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General Population and Housing Census in Iran:

Launching the forthcoming Population and Housing Census in 2006

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Introduction

The Islamic Republic of Iran is on the South-East Asia and is a part of the Middle-East countries. Iran is bounded on the north by Republics of Azerbaijan, Armenia and Turkmenistan and Caspian Sea; on the south by the Persian Gulf and the Sea of Oman; on the east by Afghanistan and Pakistan and on the west by Turkey and Iraq.

Iran comprises a land area of over 1.65 million square kilometers, ranking 16th in the world. The country generally features three climatic zones:

1. arid / semi arid regions,
2. cold and moderate mountainous regions, and
3. Caspian region.

About one half of Iran's land consists of mountains and one quarter desert, only 25 percent of which is arable land. The average population density is 41 per one square kilometer.

In 2004, administrative divisions of Iran consisted of 30 provinces, which were subdivided into Shahrestan (sub-province) and Dehestan (rural agglomeration). Each Shahrestan consists of several cities and rural districts. Capital of Iran is Tehran.

1. Population

Iran has a multi-lingual and diverse cultural society. The official language is Farsi (Persian) and other languages such as Azari, Kurdish, Luri, Arabic, Gilaki, Baluchi, Armenian are spoken, too.

According to the 2004 estimate, Iran's population is 67477000, ranking the 18th most populous nation in the world, of which 49.0% are female and 51.0% are male. The urban and rural population comprises 66.4% and 33.6% respectively. Based on the 1996 Population and Housing Census, the population of Iran is young with over 39.6% under 15 years and only 4.3% over 65 years old. The population growth rate is estimated 1.46% per year in 1996. According to the analysis of the 1996 Census, the population growth rate for urban area has been approximately 4 times that of rural areas. Rapid growth of population in Iran in 1980s was due to high

fertility, health improvement, infant mortality decline as well as substantial refugees migration from Afghanistan and Iraq

1.2. Literacy and Education

In the recent years, Iran has experienced substantial improvement in literacy and in the proportion of the population completing primary education. In 2004, nearly 81.5% of the population aged 15 years and over are literate. The rate for male is 86.7% and for female is 76.1%.

1.3. Marital Status

In 2002, out of the total population 15 years of age and over, 59.7% of male and 68.4% of female were married at least once. The mean age at first marriage for females and males in 2002 was 23.7 and 26.4 years respectively.

1.4. Activity Status

According to the 2004 Labor Force Survey (LFS), more than 44% of the population aged 15 and over are classified as economically active population. The activity rate for males and females in 2004 was 73.0% and 13.5% respectively.

1.5. Mortality and Fertility

Recent declines in mortality levels, especially infant mortality have caused fertility growth rate to decline. Mortality in Iran is characterized by relatively high infant mortality and low levels of adult mortality. Recent data indicate that approximately 1 child of every 31 born in Iran will die before reaching the first year of life. The life expectancy at birth for females and males in 2002 was 70.5 and 67.6 years respectively. The crude death rate was 6 per 1000 population in 2002.

Iranian fertility has undergone along and slow decline in the last 25 to 30 years. Factors contributing to this decline probably include the pace of modernization and government efforts since 1967 in the field of family planning. Till 2002, the country had a crude birth rate of 18.2 corresponding total fertility rate of slightly over 2.3 children per women.

2. History of Census taking in Iran

The history of census taking in Iran dates back to Qajar era, 1868. In that census only the capital of the country was enumerated. Collected data was restricted to distribution of population across social classes as well as their places of residence. Planning and execution of the first general population and housing census was carried out in the years 1940 and 1941, but due to the World War II and occupation of Iran it

remained incomplete. The Census was implemented in every city. One day was announced holiday and enumerators referred to the houses. The census covered only 35 cities.

The first full enumeration in Iran was taken in 1956. In this census, almost all people were enumerated and information on sex, literacy status, economic activity, marital status, housing characteristics, etc. was collected. After approval of the establishment Law of the Statistical Center of Iran (SCI) in 1965, the SCI was assigned to take the general population and housing census once every ten years. Accordingly, four other censuses were undertaken in 1966, 1976, 1986 and 1996. It is noteworthy that at the termination of the Iraq war against Iran in 1989 and return of the war-torn people to their main residential places, in 1991, another census was also undertaken. The following table illustrates a summary of information on the above-mentioned Censuses.

| Census Year | Date | Total Census Workers | Population (000) | Sex Ratio (male/female) |
|-------------|--------------------|----------------------|------------------|-------------------------|
| 1956 | 1 Nov. to 16 Nov | 27607 | 18955 | 104 |
| 1966 | 30 Oct. to 19 Nov. | 12885 | 25789 | 107 |
| 1976 | 30 Oct. to 19 Nov. | 29854 | 33709 | 106 |
| 1986 | 8 Oct. to 22Oct. | 55850 | 49445 | 105 |
| 1991 | 10 Sep. to 1 Oct. | 58580 | 55837 | 106 |
| 1996 | 23 Oct. to 16 Nov. | 61459 | 60055 | 103 |

The SCI is now making necessary arrangements for implementation of its forthcoming census, which is scheduled to be taken in 2006.

3. The 2006 General Population and Housing Census

Activities relating to the Census have been initiated since April 2003 which include the following stages:

1. Study and planning: The country's Census Headquarters has officially started its activity since the beginning of 2003. It was decided that 7 groups and 13 committees be formed to implement the approvals of the Headquarters. It is noted that the Headquarters has ratified 164 approvals on different issues until August 2004.
2. Implementation of the pilot census: In order to identify and resolve probable problems, all stages of the Census will be tested in 2005.
3. Implementation and evaluation of the Census: The main implementation of the Census is going to start in October 2006 for 25 days. Following the end of the enumeration, the related results will be evaluated by using direct and indirect methods.

4. Data processing and dissemination of the results: Following the end of the evaluation stage, data processing will start and the Census results will be published in 2007.

Moreover, in order to conduct studies and prepare essential census-related documents, the SCI tries to benefit from the cooperation of other government agencies and ministries such as Ministry of the Interior, Population Association of Iran, Iran Statistical Society, National Cartographic Center, I.R.I. Broadcasting, Management and Planning Organization, Statistical Research Center as well as academics.

4. New measures for the 2006 Census

1. Designing and launching a special Website for the 2006 General Population and Housing Census. Accordingly, the Census documents and information on the latest status of the activities will be easily accessible.
2. Feasibility study on census-taking along with sampling: In this method, two short and long form questionnaires are prepared. The short form questionnaire is completed for all households of the country. This questionnaire includes major items of the Census. The long-form questionnaire is completed for some percentage of the households and includes all information items of the Census. Accordingly, the data are collected more quickly and with less non-sampling errors.
3. Identifying preventive methods for non-response in the Census: Non-response is one of the non-sampling errors usually facing surveys especially censuses (due to its large scale). For this purpose, studies are being conducted to minimize non-response rates.
4. Conducting study on updating of census data by using Statistical databases of government agencies.
5. Study on effective factors for attracting people's contribution to the Census and enhancing their cooperation with enumerators by identification and use of appropriate publicity methods. Moreover, it is expected that results of this study reduce non-response rates arising from non-cooperation by the people.
6. Designing integrated training method for all enumerators as well as those persons participating in all implementation stages. Since field operations of the Census is a large-scale activity, the implementation of which involves the cooperation of local manpower of each province and areas covered by province, the integrated training program is designed in such a way that all workers could obtain similar skills. For this purpose, distance-learning program is applied.

7. Study on the use of Hand-Held Device (HHD) is now being conducted. This method facilitates the field operations for enumerators and causes updated census data to be available and non-sampling errors to decrease. Moreover, in this method, skillful interviewers able to handle HHD are required. However, use of HHD causes census-taking to face some limits.
8. In addition to direct method (post-enumeration), demographic analysis methods (indirect method) are used for the evaluation of the Census results.

5. Data items of the 2006 Population and Housing Census

In order to determine data items of the Census, the needs of 72 government agencies are inquired. After receiving their required items, the related committee studied and reviewed them and selected the final items according to the following criteria:

1. Meeting national needs by priorities,
2. Providing possibility of comparison of the forthcoming Census with previous censuses,
3. Operations costs being justifiable, and
4. Providing possibility of comparison of statistics at regional and international levels.

Out of the proposed items, 81 items have been selected, 8 of which are new. Data items on population and household are as follows:

Statistical items proposed for the 2006 General Population and Housing Census

| <i>Statistical items</i> | <i>Record of statistical items</i> | |
|---|------------------------------------|------------|
| | <i>In previous censuses</i> | <i>New</i> |
| <i>Type of household</i> | | |
| Settled private | <i>1956-1996</i> | |
| Unsettled private | <i>1966-1996</i> | |
| Institutional | <i>1956-1996</i> | |
| <i>Demographic and social characteristics</i> | | |
| Sex | <i>1956-1996</i> | |
| Age | <i>1956-1996</i> | |
| Place of work- place of education | | * |
| Status of residence | <i>1956-1996</i> | |
| Persian language | <i>1986</i> | |
| Local and ethnic language | | * |
| Citizenship | <i>1976, 1986 and 1996</i> | |
| Religion | <i>1956-1996</i> | |
| Sect | | * |
| Disability and invalidity | <i>1976, 1986 and 1996</i> | |

Statistical items proposed for the 2006 General Population and Housing Census (continued)

| <i>Statistical items</i> | <i>Record of statistical items</i> | |
|---|------------------------------------|------------|
| | <i>In previous censuses</i> | <i>New</i> |
| Marital status | <i>1956-1996</i> | |
| <i>Household (family) characteristics</i> | | |
| Relationship to head of the household | <i>1956-1996</i> | |
| <i>Educational characteristics</i> | | |
| Literacy status | <i>1956-1996</i> | |
| Educational attainment | <i>1956-1996</i> | |
| Field of study | <i>1966-1996</i> | |
| <i>Economic characteristics</i> | | |
| Activity status | <i>1956-1996</i> | |
| Type of occupation (title of job) | <i>1956-1996</i> | |
| Main activity of the work place (type of industry) | <i>1956-1996</i> | |
| Status in employment (post) | <i>1956-1996</i> | |
| <i>Geographic and migration characteristics</i> | | |
| Place of usual residence | <i>1956-1996</i> | |
| Duration of residence | <i>1986 and 1996</i> | |
| Place of birth | <i>1956-1986</i> | |
| Place of previous residence by rural area or city or abroad | <i>1986-1996</i> | |
| Place of previous residence by Shahrestan (sub-province) | <i>1976-1996</i> | |
| <i>Fertility</i> | | |
| Number of live births in the past twelve months | <i>1986</i> | |
| Total number of children ever born alive | <i>1986</i> | |
| Number of children surviving / number of dead children | <i>1986</i> | |
| <i>Household facilities and building characteristics</i> | | |
| Type of household consumption fuel | <i>1966-1996</i> | |
| Electricity | <i>1966-1996</i> | |
| Piped gas | <i>1986-1996</i> | |
| Major water supply | <i>1966-1996</i> | |
| Piped water | | |
| Central heating | <i>1986 and 1996</i> | |
| Air conditioning | <i>1986 and 1996</i> | |
| Type of household vehicle(car , motorcycle, etc.) | | * |
| Telephone | <i>1976-1996</i> | |
| Number of rooms for household | <i>1966-1996</i> | |
| Kitchen | <i>1986-1996</i> | |
| Personal computer | | * |
| Access to the Internet | | * |
| Type of sewage discharge | | * |
| Toilet | <i>1986-1996</i> | |
| Bathing facilities | <i>1986-1996</i> | |
| Type of tenure of housing unit | <i>1956-1996</i> | |
| Type of housing unit | <i>1966-1996</i> | |
| Number of rooms in housing unit | <i>1966-1996</i> | |
| Floor area of housing unit | | * |
| Type of skeleton of housing unit | <i>1996</i> | |
| Major construction materials of housing unit | <i>1966-1996</i> | |

| | | |
|--|------------------|--|
| Period of housing unit (completion year of the construction) | <i>1956-1996</i> | |
|--|------------------|--|

In addition to inclusion of items on population and household characteristics in household questionnaire, village identification card is prepared for each village, some items of which are as follows:

- Village specification
- Medical and health facilities
- Cultural and educational facilities
- Sports facilities
- Religious facilities
- Administrative and political facilities
- Police facilities
- Telecommunication and communication facilities
- Water and gas facilities