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**Major issues in topics for inclusion, standards, definitions and classifications**  
**(Report of Working Group 1)\***

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## **Introduction:**

Working Group 1 was asked to develop guidelines on standardised concepts, definitions and classifications; identify core sets of topics viewed as necessary for planning of socioeconomic development, and consider the role of censuses in such a core; provide, for each topic to be included in the revised census recommendations, criteria that would guide countries in determining what aspects of the topic to include in the census questionnaire; and review relevant paragraphs in chapter two of the UN Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses, Revision 1.

The following summarises discussions to date.

## **Potential New Topics**

Proposals have been made for the inclusion of two new topic areas: Information and Communication Technology, and the Environment. In terms of the former, a separate paper has been provided by ESCWA, detailing specific recommendations relating to adding the topic: "Access to and use of ICT by households and individuals". There are a number of variables suggested within this category, including access to, and use of: radios, TVs, fixed line telephones, mobile phones, personal computers and Internet access.

In terms of environment as a new topic, interest in two aspects has been expressed: information on household and individual behaviour that impacts the environment, and attitudinal information related to the environment. Discussion has noted that there is environment related information already collected in censuses in terms of population density, population growth, and industry. There are also topics included in relation to housing and waste disposal. Furthermore the collection of environmental awareness information is difficult, even within a survey context. None the less the growing importance of environmental issues in many countries indicate it may be appropriate to consider whether this is a topic that should be specifically included in Principles and Recommendations , Revision 1.

## **Proposed Areas of Revision to Topics**

Proposals for revisions have been made in relation to the following general topic areas: geographical and migration related data, including total population; family; education; economically active population; disability; and housing. The main issues in each case are listed below.

### **Geographical and migration related data:**

Given increased population mobility, both internal and international, there is seen to be a need to provide greater guidance on the definition of usual residence, including providing a reference time period e.g. the ECE recommends 12 months. If the purpose of defining usual residence and its role in determining population counts is clarified, an appropriate definition might follow. Hard to enumerate categories could then be considered in this context.

For the purposes of describing the population, as distinct from counting it, more guidance was suggested in areas such as: year of arrival (should this be first arrival or last arrival or something

else?); multiple citizenship (should there be more guidance on how to deal with multiple citizenship in asking about citizenship and coding responses from it?); other issues relating to the sensitivity of questions on citizenship and migrant status, ethnicity and so on were raised with the suggestion that the guidelines be reviewed to ensure guidance was given on maximising response amongst hard to enumerate population groups such as illegal migrants.

Given the importance of the urban/ rural split for many uses, it was suggested that consideration should be given to providing a standard definition to support comparability across countries.

### **Family:**

The Principles and Recommendations currently recognise that the word family means different things in different countries, and that "the degree of relationship used in determining the limits of the family in this sense is dependent upon the uses to which the data are to be put and so cannot be established for worldwide use....It is recommended that the household be used as the unit of enumeration", so that family can be derived according to the information needs of each country. None the less there are issues that have been raised for review in relation to family.

In particular, for a variety of reasons, some families could be considered to involve more than one household. Examples include shared custody and support arrangements in some countries, and polygamous families in other countries. We need to consider whether the Principles and Recommendation on families and households should be revised to cater for these cases, or if the Principles and Recommendations should continue to prescribe that a family cannot comprise more than one household (leaving individual countries to decide how best to classify families and households to this structure).

The definition of family nucleus has also been raised by the ECE in relation to grandchildren living with grandparents, in households with no parents present.

### **Education:**

It has been suggested that the Principles and Recommendations be reviewed to provide guidance on collecting 'school attendance' as distinct from 'school enrolment', and to support literacy being measured as part of a continuum, rather than a dichotomy. It has also been suggested that post-secondary education might be better explained and the inclusion of vocational training should be considered.

### **Economically active population:**

Concern was expressed that in some countries, for political reasons, the census unemployment figure is used in place of the higher quality but sample based Labour Force Survey figure. This was seen as a possible reason not to include unemployment in the census by one contributor to the discussion, but as a reason for ensuring good enumerator instructions, field operations and effective dissemination of information on the differences in definition, scope and quality by other contributors. To achieve the latter, it may be appropriate to review the relevant section of the Principles and Recommendations.

Further attention was seen as appropriate in providing guidance to support measuring the informal sector, including providing an update on the statistical definition of informal employment established by the 17th International Conference of Labour Statistics. Other areas for review included guidance for collection of data on unpaid volunteer work for countries where this is of growing interest, and for the collection of data where individuals hold multiple jobs.

### **Disability:**

There is a proposal that the guidelines be updated to support the development of census questions within the framework of the WHO International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF). Issues include how to select appropriate elements of the framework for measurement in the census, and to what extent a set of essential domains should be identified for the purpose of comparability across countries. There is also the question of whether there should be recommendations for consistent approaches to the inclusion of additional domains or domain subsets in censuses, to foster comparability across countries where these additional domains are covered. The Washington Group is currently involved in testing and development work relevant to this area, focusing on 'equalisation of opportunity' as the policy objective driving the data collection. It will be important for each country covering the disability topic to be clear on the main purpose the questions are seeking to serve, for that country. An issue will be the number of aspects of disability a country will want to cover, counterbalanced against the number of questions on the census form it is possible to devote to this topic.

### **Housing:**

There was a need seen to review the list of basic topics given in 2.293, eg floor space, and the rental and owner-occupant housing costs in 2.413- 2.415, in the light of experience gained on the quality of data gathered.