implementing the 2020 World Programme of Population and Housing Censuses. The participants welcomed this coordinated initiative 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 and build national capacities in the field of census-taking. In the context, the workshop outlined the importance and significance of South-South and



triangular cooperation, which is in the core of SESRIC activities, and expressed expectations for using it to a full extent in the 2020 round of censuses as well.

6. The workshop noted that participating countries intend to employ different methods for conducting population and housing censuses in the 2020 round, from the traditional paper-based canvasser approach, to the use of combined paper and tablet based data collection, to the use of internet self-enumeration and tablet computers combined method. Recognizing the advantages of the use of contemporary technologies for conducting population and housing censuses, primarily the use of tablet computers and geo-spatial technologies, the workshop encouraged those participating countries that are still considering their main data collection method to take these advantages into consideration while making the final decision.
7. For countries in the region that have opted for the multi-mode collection method with a view to improving coverage and reducing cost, it was recognized that the multi-mode collection method increases operational complexity and requires sophisticated response tracking methods to minimize duplications and nonresponse. It was further emphasized that the collection design needs to be optimized for such type of collection exercise to manage mode effects and data comparability issues. In that context, the workshop outlined that the successful conduct of a mixed-mode population and housing census in Iran provided valuable input.
8. The workshop concluded that several participating countries indicated their continued interest, efforts and decisions regarding using administrative sources for production of census statistics. Participants expressed the need of considering the combined census methodology for producing timely information and reducing the costs. Besides, they mentioned challenges in adoption to this methodology. They also noted the many challenges in this regard, including discrepancies in definitions and concepts leading to inconsistencies with international standards; accuracy of the data; the completeness and the coverage of the existing registers; and the legal framework.
9. Participants noted with particular interest the list of core topics for population and housing censuses as recommended by the *Principles and Recommendations* and concluded that for the most part the topics scheduled to be collected in participating countries correspond to the internationally recommended ones.
10. The majority of the countries in the region have experience in using Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI) in smaller surveys and field tests and refined their processes and procedures first before making a decision to use them in their censuses. The participants highlighted the importance of building capacity and expertise of the national statistical offices and using an incremental approach to the adoption of new data collection technologies.
11. However, in certain countries the use of CAPI technology and tablet computers in surveys has been entirely dependent on the support by different development partners with each introducing different software and management solutions and that has adverse effects on the strategical development of national capacities.
12. The participants outlined that making a decision on whether or not to use electronic data collection technologies in censuses is of substantial importance and needs to be reached with the involvement of all potential stakeholders and early enough to afford sufficient preparatory time for testing. The decision should be made on the basis of detailed analysis of past experiences, demonstrated need, market research, comparative costs as well as capacity to employ new technologies.
13. The workshop underscored that one of the key challenges in employing a CAPI-based data collection refers to recruiting technologically skilled and computer-literate temporary field staff. The participants highlighted the importance of providing adequate training both on the content of the questionnaire and on the use of the device as well as providing sufficient technical support in



the field. Another challenge was the need to develop alternative data transfer mechanisms and protocols in parts of the country where the communications infrastructure is lacking.

14. The workshop outlined the issue of the cost of acquiring tablets for CAPI-based data collection and the challenges associated with the limited life of the devices and finding justifications for re-using the devices for secondary purposes.
15. The workshop underscored the centrality of digital mapping to census operations utilizing electronic data collection technologies. The countries in the region have experience in the application of Geographical Information System (GIS) during the 2010 census round and in subsequent surveys. In the context of the international recommendation on the necessity to ensure the production of geo-referenced small-area census statistics in the 2020 Round, the workshop noted the importance of geo-coding in the next census, thus enhancing the quality and utility of census results as well as improving the efficiency and effectiveness of census operations. In that context, the workshop noted that several participating countries already achieved or are about to ensure geo-coding of each housing unit in the country - a necessary pre-condition for generating geo-referenced census statistics – by investing significant efforts in working with other government geo-spatial agencies.
16. The workshop noted the relationship between population and housing censuses and the production of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) indicators. It recognized that census statistics are critical for producing SDG indicators and the indicators related to national and regional development programmes, that a number of indicators cannot be produced without census data in the numerator or denominator. The workshop encouraged countries to conduct mapping exercises for SDG indicators in terms of data sources, availability, timeliness and frequency.
17. Participants expressed the importance of establishing a centralized system for management, monitoring and controlling operational activities to ensure census coverage and data quality. Such a system could provide capabilities for real-time monitoring, tracking, and communication among field staff. It was also noted that such a system can be efficiently used if it is established as a part of field operation and in an integrated manner with other systems used for data collection, staff recruitment and logistics. Participants specifically outlined the importance of using para-data for management and monitoring field operations.
18. Working in groups, participants discussed at length two topics: challenges and benefits of integrating geospatial information in censuses and challenges and benefits in adopting electronic data collection techniques in population and housing censuses. In terms of the first topic, both groups identified the delineation of enumeration areas, more effective field work and oversight, more accurate and diverse presentation of results, among other advantages of integration of geo-spatial information in censuses. In terms of challenges, both groups identified costs of geo-spatial technology and training and retention of qualified staff as major issues. On the second topic, participants identified clear advantages of using electronic data collection techniques for censuses as improving quality of data due to real-time editing, much faster overall processing of data as there is no need for data entry – resulting in more timely release of census results – and integration with geo-spatial information. Major challenges for adopting either tablets or internet self-enumeration, participants concluded, refer to the high costs of these technologies, training and retention of staff, in the case of using tablets on the field, challenges remain in terms of possible theft, damage, security of field enumerators using expensive devices, power supply and internet penetration. Finally, the participants concluded that these discussions provided additional opportunity for direct exchange of experiences and expertise.