Overview of the 2020 Census Round in Asia and the Pacific

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Population censuses and COVID-19

- Worldwide disruption of population censuses as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic:
  - Difficulty to undertake field work: census enumeration, but also cartography, pilot census, training
  - Disruptions with procurement of census equipment
  - Reallocation of resources for COVID-19 response

- Disruptions documented by UNFPA and UNSD:
  - arcgis-pilot.unfpa.org/open_data/esri/census.php
  - unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic-social/census/COVID-19/
Recent technical resources

- On the implications of COVID-19 on census (March 2020):
  unfpa.org/resources/technical-brief-implications-covid-19-census

- On the value of modelled population estimates for census planning and preparation (May 2020):
  unfpa.org/resources/value-modelled-population-estimates-census-planning-and-preparation
Some countries already conducted a population census as part of the 2020 round:

- 2015: Japan, Kiribati, Republic of Korea, Lao PDR, Timor Leste
- 2016: Australia, Iran, Samoa, Tonga
- 2017: Bhutan, Fiji, Pakistan
- 2018: New Zealand
- 2019: Azerbaijan, Cambodia, DPR Korea, Solomon Islands, Vietnam
- 2020: Mongolia
• Other countries have a census planned towards the end of the 2020 round: Georgia (2023), Myanmar (2024)

• But for many countries that had a population census planned in 2020 (as many as 18 ESCAP Member States), 2021 (as many as 12 ESCAP Member States) or 2022 (3 ESCAP Member States), plans are being disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic
What to do: minor adjustments or radical decisions?

- Data collection still scheduled as planned in China and some Pacific Island countries, with monitoring of situation.
- Data collection delayed/postponed by a few weeks/months for countries about to conduct census enumeration. Countries applying multi-modal data collection in better position (Republic of Korea, Malaysia).
- Postponement by a year or more in Papua New Guinea, Samoa or Thailand.
- Continued census preparations in countries where data collection is planned for 2021, with some adjustments.
A few common challenges

- Temptation to try and find short-cuts to make up for disrupted preparations. Risk of major changes in census procedures at the last minute without proper testing, with a detrimental impact on data quality.
- In most cases, need to revise census timeline, based on a realistic assessment of expected progress of census activities, and need to develop contingency plans, based on alternative scenarios.
- Increased funding concerns for censuses, as countries reallocate resources to COVID-19 response and donors are unlikely to step up their support.