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Population and Housing Censuses
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Statement from UN ESCAP*

By

**Lene Mikkelsen,
Chief of Statistics Development Section
United Nations Economic and Social Commission
for Asia and the Pacific**

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I. ANALYSIS OF REPLIES TO A QUESTIONNAIRE ON POPULATION CENSUSES

A. Number of replies

1. In preparation of the 2010 World Programme on Population and Housing Censuses the UNESCAP conducted a survey to assess meta information and plans with regard to censuses in the Asia-Pacific region. The survey was administered to 59 regional members and associate members of UNESCAP, which counts for nearly the total of the Asia-Pacific population. At the time of writing 19 countries had replied to the survey.

B. Overview of last census

2. In the 2000 census round most countries in the Asia-Pacific region carried out their censuses during the period 1999 to 2001 (39), with five censuses taking place in 2002 and two in 1998 (see table 1 in Annex). A further three countries had a census in 2004 and Cambodia had an Inter-Censal Population Survey that year. Some ten countries missed out all together on a census around the second millennium and had their last census in 1996 or prior to that. It is not clear whether the 1996 census in the Islamic Republic of Iran was a full census or an inter-censal survey, which would mean that their last full census would date back to 1991.

C. Next census

3. According to the replies the major census operations in the Asia-Pacific region will be in the years 2005-2006 and 2010-2011. Cambodia is the only country, which for the moment plans to take its next census in March 2008. This will give it a ten year interval from its last census in 1998, but will put it out of step with other countries in the region. The knowledge of our member countries' census plans is highly useful for ESCAP to time appropriately regional and subregional initiatives of technical assistance.

Table 2. Year of next planned census

COUNTRY	NEXT CENSUS DATE
Armenia	2011
Australia	August 2006
Cambodia	March 2008
Federated States of Micronesia	2010
Georgia	2010
Guam	1 April 2010
Islamic Republic of Iran	October 2006
Japan	October 2005
Kiribati	November 2005
Macao, China (by-census)	2006
Macao, China	2010/2011
Mongolia	January 2009
Niue	2006
New Zealand	7 March 2006
Palau	April 2005
Russian Federation	2010
Singapore	June 2010
Timor-Leste	2010/2011
Turkey	2010

D. Tabulation of results

4. The time needed to process census data varied considerably between countries. To a large extent the amount of time it takes to process census results depends on population size and data capture techniques used for collection as well as the processing techniques for the data. For example, Singapore held its last census by integrating several information sources, including population registers and, hence, was able to release preliminary results in less than three months, whereas a complete and final release of all data took some 18 months. However, apart from some of the smaller member countries who managed to compile results in less than six months, most countries needed about two or more years to tabulate and disseminate the final census results.

Table 3. Number of months needed for publishing census results

COUNTRY	MONTHS
Armenia	2-44
Australia	9
Cambodia	25
Cambodia - Inter-Censual Population Survey	4
Georgia	22
Federated States of Micronesia	25
Guam	12-48
Islamic Republic of Iran	-
Japan	2-44
Kiribati	12
Macao, China	3
Mongolia	16
New Zealand	11-27
Niue	7
Palau	5
Russian Federation	13
Singapore	2-18
Timor-Leste (2004 census)	3 - ?
Turkey	24

E. Dissemination of results

5. With respect to data dissemination for census results the general trend in the region is to have a mixed dissemination policy. The great majority of countries used both printed reports, booklets, posters and some sort of electronic channels, mainly the Web but also CD-ROMs, for their data dissemination. Just a few countries stated to have disseminated their census results exclusively or mainly on paper formats. The use of electronic means for dissemination is a new trend in the region that indicates that initiatives in the area of technical support to the electronic dissemination of census data will be possible to carry out with large participation.

F. Donor assistance

6. A number of countries in the Asia-Pacific region needed donor assistance to carry out their last census operations. In many cases, national statistical offices charged with the execution and management of the census received extra-budgetary resources both from the government and from external donors, in varying proportions. Generally donor assistance was in cash to cover census-related expenditures, but in some cases assistance was also provided entirely as in-kind contribution. Several Pacific Small Islands countries needed donor assistance for their census operations both in cash and in kind.

G. Unforeseen circumstances

7. Only five countries reported to have had their censuses subject to unforeseen circumstances. In three cases, Armenia, Georgia and Mongolia, this was due to delays on obtaining the financial resources needed to implement census operations, whereas in two other cases, Cambodia and Timor-Leste, circumstances are attributable to insufficient experience in undertaking national censuses.

H. Change of strategy for next census

8. When asked about changes to strategy for the next census, a few respondents declared that they are not considering changes to their census strategy, and several replied that they have not yet considered this issue. The majority of answers, however, highlighted several subjects where countries will consider a change of census strategy. Such subjects are regrouped into three main areas as follows:

Census methodology

- Use of short and long forms
- Use of population registers
- Linking data from longitudinal surveys and census
- Use of mesh blocks for flexible geographic units
- Changes to data verification, tabulation, analysis and dissemination
- De facto/De jure approaches
- Sampling of individuals/households

Census management

- Field operations resources planning and deployment
- Capturing residents abroad for election purposes
- Change into the American Community Survey model (Guam)
- Trade-off between resources and quality

Use of technology

- Use of scanners for data processing (OCR,OMR)
- Use of internet for data collection

- Use of CAPI for data collection
- Use of other electronic solutions

9. Several of the above subjects are related and can be viewed from different angles. For example, the “Use of mesh blocks for flexible geographic units” can easily be linked to “Use of other electronic solutions”, such as GPS. Several examples were also provided of how the possible use of new electronic technologies is potentially linked to “Field operations resources planning and deployment”.

I. Provision of technical expertise

10. Regarding the questions about technical assistance, countries with well-developed statistical systems declared their general availability, within available resources, to provide technical expertise. By contrast, those with developing statistical systems stated that they needed help in most areas of census taking. Several countries replied that they both needed and could provide technical assistance on a number of subjects. This is important because it opens up the possibility for having Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries (TCDC).

11. The areas where expertise was sought or offered are the following:

(a) Expertise available to be provided to other countries

- i. Data capture and processing
- ii. GPS and mapping
- iii. Planning and conduct of operations
- iv. Questionnaire design

(b) Expertise sought from other countries

- i. Quality control
- ii. Evaluation of census coverage
- iii. Data processing, analysis, interpretation, and dissemination
- iv. Questionnaire design
- v. Report writing on census results
- vi. Mapping and GPS
- vii. Implementation of international recommendations
- viii. Use of latest technology
- ix. Demographic analysis
- x. Specific software (CSPro)
- xi. Links to other data compilations (national accounts)
- xii. Use of registers for census
- xiii. Promotion and dissemination of results to users

12. Modalities highlighted for providing expertise include:

- Provision of training courses / case studies
- Invitations for study tours
- Sharing of experiences

J. New topics for next census

13. As to new topics planned for the next census, several respondents replied that they are currently discussing these. A few countries said that no new topics were under consideration. A couple of replies were generic, expressing for instance the wish to follow international recommendations on this matter, or to decide on new topics upon consultations with key users of census data, or according to policy priorities that will manifest themselves in the near future. Explicit mentions of new topics to introduce included:

- Disability
- Unpaid work
- Health-related questions
- Mortality
- Fertility
- Smoking
- Working status
- Place of work
- Languages (official and native languages spoken)
- Both internal and international migration issues
- ICT-related questions
- Floating population (fishermen or otherwise sea-based population)
- Insertion of ID numbers into census questionnaire
- Measures to increase confidentiality/protection of privacy
- Inclusion of indicators for MDGs calculation
- Housing questions
- De jure population

K. Views to be conveyed to United Nations Symposium Meeting

14. Some respondents expressed the wish to be part of the United Nations Symposium, without specifying, however, the views they wanted to convey. Several stated that they were unable to participate in the Symposium, due to financial constraints. Others expressed the need to convey their views on topics already mentioned under the questions on “Change of strategy for next census”, “Provision of technical expertise”, and “New topics for next census”.

15. Specific requests were made for the organization of training on concepts and definitions and methodologies for the new census round. Pleas were made that serious efforts are undertaken by the United Nations to find donors to assist, with technical and financial resources, those countries which are unable to carry out a census alone. Similarly, it was deemed necessary that new methodologies were developed for conducting register-based inter-censal surveys. It was also stressed that the new recommendations for the conduct of the 2010 censuses should be based on comments and experiences of all countries and that regional fora should be established for feeding into the global process.

ANNEX

Table 1. Latest census date for countries in the Asia–Pacific region

Country	Latest Census Date
Afghanistan	-
American Samoa	1 April 2000
Armenia	10-19 October 2001
Australia	7 August 2001
Azerbaijan	27 January 1999
Bangladesh	22 January 2001
Bhutan	-
Brunei Darussalam	21 August 2001
Cambodia	3 March 1998(P)
Cambodia - Inter-Censal Population Survey	April-July 2004
China	01 November 2000
China - Hong Kong SAR	14 March 2001
China - Macao SAR	23 August 2001
Cook Islands	1 December 2001
Democratic People's Republic of Korea	31 December 1993(P)
Fiji	25 August 1996
French Polynesia	7 November 2002
Georgia	17 January 2002
Guam	1 April 2000
India	1 March 2001
Indonesia	30 June 2000
Iran (Islamic Republic of)	11-Dec-91
Japan	1 October 2000(P)
Kazakhstan	26 February 1999
Kiribati	7 November 2000
Kyrgyzstan	24 March 1999
Lao People`s Democratic Republic	01 March 1995
Malaysia	05 July 2000
Maldives	31 Mar.-7 Apr. 2000
Marshall Islands	01 June 1999
Micronesia (Federated States of)	April 2004
Mongolia	5-11 January 2000
Myanmar	-
Nauru	23 September 2002
Nepal	22 June 2001
New Caledonia	September 2004

New Zealand	6 March 2001
Niue	07 September 2001
Northern Mariana Islands	1 April 2000
Pakistan	2-18 March 1998
Palau	15 April 2000
Papua New Guinea	09 July 2000
Philippines	01 May 2000
Republic of Korea	01 November 2000
Russian Federation	09 October 2002
Samoa	05 July 2001
Singapore	30 June 2000
Solomon Islands	21 November 1999
Sri Lanka	17 July 2001
Tajikistan	20 January 2000
Thailand	01 April 2000
Timor-Leste (before independence)	15th of Sept - 31 Oct 1990
Timor-Leste (after independence)	11-31 July 2004
Tonga	30 November 1996
Turkey	22 October 2000(P)
Turkmenistan	10 January 1995
Tuvalu	01 November 2002
Uzbekistan	12 January 1989
Vanuatu	16-30 November 1999
Viet Nam	01 April 1999

Shaded countries denotes those that responded to request
(P) denotes housing census only