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**Topics of emerging policy relevance and suggested minimum and essential
census topics: Implications for updating the *Principles and Recommendations*
*for Population and Housing Censuses****

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INTRODUCTION

1. The United Nations Statistical Commission, at its thirty-third session, recommended a review of the *Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses, Revision 1*¹. In addition, at its 35th session, the Commission asked that the Statistics Division also initiate a review of national experience from the 2000 round of censuses in order to take stock of issues that have emerged and that need to be addressed in order to improve the planning and implementation of the 2010 population census round². This report summarizes emerging issues thus far identified that would need to be taken into consideration in the update of the *Principles and Recommendations*.

2. The updating of the *Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses, Revision 1* will entail a review and revision of all parts of publication, i.e., on operational aspects of population and housing censuses; topics on which to collect the data; census products and data utilization; and recommended list of tabulations for population and housing censuses.

3. This paper focuses on the revision and updating of topics for population and housing censuses. Specifically, the paper presents suggested census topics for updating the census recommendations and proposes a set of minimum and essential topics to be investigated in population and housing censuses.

I. SUGGESTED TOPICS FOR UPDATING THE CENSUS RECOMMENDATIONS

4. This section is divided into two parts. Part A pertains to suggested population census topics or subtopics to be updated in the *Principles and Recommendations*. Similarly, part B relates to topics for housing censuses to be considered when updating the census recommendations. For reference, a full list of population and housing topics covered in the 1998 *Principles and Recommendations* is given in Annex 2.

A. Population census topics

5. This subsection covers the following topics:

- a. Place of usual residence
- b. International migration
- c. Marital status
- d. Families and households
- e. Educational characteristics
- f. Economic characteristics
- g. Ethnicity and indigenous peoples
- h. Disability
- i. Mortality
- j. Other

¹ Economic and Social Council, Official Records 2002, Supplement No. 4 (E/2002/24, E/CN.3/2002/31).

² Economic and Social Council, Official Records 2004, Supplement No. 4 (E/2004/24, E/CN.3/2004/33).

a. Place of usual residence

6. The concept of place of usual residence is linked to the measurement of both internal and international migration. The place of usual residence is the geographical place where the enumerated person usually resides.³ This may be the same as, or different from, the place where a person is present at the time of the census or the person's legal residence.

7. Making the definition of usual residence operational in a census may create potential problems for a number of reasons. For example, it is recognized that although most persons will have no difficulty in stating their place of usual residence, some confusion may arise in a number of cases involving persons that appear to have more than one residence. Examples include persons who maintain two or more residences, students living at school, members of the armed forces living at a military installation but still maintaining private living quarters away from the installation, and persons who sleep away from their homes during the working week but return home for several days at the end of each week. Currently, the *Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses, Revision 1* do not provide guidelines on how to deal with these situations, but instead request that "the treatment of all such cases should be clearly set forth in the census instructions".⁴ Without specific guidelines, it is conceivable that countries do not treat these groups the same, hence affecting the international comparability of data.

8. Furthermore, defining the place of usual residence as the geographical place where the enumerated person usually resides implies a time element. The recommendations do not offer any time limit for considering oneself a usual resident of a place. This can be particularly problematic if one has just moved into an area or if one still maintains ties elsewhere as is the case with migrant workers. It is true that the *Principles and Recommendations* request that in such cases, clearly stated time limits of presence in, or absence from, a particular place must be set, in accordance with the prevailing circumstances in the country, to determine whether or not the person is a usual resident.⁵ This, however, could lead to countries using different time periods thus resulting in non-comparable data.

9. The *Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration, Revision 1*⁶ consider country of usual residence as the country in which a person lives, that is to say, the country in which he or she has a place to live where he or she normally spends the daily period of rest. This definition is similar to that in the census recommendations. However, in defining long-term and short-term migration, the international migration recommendations add a time element to the definitions. For example, a long-term migrant is a person who moves to a country other than that of his or her usual residence for a period of at least a year (12 months), so that the country of destination effectively becomes his or her new country of usual residence.⁷ Likewise, short-term migrants are persons who move to a country other than that of their usual residence for a period

³ *Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses, Revision 1*, United Nations publication, Sales No. E.98.XVII.8, para. 2.20.

⁴ *Ibid*, para. 2.21.

⁵ *Ibid*, para. 2.22.

⁶ *Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration, Revision 1*, United Nations publication, Sales No. E.98.XVII.14.

⁷ *Ibid*, para. 36.

of at least 3 months but less than a year (12 months).⁸ The country of usual residence of short-term migrants is considered to be the country of destination during the period they spend in it.

10. Based on a review of country experience for the 2000 round of censuses and also on the views of experts, the updated *Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses* could recommend time periods to be used for defining a “usual” resident of a place. Also more guidance is needed to help countries determine the treatment of persons who appear to have more than one residence so that there is more comparability between countries in the data collected.

b. International migration

11. Population censuses are widely recognized as the primary source of data on international migration stocks. Data on international migration are usually obtained from the census questions on country of birth and country of citizenship. The 1998 census recommendations on international migration provide guidelines on how to apply the *Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration, Revision 1*⁹ in census data collection. In addition to the items on country of birth and of citizenship the census recommendations also provide information on how to collect data on year or period of arrival, an important item used to establish length of stay by international immigrants in the country.

12. What is missing from the *Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses* are definitions of the concepts used in the *Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration, Revision 1*. For example, although the census recommendations make reference to the relevant paragraph that contains the definition of an international migrant in the international migration recommendations, this definition is not provided. For easy reference and to facilitate its application, it is important for this definition to be contained in the census recommendations. In addition, the census recommendations should include the definitions of the concepts of foreigners and foreign-born population which are derived from the items on citizenship and country of birth respectively. The concepts of foreigners and foreign-born population as contained in the recommendations on international migration are central in distinguishing between immigrants and non-immigrants. The updated census recommendations should also provide guidelines on how to deal with the issue of multiple citizenships when collecting information on citizenship as this information is crucial in distinguishing between foreigners and citizens.

13. The discussion on updating the census recommendations to collect data on migrant stock might consider the feasibility of using the census to collect data on emigrant stock. Experts may wish to consider whether census guidelines on international migration should also include recommendations on collecting data on emigrants.

c. Marital status

14. Of late, there has been comment on how the topic of marital status is handled in the current census recommendations. It is argued by some, that the definitions and categories of

⁸ *Ibid*, para. 37.

⁹ *Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration, Revision 1*, United Nations publication, Sales No. E.98.XVII.14.

marital status in the census recommendations do not necessarily reflect the reality in many countries where there are various forms of unions or partnerships and associated living arrangements for the persons involved.

15. The section on marital status in the census recommendations might be reviewed for possible updating to take into account regional and national practices in order to improve the applicability of the recommendations to many national and/or cultural situations. The updated version of the section on marital status in the *Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses* should also be reflected in the next updating of *Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System*.¹⁰

d. Families and households

16. Information on household members and their relation to one another is an important input to studying the living arrangements of the members concerned. It also provides some indication of the support household members provide and receive from one another. That said, the section on household and family composition should be reviewed so as to re-examine what types of data are needed for important policy issues. For example, what types of living arrangements need to be classified in censuses? And for what purpose? For example, is the typology of households as contained in paragraph 2.82 that distinguishes between one-person, nuclear, extended, and composite households the most appropriate for international use? Should the new typology include classifying households by presence of children of a particular age? Should it show presence of elderly persons, and if so, how?

17. Two population groups that are of particular interest are children and older persons and the care and support they receive from others. With regard to older persons, for example, one might want to know how many live on their own either as a couple or alone and how many live with others, particularly with their own children, and to consider their support systems.¹¹ In this respect, introducing a question in the census about how long each person has lived in the household would serve several purposes. For older persons, for example, this would give a reasonably good idea of whether the older person or couple has moved in with children or others or whether others have moved in with the older person(s).

18. Another question that is often suggested for inclusion in the census is the identification of the natural mother of each child in the household to provide information for estimation of fertility by the “own children” method. A variation of this, that could be used to provide information related to household structure, is to show the line number of the parent of each child listed in the household, if the parent is present. Information from this question would be useful in identifying multi-generation households and also in providing an indication about the welfare of

¹⁰ *Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System, Revision 2*, United Nations publication, Sales No. E.01.XVII.10. See also United Nations Statistics Division, DESA “Technical Report, United Nations Demographic Yearbook review: National reporting of data on marriage and divorce, Implications for International Recommendations” (ESA/STAT/2004/7) available at <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/products/dyb/techreport/md.pdf>

¹¹ Albert I. Hermalin, “Challenges to comparative research on intergenerational transfers”. *Comparative Studies of the Elderly in Asia*, Research Reports, No. 00-56. Population Studies Center at the Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan, August 2000.

the children in the household in terms of them living with their biological parents or with others and also an indication of whether or not grandparents might be caring for their grandchildren. This could especially be relevant for countries with high levels of orphanhood due to HIV/AIDS.

19. It should be mentioned, however, that studies on living arrangements and provision of care and support are quite complex and better investigated in surveys, as it would be possible to collect more detailed information on the directions of exchanges between the members concerned. In the absence of such surveys, however, we may want to carefully evaluate the extent to which we can use the census to collect this information without unduly complicating the questionnaire and burdening the respondents.

20. The section on household and family characteristics in the census recommendations should be reviewed and updated to minimize the potential for confusion due to the terminology used. For example, in defining households, the section uses a combination of household and housing characteristics terminology (paragraphs 2.61 and 2.62). In these two paragraphs, there is use of the following terms: household, household-dwelling, housing unit, collective living quarters, institution, and homeless. Except for one (housing unit), the section does not provide definitions or cross-references to definitions of the concepts used. Definitions should be provided in the section for all the relevant concepts being used, including private households, collective households, homeless households and institutional population, in order to avoid confusion in use of these terms.

e. Educational characteristics

Literacy

21. The *Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses, Revision 1* recommend that data on literacy be collected, on all persons 10 years of age and over, so as to distinguish between persons who are literate and those who are illiterate. A literate person is defined as one who can, with understanding, both read and write a short, simple statement on his or her everyday life. An illiterate person is one who cannot, with understanding, both read and write such as simple statement.¹² When applied, this approach results in the identification of a dichotomous population, i.e., those who declare themselves able to read and write and are therefore literate, and those who consider themselves not able to, and are illiterate.

22. Of late, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has expressed concern over existing measures of literacy and considers them inadequate since the measurement of literacy is not just a matter of establishing who can read and who cannot. Furthermore, according to UNESCO, most of the data on literacy rely either on individuals' self-declaration of their own literacy or on "proxy" indicators such as their educational levels, thus resulting in indirect measures of literacy. According to UNESCO, literacy skills are needed at many different levels, from writing one's name on a form, to understanding instructions on a medicine bottle, to the ability to learn from reading a book.¹³ The organization advocates direct

¹² *Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses, Revision 1*, United Nations publication, Sales No. E.98.XVII.8, para. 2.145.

¹³ Leaflet on Literacy Assessment and Monitoring Programme (LAMP) available at the website of the UNESCO Institute for Statistics - <http://www.uis.unesco.org/>

assessment of individuals' literacy ability by testing, through surveys, their skills as a means to getting more reliable data on the topic.

23. The UNESCO Institute for Statistics, in partnership with experts and stakeholders from a wide range of international, regional, and national organizations, has formed a project, the Literacy Assessment and Monitoring Programme (LAMP), aimed at developing an internationally recognized methodology for use in surveys to assess a range of literacy levels from the most basic to higher level skills. The survey is based on a scientifically selected sample of the population and also collects background and other information. This makes it possible to use the results to identify various characteristics that may be associated with literacy, including the respondents' and their parents' education, their access to reading materials and their employment and financial circumstances.

24. The new approach for measuring literacy being proposed by UNESCO is based on testing the skills of the persons involved, instead of on the individuals' self declaration of their reading and writing abilities. What implications does this new approach have in terms of the updating of the census recommendations with regard to the definition of literacy? Should population censuses continue to collect data on literacy? Can the new approach be implemented under census conditions?

Educational attainment

25. To improve Member States' overall understanding and application of the 1997 International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED-97), the UNESCO Institute for Statistics has developed the *ISCED Operational Manual and the Manual on Fields of Education to assist Member States* to assist Member States in implementing the revised ISCED with a view to improving international comparability of educational data.¹⁴ The Institute is also reviewing country experiences in the implementation of ISCED throughout the world. Furthermore, research is also underway to study the data from a number of countries where a large proportion of students enter school either one year earlier or one year later than the entry age for programmes under ISCED. The study has important implications for ISCED and the comparability of education programmes.

26. The ISCED-97 operational manuals as well as the outcomes of the review of country experiences in the implementation of the classification should be assessed for possible input for updating the section on educational attainment in the census recommendations.

f. Economic characteristics

Industry

27. The *Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses* recommend that the classification of data on the industry or activity of the establishment in which an employed person worked during the time-reference period be based on the most recent revision

¹⁴ Report of the Secretary-General on international economic and social classifications (E/CN.3/2004/22), Statistical Commission, Thirty-fifth session, 2-5 March 2004, p.9.

of the International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities (ISIC) available at the time of the census.¹⁵ A draft of the high level structure for ISIC, Revision 4 was presented to and approved by the Statistical Commission at its thirty-fifth session¹⁶ and a draft of the revised classification is being circulated for comments. The updated census recommendations should, therefore, take into account and be based on the latest revision of ISIC, once finalized.

Occupation

28. The International Labour Organization (ILO), in conjunction with other organizations, is planning to update and improve the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO) by 2007 although it is expected that the main structure of ISCO will remain unchanged.¹⁷ The updating of the census recommendations should, if feasible, take into account the revisions to ISCO.

g. Ethnicity and indigenous peoples

29. The *Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses* contain very brief guidelines (two paragraphs) on the collection and tabulation of data on national and/or ethnic group but highlight the difficulties of providing international recommendations on the subject due to inherent variations in national circumstances. It is pointed out, for example, that some of the bases upon which ethnic groups are identified are ethnic nationality (in other words country or area of origin as distinct from citizenship or country of legal nationality), race, colour, language, religion, customs of dress or eating, tribe or various combinations of these characteristics.¹⁸

30. In 2000, the United Nations Economic and Social Council endorsed a resolution by the Commission on Human Rights establishing, within the United Nations system, a Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.¹⁹ In the resolution, the Permanent Forum was requested to, among other things, prepare and disseminate information on indigenous issues.

31. The Permanent Forum has recommended that Member States collect data to identify indigenous persons and also on the socio-economic characteristics of the population.²⁰ Presently, no official definition of indigenous peoples has been developed. Guidelines are, therefore, required on how the section on national and/or ethnic group in the *Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses, Revision 1* should be reviewed and revised so as to assist countries in their data collection on this topic.

¹⁵ *Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses, Revision 1*, United Nations publication, Sales No. E.98.XVII.8, paras. 2.221-2.222.

¹⁶ *Economic and Social Council Official Records 2004 Supplement No. 4, E/2004/24, E/CN.3/2004/33.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses, Revision 1*, United Nations publication, Sales No. E.98.XVII.8, para. 2.116.

¹⁹ Economic and Social Council Resolution 2000/22, 45th plenary meeting of the Economic and Social Council, 28 July 2000.

²⁰ Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues - Report of the Workshop on data collection and disaggregation for indigenous peoples, New York, 19-21 January 2004.

h. Human functioning and disability

32. The *Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses, Revision 1* contain a section on how to define and collect data on disability status as well as suggestions for the type of socio-economic characteristics on which to tabulate data on disability. New developments in the area of disability measurement necessitate a revision of the current recommendations. One of these is the development of the *International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF)*²¹ framework to classify human functioning. The approach of the ICF is different from that of its predecessor, the *International Classification of Impairments, Disabilities and Handicaps (ICIDH)*²², on which the current census recommendations on disability measurement are based.

33. Another development is the formation of the Washington Group on Disability Statistics (WG), which is comprised of representatives of national statistical offices from 44 countries and areas, interested international organizations, and non-government organizations²³. The main purpose of the Washington Group is the promotion and co-ordination of international co-operation in the area of health statistics by focusing on disability measures suitable for censuses and national surveys that will provide basic necessary information on disability throughout the world. More specifically, the WG aims to guide the development of a small set(s) of general disability measures, suitable for use in censuses, sample-based national surveys, or other statistical formats, for the primary purpose of informing policy on equalization of opportunities. The second priority of the Washington Group is to recommend one or more extended sets of survey items to measure disability, or principles for their design, to be used as components of population surveys or as supplements to specialty surveys. These extended sets of survey items are intended to be related to the general measure(s). All disability measures recommended by the group, general or extended, will be accompanied by descriptions of their technical properties, and methodological guidance will be given on their implementation and their applicability to all sections of the population.

34. The updated census recommendations should, therefore, include a revised section on measurement of human functioning and disability that is based on the framework and terminology of the ICF and that also takes into account the work of the Washington Group and the Statistics Division in the area of human functioning and disability statistics.

i. Mortality (deaths due to AIDS and maternal mortality)

35. Mortality measurement is still problematic, particularly in countries that lack reliable data from vital registration. Two topics are presented here for addition to the census recommendations, maternal mortality and deaths due to AIDS. Both topics are of serious public health concern in many developing countries, making their measurement of utmost importance.

²¹ *International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF)*, Geneva, World Health Organization, 2001.

²² *International Classification of Impairments, Disabilities and Handicaps (ICIDH)*, Geneva, World Health Organization, 1980.

²³ For information on the activities of the Washington Group on Disability Statistics see <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/methods/citygroup/washington.htm> ; for information on the United Nations disability statistics programme see <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/sconcerns/disability/disab3.htm>

Presently, however, the census recommendations do not contain guidelines for collecting data on deaths due to AIDS or to maternal causes.

Deaths due to AIDS

36. The census recommendations contain guidelines on how to collect data on deaths for use in indirect estimation of mortality especially in countries that lack reliable data from civil registration. The guidelines include information on how to obtain data for estimating infant and child mortality from questions on children ever born alive and children surviving as well as for estimating adult mortality from the questions on deaths in the past 12 months and on maternal or paternal orphanhood.

37. While use of these questions has improved estimation of mortality in countries that do not have reliable or accurate data from registration of deaths, there is still a general lack of data on mortality particularly due to HIV/AIDS. At the Workshop on HIV/AIDS and Adult Mortality in Developing Countries, organized by the United Nations Population Division,²⁴ it was recommended that efforts be made to improve the availability of data on adult mortality in the affected countries. The Workshop expressed an urgent need to have usable real data from vital registration, although it was noted that it would take a long time to come. It was felt that in the interim, having appropriate questions in censuses could help to fill part of the vacuum. To be able to get some indication of the deaths related to AIDS, participants recommended that the United Nations *Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses* be reviewed and strongly recommend to collect mortality data by including, when appropriate, questions on:

- (i) Household deaths by age and sex in the 12 months preceding the census (or other clearly defined reference period);
- (ii) Whether the deaths reported were related to pregnancy;
- (iii) Whether they were due to external causes (accidents or homicide or suicide).

Non-AIDS related deaths represented by items (ii) and (iii) may be used to refine the total number of deaths in (i).

Maternal deaths

38. Maternal mortality continues to be a major health concern in many developing countries. Furthermore, the Millennium Development Goals have as a target the reduction of the maternal mortality ratio but cite lack of reliable data as an obstacle to monitoring improvements especially in countries where the problem is the greatest.

39. Some researchers have advocated the use of population censuses to collect data on maternal mortality citing advantages associated with use of this data source. These include: (i) cost-effectiveness of asking a question on maternal deaths, compared to large periodic demographic surveys; (ii) ability to disaggregate analyses at the sub-national level; and (iii)

²⁴ Information on the workshop can be found on the website of the United Nations Population Division at http://www.un.org/esa/population/publications/adultmort/Adult_mortality.htm.

ability to evaluate completeness of death and birth recordings.²⁵ To obtain data on maternal deaths, census information on deaths in the household would identify:

- (i) all deaths within a specified period, such as 12 months;
- (ii) the age and sex of each deceased person;
- (iii) the timing of adult female deaths relative to pregnancy, childbirth and the postpartum period.

40. Due to their complex nature, however, both deaths due to AIDS and maternal deaths are not easy to investigate especially in a census where there are many other competing topics. It is recommended, therefore, that the inclusion in the census recommendations, of guidelines on how to collect, through a census, information on deaths due to AIDS as well as maternal deaths be based on outcomes of meetings of experts in the respective fields.

j. Other

41. Experts are invited to propose amendments to existing topics and to also suggest additional topics for consideration in the update of the *Principles and Recommendations*. Proposals and suggestions may be sent to socialstat@un.org where the Statistics Division, as Secretariat, will collect all suggestions all such proposals and compile them into a report for circulation to members of the Expert Group and others, for use in further deliberations on this issue.

B. Housing census topics

42. A review of questionnaires used by countries to collect data on housing for the 2000 round of census shows that countries varied widely in the topics covered and the way questions were asked. A proposed list of topics to be updated is not given here, but experts are invited to offer suggestions and ideas. The decision on topics to be updated and how they should be handled in the *Principles and Recommendations* will ultimately require active participation of experts from all regions.

43. From an overview of the housing questionnaires used by countries in the 2000 census rounds, it is noted that new questions that emerged thus far include availability of a computer in the living quarters as well as access to the Internet.²⁶ A question on availability of a computer was asked by at least 50 countries spread throughout the world, but mainly in North America and Europe. Availability of Internet was investigated by at least 21 countries. Experts might wish to consider the appropriateness of including these items as they deliberate on topics and subtopics to be updated in the *Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses*.

²⁵ Kenneth Hill, Cynthia Stanton and Neeru Gupta, "Measuring maternal mortality from a census: Guidelines for potential users". MEASURE Evaluation, February 2001.

²⁶ United Nations Statistics Division, DESA, "Incorporating housing statistics in the *Demographic Yearbook* data collection". Paper presented at the United Nations Expert Group Meeting to Review the United Nations *Demographic Yearbook* System, 10-14 November, 2003, New York; also see http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/meetings/egm/DYB_1103/docs/no_07.pdf.

II. SUGGESTED MINIMUM AND ESSENTIAL CENSUS TOPICS

44. The idea of a minimum list of census topics and related data items/variables is not new. In the mid-1990's, there was a lot of focus on statistical implications of the outcomes of major international conferences which were held between 1990 and 1996.²⁷ These conferences recognized the importance of adequate information in formulating policy and monitoring progress in the achievement of conference goals, and called on countries and international organizations to develop and improve the necessary statistics and indicators. Consequently, at its twenty-eighth session (New York, 27 February-3 March 1995), the Statistical Commission established the Expert Group on the Statistical Implications of Recent Major United Nations Conferences to draw up a work programme reflecting the major action areas and indicate the necessary international statistical work in the social field related to the outcomes of the major conferences.²⁸

45. Based on the programmes of action of the conferences, which described issues of current world concern, the Expert Group identified relevant policy themes and areas of social concern and proposed a list of corresponding social indicators to monitor or assess progress towards development. In this connection, the Expert Group recommended a basic list of 15 social indicators that would make up a minimum national social data set (MNSDS). These indicators were selected on the basis of the following criteria: (a) direct relevance to the identified policy areas; (b) accepted international definition and classification; (c) a collection instrument that is feasible in most countries; and (d) feasibility of gender disaggregation. The Statistical Commission at its twenty-ninth session endorsed the proposed list but emphasized that the 15 MNSDS indicators should be considered as a minimum and not a maximum list of indicators, and invited users to build on MNSDS to meet national needs and circumstances, as well as requirements in specific fields.²⁹ The list of 10 indicators for the minimum national social data set, for which data can be collected through censuses, is presented in annex 1.

46. As the 2000 round of censuses comes to an end one wonders to what extent the suggested list of MNSDS indicators has been applied by countries based on data collected through national censuses and other data collection activities. It should be mentioned that the Expert Group proposed that the MNSDS should be developed to provide key statistics for national and international reporting and monitoring. Instead of embarking on a completely new list of suggested minimum and essential census topics, we should try, therefore, to find out to what extent the list of census topics that are necessary for the MNSDS is adequate for such a purpose and how, if necessary it needs to be supplemented.

47. It should also be noted that when the MNSDS list was developed, the collection of data on maternal deaths through censuses was not part of the census recommendations. Depending on the outcome of the current updating of the census recommendations, there may be, for future rounds of censuses, international guidelines on collecting data on maternal mortality in censuses.

²⁷ The major conference include the International Conference on Population and Development (Cairo, 5-13 September 1994), the World Summit for Social Development (Copenhagen, 6-12 March 1995), and the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 4-15 September 1995).

²⁸ Economic and Social Council Official Records, 1995 Supplement No.8 (E/1995/28, E/CN.3/1995/27).

²⁹ Economic and Social Council Official Records, 1997 Supplement No. 4 (E/1997/24, E/CN.3/1997/29).

Also, the indicator whose item is presently not included in the census recommendations is the average number of years of schooling completed. In the *Principles and Recommendations*, educational attainment, i.e., the highest level attended in the educational system of the country where the education was received, is classified in terms of levels: primary, secondary and post-secondary. Given that, for many countries, information on educational attainment is routinely collected through a census, can some modification(s) be made so that the required indicator on education for the MNSDS would be based on census data? Would educational attainment be a good substitute for the indicator on average number of years of schooling completed? Adding the indicator on maternal mortality and on educational attainment to those for which data can be collected through censuses would leave only 3³⁰ of the 15 MNSDS indicators that are based on data that are collected through surveys.

48. The suggested Minimum National Social Data Set includes the following: a list of indicators; required data items/variables; and corresponding tabulation in census recommendations (See Annex 1).

49. In recent years, the focus has shifted to the Millennium Indicators as a framework for assessing and monitoring progress towards a set of internationally agreed development goals and targets.³¹ While there are 48 Millennium Indicators for measuring progress towards the 18 Millennium Development Goals (MDG), there are some similarities between the MDG indicators and those in the MNSDS. Indicators that are common to both include: (a) infant mortality; (b) child mortality; (c) access to safe water; (d) access to sanitation; and (e) maternal mortality.

50. It should be born in mind that while the MNSDS was intended for international use, the MDGs are directed towards developing countries. This said, however, it is important to assess the extent to which some of the MDG indicators can be added to the list for the MNSDS so as to reflect current concerns. Furthermore, it should be recalled that previous issues of the census recommendations, except the 1998 version, had a list of recommended basic census topics, shown in bold in annex 2. Basic census topics in the global recommendations are those that were considered priority topics in the majority of the regional recommendations.

51. It is proposed that the discussion on whether or not to expand the list of suggested minimum and essential topics of censuses based on the MNSDS would also take into account the recommended basic topics from previous issues of the *Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses*, as well as new topics put forward by the Millennium Development Goals.

³⁰ Contraceptive prevalence; per capita gross domestic product (GDP); and monetary value of the basket of food needed for minimum nutritional requirements.

³¹ More information on the Millennium Indicators can be found at http://unstats.un.org/unsd/mi/mi_goals.asp, and on the Millennium Development Goals at <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/>.

III. SUGGESTED TOPICS AND THE MINIMUM AND ESSENTIAL CENSUS TOPICS: IMPLICATIONS FOR UPDATING OF THE CENSUS RECOMMENDATIONS

52. The updating of the census recommendations with regard to the topics presented in the preceding sections may be more challenging for some topics than for others. In some cases the updating would be based on a review of national experiences for the 2000 round of censuses, in others, on new methodologies being developed or classifications being updated, and in yet others on conclusions of intensive discussions of experts with regard to the feasibility and appropriateness of their investigation in censuses.

53. The Expert Group may wish to propose that a technical subgroup to the Expert Group on Population and Housing Censuses be established that would review each of the topics thus far proposed, and to also consider emerging topics as they arise. The technical subgroup would report the results of their work to the Expert Group for possible agreement. When applicable, the technical subgroup would also be responsible for reviewing and making suggestions for updating the corresponding recommended tabulations. The technical subgroup would need to decide on the order in which they would work on the topics and the timing of the decisions to be reached in order to report back in a timely manner to the Expert Group on Population and Housing Censuses. The Expert Group on Population and Housing Censuses would meet in July 2005 to review the work thus far completed by the technical subgroup and to also decide on directions to take concerning future census typologies to be included in the *updated Principles and Recommendations* and to follow up on specific methodological concerns related to the implementation of the 2010 World Programme of Population and Housing Censuses.

54. It is proposed that the Expert Group convene in January 2006 to complete a final review of the draft *Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses, Revision 2*. The revised draft will be presented to the Statistical Commission at its thirty-seventh session around March 2006 for possible comment and agreement. The document will be revised taking into account the comments and suggestions of the Commission and finalized by June 2007.

**ANNEX 1: MINIMUM NATIONAL SOCIAL DATA SET INDICATORS AND
REQUIRED DATA ITEMS (ITEMS BASED ON CENSUS DATA)**

Recommended indicators in the MNSDS	Required data items/variables	Corresponding tabulations in census recommendations
1. Population estimates, by sex, age and ethnic group	Total population; Sex; Age; National and/or ethnic group	P3.1 Population, by single years of age and sex P3.5 Population, by national and/or ethnic group, age and sex
2. Life expectancy at birth, by sex	Deaths in the past 12 months, by age and sex; Population, by age and sex	P4.9 Deaths, by sex and age within the 12 months preceding the census; and total population, by age and sex
3. Infant mortality, by sex	Live births within the 12 months preceding the census; Deaths of infants born within the 12 months preceding the census (See also indirect estimates for indicator 4)	P4.7 Female population ... to 49 years of age, by age, number of live births by sex within the 12 months preceding the census, and deaths among these live births, by sex
4. Child mortality, by sex	Indirect estimates of child mortality are based on reports of women on: Children ever born, by sex and by age group of mother; Children living, by sex and by age group of mother	P4.1 Female population 15 years of age and over, by age and number of children ever born alive by sex P4.3 Female population 15 years of age and over, by age and number of children living (or dead) by sex
5. Number of people per room cross excluding kitchen and bath-room	Number of rooms; Number of occupants	H.11 Housing units, by number of rooms, cross excluding classified by type of housing unit and number of occupants per housing unit
6. Household income per capita (level and distribution)	Total annual income of household; Size of household	P6.18 Households and population in households, by annual income and size of household
7. Unemployment rate, by sex	Activity status; Sex	P6.1 Population ... years of age and over by usual (or current) activity status, marital status, age and sex
8. Employment-population ratio, by sex	Activity status; Sex	P6.1 Population ... years of age and over, by usual (or current) activity status, marital status, age and sex
9. Access to safe water	Water supply system; Source of water supply	H.14 Housing units, by type of housing unit occupied, cross-classified by water supply system and source of water supply
10. Access to sanitation	Type of toilet facilities	H.15 Housing units, by type of housing unit occupied, cross-classified by type of toilet facilities

Note: Five of the recommended indicators -- namely, maternal mortality; contraceptive prevalence; average number of years of schooling completed by sex; per capita gross domestic product (GDP); and monetary value of the basket of food needed for minimum nutritional requirements -- are not shown in the table because the data required for these indicators are not within the scope of questions usually included in population and housing censuses. Three dots (...) indicate the minimum age adopted by the country for responding to census questions on current fertility or economic activity.

Source: *Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses, Revision 1*, United Nations publication, Sales No. E.98.XVII.8, para. 3.21.

**ANNEX 2: POPULATION AND HOUSING CENSUS TOPICS IN THE 1998
PRINCIPLES AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POPULATION AND HOUSING
CENSUSES***

(A) POPULATION CENSUS TOPICS

Geographical and internal migration characteristics (paras. 2.18-2.59)

- i. Place of usual residence (paras. 2.20-2.24)**
- ii. Place where present at time of census (paras. 2.25-2.28)**
- iii. Place of birth (paras. 2.29-2.34)**
- iv. Duration of residence (paras. 2.35-2.37)**
- v. Place of previous residence (paras. 2.38-2.39)**
- vi. Place of residence at a specified date in the past (paras. 2.40-2.41)**

Household and family characteristics (paras. 2.60-2.84)

- vii. Relationship to head or other reference member of household (paras. 2.67-2.76)**

Demographic and social characteristics (paras. 2.85-2.117)

- viii. Sex (para. 2.86)**
- ix. Age (paras. 2.87-2.95)**
- x. Marital status (paras. 2.96-2.103)**
- xi. Citizenship (paras. 2.104-2.108)**
- xii. Religion (paras. 2.109-2.111)
- xiii. Language (paras. 2.112-2.115)
- xiv. National and/or ethnic group (paras. 2.116-2.117)

Fertility and mortality (paras. 2.118-2.143)

- xii. Children ever born (paras. 2.126-2.131)**
- xiii. Children living (paras. 2.132-2.133)**
- xv. Date of birth of last child born alive (paras. 2.134-2.136)
- xvi. Deaths in the past 12 months (paras. 2.137-2.138)
- xvii. Maternal or paternal orphanhood (paras. 2.139-2.141)
- xviii. Age, date or duration of first marriage (para. 2.142)
- xix. Age of mother at birth of first child born alive (para. 2.143)

Educational characteristics (paras. 2.144-2.164)

- xiv. Literacy (paras. 2.154-2.149)**
- xv. School attendance (paras. 2.150-2.152)**
- xvi. Educational attainment (paras. 2.153-2.157)**
- xx. Field of education and educational qualifications (paras. 2.158-2.163)

Economic characteristics (paras. 2.165-2.247)

- xvii. Activity status (paras. 2.168-2.208)**
- xviii. Time worked (paras. 2.209-2.211)**
- xix. Occupation (paras. 2.212-2.220)**
- xx. Industry (paras. 2.221-2.225)**

* Basic census topics are indicated in bold

- xxi. **Status in employment** (paras. 2.226-2.235)
- xxi. Income (paras. 2.236-2.238)
- xxii. Institutional sector of employment (paras. 2.239-2.244)
- xxiii. Place of work (paras. 2.245-2.247)

International migration (paras. 2.248-2.257)

- xxiv. Country of birth (paras. 2.252-2.253)
- xxv. Citizenship (para. 2.254)
- xxvi. Year or period of arrival (paras. 2.255-2.257)

Disability characteristics (paras. 2.266-2.277)

- xxvii. Disability (paras. 2.262-2.272)
- xxviii. Impairments and handicaps (paras. 2.273-2.276)
- xxix. Causes of disability (para. 2.277)

(B) HOUSING CENSUS TOPIC

Unit of enumeration - building

- i. Building – type of (paras. 2.296–2.303)
- ii. Construction material of outer walls (paras. 2.304–2.306)
- iii. Year or period of construction (paras. 2.307–2.311)

Unit of enumeration – living quarters

- iv. **Location of living quarters** (paras. 2.312–2.319)
- v. **Living quarters – type of** (paras. 2.320–2.365)
- vi. **Occupancy status** (paras. 2.366–2.369)
- vii. **Ownership – type of** (paras. 2.370–2.374)
- viii. **Rooms – number of** (paras. 2.375–2.377)
- ix. **Floor space – useful and/or living** (paras. 2.2378–2.380)
- x. **Water supply system** (paras. 2.381–2.383)
- xi. **Toilet and sewerage facilities** (paras. 2.384–2.389)
- xii. **Bathing facilities** (paras. 2.390–2.391)
- xiii. **Cooking facilities** (para. 2.392–2.397)
- xiv. **Lighting – type of and/or electricity** (paras. 2.398–2.399)
- xv. **Solid waste disposal – type of** (paras. 2.400–2.401)
- xvi. **Occupancy by one or more households** (paras. 2.402–2.406)
- xvii. **Occupants - number of** (para. 2.407)
- xviii. **Demographic and economic characteristics of the head of household** (para. 2.67)
 - **Age** (para. 2.87)
 - **Sex** (para. 2.86)
 - **Activity status** (para. 2.168)
 - **Occupation** (para. 2.410)
- xix. **Tenure** (paras. 2.410–2.412)
- xx. **Rental and owner-occupied housing costs** (paras. 2.413–2.415)

Additional topics on housing

Unit of enumeration - building

- xxi.** Dwellings in building – number of (para. 2.418)
- xxii.** Elevator – availability of (para. 2.419)
- xxiii.** Farm building or not (para. 2.420)
- xxiv.** Materials of which specific parts of building are constructed (para. 2.421)
- xxv.** State of repair (para. 2.422)

Unit of enumeration – living quarters

- xxvi.** Bedrooms – number of (2.423)
- xxvii.** Fuel used for cooking (para. 2.424)
- xxviii.** Heating – type and energy used for (para. 2.425)
- xxix.** Hot water – availability of (para. 2.426)
- xxx.** Piped gas – availability of (para. 2.427)
- xxxi.** Telephone – availability of (para. 2.428)
- xxxii.** Use of housing unit (para. 2.429)

Unit of enumeration - occupants

- xxxiii.** Cars available to the household – number of (para. 2.430)
- xxxiv.** Durable consumer appliances available to the household (para. 2.431)
- xxxv.** Outdoor space available for household use (para. 2.432)

SELECTED SOURCES

Suggestions for updating of the various topics in the census recommendations have come from different sources, including the following:

Expert Group Meeting to Review the United Nations *Demographic Yearbook* System, 10-14 November 2003, United Nations Statistics Division, DESA, New York
(<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/meetings/egm/default.htm>)

Workshop on HIV/AIDS and Adult Mortality in Developing Countries, 8-13 September 2003. United Nations Population Division, DESA, New York
(<http://www.un.org/esa/population/publications/adultmort/Adultmortality.htm>)

Workshop on Data Collection and Disaggregation for Indigenous Peoples, 19 – 21 January 2004, United Nations Social Development Division, DESA, New York
(Http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/news/news_workshop_doc.htm)

Albert I. Hermalin, **Challenges to comparative research on intergenerational transfers**. Comparative Studies of the Elderly in Asia, Research Report No. 00-56. Population Studies Center at the Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan, August 2000.
(<http://www.psc.isr.umich.edu/pubs/papers/ea00-56.pdf>)

Kenneth Hill, Cynthia Stanton and Neeru Gupta, “Measuring maternal mortality from a census: Guidelines for potential users”. MEASURE Evaluation, February 2001
(<http://www.cpc.unc.edu/measure/publications/pdf/ms-01-04.pdf>)