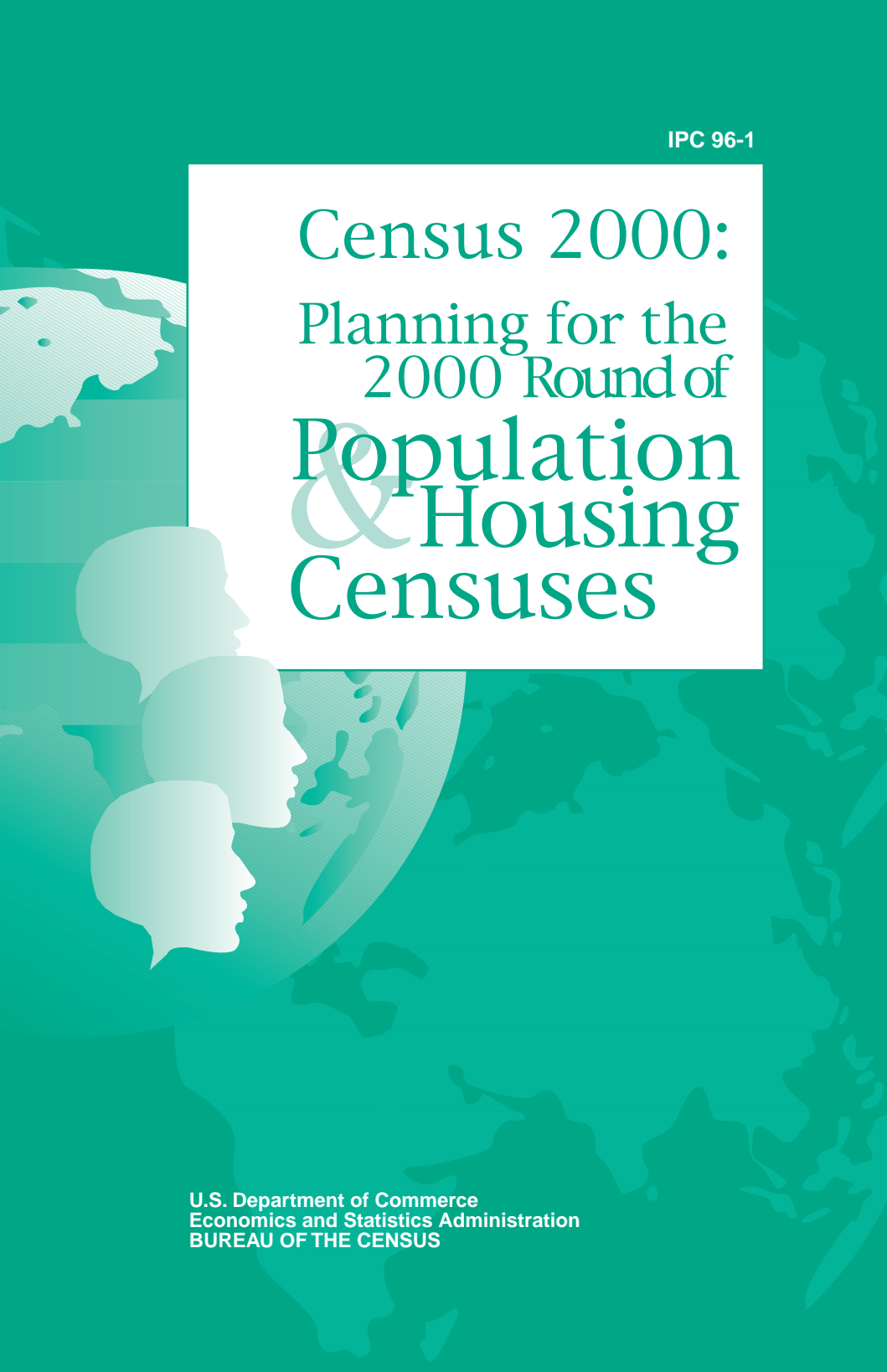


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Census 2000: Planning for the 2000 Round of Population & Housing Censuses

U.S. Department of Commerce
Economics and Statistics Administration
BUREAU OF THE CENSUS

Census 2000:

Planning for the 2000 Round of Population and Housing Censuses

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Census 2000:

Planning for the 2000 Round of Population and Housing Censuses

Planners and decision makers worldwide face a common problem: the lack of high-quality and timely statistics to identify needs; measure trends; establish goals, priorities, and policies; guide program design and funding; monitor implementation; and evaluate results. Censuses of population and housing and integrated intercensal survey programs are vital to meeting these information needs.

Population and Housing Censuses are the backbone of National Statistical Systems. They provide essential data for apportioning political representation, for national and sectoral planning, for allocating resources, for locating roads and other infrastructure, and for guiding the marketing and distribution efforts of private enterprise. They provide basic data on the size, composition, location, socioeconomic status, and change over time of the population. Data from a population census can be used for improving housing, schools, medical care, and employment. Censuses are also essential for developing sampling frames for a variety of surveys.

This document discusses the importance of censuses and offers an illustrative schedule of the critical steps in planning and implementing a population census. The document includes:

- a discussion of the importance of population and housing censuses;
 - a calendar of activities designed for a model census; and
 - a listing of potential sources of training, technical assistance, and other support for censuses.
-

Why Take a Census?

The process of counting every single one of a country's citizens—no matter what their age, sex, socioeconomic status, or place of residence—is truly a unique statistical event. Even in ancient times rulers felt the need to take such a count; and today nearly every country periodically feels the same need. What makes a census so important?

Censuses perform three major functions that, because of their universal nature, no other data-gathering activity can perform. The three fundamentals they provide are:

- **knowledge** about a country and its citizens;
- a basis for peaceful allocation of **political representation**; and
- the social value of **participation** by all of a country's stakeholders.

There are also many practical reasons for a census:

- **Official statistics in general and censuses in particular act as a renewable and unique national resource that helps guide and direct the actions of business, government, and private citizens.**

If a country is to prosper, the free flow of information is vital—and that includes good statistical information. The information must be appropriate and widely available. Unlike other national resources that are consumed when used, the value of statistics grows when used. Each time statistics are used to save a factory, to help plan a government program, to create jobs, or to equitably apportion voting rights, those statistics return more value to the country and its citizens..

- **Censuses provide the baseline data needed for public service planning.**

No matter what the field—education, health, public safety, transportation—government

officials cannot adequately plan and provide public services without knowing the age, sex distribution, and location of the country's population. A census is the only data source that can give them the detailed data they need for local areas.

- **It is impossible to have a representative government without a reliable census.**

A census provides the raw material that underlies a representative government—data on which to base free and fair elections, to apportion representatives, and to allocate government funds fairly.

- **No developed, free-market economy can operate with inappropriate statistical systems—and no developing economy should, either.**

Successful free-market countries cannot be maintained or built without easily-used statistics that meet the needs of the private sector. Development, free markets, and useful statistics go hand-in-hand, and none has ever prospered without the others.

- **Intercensal surveys are wonderful tools for collecting all kinds of necessary information at relatively short intervals and at relatively low cost, but such surveys are only as reliable as the samples on which they are based.**

More and more countries have come to recognize the utility of intercensal surveys to gather information on a variety of topics—demographic trends, employment, expenditures, and health indicators. But, if the data collected in these surveys are to be truly representative, the surveys must use statistically sound samples. Such samples have to be drawn from reliable and relatively recent census data.

- **Democratic principles are vastly strengthened if all citizens, regardless of rank or influence, have equal access to government statistics.**

Private individuals must be able to use information for innovative business ideas, or to propose changes in government policies. In this way, the statistics act as “third party testimony,” giving the common people support in public discourse. If statistics are tightly controlled, available only to the powerful and withheld from the public, democratic principles suffer.

- **Building statistical capability is a part of building the knowledge infrastructure of a country.**

Building official statistical capability is just as important as technology transfer or developing a country’s education system. Without a responsive statistical system that meets the needs of all aspects of its society, the essential elements of business and government will continue to base their decisions on spotty or inaccurate information. That shouldn’t happen, and it doesn’t have to happen.

Figure A provides a more detailed listing of the variety of uses and users for a census of housing and population.

Planning for Censuses

Careful planning and attention to detail are necessary in each phase of a census to produce timely and accurate census data. Coordination of census activities and adherence to internationally recognized standards for data collection can eliminate problems commonly encountered in conducting a census.

A model census calendar is included in this document (figure B). This calendar details the various activities that have to be completed as part of a census. It covers a period from 3 years prior to the census date to 3 years after the census date. It should be noted that 3-year advance planning is the minimum. In most cases, it is prudent to begin the planning cycle 4 to 5 years prior to the census. The first step in the implementation of a census is the development of a calendar, which lists the major census activities and their starting and completion dates. The calendar is designed to show the basic census activities and the amount of time required to plan, implement, and process a census. Each activity in the calendar is an integral part of taking a good census and must be carried out in a timely and meticulous manner.

Common Problems

The implementation of a census is an enormous undertaking in terms of timing, the human and material resources needed, public awareness, and planning required. Careful attention to detail and knowledge of appropriate technologies and standards are necessary to minimize the occurrence of common problems. The following section summarizes the major stages of census planning, implementation, and follow-up. In each stage, prospective assistance activities are described.

Figure A.

Main Purpose for Which Census Data Used

(List does not imply priority ranking)

	National Legislative Body	National Government Agencies
Apportioning seats in the legislative body	X	
Defining voting districts		
Monitoring compliance with laws based on population distribution		X
Identifying areas requiring bilingual education		X
Identifying areas in need of energy assistance		X
Developing programs to reduce unemployment		X
Identifying areas requiring economic stimulus programs		X
Developing social service programs	X	X
Developing programs for the elderly and handicapped	X	X
Studying commuting patterns/developing transportation systems	X	X
Identifying low-cost housing needs		
Establishing occupational/vocational education programs		
Defining school districts and building schools		
Assessing subgroups' social and economic progress	X	X
Developing program goals and policies		
Establishing communications/transportation systems		
Planning residential developments		
Selecting industrial/commercial development sites		
Selecting locations for marketing goods/services		
Assessing potential labor pools		
Analyzing social and economic trends	X	X
Studying internal migration patterns and immigration	X	X
Analyzing population growth	X	X
Conducting age search and verification		
Conducting genealogical research		
Conducting historical research		
Developing sampling frames for national/subnational surveys	X	X
Evaluating current-survey results/other statistics		X
Developing postcensal estimates/projections		X

Main Type of User

State Legislatures	State/ Local Government Agencies	National/ Regional/ Local Organizations	Business/ Marketing Sector	Academic Researchers	Individuals
X	X				
	X				
	X	X			
	X				
	X				
X	X	X		X	X
X	X	X	X	X	X
X	X			X	
	X	X		X	X
	X				
X	X	X	X	X	X
		X	X		
	X		X		
	X		X		
	X		X		
X	X	X	X	X	X
X	X	X	X	X	X
X	X	X	X	X	X
				X	X
				X	
X	X	X	X	X	X
	X	X	X	X	
	X		X	X	

1***Planning and Preparation***

A census is a complex, large-scale operation usually undertaken only once or twice in a decade. Normally, conditions change so substantially between censuses that each census requires new planning. Planning is, therefore, the first order of business when a census is to be taken. It should be started, even on an informal basis if necessary, long before approval for the census is obtained from the appropriate governmental body.

Good planning and careful advance preparation are vital to the successful accomplishment of the basic objectives of the census; namely, to obtain as complete and accurate information as possible within budgeted costs in a minimum period of time. Everything necessary for each step must be planned sufficiently in advance so that it will be carried out at the appropriate time and in the proper sequence.

Key Technical Support Strategies:

- Training programs in sampling, survey and census methods, data processing, cartography, and demographic statistics;
- Workshops on planning a population census (estimating staffing, preparing census calendars, preliminary budgets, initial plans, publicity, and schedules), operational controls (to include budgeting, scheduling, and reporting), statistical quality control, designing tables, and use of microcomputers for demographic and statistical analysis;
- Technical assistance on assessing the capability of host-country institutions to conduct a census and draft census plans with calendars and resource requirements, and on organizing preparatory work for the census including specifications of data output, questionnaire design, and quality control.

2**Questionnaire Design and Table Outlines**

Well-designed questionnaires and other forms are crucial to the success of the census. If questions are poorly worded and the format is confusing, census resources will be wasted, and no amount of processing will improve the data. Questionnaires contain the items for which information is collected during the enumeration. Therefore, a questionnaire serves as the basic instrument for obtaining accurate and necessary data.

Designing a questionnaire requires a good understanding of why the information is being obtained and how it will be used. It requires skill in judging how well the questions will be understood by those furnishing the data. It calls for knowledge of how the information will be tabulated and how it will be processed. Also, it demands good judgment in putting together all the elements. An effective questionnaire is one that is economical in human resources, equipment, and costs to produce the form as well as to use it.

Key Technical Support Strategies:

- Workshops on questionnaire design and the interface of data processors, statisticians, and analysts;
- Technical assistance on definition of data requirements, development of tabulation plans, translation of requirements into questionnaire flowcharts and questions, design and formatting of the questionnaire to ensure ease of enumeration and processing, development and implementation of pretests, and final revision of the questionnaire.

3**Mapping**

Maps have a number of uses in censuses, but they serve primarily to ensure that all parts of the country are assigned to be enumerated and that the data are

allocated to the proper administrative units. This is accomplished by dividing the total area of the country into small areas for individual enumerator assignments and instructing enumerators in the use of maps in taking the census. Maps are also very valuable in census planning and presentation and analysis of the results.

A mapping program should not be considered as part of one census or survey. Once maps are produced, they can be updated for use in intercensal sample surveys and in future censuses.

Key Technical Support Strategies:

- Training on census and survey geography;
- Workshops on mapping at the executive level (1 week to cover requirements for setting up mapping program, listing and describing operations required for preparing and reproducing maps for data collection and publication, and estimating required resources) and at the technical level (2 weeks to cover interpretation of maps and aerial photographs, use of basic drafting equipment and cartographic materials, and actual map production for the census);
- Technical assistance in assessing the quality of available maps, developing a mapping program to meet the census calendar, drawing and duplicating maps for census enumeration, storing and maintaining maps for future censuses and surveys, and developing training for cartographic field staff (reading and using maps, constructing sketch maps, and updating maps in the field).

4

Enumeration

The principal issue for most countries will be the manner in which the census operation is organized and actually carried out. In this respect, nothing is more critical than the adequacy of the enumeration. If there are any serious deficiencies in the enumeration, there is little that can be done to overcome them at the

processing stage, even with complex data editing and computer imputation procedures. The quality of the final census data is limited by the quality of the data collection operations.

The enumeration phase depends on many preceding activities: organization of the field structure, recruitment and training of field staff, design of questionnaires, determination of collection procedures, and quality control over the field operations, among others.

Key Technical Support Strategies:

- Workshops on writing operations manuals, designing training guides and programs (verbatim guides for enumerator or supervisor training) and field procedures (concepts and techniques of field organization, different methods of enumeration, pay systems);
- Technical assistance preparing field manuals and training guides, developing supervisor and interviewer training programs, pretesting field procedures, monitoring training and fieldwork, and developing quality control programs for the administration of fieldwork.

5

Processing

Data processing is the set of operations that translates the information collected in a census into a useful and timely set of statistical reports. A national population and housing census is invariably the largest and most costly data processing operation a country will undertake. Furthermore, the time periods between censuses, normally 10 years, are so long that the transfer of knowledge and techniques from one census to another is minimal, particularly in view of the changes in technology which take place in the interval. In effect, the processing of each national census must be treated as an extremely large, first-time operation. The increased availability and use of microcomputers can make a significant impact on the design and implementation of data processing activities.

Key Technical Support Strategies:

- Workshops on the Integrated Microcomputer Processing System (IMPS), preparing computer edit specifications, project management for data processing, planning and designing a data processing system for censuses and surveys;
- Technical assistance on assessment of processing and equipment requirements, systems design and on-the-job training in system implementation, scheduling data processing activities, software and hardware selection, questionnaire design to facilitate processing, and quality control systems.

6

Analysis and Publication

The ultimate reason for collecting census data is to use it. The public sector uses the data collected in censuses for planning government programs more effectively and efficiently. The private sector uses census data to help understand opportunities for the expansion of businesses and industry.

Data will not be fully utilized unless they are widely distributed and the distribution is highly publicized. The distribution can be either in printed or electronic form, which in turn will affect how the data are used. Therefore, the presentation of the data is an essential step in the ultimate goal of having the census data widely used in both public and private decision-making.

Key Technical Support Strategies:

- Workshops on the analysis of population data, preparing statistical reports, and use of microcomputers for demographic and statistical analysis;
- Technical assistance on the design and development of publications, descriptive analysis of census results, and in-depth analysis of census statistics and software and technical assistance for statistical analysis.

7

Evaluation

A “perfect” census is impossible; errors will inevitably exist. Nevertheless, census figures that are subject to error are still valuable if the magnitude of error is known and if the error does not adversely affect the major uses of the data.

A program for evaluating the census has three broad objectives. The most important is to measure accuracy. The other objectives are to identify sources of error and to provide guidance for future statistical programs; these can usually be achieved as by-products of measuring accuracy.

Key Technical Support Strategies:

- Workshops on demographic methods of evaluation, post-enumeration surveys for population censuses and statistical methods for measuring content error;
- Technical assistance on the design of the post-enumeration survey (PES) for coverage or content evaluation.

8

Documentation

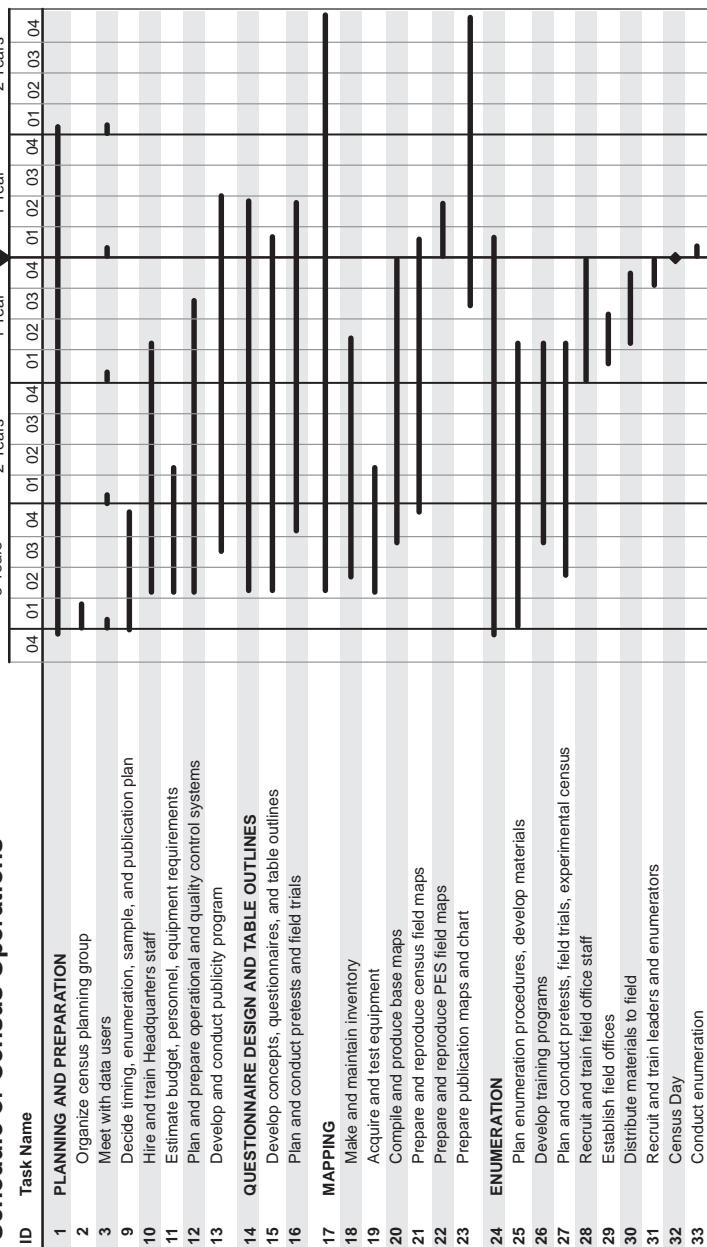
The preparation of a procedural history is an integral part of the census. A census that enumerates and describes a country’s population and housing resources is a large undertaking.

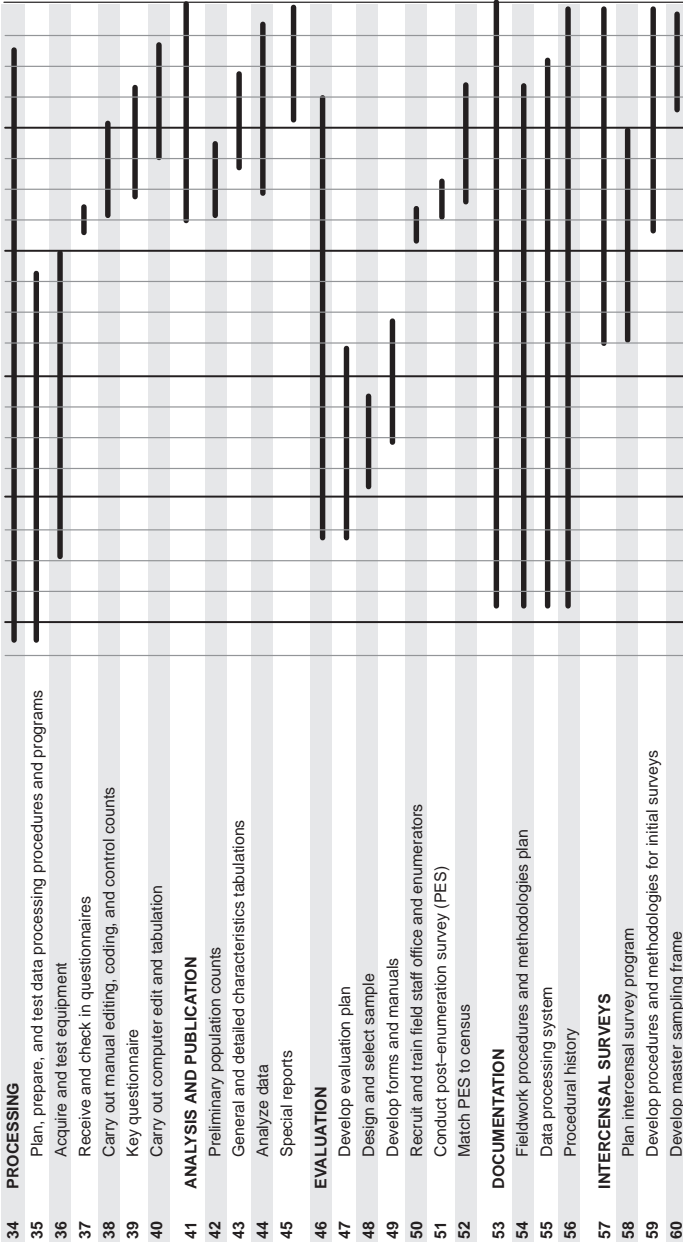
The experience with this activity should be summarized in a report to provide a public record of how the job was done. Such a record is extremely important so that all users will have a comprehensive understanding of the scope of the census program and how it was implemented. A procedural history is also important for documenting procedures and problems to assist in improving the next census.

Key Technical Support Strategies:

- Workshops on the documentation of census activities;

Schedule of Census Operations





Census Day

- Technical assistance on the development of comprehensive documentation of the methods and procedures used in census implementation, including problems encountered and recommendations for future censuses.

9

Intercensal Surveys

A census is often considered a starting point or a benchmark for a series of studies on subjects of major importance. The census data, in particular the population or housing unit counts for small geographic areas, are useful as a framework for the design of samples for intercensal household surveys. In some countries, the census serves as a basis for surveys of small-scale enterprise and farm households.

Key Technical Support Strategies:

Technical assistance on post-censal master sample design and in all aspects of implementing intercensal surveys.

10

Data Dissemination

A strong program for data dissemination is now vital if statistical agencies are to meet the needs and expectations of their domestic government and private sector data users—and those of donor agencies and foreign investors. To provide the data quickly and easily and in the appropriate format, is a challenge made even more difficult by today's increasingly complex technologies and the need for data in a widening variety of business, government, and social organizations. Fortunately, effective techniques have been established to improve the coordination and integration of user needs into the entire process of collecting, processing, and disseminating statistics. These techniques ensure better products and services to the public and private sectors.

Key Technical Support Strategies:

- Workshops on data dissemination, statistical presentation and graphics software, thematic mapping, and producing CD-ROM products;
- Technical assistance on the design, development, operation and management of a data dissemination program, promotional and marketing principles of dissemination, customer service operations, effective publication, poster, brochure and newsletter layout and graphics principles, automated products, such as CD-ROMs and on-line statistical services.

Donor Support

Potential sources of donor and/or technical support for censuses are described below. Figure C provides more detail on the specific types of assistance provided by some of the organizations funding or providing support for censuses. Other countries can and do provide census assistance.

The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and its Country Support Teams

The UNFPA has historically been by far the largest source of support for censuses. In addition, it has played a major role in mounting census assessments and producing census project statements/plans. Finally, the UNFPA has served as a focal point to encourage and coordinate the input and involvement of other donors and technical agencies.

In the past, the UNFPA relied primarily on the UN Technical Agencies and Regional Commissions for the implementation of census support projects. Recently, the UNFPA created a number of Country Support Teams (CST's), which provide a wide range of technical expertise in support of censuses, as well as other activities. Working through the CST's, DESIPA, and the REC's (see below), the UNFPA can provide virtually any kind of technical support needed for a census. Further, the UNFPA considers virtually all developing countries within its purview and is one of the few donors that will consider support for local costs, although it does so reluctantly.

The UNFPA has indicated informally that it will reduce its support for the 2000 Round well below past levels, although the UNFPA continues to play its key roles in mounting census assessments and soliciting/coordinating donor inputs.

The UNFPA has resident representatives in most countries. Requests for census assistance should be directed to him/her. In the absence of a UNFPA representative, the local United Nations Development Program (UNDP) should be contacted.

The Department for Economic and Social Information and Policy Analysis (DESIPA), including the Population and Statistics Divisions, and the UN Regional Economic Commissions (REC's) for Africa (ECA), Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), Europe (ECE), Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), and Western Asia (ECWA).

The UN Technical Agencies and Regional Commissions are not “donor” agencies. In the past, they had primary responsibility for the implementation and technical support of census projects. In part, this function has been passed to the CST's, but the former organizations retain a formidable range of skills and still provide a substantial amount of census assistance. Like the UNFPA, DESIPA, and the REC's cover virtually all developing countries.

Contacts for these agencies are listed in attachment A.

The World Bank

The World Bank is a donor agency that provides little direct technical support, except at project formulation stages and through contractors/consultants. Bank support is primarily in the form of loans. This is based on the logic that a census is a one-time investment that pays off over a 10-year period and that a loan can help the country spread the cost over the entire time period. Despite the logic, countries have been reluctant to seek and/or accept such loans, in part because other grant funding was readily available. This may no longer be the case, and more countries may have to resort to loan funding for their censuses.

The Bank has representatives in most countries where it has significant programs, and countries should initiate inquiries about assistance through those representatives.

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and the U.S. Bureau of the Census

USAID is historically the second largest supporter of population and housing censuses. As a

donor organization, USAID does not provide direct technical assistance, but contracts primarily with the U.S. Bureau of the Census (BUCEN) for the provision of a full range of training, technical, methodological, software, and equipment support.

USAID funds census support only in its emphasis or priority countries. Furthermore, census support is not provided to all priority countries. Decisions concerning census support in a specific country are made by the USAID Mission. Initial inquiries for assistance should be made to the USAID Mission, and you may also wish to contact BUCEN and USAID's Office of Population (see contacts in attachment A).

The Overseas Development Administration (ODA) of the United Kingdom

ODA has a long history of technical and other support for censuses, having provided support for virtually all aspects of censuses. In recent years, the focus has been on training and provision of expertise in data processing and demographic analysis, in the form of both short-term and long-term advisors, and data dissemination. However, requests for any aspect of census support can be considered.

Requests should be made to ODA through the UK representative in country.

Statistics Sweden

Statistics Sweden has played a major role in providing support for censuses (and other statistical programs) in Africa and Asia. Statistics Sweden provides support for virtually all aspects of censuses, with emphasis on logistics, data processing, and report writing/analysis. This assistance is provided through training, short-term technical assistance, and resident advisors. The overall goal of Statistics Sweden's support is the development of capable local census teams.

Requests for assistance can be directed to the contact in attachment A. Statistics Sweden nor-

mally carries out assessments to determine assistance needs and strategy.

The Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and Statistics Canada

CIDA has provided support for census-taking and census-related training since the early 1970's and was a major contributor to the 1980 round of censuses in Africa, using both multilateral and bilateral channels. Programming and resource allocation decisions on census support are made through CIDA's corporate planning cycle exercise, taking into account the strategies and priorities of the respective regional programming divisions.

Historically, Statistics Canada has supported censuses through the provision of long-term advisors on secondment through the United Nations system. Statistics Canada is currently expanding its training and short-term technical assistance support for censuses in a number of technical areas, emphasizing planning, methodology, sampling, quality control, data analysis, tabulation, and analytical reports.

Requests for assistance from Statistics Canada and CIDA (for Africa) can be made to the contact shown in attachment A.

The French National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies (INSEE) and Center for Population and Development (CEPED)

INSEE has extensive experience in organizing population and housing censuses. It has taken part in many censuses in Africa by providing qualified experts. Recently, INSEE assisted Tunisia in organizing the 1994 census and provided experts on short-term assignments in Morocco. It has also supported censuses in other regions, such as providing experts in Bulgaria and observers in Macedonia.

In the future, INSEE could provide support in the fields of data collection and processing (automatic encoding, quality control, sampling), and

Figure C.

Donor/Technical Agency Emphasis

TECHNICAL AREA	Agency								
	UNFPA/ CST'S	DESIPA/ REG ECON COM	CIDA/ STAT CAN	STATISTICS NORWAY	ODA	STATISTICS SWEDEN	USAID/ BUCEN	WORLD BANK*	INSEE AND CEPED
Census Planning	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Cartography	X	X			X	X	X	X	X
Census Methodology	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X
Questionnaire Design	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X
Sample Design	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X
Data Collection	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X
Quality Control	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X
Data Processing	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X
Census Evaluation	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X
Data Analysis	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Data Publication				X	X	X	X	X	X
Data Dissemination	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Documentation	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Master Sample Frame	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
TYPE OF ASSISTANCE									
Training		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Technical Assistance (Intermittent)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Resident Advisors	X	X			X	X	X	X	X
Manuals and Documents		X	X					X	X
Software					X	X	X	X	X
Hardware Procurement	X	X			X	X	X	X	
Other Commodities	X	X			X			X	
Direct Local Support	X				X	X		X	X

*WORLD BANK (funding/loans for the indicated areas provided)

dissemination (tabulation, dissemination systems, new dissemination technologies, etc.), by providing experts on short-term assignments and arranging information visits for senior census managers.

INSEE also promotes the activities of CEPED. CEPED gathers the expertise of various French organizations interested in population studies in Third World countries and their relationship to development issues. It has a strong focus on Africa. CEPED has a tradition of working closely with institutions in developing countries, including statistical offices. It can provide training and technical assistance on most aspects of censuses, from questionnaire design to data analysis to publication of reports.

See attachment A for INSEE and CEPED contacts.

Statistics Norway

Statistics Norway provides training and technical assistance in virtually all aspects of censuses, except for cartography. Statistics Norway works in selected countries and responds to specific requests for assistance to the contact in attachment A.

In light of shrinking donor resources, it is important that alternative sources of assistance be explored. Japan is increasing its donor activities and should be considered when seeking census support. Another strategy for obtaining early and stronger census funding commitments is for countries to involve the donors that they hope will support their census in the early planning and project development for the census. Such efforts are usually carried out under the title of census assessments, where teams of experts assess the capacity of host-country institutions to carry out each step of the census. The assessment team will complete a comprehensive study of host-country capabilities, pinpoint the areas where external help is needed, and recommend the types and amounts of financial, commodity, and technical support required to help the country take a good census.

ATTACHMENT A

Donor/Technical Agency Contacts

United Nations

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