

FOR PARTICIPANTS ONLY
27-28 November 2006

UNITED NATIONS
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

Expert Group Meeting on ESCAP Regional Census Programme
27-28 November 2006
Bangkok, Thailand

REPORT

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I. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Expert Group Meeting on ESCAP Regional Census Programme was organized and sponsored by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). It was held in Bangkok, Thailand, from 27 to 28 November 2006. The Expert Group Meeting was implemented as an open brainstorming among national statisticians and regional and international experts. The expert group focused the first day on reviewing the three components of the ESCAP Regional Census Programme proposed by ESCAP Statistics Division. The second day concentrated on discussing in more detail the migration component of the ESCAP Regional Census Programme and migration statistics in general.

2. The following are the recommendations on the overall proposal of the ESCAP Regional Census Programme and its three components agreed upon by the expert group.

A. Recommendations on overall proposal

- The expert group shared the view that the proposed regional census programme is timely, responds to country needs in the region, and contains the right mix of priorities and activities.
- Stressed the need for ESCAP to give more priority to “engendering” censuses.
- Supported the strategy to establish regional networks of local experts in thematic areas, both as an on-line working group to facilitate knowledge sharing (e.g., through moderated eDiscussions) and as a resource pool.
- Supported the strategy to promote country-to-country cooperation, including South-South cooperation. Emphasized the need to coordinate, to the extent possible, with National Statistical Offices (NSOs) when identifying experts and favoured “secondment” over “consultancy” arrangement.
- Expressed need for assistance in data processing and dissemination.
- Suggested that the regional census programme schedules its activities according to country needs at different phases of a census cycle. They suggested that ESCAP compile country census plans/calendars to identify common needs, and organize activities for countries accordingly.
- Emphasized coordination and partnerships with other international and sub-regional bodies active in the region to avoid duplication and maximize the impact of the programme.
- Suggested that, in the absence of a Statistical Committee, ESCAP may consider a resolution at the next Commission meeting to provide ESCAP Statistics Division with a clear mandate to develop and implement the regional census programme.

B. Recommendations for specific components

(a) Promoting global principles and recommendations

- Experts welcomed the user-driven approach, but cautioned the need to balance national needs and international comparability.
- Stressed the need to review the recommended tabulations and establish a regional minimum set – suggested considering working through sub-regional processes (e.g., ASEAN), and “aggregate” up to the region.
- Also stressed the need to review the Principles and Recommendations to identify areas that require regional and/or country adaptation, and country needs for specific technical assistance in implementing the Principles and Recommendations.
- Welcomed the organization of a regional workshop on global Principles and Recommendations to raise awareness and to identify country needs and follow-up activities, including targeted training by SIAP.

(b) Supporting the use of censuses to measure emerging issues

International Migration

- The group confirmed the strong need to strengthen national statistical capacity to produce and disseminate migration data and agreed that the proposed programme is timely and very relevant.
- Stressed the need to go beyond migration stock to consider how to measure migration flow, out-migration, and irregular migration (including refugees).
- Recommended to also address the collection, analysis and dissemination of internal migration data since internal migration is an issue of great concern for many countries in the region.
- Recognized that census is an important source of migration data but not the sole one - other sources are needed and already available in some countries.
- While acknowledging the need to make the most of the census for migration data collection, the group recommended focusing on a minimum set of questions in the census and possibly using a longer question set in a sample-based census or in a post-census survey.
- Recommended exploring how to obtain flow data from census by sharing of aggregate data between countries.
- Encouraged the sharing of aggregate data between countries also for other purposes such as the triangulation of country data.

- Recognized the different situations in countries and the need for “stock-taking” of existing practices of migration data collection in censuses.

Disability

- Experts agreed with the importance of promoting disability data collection and dissemination in the region.
- Recognized that disability is a complex phenomenon and there are limitations of using census for detailed ICF-based disability data collection.
- Suggested using census as a framework for post-census surveys on disability or using a long-questionnaire for sample-based census that includes more detailed questions on disability.
- Mentioned that more studies are needed to address some remaining technical issues, such as the proper cut-off age for respondents, the use of proxy respondents, cognitive qualities of question phrasing, and interview burden of proposed disability questions for census.
- Encouraged ESCAP to apply the disability project modality to the migration component of the regional census programme and other programmes.

(c) Facilitating the effective application of Information Technology (IT) and Geographical Information System (GIS)

- The expert group confirmed the country need for support in applying GIS and other IT tool for census planning, operations and dissemination, and in making effective use of outsourcing.
- Agreed that ESCAP’s role is to create a regional forum for sharing best practices, raising awareness of options, and facilitating country-to-country cooperation.
- Supported the proposed set of activities, and stressed the need for additional workshops targeting both census managers and IT experts.
- Emphasized the need to establish a regional network of local experts for IT applications in different areas, and the potential of an effective on-line working group for knowledge sharing through moderated eDiscussions.

C. Recommendations on the improvement of international migration statistics

(a) Promotion and advocacy

- Suggested to engage in a well-planned and open user-producer dialogue allowing NSOs to listen to user demands, cross-check questions whether they are relevant to user needs and justify the usefulness of specific questions.

- Stressed to advocate the decision making bodies on the importance of national interest of having access to realistic population data, that is capturing population groups invisible to other sources such as undocumented migrants.
- Recommended to identify areas of importance for national policies and planning that would relate to migration and highlight the value added to the national information system by including migration topic in the upcoming censuses.

(b) Data collection

- Proposed to use censuses as the main instrument in collecting international migration statistics and to use census data as a framework for future specialized surveys.
- Emphasized on strengthening and improving administrative data systems for more reliable and comparable international migration data, for the long run, as ad-hoc surveys are expensive tools for data collection but also cautioned that revising administrative systems involve costs and strong commitment of high-level national authorities.
- Encouraged compilation and use of currently available migration statistics for policy development.

(c) Measurement issues

- Recognized that there are measurement issues such as duration of stay/absence, duration for determining long-term/short-term migrants, threshold of period used to define migrants e.g 12 months, 3 months or more and the need for harmonizing the definitions taking into account both international guidelines and regional needs.
- Suggested to establish a regional guideline on a common set of questions for the upcoming censuses to improve international migration data comparability.
- In the context of effects of globalization and economic development, underlined the increasing demand for additional information on both in and out migrants, for instance, income of the non-resident workers, educational attainment of legal immigrants etc. as well as the importance of obtaining migration flow data.

(d) Data sharing and collaboration among national and international agencies

- Suggested to establish a formal coordination mechanism among different sources within the country to produce aggregate migration statistics.
- Agreed that there is a growing need for a common regulatory body, both at the national and international levels, to communicate between various stakeholders and to establish a comprehensive migration database and data sharing mechanism in order to tackle migrant issues, harmonize definitions and produce policy relevant data among different users in the region.

(e) Policy relevance

- Recognized that the existing international migration statistics available in the countries is not sufficient for national policy development. Efforts need to be stepped up on enforcement and monitoring of data collection of migrants for use in the formulation of migration policy and management.
- Proposed countries should look into matters of out migration where statistics is limited and not sufficient for policy development. Thus, enabling to provide some insights on issues such as push and pull factors, brain drain and human resources planning so that relevant policy measures can be implemented.

(f) ESCAP's support

- ESCAP should advocate for countries to consider inclusion of international migration topic in their upcoming censuses and adoption of internationally recommended concepts, definitions and tabulations, at the same time taking into account the regional needs.
- ESCAP should support the countries by establishing a set of regional guidelines on international migration statistics for countries to follow in implementing their censuses so as to improve availability, quality and comparability of migration statistics.
- ESCAP support is needed especially in questionnaire development and field testing of questionnaire in both international and internal migration.
- ESCAP assistance will be essential in training of census staff especially in questionnaire development.
- ESCAP should carry out regional studies regarding migration in order to share existing best practices in the countries and lessons learnt so as not to repeat mistakes.

II. PROCEEDINGS OF THE EXPERT GROUP MEETING

A. Attendance and Opening

3. The Expert Group Meeting was attended by statisticians and officials from national statistical offices and census organizations responsible for planning and implementing various aspects of census taking. Participants came from 18 countries and territories: namely, Australia; Bangladesh; Brunei Darussalam; China; Hong Kong, China; India; Indonesia; Macao, China; Malaysia; Mongolia; Myanmar; Nepal; New Zealand; Pakistan; Philippines; Sri Lanka; Thailand; and Viet Nam. There were also participants from various United Nations Agencies and Intergovernmental Organizations, namely, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF); United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA); International Labour Organization (ILO); EUROSTAT; International Organization for Migration (IOM) and Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC). Resource persons from UNFPA, South-South Cooperation Unit, UNDP Regional Centre and Emerging Social Issues Division (ESID), ESCAP joined the meeting to share their experience.

4. The Chief of Statistics Division, ESCAP opened the meeting by welcoming all participants to Bangkok and expressed his appreciation to the governments and NSOs for sending high-level participants to the meeting. He underscored the importance of a regional census programme, in conformity with United Nations Statistical Commission's recommendation, to take into account regionally relevant issues and to develop internationally comparable statistics, through a more efficient sharing of knowledge and resources. He highlighted the fact that this regional census programme supports one of the main components of ESCAP's overall effort to promote national capacity building for countries in Asia and the Pacific. He invited the participants to provide open and honest opinion on whether the topics tackled in the programme are relevant, if the proposed mix of activities are appropriately blended and most importantly, if the regional needs to improve census data are met. He further went on to highlight the fact that the issue of international migration has come to the forefront both in the world and in Asia and the Pacific region. He expressed that lack of adequate information on international migration hampers development of relevant policies to tackle migration issues. Finally, he encouraged countries to take the population censuses as a golden opportunity to build a much needed information system on migration and to think beyond the current census round on ways to improve the availability and quality of migration data on a continuous and sustainable basis.

5. During the opening session of the meeting, Chief of Statistics Development Section, Statistics Division, ESCAP presented an overview of the scope and purpose of the meeting, objectives and guiding principles of the ESCAP Regional Census Programme. The presenter underlined that in developing the regional census programme, the ESCAP Statistics Division sought to identify and address distinct regional challenges and country needs through an expert group meeting and a metadata survey conducted in December 2004 and April of 2005 respectively. The meeting was informed that the 2004 EGM encouraged ESCAP to establish a country needs driven regional census programme and to address distinct regional issues while supporting and complementing the 2010 World Population and Census Programme. The 2005 metadata survey identified the availability of national census skills and revealed the areas of support countries need especially in applying relevant Information Technology in census operations. The speaker further emphasized that the formulation of the programme was steered by four guiding principles: (1) Making censuses a strategic priority, (2)

Promoting international standards while incorporating regional needs (3) An integrated approach that maximizes impact and (4) Utilizing the strengths and comparative advantages of ESCAP. The following questions were raised as a guideline to discuss and recommend in the deliberations to follow.

- Does the ESCAP Regional Census Programme have a right mix of priorities?
- What are the areas that need to be strengthened?
- What are the components/activities that need to be dropped or other components/activities that need to be added?
- For each component, is the strategic approach appropriate?
- What other areas need to be pursued?

B. Meeting objectives, expected outcome and agenda

6. The general and specific objectives of the meeting are outlined as follows:

General objectives

To identify the focus and major components of the ESCAP Regional Census Programme for the 2010 global census round

To give direction on how best to collect and analyse international migration statistics in the Asia and the Pacific region using census and other tools

Specific objectives

- To give guidance on the composition of the ESCAP Regional Census Programme so that the programme meets the regional needs on improvement of data availability, data quality and international comparability
- To promote the inclusion of the migration topic in the 2010 census round
- To identify areas of priority in establishing a common and comparable data collection and analysis system for international migration statistics in Asia and the Pacific

7. The overall expected outcomes of the meeting are as follows:

- a. A set of recommendations on the proposed ESCAP Regional Census Programme so as to have maximum impact and to meet the countries' needs on improving census data in the region
- b. A set of recommendations on how best to establish a common and comparable international migration data collection, analysis and data sharing system around censuses and beyond censuses

8. The meeting agenda was organized into six substantive sessions. The first day of the meeting started off with Session 1 on Collaborating roles of partners. This was followed by Session 2 where the three proposed components of the ESCAP Regional Census Programme, namely, (1) Promoting Global Principles and Recommendations, (2) Census Data Collection on Emerging Issues: Improving Disability Statistics and Understanding International Migration (3) Supporting Effective use of IT in census operation, was discussed extensively. The day ended with Session 3 where the countries presented their perspectives on the ESCAP Regional Census Programme as a whole, followed by a plenary discussion where other participants presented their views giving direction to the proposed Programme.

9. The second day of the meeting focused solely on the International Migration Statistics. Session 4 commenced with country presentations by Australia; India; Sri Lanka; Macao, China and Myanmar on the situation of international migration statistics in their respective countries followed by a plenary discussion. Session 5 and 6 are group works centering on (1) Recommendations in migration topic in censuses and (2) Identifying areas of priority for activities beyond censuses respectively.

10. During the closing session, the participants went through the conclusions and recommendations presented line by line by Chief of Statistics Division, ESCAP. The meeting advised and commented on the content and wording so that they reflect the deliberations made during the meeting. The meeting ended with closing remarks by Chief of Statistics Division, ESCAP.

11. The meeting documentation and reference materials are available at the following address: <http://www.unescap.org/stat/meet/egm2006/index.asp>. Participants at the meeting were provided with a CD containing all meeting documents including the *Draft Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses, Revision 2*, posted on the United Nations Statistics Division website, for easy reference.

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MEETING PROGRAMME

Day One (Monday, 27 November 2006)

08:00-08:45 Registration

09:00-09:35 Opening session – Moderator: Mr Pietro Gennari, ESCAP

Opening speech by Mr Pietro Gennari, Director, Statistics Division, ESCAP
(10 mins)

Scope and purpose of the meeting, objectives and guiding principles of
ESCAP Regional Census Programme – 2010 global census round by Ms
Haishan Fu, Chief, Statistics Development Section, Statistics Division

- Presentation (10 mins)
- Plenary discussion (15 mins)

09:35-10:00 Group photo, coffee/tea break

10:00-10:35 Session 1: Collaborating role of partners (35 mins)
Moderator: Ms Haishan Fu, ESCAP

- Presentations by SPC (Mr Gerald Haberkorn, Head, Demography
Population Section) and UNDP Regional Centre (Mr Denis Nkala,
Chief, South_South Cooperation Unit)
- (10 mins each – 20 mins)
- Plenary discussion (15 mins)

**10:35-14:25 Session 2: Possible components of the ESCAP Regional Census
Programme – 2010 global census round**

Moderator: Ms Haishan Fu, ESCAP

10:35-11:10 Component 1: Promoting Global Principles and Recommendations

- Presentation (Khin Win Thin, ESCAP) (10 mins)
- Comments by lead discussant (Mongolia, SPC) (10 mins)
- Plenary discussion (15 mins)

11:10-12:25 **Component 2: Census Data Collection on Emerging Issues-
Improving Disability Statistics and Understanding International
Migration**

Moderator: Ms Haishan Fu, ESCAP

- Presentation on “Use of census data for the global estimates of international migration” by Ms Keiko Osaki Tomita, Chief, Population and Social Integration Section, ESID (15 mins)
- Presentation (Joern Geisselmann, ESCAP on International Migration) (10 mins)
- Comments by lead discussant (Philippines) (10 mins)
- Presentation (Wei Liu, ESCAP on Disability Statistics) (10 mins)
- Comments by lead discussant (Thailand) (10 mins)
- Plenary discussion (20 mins)

12:25-13:25 Lunch break

13:25-14:25 **Component 3: Supporting Effective use of Information Technology in
census operations**

Moderator: Mr Ilpo Survo, ESCAP

- Presentation (Khin Win Thin, ESCAP) (10 mins)
- Comments by lead discussants (Malaysia and HongKong, China) (10 mins each - 20 mins)
- Plenary discussion (30 mins)

14:25-14:40 Coffee/tea break

**14:40-16:30 Session 3: Perspectives on the ESCAP Regional Census Programme as a
whole**

Moderator: Ms Ka Lin Chan (Hong Kong, China)

14:40-15:25 Comments by lead discussants on the ESCAP Regional Census Programme (India; New Zealand; Nepal) (10 mins each)

15:25-16:30 Plenary discussion

Day Two (Tuesday, 28 November 2006)

**09:00-10:30 Session 4: Situation of international migration statistics in the region
Moderator: Ms Carmelita Ericeta (Philippines)**

09:00-10:00 Country presentations on the current practices and challenges of international migration data collection, compilation, dissemination and analysis (Australia; India; Sri Lanka; Macao, China; Myanmar)

10:00-10:30 Plenary discussion

10:30-10:45 Coffee break

- 10:45-13:45 Session 5: Recommendations on migration topic in censuses**
Moderator: Mr Federico Soda, IOM
- 10:45-11:00 Introduction to group works (ESCAP)
- 11:00-12:00 Group works
- 12:00-13:00 Lunch break
- 13:00-13:45 Group work presentations and plenary discussion
- 13:45-16:00 Session 6: Identifying areas of priority for activities beyond censuses**
Moderator: Mr Remi Bardon, EUROSTAT
- 13:45-14:00 Introduction to group works (ESCAP)
- 14:00-15:00 Group works
- 15:00-15:15 Coffee break
- 15:15-16:00 Group work presentations and plenary discussion
- 16:00-17:00 **Closing Session**
Conclusions and recommendations by Mr Pietro Gennari
Closing speech by Mr Pietro Gennari
Evaluation of the meeting

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