

Seminar on Population and Housing Census Practices of OIC Member Countries

6-8 March 2013 , Ankara - Turkey

CONCLUSIONS

In accordance with the Resolutions of the Second Session of the OIC-StatCom, the Members of the OIC-StatCom called for an Expert Group Meeting (EGM) to be organized by SESRIC and IDB to define the structure of a comprehensive profile that will include all the relevant phases of censuses and to compile the different country experiences and practices from OIC Member Countries with the aim of initiating possible cooperation activities among the member countries within this respect.

The respective meeting co-organized by SESRIC and IDB was attended by delegates from the National Statistical Offices (NSOs) of 17 member countries, namely Afghanistan, Bahrain, Egypt, Indonesia, Iraq, Malaysia, Maldives, Niger, Pakistan, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Sudan, Turkey, Uganda, Yemen and the representatives of the UNSD and UNESCWA.

At the end of the deliberations, participants of the seminar agreed on the following conclusions:

1. Providing the most comprehensive socio-economic data at the small area level on the number and characteristics of populations and their housing situations, censuses are the primary statistical source for most of countries, especially for developing countries. In this regard, censuses are regarded as the benchmark for development planning and the sampling frame for surveys.
2. Administrative sources and registers can be a good source of socio-economic information for governments and policymakers as long as data quality and completeness are ensured. For registers to be a sound alternative to traditional censuses, functional registers, well-established technical infrastructure, necessary statistical laws, public trust in registers and reliable solutions to security aspects are some of the essential conditions that need to be met. -
3. Application of advanced technologies into census processes is perceived to increase the timeliness and quality of census data. It was emphasized that adequately testing is required for their sound application. Introduction of new technology, however, could be costly.
4. As the unit cost of the censuses keeps increasing and as many countries face financial constraints, a thorough opportunity cost analysis among the alternative census methodologies and other applications (i.e. traditional, register-based, surveys, use of modern technology, etc) should be carried out before determining future activities related to the implementation of population and housing censuses.
5. The UN Principles and Recommendations for Populations and Housing Censuses and accompanying handbooks should be considered as useful guidelines for census planning and implementation. In this context, countries are encouraged to apply the core topics recommended by the UN in the design of their census questionnaires although countries could include additional topics to reflect the reality of their societies.

6. Many countries overburden the census questionnaires as censuses are seen as an opportunity to collect data on many topics which could increase the cost of the censuses and also have adverse consequences for data quality. It was suggested that countries carefully assess the availability of other sources such as surveys to meet specific data needs as well as the appropriateness of collecting data on some complex topics through the census.
7. Collaboration and cooperation among countries and international organisations are necessary for sharing experience and knowledge as well as getting detailed information on best practices. In addition to organising study visits and training workshops, countries can exchange their equipments as well as tools and applications developed for census to produce tangible outputs. On this matter, Bahrain, being the only member country conducting register-based censuses, expressed their willingness to share their expertise and tools with other member countries and the participants applauded the proposal.
8. Expertise is very important in providing technical assistance to countries. Following the request of countries to have a roster of experts, SESRIC indicated the existence of such a roster through their database (<http://www.sesric.org/statistics-experts.php>) which will be further improved to include more experts.
9. It was proposed to organise workshops for the upcoming population and housing census round in order to provide detailed and up-to-date information about the different aspects of censuses. In this regard, participants welcomed the suggestion made by UNESCWA to establish a network among SESRIC, IDB, UNESCWA, UNFPA and AITRS to be able to organize more comprehensive and budget friendly workshops annually. In addition, UNSD informed participants about plans for 2020 round that will include updating of census guidelines followed by conducting of regional census workshops as was done for 2010 Round.