

United Nations Expert Group Meeting on the 2010 World Programme on Population and Housing Censuses

Date: 22 - 26 August 2005
Venue: New York
Host: United Nations Statistics Division, DESA
Contact: globalcensus2010@un.org
Web site <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/sources/cwp2010/default.htm>

This Expert Group Meeting is the first in a series of meetings planned to support the *2010 World Programme on Population and Housing Censuses*. The Expert Group Meeting will focus on the review and update of the United Nations *Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses, Revision 1*. The need to update the current set of principles and recommendations was clearly recognized at the global level¹. Activities aimed at updating regional proposals have also been initiated and are underway in several regions. These regional proposals will be included as part of the global review and updating process.

The goal of the United Nations *2010 World Programme on Population and Housing Censuses*, as adopted by the United Nations Statistical Commission in March 2005 with the United Nations Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs acting as its secretariat is for all countries and areas to:

- Agree on a set of accepted international principles and recommendations governing the conduct of population and housing censuses;
- Conduct a population and housing census at least once during the period 2005-2014; and
- Disseminate census results in a timely and comprehensive manner.

Important to note: The United Nations Statistical Commission requested that the updated and revised United Nations *Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses* be submitted for consideration at its 38th session (March 2007).

The Expert Group Meeting will ...

The Expert Group Meeting will bring together chairpersons of all working groups and technical sub-groups of the *2010 World Programme*. For more details on working groups and technical sub-groups and their assignments in respect to the revision of the *Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses*, see <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/sources/cwp2010/docs.htm>.

The Expert Group Meeting will consider in detail the proposals that have been put forward for updating or revising the current set of principles and recommendations. Issues for discussion and deliberation will include:

- operational aspects of population and housing censuses,
- topics for population and housing censuses,
- census products and data utilization; and

¹ United Nations Symposium on Population and Housing Censuses , New York, 13-14 September 2004, at:

<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/meetings/egm/default.htm>

United Nations Expert Group Meeting to Review Critical Issues Relevant to the Planning of the 2010 Round of Population and Housing Censuses (2005-2014), New York, 15-17 September 2004, at:

<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/meetings/egm/default.htm>

- the list of core tabulations.

The meeting will also seek to consider proposals for the inclusion of guidelines related to census features that are not presented in the current version but that may need to be addressed and elaborated, such as combining census methodologies, comprehensive data dissemination, and layouts for international data collection.

A selection of key issues

1. What is a census?

A census is currently expected to possess four essential features: individual enumeration; universality within defined territory; simultaneity; and defined periodicity. While most countries continue to conduct a traditional census and some use national registers, new forms of data provision such as rolling collections are emerging which do not necessarily have all of these characteristics.

2. What should a census include and how should the content be determined?

Changing social conditions and issues have led to a number of new and evolving topics being considered for inclusion and/or revision in national censuses for the forthcoming 2010 census round. Some of the key topics under consideration for general inclusion are usual residence, international migration, human functioning and disability, mortality, households and living arrangements, access to modern technology such as computers. At the same time, there are concerns regarding the overburdening and unbalancing of the census questionnaire with various topics and the under-utilization of collected census data in the current round.

3. What is the core set of outputs that is essential to social and economic planning?

A core national dataset is considered as a means to: obtain the necessary outputs for planning purposes; improve national and international comparability of data; and facilitate the integration of national statistical systems. The Expert Group on the 2010 World Programme on Population and Housing Censuses will provide guidance in the identification of items/topics for a core national dataset while considering the extent to which the current United Nations Demographic Yearbook reflects such a set.

4. How feasible are alternative approaches to censuses? We might be at the beginning of a “census revolution”, yet alternative census designs and approaches including a combination of administrative sources, household surveys, satellite imagery, and use of the Internet, are still largely uncharted territories. Thus, the Expert Group on 2010 World Programme on Population and Housing Censuses should outline preconditions and prerequisites that ought to be considered for adopting any alternative census design, taking into account the experiences of countries that are implementing such designs in regard to quality and coverage of statistics obtained, costs, and timeliness of census results.

The outcome of the Expert Group Meeting will form the basis for continued dialogue and activity among experts towards the preparation of more a set of concrete proposals for revision and updating of the Principles and Recommendations for 2010 round of population and housing censuses.