

United Nations Statistics Division
Technical Meeting on Use of Technology in Population and Housing Censuses
28 November - 1 December 2016, Amman, Jordan

Draft Concept Note

Background

Population and housing censuses play a vital role in the production of official statistics. They provide information on a wide range of demographic, social and economic characteristics of the population allowing detailed data disaggregation by small geographic areas and small population groups. They are also a fundamental data source for monitoring the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as they generate the base population figure used as denominator for many development indicators that are expressed in the form of per capita or proportion in the total population.

Advances in technology and census methodology have created a variety of approaches in conducting a census. The adoption of new technology in the conduct of a census operation calls for early and careful planning to ensure a successful and cost-effective implementation. In particular, planning for 2020 round censuses have given significant consideration to the realization of benefits from electronic data collection technologies, given their many advantages including improvements in quality and timeliness of census results. The selection of a new technology and its successful adoption in a country context requires a careful review of available technological solutions, analysis of its cost against its benefits, and the institutional setup. As the use of electronic data capture technologies is a relatively new phenomenon in census taking, there is limited experience among national statistical offices. Therefore, there is a need for better understanding of the factors that play key roles in the successful implementation of these technologies and for documenting good practices.

The United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD), in close collaboration with United Nations Regional Commissions, has embarked on a project for enhancing the capacity of national statistical offices for the efficient use of technology in carrying out censuses in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and that of the 2020 World Population and Housing Census Programme. The project particularly aims to strengthen the capacity of national statistical offices or census authorities on the use of electronic data collection technologies in population and housing censuses.

The project consists of four inter-related components:

- i) conducting a technical meeting to review experience in, and document good practices on, the use of electronic data collection technologies in census enumeration;
- ii) preparing guidelines on the use of electronic data collection technologies;
- iii) conducting regional training workshops based on the guidelines; and,
- iv) providing technical assistance to countries on the use of electronic data collection technologies for census enumeration.

Organisation of the technical meeting

As a first step of this project, UNSD in collaboration with the Department of Statistics (DoS) of Jordan, the Arab Institute for Training and Research in Statistics (AITRS) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) will organise a technical meeting on the use of electronic

data collection technologies in population and housing censuses. The technical meeting is scheduled to take place from 28 November to 1 December 2016 in Amman, Jordan. It is expected that the meeting will be attended by about 40 participants including census experts from 20 national statistical offices from different regions of the world and representatives of United Nations Regional Commissions, UNFPA, the World Bank and other international agencies.

Census experts from national statistical offices will be invited based on their countries' 2010 round experience with the use of electronic data collection technologies (handheld devices such as PDAs, tablets and laptops, the Internet, and GIS/GPS) for field enumeration. Prior to the meeting, national census experts will be requested to submit in writing their respective country's experience on specific aspects of the use of technology. The working language of the meeting will be English. Interpretation services will not be provided.

Objectives of the meeting

The main objective of the technical meeting is to gather input towards the drafting of guidelines on the use of electronic data collection technologies in censuses based on a global review of country experience and practices.

Specifically, the meeting aims to:

- (i) identify key factors for making sound decision on the use of electronic data collection technologies and for developing appropriate strategies for efficient use of the selected technologies; (ii) review the business processes critical for successful implementation of electronic data collection technologies, focusing on the use of handheld electronic devices and the Internet;
- (iii) discuss the benefits and challenges of the use of electronic data collection technologies and the possible strategies for maximising the benefits of investment in these technologies.

Expected outcomes of the meeting

Two major outcomes are expected from the meeting:

- (i) Documentation on national practices on the adoption of technologies for electronic data collection and monitoring of field enumeration, identifying key factors for making sound decisions and developing appropriate strategies, critical business processes for successful implementation, and, the benefits and challenges of using these technologies.
- (ii) Inputs for the guidelines, in accordance with the proposed outline, covering all important aspects in the process of adopting electronic data collection technologies in population and housing censuses.