

Some Challenges in Conducting the Population and Housing Census in Sri Lanka

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Introduction

- Sri Lanka has a long history of census taking
- Started in 1971, usually once in 10 years
- Last one in 2001
- Carried out completely in 18 out of 25 districts due to disturbed conditions in North and East

Census Methodology

- Carried out in 4 stages
 - Mapping
 - Listing
 - Preliminary Census
 - Final Census

Census Instruments

- Population and Housing schedule
 - General information
 - Migration patterns
 - Educational characteristics
 - Economic characteristics
 - Nuptiality and Fertility
 - Housing characteristics
 - Household characteristics
 - All on 100% basis; no sample schedule

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Census Instruments

- Disabled Schedule
 - Six types of disabilities
 - Seeing
 - Hearing/speaking
 - Disability in hands
 - Disability in legs
 - Other physical disabilities
 - Mental disabilities

Census Data Capture

- Current procedure is centralized key-to-disk system
- Caused considerable delays and potential source of error
- Image based form processing such as OCR/ICR needs to be explored
- Greater attention to examine suitability
 - Selection of technology
 - Quality of printed questionnaires, training
 - Coding of open-ended questions
- Decentralizing at regional levels

Computer Assisted Coding

- Mainly for occupation and industry
- Usually laborious, time consuming and prone to errors
- Need to develop software in local languages to find the most suitable code
- Greatly reduce the time, improve accuracy

De facto vs De jure Enumeration

- Current procedure based on 'defacto' basis
- Conducting final Census within 6 hours created many practical constraints
 - Outdoor enumeration
 - Difficult to keep public at home
 - Possibility of missing population
- Tabulation based of place of enumeration but most policy makers need usual residence population
- Therefore necessary to consider shifting from the current 'defacto' approach

Urban Definition

- Based on administrative boundaries
- Prior to 1987, all Municipal Councils (MC), Urban Councils (UC) and Town Councils (TC) were treated as Urban areas.
- TC's were abolished in 1987 and treated as rural areas
- Urbanization is underestimated
- New statistical definition is being explored using multivariate analysis of variables related to urbanization

Census Cartography

- EA maps were developed in 2001
- Digitized after census; but boundaries of certain areas are not matching
- Field program has been launched to redefine boundaries of smallest administrative divisions using GPS
- Co-operation is obtained from all stake holders

Addressing Emerging Social Issues

- Meaningful disability statistics
 - Measurement approach was based on impairment dimension
 - Incidence is low (around 2 percent)
 - Need to follow ICF framework and develop suitable questions
- Developing certain MDG indicators which are currently unavailable

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Addressing Emerging Social Issues

- Measuring international migration effectively
 - Sri Lankan migrant workers overseas
 - Students leaving the country for higher education
 - Migration due to conflict situation in North and East

Dissemination of Census Information

- Currently disseminated through print and electronic media as well as via internet
- However, limited to pre-defined sets of tabulations
- Interactive viewing of information with the thematic maps will be very useful
- Developing on line 'One Stop Service' system
- Further analysis beyond descriptive analysis and disseminate findings to policy planners

Thank You!