PLANNING, MANAGEMENT AND OPERATION OF POPULATION CENSUSES IN INDIA

1. Introduction
1.1 The Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner, India is in-charge of the conduct of the decennial Population Census of the country and compilation and dissemination of census data. Earlier, for the purpose of conducting Population Census, a Census Commissioner was appointed by the Government before each Census, assisted by Provincial Superintendents and District Census Officers. In 1948 following a Census Act, a permanent Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner was created. The Census organization became a permanent set up in the Government of India from 1961, so that the organization could conceive ideas for improving the census in its utility, coverage, etc and plan for the same. In India, the Census organization is under the Ministry of Home (Interior) Affairs.

1.2 This paper aims to provide an overview of the system of conducting population censuses in India. The paper also covers in brief the organisation of the census, broad based uses of population census results, resources available for the conduct of census and the use of infrastructure created for the conduct of census for other statistical operations in the intervening period.

2. Population Census in the Statistical System
2.1 The Indian Statistical System is broadly decentralised (subject-wise as well as state-wise), in accordance with the federal nature of the system of government in the country. However, large-scale statistical operations such as Population Census, Economic Census, Agricultural Census and Livestock Census and nation-wide sample surveys including the Annual Survey of Industries and the Socio-Economic surveys, as well as, compilation of macro-economic aggregates like national accounts, price indices and industrial production, are largely Central activities. The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) is the nodal agency for all statistical activities at all-India level. The State Directorates of Economics and Statistics (DESs) carry out the responsibility of coordination of all statistical activities at the State level and keeping liaison with the MoSPI for the purpose of coordination at all-India level.

2.2 The Central Government acts as the coordinating agency for presentation of statistics on an all-India basis even in fields where the States have the primary authority and responsibility for collection of statistics. The respective central Ministries/Departments are responsible for compiling statistics pertaining to their subject of administration. They carry out this function with the collaboration of the respective Departments of the State governments. The MoSPI to which the Central Statistical Organisation (CSO) and the National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO) belong, is responsible for the compilation of National Accounts, Index of Industrial Production, Consumer Price Indices for Urban Non-Manual Employees (CPI_UNME), Human Development Statistics including Gender Statistics, conduct of Annual Survey of Industries and Economic Census. The CSO coordinates statistical
activities with Central Government Ministries/Departments, State Governments and other Statistical Agencies.

2.3 The conduct of population census and the release of the results of population census are accordingly decentralized activities of the Indian statistical system. These function independently of the CSO, but the CSO and the NSSO provide considerable inputs in the organisation and planning of the population censuses. There are some changes in the statistical system of the country recently, with the creation of National Statistical Commission (NSC) as the apex statistical body in the country. With this creation, the population census activities will be monitored by the NSC, to which the Chief Statistician of India (CSI) is the Member Secretary. The CSI is the head of the National Statistical Office with the Central Statistical Office and the National Sample Survey Office as its offices.

3. History of Censuses in India
3.1 India has a long tradition of regular decennial Censuses. The year 1872 marked the beginning of census taking in India when the results of the censuses around that time in different parts of the country, conducted non-synchronously, were aggregated. However, the first complete Population Census was conducted in 1881 on a uniform basis throughout the country. Since then the census is being conducted regularly after every ten years. With the partition and independence of India in 1947 and the formation of the Indian Union with its present boundaries, the year 1951 marked its first census after independence. Each successive census has seen efforts to collect more useful data in a comprehensive manner.

3.2 The last decennial population Census of India, 14th in the series since 1872 and the 6th since Independence, was conducted from 9th to 28th February, 2001. The Reference Moment for Census of India 2001 was the 0.00 hours and the Reference Date –March 1, 2001.

4. Census Act, 1948
4.1 The two most important Acts governing collection of statistics in the country are the Census Act, 1948 and Collection of Statistics Act, 1953. There is a third set of laws, mainly for administrative purposes, under which statutory returns have to be submitted to specified authorities. These returns are an important source of official statistics.

4.2 The Population Census, which is a Union subject, is conducted under the Census Act, 1948. The Act empowers the Central Government to take a Population Census of the country after duly notifying its intention to do so. It empowers the Central Government to appoint Census Commissioner and State Governments Census officers to take the census. The Census Act is utilised for fixing primary administrative responsibility, for obtaining necessary funds, for determining the general scope and timing of the Census, for placing a legal obligation upon the people to give truthful answers, and for placing a legal obligation upon the enumerator to record the responses faithfully. While the Act makes it obligatory for the public to answer all questions faithfully, simultaneously, it guarantees confidentiality of information in respect of
individuals. It provides penalties for (a) census officers if they fail in their official work, and (b) the respondents if they provide wrong information. The Act has been further amended vide the Census (Amendment) Act 1993.

5. **Planning for the Census**

5.1 The planning for a census in the country now starts about 4-5 years ahead of the census date. The Census Operations are conducted in the country in two phases. In the recently conducted 2001 Population Census, the first phase of the census, viz., House-numbering and House-listing Operations was completed between April-June 2000 in States and Union territories. The second phase, viz., Population Enumeration was conducted from 9th to 28th February 2001.

5.2 It has been the practice in India to have extensive consultations with data users on the data items to be canvassed and the tabulations to be prepared therefrom. The consultation with data user is a continuous process. The 'data users' formally consulted include the Planning Commission, the Ministries of the Central Government dealing with socio-economic and cultural aspects State Governments, Research Institutions and Academicians. During the tabulation and dissemination of the results of 2001 census, the official in charge of data dissemination had close interaction with a wide range of data users. These included non-traditional users like industry, NGOs, etc who were not using the census data earlier. The experience from these interactions would be a very valuable input to planning for 2010 census. In addition to these, there have been correspondences regularly from various types of data users regarding their requirements. Since it is the only such operation which tries to collect all the information at one point of time, the demands on census to include new items of data is too high. However, the number of questions, in the census schedules have to be restricted so that the quality of data can be maintained and improved.

5.3 The 2001 Census operations was the result of years of painstaking and meticulous planning and preparation. A Data Users’ Conference, which was inaugurated by Home Minister, was held in April 1998. The representatives of the various Ministries of Government of India, Planning Commission, State Governments, important Statistical/ Demographical Institutes and Universities etc. attended this conference. As many as four Conferences of Directors of Census Operations were organised, from September 23-25, 1999, February 3-5, 2000, May 26-27, 2000 and November 13-15, 2000, respectively, at New Delhi. The Home Minister inaugurated the Fourth Conference. At the conferences, the Directors of Census Operations and other senior officers from the State/UT Directorates of Census Operations discussed the strategy to be adopted for the Census of India 2001 and also shared their views and the experiences of pretest of the Houselist and the Household Schedules canvassed and also the actual Houselisting Operations conducted during April – June 2000.

5.4 An Advisory Committee on Technical Issues (TAC) comprising former Registrar General and Census Commissioners, eminent demographers, statisticians and social scientists was constituted to provide guidance/direction.
5.5 Based on the experiences gained during the pretest and Houselisting operations, the draft questionnaires were suitably modified and finalised for actual enumeration. The revised draft questionnaires and the concepts etc., were discussed in the various meetings of the TAC and finalised. Thereafter, the Houselist and Household Schedules were finalised and then subsequently approved by the Home Minister. These Houselisting and Household Schedules were duly notified in the gazette.

5.6 In respect of the previous Census, 2001, the Houselisting Operations (the first phase of the Census of India 2001) were held between April to September 2000 throughout India. Before the launch of the Houselisting operations, and the household schedules, adequate publicity was given to these operations and the public were requested to cooperate in the Census taking. Typically, the public were informed of the following before the launch of houselisting operations:

- Houselisting Operations is a four week long exercise when Census Enumerators would visit the Block assigned to her/him and collect information on the house and the household;
- Find out when the Houselisting Operations begins in your state or union territory;
- The Census Enumerator is assigned a block, known as Enumeration Block consisting of a certain number of census houses/households;
- She/he shall prepare a layout map of the area showing all roads, lanes, by-lanes, houses, markets, shops, factories etc. She/he shall be visiting each house or structure, residential or non-residential, in her/his charge and list them in the prescribed Houselist Schedule. She/he would also put a number preferably on the front wall of the house in case it is not already numbered. This number, known as Census House Number is the reference number by which the house will be identified;
- The Census Enumerator is authorised by Law to ask questions which should be truthfully answered. All the information given are kept confidential by Law and cannot be used as evidence in any Court of Law in the Country;
- As the Census Enumerator visits every house she/he shall be recording the purpose for which the Census House is used. In case the house is used for residential purpose - wholly or partly, she/he would also ask a few questions from the head of the household (e.g., Name, Number of persons in the household and amenities available to the household);
- The information collected during the Houselisting Operations shall be collated, tabulated and disseminated in the form of Tables for use by planners, administrations, NGOs in understanding the condition of the people and in devising programmes for their development;
- In case the Census Enumerator does not visit you, contact local government administration, like, District Collector or District
6. Data Collected in census
6.1 Indian census has been following an approach of maintaining comparability with previous censuses, to the extent possible, while finalizing the list of questions to be canvassed. New items have been added only when it was felt that these would not affect the workload of the enumerators too much and are simple enough to be handled by them. The simplicity of questions has been very important consideration due to the difficulties in training the large number of enumerators and ensuring uniform application of the concepts and definitions all over the country.

6.2 The 2001 census collected data on following items:

1. Housing and amenities available to households, etc.
   a) Material used in construction of the house
   b) Number of rooms
   c) Availability of electricity, toilet/bathroom and drainage facilities
   d) Availability of kitchen within the house and fuel used for cooking
   e) Source of drinking water supply and its availability within premises
   f) Ownership of assets like radio, television, telephone, bicycle, Scooter/moped/motor cycle, car/jeep/van
   g) Whether the household is availing banking services

2. Population data
   a) Demographic information – sex, age, marital status
   b) Education – literacy, educational level, current attendance in educational institution
   c) Religion, Name of caste/tribe in case the person belongs to a caste/tribe, Mother tongue and other languages known
   d) Disability-type of disability, i.e., in seeing, speech, hearing, movement & mental
   e) Economic activity – whether the person has worked during the reference period, the industry and occupation details in case of the who had worked, details of activity in case of non workers, unemployment status.
   f) Migration – Place of birth, place of previous residence and its rural-urban status, duration of residence at the place of enumeration and the reason for migration.
   g) Fertility – Number of children ever born, surviving and Births during the previous year.
h) Availability of land with cultivating households.

7. Tabulation of Data

7.1 The Census organization had prepared a tabulation Plan on the basis of the consultations with data users and the tables generated in the previous censuses, etc. However, in several cases, tabulations that were not part of the pre-designed tabulation plan, either in the form of new cross-classifications or as tables at lower geographic levels were required. To the extent possible, the organization has met these requirements. All these experiences would help in improving the tabulation plan in the next census. For processing the data collected at the Census of India 2001, arrangements were made to use the latest technology for generating the census tables as quickly as possible.

7.2 Census Data products are available in the form of books, floppies and CDs. There are separate products presenting All India Series and State Series data, where data is presented at different administrative levels. These tables cover such subjects as, population, economic activities, socio-cultural aspects, migration, fertility, housing and household amenities, scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, etc.

1991 Census: List of All India Publications

- State and District Profiles
- Primary Census Abstract (PCA)
- Population Tables
- Population Projections
- Economic Tables (B - Series)
- Socio - Cultural Tables (C - Series)
- Religion Tables
- Language Tables
- Migration Tables (D - Series)
- Fertility Tables (F - Series)
- Housing Tables (H - Series)
- Special Tables on Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes
- Town Directory
- Other Subjects
- Analytical Study Report Series

The State publications are brought out separately for each state and union territory as listed on the right. These cover the following subjects:

- Population Totals
- Part I: Administration Report
- Part II: A Series - Population Tables
- Part III : B Series - Economic Tables
- Part IV-A : C Series - Socio - Cultural Tables
- Part IV-B : Language and Religion
- Part V : D Series - Migration Tables
Census Data Online

Provides Census of India 1991 statistics on a large number of key indicators, such as, Area, Population, Number of Households, Sex ratio, Nuptiality, Fertility, Literacy Rates, Work participation Rates, Religions, Languages, Housing and Household Amenities etc. There is also a search facility available to quickly locate key statistics. The census data online, A-Z index is placed at Annex-1.

8. Uses of Population Census data

Houselisting Operations

8.1 Houselisting Operations provide a database on the quantity and quality of housing stock in the country. Thus for example, data on the total number of rooms, Census Houses by size – class of rooms are generated. Similarly the data on the material used for constructing the floor, wall and roof are also available.

8.2 The unique feature of the Houselisting data set is that it enables to know the proportion of households having access to or using a particular amenity, the estimates of housing shortage, the congestion factor, etc. in great detail, across the states and districts as well as at sub-district level. For example, data on villages electrified may be available, the proportion of households using electricity is not known usually. Houselisting Operations generate this type of data set.

8.3 Some of the uses of the houselisting operations are:

- It is the stepping stone to ensure complete coverage of the geographical area of the country during Population Enumeration in 2001
- To find out the number of housing units - residential or non-residential in the country and the purpose for which they are used
- To assess and estimate the quality of life of the people of India. The quality of life will be reflected from the availability or non-availability of amenities to each household in the country
- The list of amenities on which information will be collected at the Houselisting Operations include
- Information collected can be used to identify geographical areas at different levels of development and utilized for preparing development plans of specific areas for specific amenities.
• The Houselist data will also throw up huge array of statistics on the industries connected with the production, marketing and other related areas for the above items.

**Population Census**

8.4 One of the important uses of census data is for delimitation of constituencies in the Parliament (Lok Sabha – the House of the People), State Legislative Assemblies and local self government bodies for urban (Municipal) and rural (Panchayat) areas. As per the constitution of India, seats in proportion to their population are to be reserved for castes and tribes listed as per the constitutional order. This has brought in an awareness of the importance of census.

8.5 The data thrown up by census at state and district level are being used by the Planning Commission and the concerned Ministries for formulation and monitoring of programmes in several areas like education, welfare, gender equality, labour, man power planning etc.

8.6 The data generated by the Census of India 2001 provide benchmark statistics on the People of India at the beginning of the next millennium. This is expected to mirror a fair representation of the socio-economic and demographic condition of our people which constitutes about one-sixth of the human population on this planet. The census statistics will be used for assessing the impact of the developmental programmes and identify new thrust areas for focussing the efforts on improving the quality of life in our country.

8.7 The population census data, besides being extensively used by the demographers and social scientists, is also used for the workforce data at national, state, district and sub-district level, which is also available by economic activity. This is the only source for the workforce data by economic activity at district and sub-district level. The 5-yearly sample surveys conducted by the National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO), provide reliable data only by broad economic activity category for the States, and not either by detailed economic activity category at State level or by broad group economic category at sub-state level. These workforce data are used extensively in the compilation of national and state income estimates as well as for estimating district income estimates. The role of these data is more pronounced in identifying the informal sector, the workforce estimates for which are arrived at as residuals from the overall workforce estimates coming from the Population Census/NSS employment and unemployment surveys and the workforce data for the organized sector coming from administrative data sources. The Population Census data is also extensively used in preparing the national, state and district human development reports, as this is the major source on health and education indicators at sub-district level. Also, for village or Block/Taluk level database, considerable part of data source is the population census. In the present policy of decentralized planning, the population census plays a major role in providing requisite socio-economic data at micro level.
9. Resources for Population Census and their Utilization

9.1 As per the constitution of the country, ‘Population Census’ is a subject under the Central (Federal) Government. The Census Act of 1948 provides the basic legal support for the conduct of census. The actual conduct of the census is, however, a joint effort of the Central and State Governments. The Central Government establishes the organization at the Central and State level. The census officials at district and lower levels are appointed by the State Government. All the technical and financial aspects are taken care of by the Central Government.

9.2 The Indian census is huge administrative exercise of collecting statistical data pertaining to more than one billion people. It employs about two million part time enumerators for collecting the data from the field. During the census operation, there is a six-tier structure (National, State, District, Sub-district, Supervisor and Enumerator) of officials that work for the census. In such a huge exercise, the general public comes across the Enumerator and Supervisor only, even though, the organization tries to provide a lot of publicity during the period these are focused on the census as an activity.

9.3 The census planning in the country has always been done in a manner so as to use minimum resources that are optimally used. The data collection and processing procedures involved very minimal hiring of extra full time manpower as the work was mostly handled by existing government employees on a part time basis who are paid only a small honorarium. The processing of data is done in phases so as to optimally use the processing infrastructure. The Government has been able to provide the required resources for the census.

9.4 The census organization in India is a dynamic one in terms of its size. While almost the entire manpower at its disposal is used for census related work during the census operations, once the work is over they are deployed for the other activities like sample survey and other studies handled by the office. The work of census enumeration and its supervision up to district level are done by officials drawn from the State Government who work on a part time basis in addition to their normal duties. Thus the problem of utilization of manpower after census work is over is not a large issue in the country.

9.5 One of the areas where large investments are made during the census is in the creation/upgrading of data processing facilities. The 2001 census schedules were computerized by scanning and using ICR technology for numeric data items and Computer Assisted Coding for other items. This required scanners and computer networks to be installed in 15 data centres across the country. A total of 25 scanners, 1060 computers and 45 servers were installed for this purpose. After scanning of the Schedules, the data processing was scheduled in phases with information required by more users being given priority. The processing of the entire data would be over by the end of 2006. The scanners and computers would thereafter be available for other uses. These are already being used for the processing of data collected in Fifth Economic Census conducted by the Central Statistical Organisation. The scanners have almost exhausted their life as they were heavily used.
However, the computers can be used for some more time. The computerization requirements of the projects like Sample Registration System, etc would be handled using these computers. The space capacity available is being made available to other Government Departments for their use for processing of data collected by them.

10. Relationship with other Programmes

**Economic Census**

10.1 Twice in the past, the Economic Census of India had been carried out as part of the house-listing operation of Population Census. Subsequently, doubts were expressed, whether the Census Act permits this, and consequently the Economic Census was de-linked from the Population Census. The recent 1998 and 2005 Economic Censuses were conducted independently of the Population Census operations, by the CSO in collaboration with the State Directorates of Economics and Statistics.

10.2 However, in future the operation of Economic Census is planned to be part of house listing operations of the decennial Population Census. For this purpose, the census enumeration blocks and UFS blocks have to be linked in a manner such that each UFS block is made up of a number of complete census enumeration blocks. This involves close cooperation between the MoS&PI and the Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner.

**Civil Registration System**

10.3 The Civil Registration System Unit of the Office of the Registrar General, India coordinates and unifies the activities of State Governments on registration of Births and Deaths and provides general direction and guidance to States/UTs in this matter for effective implementation of the provisions of the Registration of Births and Deaths Act, 1969. It also compiles and disseminates the statistical information on vital events based on the registration of births and deaths through various publications.

10.4 The current level of registration of births and deaths in the country is far from complete. Continuous efforts are being made by the Office of the Registrar General, India to bring about improvements in the system. Various activities being pursued in this regard include publicity, augmenting computational facilities and other assistance. The infrastructure available for the Population Census is used for the Civil Registration System.

**Sample Registration System**

10.5 A sample survey on births and deaths popularly known as Sample Registration System (SRS) is being carried out regularly by the Office of the Registrar General, India in randomly selected villages and urban blocks spread throughout the country. The main objective of the survey is to provide reliable estimates of birth and death rates at the state and national level. It also provides other measures of fertility and mortality including Infant Mortality Rate for bigger States (10 million and above) and the country as a whole.

10.6 The field investigation under Sample Registration System consists of continuous enumeration of births and deaths in a sample of villages/urban
blocks by a resident part-time enumerator, and an independent six monthly retrospective survey by a full-time supervisor. The data obtained through these two sources are matched. Periodic reports are published to disseminate the results. A separate scheme on Medical Certification of Cause of Death (MCCD) is being implemented which aims to provide a reliable database for generating mortality statistics, which forms an integral part of the vital statistics system. Statistics on causes of death is obtained through the Civil Registration System under the Registration of Births and Deaths Act, 1969. Both the CRS and the SRS use the infrastructure available for the Population Census.

11. Next Population Census
11.1 The last population census of the country was conducted in 2001, from 9th to 28th February, 2001. The Reference Moment for Census of India 2001 was the 0.00 hours and the Reference Date –March 1, 2001. India conducts population censuses once every 10 years, coinciding with the year ending in “1”. The next Population Census is scheduled to be taken for the year 2011.

12. Concluding Remarks
12.1 India has a long tradition of taking Population Censuses, beginning with the first uniform census conducted throughout the country in the year 1881. Thereafter, the Census is being conducted every 10 years with the last census in 2001 and the next census planned for 2011. The Census Act of 1948 provides the legal framework for the conduct of the Population Census. The Census is conducted in two-phases, the house-numbering and house-listing phase and the population enumeration phase.

12.2 The Indian census is a huge administrative exercise involving collection of statistical data pertaining to more than one billion people. It employs about two million part time enumerators. During the census operation there is a six tier structure (National, State, District, Sub-district, Supervisor and Enumerator) of officials that work for the census. The Population Census work is independently undertaken by the Registrar General and Census Commissioner, in the decentralized statistical system of the country. However, the MoSPI is associated in the planning stage.

12.3 The data collected in the Population Census is aimed to provide the requirement of data users and maintaining comparability with previous censuses, to the extent feasible, keeping in view the overall objective of the Census, workload of enumerators and the need to keep the questions simple. The simplicity of questions is very important, in the context of training of large number of enumerators and ensuring uniform application of the concepts and definitions.

12.4 The data provided by the Census is at lower geographic levels and is in respect of housing conditions, demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the population and households. One important use of Census data is for delimitation of constituencies in the Parliament. The data users of population census are considerably broad based and also include the compilers of national, state and district income estimates, as well as the
researchers and officials engaged in the preparation of human development reports. It is also the only source for many small area level statistics. There is also wide ranging consultations with various users before the questionnaires are finalized for the Census.

12.5 The census planning in the country has always been done in a manner so as to use minimum resources that are optimally used. The data collection and processing procedures involved very minimal hiring of extra full time manpower as the work was mostly handled by the existing government employees on part time basis, who are paid only a small honorarium. The processing of data is done in phases so as to optimally use the processing infrastructure. The infrastructure is also used for other programmes, such as the Economic Census work, the Civil Registration System and the Sample Registration System, in the intervening years. The results of Population Census are used in designing several sample surveys. The Government has been able to provide the required resources for the census.

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Urban Agglomerations, Number of { HYPERLINK "http://www.censusindia.net/cendat/datatable6.html" }
Urban Agglomerations, by Population Size { HYPERLINK "http://www.censusindia.net/cendat/datatable6.html" }
Urban Population { HYPERLINK "http://www.censusindia.net/cendat/datatable2.html" }
Urban Population, per cent { HYPERLINK "http://www.censusindia.net/cendat/datatable3.html" }

V
Villages, by Population Size { HYPERLINK "http://www.censusindia.net/cendat/datatable5.html" }
Villages, Inhabited { HYPERLINK "http://www.censusindia.net/cendat/datatable5.html" }
Villages, Number of { HYPERLINK "http://www.censusindia.net/cendat/datatable1.html" }
Villages, Uninhabited { HYPERLINK "http://www.censusindia.net/cendat/datatable5.html" }

W
Widowed Persons Among Aged { HYPERLINK }
"http://www.censusindia.net/cendat/datatable11.html" }  
Women (15-44 yrs), by Education Levels { HYPERLINK  
"http://www.censusindia.net/cendat/datatable17.html" }