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Frameworks and tools for bilateral and multilateral cooperation among NSIs with regard to censuses**Challenging the United States Census Bureau's Mission:
From Sharing our Expertise Globally to Modernizing our
International Cooperative Efforts¹****Note by the United States Census Bureau²***Summary*

The United States (U. S.) Census Bureau has a long history working with other National Statistical Offices (NSOs) and International Statistical Organizations. Programme areas throughout the Census Bureau work with other NSOs on key research projects, idea exchanges, international meetings, or serve on the boards of international organizations. These efforts are only partially reflected in its mission statement:

“Serve as the leading source of quality data about the nation's people and economy. We honor privacy, protect confidentiality, *share our expertise globally*, and conduct our work openly. We are guided on this mission by scientific objectivity, our strong and capable workforce, our devotion to research-based innovation, and our abiding commitment to our customers.”

The purpose of this document to challenge the current thinking behind the U.S. Census Bureau's Mission Statement and its views on bilateral and multilateral cooperation with other NSOs. This document provides a brief glance into a newly proposed framework.

¹ Disclaimer: This report is to inform interested parties of research and to encourage discussion. Any views expressed are those of the author and not necessarily those of the United States Census Bureau.

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I. Introduction

1. The purpose of this document is to challenge the current thinking behind the U.S. Census Bureau's Mission Statement and its views on bilateral and multilateral cooperation between National Statistical Offices (NSOs). Times have changed and we need to broaden our vision of collaboration with a renewed commitment to work and contribute within the international statistical community³. NSOs working together are essential in this era of changing census methodologies and technologies. This document provides a brief glance into a proposed framework.

2. The recent origin of the Census Bureau's international work goes back to the International Statistical Programs Center (ISPC) and is a part of its legacy. When the Census Bureau abolished the ISPC in the 1990s, remnants of its work were scattered throughout the agency. Some of the Center's functionality disappeared completely. Since that time, our enterprise international business processes have remained stagnant, little has changed with the reasoning behind their business decisions, or approach to working within the international statistical community.

3. Nonetheless, the leadership of the Census Bureau has changed. Survey and census methodology and technology have been evolving. As the Census Bureau moves forward, many societal and technological changes are driving the way we conduct our work. We need technical expertise and prudent decision-making to select the most appropriate methods and technologies for our surveys and censuses.

4. As a statistical organization, we must balance resources, funding, and data quality with waning respondent participation and increasing privacy concerns to conduct our business. Many countries are facing similar challenges; greater international cooperation and commitment among countries can provide the foundation for these emerging and evolving trends. Fostering effective partnerships with staff at other NSOs and International Statistical Organizations, can potentially reduce costs, create a stronger knowledge base, and strengthen our programs through shared research outcomes.

5. What is International Collaboration? The International Collaboration Steering Committee (described below in Section 5) defines it, as follows:

International Collaboration is a process when two or more NSOs and/or International Organizations work together to achieve a common goal, by sharing knowledge, learning, and building consensus. Throughout this process, the participants seek opportunities to learn from each other and share their experiences, optimize existing opportunities, create new collaborative opportunities, and integrate the knowledge gained into their programs. As Census Bureau staff participate in these efforts, it is critical that they communicate the lessons learned with other Census Bureau staff. This is our goal for our international collaborative efforts. Collaboration may guide specific research that we might implement or insight into the future direction of our large-scale surveys and censuses. Looking towards the future, international collaboration may help frame the vision of our goals and the needed research to guide us to fulfill that vision.

³ Note: The term international statistical community and international census community are used interchangeably throughout the document.

II. International Collaboration and Cooperation⁴

6. The Census Bureau has a long history working with other NSOs and International Organizations, such as the United Nations. In 2005, Director Louis Kincannon and Deputy Director Hermann Habermann re-established the International Relations Office. For many years, this office did not exist. Prior to returning to the Census Bureau, Director Kincannon came from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the Deputy Director came from the United Nations, both had strong interests in and saw the benefits of working with other countries.

7. We continue the tradition of international collaboration today. Program areas throughout the Census Bureau work with other NSOs on key research, exchange ideas, and participate at international meetings, or serve on the boards of international organizations.

8. The current international activities, at the Census Bureau, include:

- Reimbursable projects
- Expertise sharing projects sponsored by International Organizations, i.e., United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD), United Nations Economic Commission on Europe (UNECE), United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (UNECLAC), and the International Association for Official Statistics (IAOS) – part of the International Statistical Institute (ISI)
- Bilateral projects or cooperative projects (we reach out to provide assistance or ask for assistance and another country does the same)
- International meetings, workshops, conferences, and trade shows
- International working groups
- Research papers with other NSOs or International Organizations
- Research projects with other NSOs or International Organizations
- International visitors to the Census Bureau
- Information requests from/to other countries, usually through other NSOs.

9. Another remnant of the ISPC is the International Programs area, in Population Division (POP). This area provides, among other things, technical advice and builds statistical capacity in developing countries. Attachment A is an overview of the Population Division's International Programs area's principle goals and responsibilities. More on this program area, in Section V, of this document.

III. International Cooperation Links to Strategic Goals, Objectives, and Strategies

10. The *United States Department of Commerce Strategic Plan, FY 2011-2016*, identifies the Department's critical goals and objectives. The fourth strategic goal - Science and Information is to "generate and communicate new, cutting-edge scientific understanding of technical, economic, social, and environmental systems." This goal focuses on generating and providing the means by which the public and other federal agencies can acquire essential technical, economic, social, and environmental information.

⁴Note: The terms collaboration and cooperation are used interchangeably throughout the document.

Embedded in Objective 14, under this goal, is the work of the Census Bureau: “Enable informed decision-making through an expanded understanding of the U.S. economy, society, and environment by providing timely relevant, trusted, and accurate data, standards, and services.”

11. The Census Bureau’s mission clearly shows our commitment to international collaboration:

Serve as the leading source of quality data about the nation's people and economy. We honor privacy, protect confidentiality, share our expertise globally, and conduct our work openly. We are guided on this mission by scientific objectivity, our strong and capable workforce, our devotion to research-based innovation, and our abiding commitment to our customers.

12. *The U.S. Census Bureau Strategic Plan FY 2013 – 2017*, which links to the United States Department of Commerce Strategic Plan, further supports international collaboration across the organization in Goal 2: Customer Service Excellence. The goal states:

“The Census Bureau regularly interacts with the people who rely on statistical information to help ensure that it is delivering relevant, high quality products to the nation. Communications include many organizations and groups, such as Federal Advisory Committees, expert panels from the National Academy of Sciences, academic researchers, members of Congress, and data user groups. These data users and other stakeholders have different levels of proficiency with statistical information, and the Census Bureau needs to assure that its products are easily accessible, understandable, and available in formats that help people answer their questions. Additionally, the Census Bureau has numerous reimbursable customers, primarily other federal agencies, who pay the Census Bureau to collect information on their behalf. This is a cost effective shared service for the government, rather than each agency developing a separate capability for conducting large-scale scientific surveys. The Census Bureau provides an array of statistical services to its varied stakeholders, which include the following groups and organizations:

- Congress
- Federal data users and data providers at other agencies
- Non-federal data users from academia; state, local and tribal governments; and the public
- Data suppliers in the private and nonprofit sectors
- Oversight entities such as the Office of Management and Budget, the Government Accountability Office and the Office of the Inspector General
- Advisors on committees and outside expert consultants
- Advocacy groups
- International statistical organizations”.

13. The outcome for Customer Service Excellence further states: “Stakeholders receive accurate data that meets their information needs in a timely and easily accessible manner. Congress values the Census Bureau’s work and supports its efforts. Respondents understand the importance of participating in statistical data collection and do not feel harassed. Domestic and international statistical organizations and other governmental agencies are able to work collaboratively with the Census Bureau.”

14. *The U.S. Census Bureau Business Plan for Change* describes the specific transformational objectives and initiatives that support our strategic plan and follows the 10 guiding principles. Referring to Goal 4, Workforce Excellence, in our Strategic Plan, the Business Plan for Change, offers Objective 4.3: “The Census Bureau develops networks

and partnerships in knowledge areas critical to future mission success.” The objective states:

15. “The Census Bureau shares expertise with other venues worldwide. Strategically tapping into those venues serves as a force multiplier for increasing our capabilities. Networks give us a possible option to gain expertise other than outsourcing.”

16. The outcome of this is to eliminate targeted knowledge gaps. Activity 4.3.1 is to establish business processes for engaging individual and network partners in Census Bureau knowledge areas and reach out to those partners.

17. Principle 7, from the 10 Guiding Change Principles, within the Business Plan for Change, fully supports and encourages international collaboration:

“Guard against insular thinking. Expand our outward focus to keep current with developments internationally, in other agencies, in the private sector, and academia. The continued regular use of outside experts to provide feedback and recommendations regarding organization, methodological, program, and product proposals outside the walls of the Census Bureau will enable us to benefit from the best advice we can get, regardless of the source.”

IV. Cooperative Vision for 2020 and Beyond

18. In 2011, the UN Statistical Commission asked the United States to conduct a review of the 2010 World Population and Housing Program⁵ (covering the years 2005 through 2014). The Census Bureau presented the results and recommendations, for the Statistical Commission to consider, at the 43rd session of Commission, held in February 2012. There were two main objectives for the review:

- Document early lessons learned from the 2010 census round, and
- Present preliminary recommendations for the 2020 census round for consideration by the Statistical Commission.

19. The quote below, from the review, summarizes the 2020 world census experience:

“Rapidly changing technologies, evolving census methodologies, privacy concerns and increasing needs for more timely data, in many countries of the world will significantly affect the approach to census taking during the 2020 round of population and housing censuses and beyond.”

20. The report predicted that the 2020 world round of censuses would be a turning point in how censuses are fundamentally conducted around the world. The report contained 12 recommendations for the Statistical Commission to consider. One of the recommendations is directly linked to cooperation:

- The UN should call for continued and increased collaboration and cooperation in respect to census activities among countries.

21. The 2030 world round of censuses will be even more innovative than the 2020 round. The use of administrative data, registers and handheld devices are the census of today and may not be the census of the future. Current technologies will be obsolete by

⁵ United Nations. (2012) Report of the United States of America on the 2010 World Program on Population and Housing Censuses. E/CN.3/2012/2. Available from: <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/sc2012.htm>

2030. Countries should consider the following when determining the direction of their census:

- What is an appropriate approach to census taking for one country may be inappropriate for another. NSOs consider many factors to select the most appropriate methods and technologies for their own unique situation and data needs.
- With the modernization of censuses come challenges, risks, and lessons learned.

22. Looking towards the 2030 Census, international cooperation may help frame our vision of census taking and the needed research to guide us to that vision. The next new big innovation in censuses is waiting to be discovered. This will only occur with countries working together and sharing ideas.

V. Opportunities for International Cooperation

23. A number of changes have already taken place as a part of, the Census Bureau's efforts to modernize our approach to international cooperation; however, more changes are required.

24. Investing resources to work together to share best practices learned through our experiences and then communicating these across the organization is one of the motivators for incorporating international cooperation into our programs. We must encourage staff to think globally about our programs and to integrate international cooperation into our work. The organizational culture should shift from providing forums for information exchanges to how we can work with other NSOs to design various aspects of our surveys or census. Our stakeholders must clearly understand the benefits and the potential direction of this work.

25. For international collaboration to work, we need to keep open minds and listen; not be prescriptive, but willing to form partnerships and learn. This is a shift in paradigms. It will require time for the organizational culture to adapt to this new vision.

A. Support from Levels of the Organization

26. To begin, we must ensure that there is support for international cooperation from the executive staff to all levels of management within the agency. Discussions are underway with the executive staff to confirm their buy-in on our new initiatives and status of our international programs.

27. Twice a year, briefings are conducted with our Operating Committee (comprised of the Director, Deputy Director and all Associate Directors) to discuss our international work to get an organizational check-in on their support and provide updates on our work.

28. We are also stressing that international cooperation is not just about travel. The world has gotten much smaller with technology. Most of our cooperative efforts can be accomplished with technology.

B. Changing the Organizational Culture

29. Shifting our thinking from we are the U. S. Census Bureau: "Here is how you should conduct your census" to learning from other countries by asking: "How did you do that." Using consistent messaging, we are broadening our staff's thinking to understand that if you listen, you come away with new ideas and the potential beginning of forming a partnership with colleagues at other NSOs. These shifts in thinking and culture will take a commitment from staff and time.

30. We are changing our corporate culture from just sharing our expertise globally to focused bi-lateral and multilateral cooperation – where can we seek cooperative opportunities and how do we integrate the lessons learned into our work.

31. To highlight the incremental changes that have occurred to date and to gain momentum, we have formed two new groups.

32. We have established the International Collaboration Steering Committee (ICSC) – The Deputy Director directed the creation of this group, with representation from each of the Census Bureau’s Directorates with a role in international collaboration. The purpose is to gather information on the Bureau’s international activities, coordinate these activities, and to share the knowledge gained from these activities across the Bureau.

33. The ICSC scope is to work across directorates to identify international collaboration and ensure communication of this work within the agency. The Committee proposes recommendations to the Executive Staff on ways to improve our coordination, communication, and integration of working with other NSOs throughout the Census Bureau.

34. We have also set-up the Network for International Collaborators (NIC) –An employee support and advocacy organization whose primary purpose is to promote international collaboration between the U. S. Census Bureau and other NSOs or International Organizations around the world. Participants can discuss their current international work, share ideas and lessons learned, and provide an opportunity for staff not working on international collaborative programs to learn about these efforts.

C. Reintroduce a Centralized Stand Alone International Center

35. We have proposed detailed options on how to move the International Relations Staff forward to create the International Cooperative Programs Staff. While a name change alone is a start, the current thinking is that the staff is outdated and reflects a time when we were reactive in the international statistical community and not proactive. The Census Bureau has much to offer other NSOs and countries, through sharing our expertise, as stated in our mission statement. While at the same time, we must also be open to learning from other NSOs to guard against insular thinking (Change Principle 7).

36. Cooperation at the international level between NSOs is important and useful in all statistical areas. Many countries have recently developed new methodologies and technologies, with the objective to increase efficiency and reduce costs, without sacrificing quality. Countries sharing their experiences with other countries can often provide useful information on lessons learned, best practices, and in particular, the implications of innovative methodologies and technologies on census and survey planning, implementation, and data quality. Bilateral and multilateral cooperation among NSOs plays a fundamental role in our work.

37. The Census Bureau’s Deputy Director is currently reviewing options and is considering reinstating an International Programs Center. The establishment of an international center would merge the functionality of the ICPS (see Attachment B) with the International Programs area of the Population Division (see Attachment A).

D. Develop an Enterprise-wide International Strategy

38. The Census Bureau leadership should consider the development of an agency-wide International Cooperative Strategy. A strategy will provide the framework and direction for our cooperative work, prioritizing NSOs or organizations to work with, establishing goals

and intended outcomes, and setting the direction for our cooperative efforts. At present, such a strategy does not exist at the Census Bureau or at the Department of Commerce.

E. Partnerships

39. Consideration should be given to broadening our stakeholder engagement to include other NSOs and not just U.S. stakeholders. Identifying countries to work with and proactively engaging them to work on joint projects, renew our commitment to international cooperation and reinforce the benefits of these efforts. We also should rethink our role in the international census community and determine what our role should be and how to achieve this goal.

40. With limited resources and time, we should carefully consider from a strategic viewpoint the countries to partner with and how to maintain and foster these partnerships. We also must take the time to share with staff, lessons learned and best practices, from other countries and determine how to incorporate relevant ideas into our work.

41. As a starting place, the Census Bureau will be co-hosting the 28th Population Census Conference with the Association for National Statistical and Census Directors from the Americas, Asia and the Pacific (ANSCDAAP) and the University of Minnesota Population Center, the first week of September 2016. Next year, we will host the 2017 International Census Forum.

VI. Conclusion

42. While the U.S. Census Bureau has a long history working with other countries, we need to rethink about our role in the international statistical community and renew our commitment to international cooperation. Efforts are underway to make these changes, we should start by revising the Census Bureau's Mission Statement – we share our expertise globally is just a part of the international equation. The proposed Mission Statement should read:

“The Census Bureau serves as the leading source of quality data about the nation's people and economy. We honor privacy, protect confidentiality, share our expertise globally, *keep an open mind to learn from and collaborate with other countries* and conduct our work openly. We are guided on this mission by scientific objectivity, our strong and capable workforce, our devotion to research-based innovation, and our abiding commitment to our customers.

43. All NSOs have the same urgent need for good statistics and most are now working under the same premise of cheaper, faster, with less staff. Working together to share best practices learned through experience and then communicating these across the organization holds great potential for both the U. S. Census Bureau and our international partners.

Annex I

Overview of the International Programs, Population Division

1. The international area of Population Division provides capacity building to statistical agencies around the world through technical assistance, training, and software products. The area draws on expertise from across the Census Bureau in these projects. It also conducts demographic, economic, and geographical studies of other countries. For over 60 years, the Census Bureau has performed international analytical work and assisted in the collection, processing, analysis, dissemination, and use of statistics with counterpart governments in over 100 countries. This work is funded on a reimbursable basis from various agencies such as USAID, the United Nations, and the World Bank.

2. The international area develops, supports, and maintains:

- CSPPro (Census and Survey Processing System), a software product used by over 100 countries worldwide for census and survey processing;
- The International Data Base, containing estimates and projections for countries and areas of the world with a population of 5,000 and more;
- The HIV/AIDS Surveillance Data Base, a compilation of information from widely scattered small-scale surveys on the AIDS pandemic and HIV seroprevalence;
- TASC (Tool for Assessing Statistical Capacity);
- DAPPS (Demographic Analysis and Population Projection System); and
- Other tools.

Annex II

Overview of the International Cooperative Programs Staff, Policy Coordination Office

1. Recognizing the need to change, we are revising our approach and renaming the International Relations Staff to the International Cooperative Program Staff (ICPS). The redesigned ICPC coordinates the Census Bureau's international activities and assists Bureau employees, at all levels, to engage with the international statistical community effectively. Fostering effective partnerships with staff from other NSOs and International Statistical Organizations, we can strengthen our programs through shared lessons learned.

2. The staff is responsible for:

- Coordinating enterprise-wide international cooperative programs;
 - Assisting with international travel approvals;
 - Managing the Foreign National Visitor Program;
 - Preparing and maintaining the Census Bureau International Strategy;
 - Preparing controlled correspondence to NSOs or International Organizations;
 - Addressing information or data requests;
 - Reporting, internally and externally on Census Bureau related international activities;
 - Liaising to The Office of the U. S. Chief Statistician, Office of Management and Budget;
 - Chairing the International Collaboration Steering Committee;
 - Organizing the Network for International Collaborators (NIC); and
 - Liaising to the International Census Forum (ICF) Census Bureau.
-