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**National approaches to the dissemination of demographic statistics
and their implication for the *Demographic Yearbook***

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A. Introduction

1. The United Nations *Demographic Yearbook* is a compilation of country-wise data on demographic and social statistics. It has been serving the need of data users all over the world. Over the years the content and coverage of countries' demography have undergone change. Thus, the review of content, coverage and quality of data in the *Demographic Yearbook* is a welcome step.
2. India has a decentralized Statistical System. The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation is the nodal statistical agency in the country. The Central Statistical Organisation (CSO) being the apex statistical organisation coordinates the statistical work carried out in the country in a decentralized manner.
3. Demographic statistics in India are collected, compiled and disseminated by concerned statistical organizations under various Ministries. The CSO also analyses and disseminates demographic data. The methods of data dissemination are primarily through publications, soft copies and also through websites.

B. Sources of demographic and vital statistics

4. The following are the major sources of data on demographic and social statistics:

(a) Population census

5. A population census is a complete enumeration, at a specified time, of individuals inhabiting a specified area. In India, the population census is undertaken at an interval of ten years. In the population census, particulars are collected about age, sex, social, economic, ethnic and familial characteristics of individuals. A population census directly supplies the data on vital events e.g. births and deaths that have occurred. The population census of a country of the size of India is a gigantic exercise and requires enormous effort from the Central and State Governments, the field enumerators, supervisors and the public at large. Since its inception in 1872, the conduct of census has greatly improved in terms of content, coverage, quality and speedy release of census data, their analyses and results. The last decennial census was conducted in 2001.

(b) Registers of vital events

6. The civil registration system envisages the recording of each and every vital event for legal purposes and in the process, it captures a lot of information on various characteristics of these events like the age of mother, religion, causes of death, age at death, etc., which help in the compilation of a continuous series of vital statistics. Timely, accurate and complete registration of births and deaths is very crucial for understanding of population dynamics at the local and policy level for planning of effective health and development programmes. In India, the enactment of the

‘Registration of Births and Deaths (RBD) Act, 1969’ replacing all diverse laws that existed on the subject, and the Model Rules framed under the Act introduced a uniform legislation to overcome the problem of multiplicity of acts and rules that existed in the country. The Act provides for compulsory registration of births and deaths in the country. However, registration of marriages and divorce is not compulsory in India.

(c) Sample Registration System

7. The civil registration system (CRS) in India is not 100 percent successful. Thus in order to obtain timely and reliable estimates of vital events, a system namely, Sample Registration System (SRS) was introduced in 1964-65. The SRS is a large-scale demographic survey for providing reliable annual estimates of birth rate, death rate and other fertility and mortality indicators both at national and sub-national levels. The field investigation consists of continuous enumeration of births and deaths by resident part time enumerators. In addition, an independent post-enumeration survey is conducted every six months by a competent supervisor. The data obtained through these operations are matched. The unmatched and partially matched events are re-verified in the field and thereafter, an unduplicated count of births and deaths is obtained.

(d) Hospital records

8. Records of in-patients and outpatients as maintained by various hospitals and health centers containing information such as, age, sex, nature of illness, type of treatment and outcome serve as a good source of health related information in the country.

(e) Sample surveys

9. India has one of the largest sample survey organizations, namely National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO), in the world. This organization was set up in 1950 and has conducted 59 rounds of various kinds of surveys. The National Sample Survey Organisation under the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation took up a number of countrywide household based surveys for collecting data on many vital events. Besides the NSSO, the International Institute for Population Sciences, another specialized organization in this area, has conducted two National Family Health Surveys (NFHS), one during 1992-93 and another during 1998-99. In these surveys, important information on the health status of the population, family planning, fertility and mortality as well as growth and development of children, levels of anaemia of women and children and related parameters at the state and national levels were collected.

C. Data Dissemination

10. Demographic statistics are also disseminated by the Government of India primarily through printed publications, soft copy and also through the Internet. In India, the major organizations that deal with demographic statistics are:

- a) Central Statistical Organisation (CSO)
 - b) National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO)
 - c) Registrar General and Census Commissioner of India
 - d) Ministry of Health and Family Welfare
 - e) International Institute of Population Studies
11. The important publications through which demographic statistics are disseminated are:
- a) Statistical abstract of India
 - b) Selected socio-economic statistics, India
 - c) Reports of the population census of India
 - d) Vital statistics of India (based on civil registration)
 - e) Sample registration system- Bulletin
 - f) Sample registration system- Statistical report
 - g) Sarvekshana

D. Website

12. Although most of the statistical organizations in India have their own websites, a comprehensive website is maintained by the Ministry of Information Technology in India at www.indiaimage.nic.in. This website maintains hyperlinks to all individual website sites of various ministries including statistical organizations. However, not all data are provided through the Internet. Priced data are sold through various agencies in softcopy.

E. Implications for the United Nations *Demographic Yearbook*

13. The present system of supply of data for the *Demographic Yearbook* could be made user friendly if it is done in an interactive mode through a website. This would, however, call for appropriate measures in maintaining data security of the individual countries. Since most of the countries, if not all, have their demographic data available in their websites, it would be beneficial if the United Nations website, which provides information on publications, is cascaded from "broad indicators" to the specific "publications" in steps. For this purpose, the whole gamut of statistical indicators might be grouped into a number of categories like:

- a) Demographic indicators
 - b) Social indicators
 - c) Economic indicators
 - d) Environment indicators
14. Browsing for demographic information, one may start with "Demographic indicators" and under this one can browse the following:

- a) Demographic and vital statistics
 - b) Health statistics
 - c) Gender statistics
 - d) Human development indices
 - e) Employment and un-employment
 - f) Statistics on languages
 - g) Other social statistics.
15. For getting/searching the desired “demographic and vital statistics”, one could explore the following links under option (a) above:
- a) List of subject-specific indicators (for which data are available)
 - b) United Nations publications where such data are available
 - c) World situation- an analysis
 - d) Forecast of selected demographic indicators
 - e) Link to country websites on demographic indicators
16. The above model would allow users to go to desired country’s web page directly and get the latest information on the country in question. Besides, this may make all kind of demographic data available *logically* at one place.

F. Suggestions for improvement of the *Demographic Yearbook*

17. A few suggestions are given below for improvement of the content and coverage of the United Nations *Demographic Yearbook*.
- A separate section may be introduced in the *Demographic Yearbook* to indicate status of each country on Millennium Development Goal (MDG) indicators having bearing on demography.
 - Certain indicators like population by education and literacy related to demography, which are covered in the Human Development Report, may also be included in the *Demographic Yearbook*.
 - Besides international migration, internal migration within a country, for example, between rural and urban sectors may possibly be included.
 - For the purpose of development of poverty reduction programmes, a few demographic related indicators may also be included in the *Demographic Yearbook*.