

**Joint UNECE-UNFPA Regional Training Workshop  
on Population and Housing Censuses for South Eastern European countries  
(Ohrid, 24-26 November 2008)**

The workshop was organized for senior professionals/experts from the Statistical Offices of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania and Serbia.

**Summary of the main outcomes of the discussion**

**Topic 1: Measurement of disability**

Recent developments in the definition of disability were presented: from a **medical model** approach to disability that was based on medical conditions, impairments or individual pathology – to the **social model** (or more specifically, the bio-psycho-social model), based on the *consequences* of diseases on **functional ability** and/or **social participation**. Disability represents a complex process and is not a single, static state. It refers to the outcome of the interaction of a person and his/her **environment** (physical, social, cultural or legislative) and represents a measure of the negative impact of environmental factors on one's ability to function.

A Definitional Paradox for Disability was introduced and explained:

- There is no single, correct, universally accepted operational definition of disability. (There is no gold standard for disability measurement.)
- Different operational definitions will lead to different estimates of disability prevalence.
- The definition will depend on the purpose chosen for collecting disability statistics.

The **International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF)**<sup>1</sup> developed by the WHO in 2001, was introduced as the conceptual model and framework for the development of disability questions.

The methodological work conducted by the **Washington Group on Disability Statistics**<sup>2</sup> to facilitate the international comparison of data on disability was presented. The Washington Group has chosen to focus on the **equalization of opportunities** as the main purpose for the design of questions and the collection of disability statistics. Locating the purpose on the conceptual model of disability (ICF) will guide the choice of which ICF elements to operationalise and subsequently will form the basis for the choice of questions to be developed. The choice of equalization of opportunities resulted in aspects of **activity limitations, participation restrictions** and **environmental factors** (both barriers and facilitators that may hinder or enhance social inclusion and participation respectively) as the elements of the ICF model that are operationalised in question development.

The importance of paying careful attention to wording and context of questions in order to ensure validity and reliability was stressed. In addition, care should be taken in selecting appropriate response categories and ensuring the questions developed actually elicit the responses expected. It was recommended that all questions developed be tested both cognitively and in the field prior to implementation.

---

<sup>1</sup> See: <http://www.who.int/classifications/icf/en/>

<sup>2</sup> Information on the Washington Group can be found on the website: <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/citygroup.htm> and in key papers published in a special issue of Research in Social Science and Disability. For further information and to request additional material please contact Mitch Loeb, NCHS ([mloeb@cdc.gov](mailto:mloeb@cdc.gov))

The Washington Group has recommended the following set of questions for use on censuses.

**Because of a Health problem:**

- 1) Do you have difficulty seeing even if wearing glasses?
- 2) Do you have difficulty hearing even if using a hearing aid?
- 3) Do you have difficulty walking or climbing stairs?
- 4) Do you have difficulty remembering or concentrating?
- 5) Do you have difficulty with (self-care such as) washing all over or dressing?
- 6) Using your usual (customary) language, do you have difficulty communicating (for example understanding or being understood by others)?

**Response categories:**

- (1) No - no difficulty; (2) Yes - some difficulty; (3) Yes - a lot of difficulty; (4) Cannot do at all

The **basic actions** represented in this set of questions are those that are most often found to limit an individual and result in participation restrictions. Domains were selected using the criteria of simplicity, brevity, universality and comparability. It is expected that the information that results from the use of these questions will, a) represent the **majority** of, but not all, persons with limitation in basic actions, b) represent the most commonly occurring limitations in basic actions, and c) be able to capture persons with similar problems across countries.

The question set was designed to identify the subpopulation that is at a greater **risk** than the general population of experiencing restrictions in social participation, for example in employment, education or civic life. Risk is increased as a result of difficulties experienced in basic functional domains or actions such as seeing, hearing, walking, cognition, self care and communication.

## Topic 2: Population to be enumerated

The main concepts and definitions relating to the population to be enumerated in the census and the place of usual residence were reviewed and discussed, with reference to the **Conference of European Statisticians Recommendations for the 2010 censuses**<sup>3</sup>.

The concept of **usual residence** according to the '**12 month criterion**' and the treatment of selected population groups were discussed in detail. Particular attention was given to the cases where the '**intention of staying**' should be taken into consideration, with some practical examples.

The discussion focused on difficult/problematic cases, such as that of **tertiary students** living away from home during term time. Most countries in the South East European (SEE) region view the counting of students as one of the most difficult cases of the enumeration. In order to avoid the risk of undercoverage of this specific population group, and also for sensitivity reasons (since in most cases the students are considered as members of the household), tertiary students living outside the family home but **in the same country** are generally counted at the family home. On the other hand, the risk of double counting implied by this strategy has to be taken into account and the need for accurate checks during the processing phase to identify and eliminate double counts underlined. As to students **studying abroad**, the importance of not including them in the total population count of the country of origin was stressed, in order to avoid double counting between countries.

Three main **approaches for enumerating usually resident persons** were identified

- a. enumeration in the place of usual residence
- b. enumeration in the place of presence at the time of the census
- c. enumeration in the place of 'permanent residence'.

Their respective pros and cons and their implications on the total population count were described in detail, with specific reference to the following:

- who is included and who is not included in the total population count
  - compliance with international criteria for identifying usually resident population.
- a. The strategy adopted by most countries is to **count people at their place of usual residence**. This approach requires the clear identification *a priori* of persons usually resident in the living quarter, for which the individual questionnaire is completed. Visitors (i.e. persons

---

<sup>3</sup> See : [http://www.unecce.org/stats/publications/CES\\_2010\\_Census\\_Recommendations\\_English.pdf](http://www.unecce.org/stats/publications/CES_2010_Census_Recommendations_English.pdf)

temporarily present at the time of the census) are generally listed in a separate part of the questionnaire but for them no individual questionnaire is filled in.

The following key issues are to be taken into account with reference to this approach:

- ✓ how to distinguish between persons usually resident in the place of enumeration and persons temporarily present
- ✓ what is to be intended for temporary absence (absence or expected absence of less than 1 year)
- ✓ entire households temporarily absent (especially if abroad at the time of the census) will be missed by the census therefore will not be included in the total population count.

- b. Some countries (apparently none in the SEE region) **enumerate people in their place of presence at census reference moment**: all persons present in the living quarter at census reference moment are enumerated, while members of the household who usually live at that address but who are absent at census reference moment are counted but no individual questionnaire is completed for them.

The following key issues are to be taken into account with reference to this approach:

- ✓ the identification of persons usually resident in the living quarter is done *a posteriori*, by the answers to the question: 'where do you usually live?'
- ✓ persons usually resident in the living quarter but temporarily absent will complete the individual questionnaire in the place where they are present at census reference moment
- ✓ persons usually resident in the living quarter but temporarily abroad will be missed by the census; therefore, they will not be included in the total population count.

- c. Some countries in the SSE region enumerate people at their '**place of permanent residence**' (i.e. their place of residence or former residence).

All persons 'permanently resident' in the living quarter are enumerated, even if absent for more than 1 year, and the identification of persons usually resident in the living quarter is done *a posteriori*, by the answers to questions on 'permanent residence', on the duration of absence for persons 'permanently resident' and on the duration of presence for persons temporarily present.

The following key issues are to be taken into account with reference to this approach:

- ✓ persons who should not be counted according to international criteria (persons who are absent for more than 1 year) are enumerated and will be identified only during the processing phase
- ✓ information is collected twice for persons not 'permanently resident' in the place of enumeration (once in the place of temporary presence and once in the place of 'permanent residence').

This strategy is a highly risky one since information is collected also for persons who are no more usually resident in the household and who are not to be included in the usually resident population. Therefore, it is extremely important to exclude these persons from the total population count during the processing phase. Furthermore, if the individual questionnaire is being completed for the purpose of collecting information on emigrants, it has to be considered that these will be proxy answers, thus the accuracy of the information collected will not be guaranteed.

Group activity and following discussion made clear that most countries in the region will adopt approach a), i.e. will enumerate population in the place of usual residence. However, the possibility of having the individual questionnaire completed for both persons usually resident in the living quarter and persons temporarily present is being considered by some countries, in order:

- to avoid risk of misclassification by enumerators and the consequent risk of undercoverage
- to obtain more accurate information.

With reference to this, it has been underlined that accurate checks will be needed in order to avoid double counting and that this approach would be burdensome for respondents.

Some countries do intend to adopt strategy c), even if not in compliance with international rules. The risks associated to this approach have been discussed and the importance of strict checks during the processing phase has been stressed.

### Topic 3: Ethno-cultural characteristics

Some **general principles** related to the measurement of ethno-cultural characteristics (ethnicity, religion and language) in the census were stressed during the discussion:

- These topics have a **strong subjective dimension** and they can be politically sensitive in certain countries. For these reasons, in the CES Recommendations these topics are presented as **optional** (“non-core”).
- If the topics are included in the census, then all possible measures should be taken to guarantee that the **free and open declaration** of the respondents is recorded and preserved. What is reported by the respondent has to be recorded by the interviewer and then **preserved** during collection, coding, processing, editing, and dissemination. Ensuring the free and open declaration of the respondents is particularly important because of the strong subjective dimension of these topics. In fact, purpose of the census is to provide data that reflect the reality of the country and its population. In the case of ethno-cultural characteristics, the « reality » is what is reported by the respondents, and it should not be influenced or modified.
- **Information on one topic cannot be derived from information on other topics** (for instance, religion cannot be derived on the basis of ethnicity)
- The **enumerators should always ask the questions**, without suggesting or influencing the answer assuming that they know it. This should be stressed when training enumerators
- Respondents should be informed by the interviewer about their **right not to reply** to the questions on ethnicity and religion
- The questions should **always include an open box for write-in answer** (not pre-coded) for small groups to identify themselves

Some specific remarks were made during the discussion on the **ethnicity** topic:

- When the questionnaire includes pre-coded categories, then the categories for the most common ethnic groups (**at least 4-5 groups**) should be presented, in addition to the open box and the “none” and “not declared” categories. It was stressed that the practice of presenting only one pre-coded category (for the most common ethnic group) should be avoided. Some real cases of past censuses were discussed, when the way the pre-coded categories were presented had substantially influenced the results
- Respondents should be allowed to select **more than one ethnic affiliation** or a **combination of ethnic affiliations**
- Guidelines should be provided how the ethnicity of **children from mixed couples** is determined
- **Coding** procedures should be designed with the objective to preserve at the maximum the information provided by respondent, including multiple affiliations and combinations of affiliations. It was stressed that technology should adapt to information needs, not the opposite!
- Concerning the **dissemination** of census results on ethnicity, particular care should be taken given the sensitivity of the topic. Output classifications should be extensive and discussed with ethnic groups themselves. Classifications at the finest levels should include all ethnic groups. For aggregated classifications, the aggregations should be documented and fully transparent. Results should be presented also for multiple ethnic affiliations and combinations of ethnic affiliations, as well as for the categories “no ethnicity” and “not declared/do not want to answer”

All of the remarks above apply in a similar way to the **religion** topic, except for the fact that multiple answers or combinations of religions should not normally be allowed.

Concerning both the **religion** and **language** topic, the different types of possible questions presented in the CES recommendations were reviewed. Countries that would like to collect data on religion and/or language should select the question(s) depending on their information needs, but then should specify clearly the **operational definitions** in the questionnaire and the instructions.

## Topic 4: Measurement of international immigration and internal migration

This session was opened with a review of the migration topics according to CES Recommendations, taking into account the two main goals of census migration questions: a) collecting information on migration moves and b) identifying all population groups relevant to migration.

First, topics concerning **timing, geography and reason of migration moves** were analysed in detail.

- As to **geography and timing**, the importance of using different questions in order to collect information on both internal and international migration was underlined. In fact, by using only one question (previous place of usual residence), information on international migration would be collected only if the respondent's last move was from abroad (if the person was first moving to the country of enumeration and then within the country, only internal migration would be registered). Therefore, the optimum would be to use two different set of questions:
  - a) The question on **previous place of usual residence and timing of arrival in the current place** (whether in the extensive or in the reduced mode) will be used in order to collect information on **internal migration** (in this case the focus is on the current place of usual residence: from where the person arrived to the current place of usual residence and when).
  - b) The question on **ever-resided abroad and year of last arrival in the country** will be used in order to collect information on international migration (in this case the focus is on the country of usual residence: has the respondent ever resided abroad and, if yes, when did the respondent last arrive in the country of current usual residence).
- As to the non-core topic '**reason for migration**', its relevance for providing information to policy makers was highlighted. It should also be taken into account that different classifications might be necessary in accordance to the type of migration (internal or international) for which information is collected.

The following issues concerning questions aimed at identifying population groups relevant to migration were underlined.

- Information on **place/country of birth** can be collected both with reference to the geographical unit in which the birth took place and with reference to the place of usual residence of the mother at the time of birth. While the former mode would not be suitable for measuring internal migration (since the information so collected would be biased by the territorial distribution of hospitals), the latter might be more difficult for respondents, thus implying a higher risk of inaccuracy.
  - ✓ In both cases, information on place of birth should be collected down to the smallest civil division and according to the current borders at the time of the census.
  - ✓ In order to speed up the processing phase, pre-coded answers should be provided for the most frequent cases, while write-in answers should be used for collecting information on place of birth different from usual residence.
  - ✓ **Country of birth of parents** is a non-core topic but it allows better identifying of population with migration background, especially in countries with a long migration history.
- With regard to **citizenship**, information on dual or multiple citizenship (not only for citizens of the country of enumeration) should always be collected and stateless persons (including persons whose situation concerning citizenship has not been clarified yet following after the dissolution/unification of former countries) should be recorded as such.
  - ✓ A pre-coded answer for citizenship of the country of enumeration is preferable to an open answer, except for countries where citizenship might be a sensitive issue due to specific reasons.
  - ✓ In countries with a big immigrants' stock, it would also be important to collect information on citizenship acquisition (by birth, naturalization, attribution by a newly formed state), since citizenship varies along time.

Finally, specific issues concerning selected migration-related population groups were considered.

- Definitions and treatment of **population with refugee background and internally displaced persons** were examined.
- The need to adopt special enumeration strategies for counting **irregular migrants** (*ad hoc* communication campaign, involvement of ethnic organizations, etc.) was underlined, not for the purpose of identifying them as such, but rather to make sure that they are included in the total population count (provided they satisfy the *12 months criterion*).

Group activity and following discussion made clear that most of the migration questions will be included in next census questionnaires by countries in the SEE region.

- In most countries in the region, information on place of birth is usually collected by the question on the place of usual residence of the mother at the time of birth. Though it is a burdensome approach, some countries do plan to use both questions (place of usual residence of the mother at the time of birth and place of birth), in order to be able to measure internal migration and at the same time increase the accuracy of information on the place of usual residence of the mother at the time of birth.
- As to the country of citizenship, most countries will collect information on dual citizenship, even if only with reference to the country's citizens.
- The collection of information on citizenship acquisition is not, for the time being, of interest for countries in the region.

## Topic 5: Measurement of international emigration

This session analyzed the use of the population census to collect information on **emigration**. In particular, presentation and discussion focused on the possibility to derive estimates of number and characteristics of former residents who had left the country for long-term (more than 1 year) residence abroad.

UNECE presented results of a comparative analysis of the experience of four countries that used an **emigration module** in the last population census (Georgia 2002, Moldova 2004, Poland 2002 and Tunisia 2004)<sup>4</sup>

The main findings of the analysis by UNECE can be summarized as follows:

- clear distinction needs to be made between population count and count of former residents living abroad: residency rules need to be strictly applied, i.e. **persons living abroad for 12 months or more should be excluded from the count of resident population**;
- emigration modules/questions at the census are **not able to provide an accurate count of the total number of emigrants residing abroad**: through the comparison of census data on emigrants with corresponding data supplied by the main destination countries, it was made clear that census data underestimate the total number of nationals living abroad<sup>5</sup>
- emigration data collected at the census can be useful to collect information on selected groups of emigrants, as for example on those who emigrated recently;

Countries wishing to include an emigration module or emigration questions at the next census should pay attention to the following aspects:

- **Clear separation between count of resident population and count of emigrants**, with the latter being excluded from the resident population if their absence lasts 12 month or more.
- Clearly identify the group of emigrants that can be covered by the census; in particular:
  - To safeguard data accuracy, focus should be on those who emigrated during a certain period of time before the census (for example 5 years);
  - To reduce risk of double-counting, enumerated households should be asked to report only those former members who left the household and directly emigrated abroad, while excluding those former members who, before emigrating, spent some time in another household in the country.
- Keep to a minimum the information collected on emigrants, since such information is collected from a proxy respondent.
- Three options exist to collect data on emigrants:

---

<sup>4</sup> The full report can be found at: <http://www.unece.org/stats/documents/ece/ces/ge.10/2008/wp.3.e.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> In particular, there is undercounting in these cases:

- when the entire household leaves the country and nobody can report at the census
- when some members of the household remain but, between the time the emigrant(s) leaves and the census, the household dissolves for any reason (death, divorce, emigration, etc.)

- Include questions in the main form: these questions should identify persons living abroad for more than 12 months. This approach can be used only in those censuses where the population to be enumerated can also include persons that are residing in a place different from the place of enumeration (for example 'members' of the household living abroad or in another place within the country). In such cases due attention should be paid to identify these persons at the processing stage and exclude them from the count of resident population
- Use a separate list for former members of the household living abroad at the time of the census. This would allow a clear distinction between resident population and emigrants living abroad. At the same time, some information is collected on the group of emigrants and respondents can report on persons that they consider as full members of the household
- Use a separate form for former members of the household: this approach, very similar to the previous one, allows the inclusion of a broader set of questions

Group activities and following discussion made clear that several countries are considering counting in the next census former residents currently living abroad. Participants were aware of the limitations of using census to collect data on emigrants; however, it was underlined that this practice can provide useful data in certain cases, including when:

- No other national sources provide data on emigration and/or nationals living abroad
- Use of data from immigration countries is hampered by the fact that the emigration country has become independent only recently and host countries may still register and count citizens from emigration country under the previous denomination (e.g. Montenegro citizens registered as nationals of Serbia & Montenegro)
- There is interest to collect information that can be used to qualify emigration and its consequences, such as on households where one or more members are living abroad, on geographical and socio economic profiling of emigrants, on main countries of destination, etc.
- The use of emigration module/list/questions at the census can also be considered, in certain circumstances, as a possible practice to have a better count of the resident population. As a matter of fact, this practice should reduce cases of former residents unduly considered as members of the household and, therefore, as resident persons.

Finally, participants agreed that the use of immigration data produced by destination countries is an extremely useful source of information on emigrants, especially on national citizens living abroad. In order to facilitate and support such practice the UNECE produced the 'Guidelines to improve emigration estimates through the use of immigration data from receiving countries'<sup>6</sup>.

\* \* \* \* \*

---

<sup>6</sup> See: <http://www.unece.org/stats/documents/ece/ces/ge.10/2008/wp.6.e.pdf>