

**KILLING THE GOOSE WHICH LAYS  
GOLDEN EGGS -  
POPULATION DATA BASE FROM CENSUS?**

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# PRESENTATION OUTLINE

- THE BACK GROUND
- CONVENTIONAL USES OF CENSUS DATA
- ESTABLISHING POPULATION REGISTERS
- ISSUES IN CONVERTING CENSUS RECORDS INTO POPULATION DATA BASE
- SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

# THE BACKGROUND- THE IDENTITY CRISIS

Some countries are reportedly attempting to use the forthcoming 2005 -14 round of the global census, concurrently with establishing a population data base/ population register.

Following the 9/11 incident, issues of national security concerns brought to the fore once again the need for checking the identity of every person in the country.

# THE BACKGROUND- THE IDENTITY CRISIS

- Several developed countries have a reasonable civil registration system and some form of population data base, which could be used as such or with little effort by updating it for establishing data bases for **'Identity'** of every person.
- Most developing countries either do not have a reliable civil registration system or other population data bases to fall back on establishing **'Identity' data bases** of every person in the country.

# **DEMAND AND SUPPLY OF PERSONAL IDENTITIES**

**The demand for national and specialised population data bases in easily accessible format grew rapidly in the last decade** due to issues of identification of illegal migrants, monitoring benefits for social security and health care, establishing individual identity during financial transactions and elections to control frauds.

# DEMAND AND SUPPLY OF POPULATION DATA BASES

With the phenomenal rise in the Information Technology, solutions for establishing relational data bases and its capacity to provide electronic identity to individuals, it seemed that the supply side of converting population data bases into '**UNIQUE PERSONAL IDENTITY**' has been met.

However, the absence of a complete and unique population data base has prevented this to happen in many countries. **CENSUS APPEARS TO BE AN EASY AND AFFORDABLE SOLUTION TO THIS PROBLEM OF ESTABLISHING POPULATION DATA BASE.**

**THIS PRESENTATION RAISES SOME CONCERNS TO THIS APPROACH.**

# CONVENTIONAL USES OF CENSUS DATA

- Data and information collected during the census is usually used **for generating statistical aggregates and abstracts** on demographic and socio-economic characteristics of individuals and households at various geographical and administrative levels.

# CONVENTIONAL USES OF CENSUS DATA

- Census data (i.e. population) is commonly used for determining and delimiting political constituencies and as an important input for improved resource allocation for specific sectors such as health, education, special population groups, housing etc.

# CONVENTIONAL USES OF CENSUS DATA

- The major use of census data is for affecting changes in policy formulation and evidence based planning, specially at the sub-national levels.

# CONVENTIONAL USES OF CENSUS DATA

- While census data is extremely useful for gaining insight at micro level statistical aggregates, **its use for extracting information on individuals or for administering individual benefits is usually neither advocated nor encouraged, specially as it breaches confidentiality and may endanger the Census itself, THE GOOSE WHICH LAYS GOLDEN EGGS.**

# ESTABLISHING POPULATION REGISTERS

- Population data bases in the form of '**POPULATION REGISTERS**', are usually established under an independent law of the country.
- Extensive use is made of civil registration registers along with other administrative records such as immigration, school, health, property, business registers etc., for creating population registers.

## **ISSUES IN CONVERTING CENSUS RECORDS INTO POPULATION DATA BASE**

- Extracting individual information such as name and age from census records for establishing accurate, reliable and acceptable population data bases or population registers can have serious limitations specially in countries where large populations are illiterate and ages are not known or understood correctly.

# ISSUES IN CONVERTING CENSUS RECORDS INTO POPULATION DATA BASE

- In self enumeration process, names and other characteristics are recorded by the persons themselves or the head of the household and are more likely to be accurate .
- If enumeration is by door to door visit, then accurate recording of names is more likely to suffer and pose a serious problem in establishing a unique identity of every person **which matches with the documentary evidence.**

# ISSUES IN CONVERTING CENSUS RECORDS INTO POPULATION DATA BASE

- This problem **will enhance during transliteration in a single language data base**, if multiple languages are used for data collection.
- In addition, absence of precise house address as a part of the census data can pose a big challenge in establishing reliable population database.

# ISSUES IN CONVERTING CENSUS RECORDS INTO POPULATION DATA BASE

- While a certain level of under or over count of individuals is expected in any census, the standards of completeness for population data bases are much higher and expected to be error free.
- This is because the immediate and primary objective of a population register (data base) is to establish the accurate existence and identity of every individual and his/her location on real time basis.

# ISSUES IN CONVERTING CENSUS RECORDS INTO POPULATION DATA BASE

- Census is a snap shot of a population and its characteristics with a reference date and time and is therefore static and fixed.
- Conceptually population registers are real time data bases, ever evolving because of the inherent dynamics of population and population movement and is therefore organic and changes its form continuously.

## **ISSUES IN CONVERTING CENSUS RECORDS INTO POPULATION DATA BASE**

- Larger the time difference in extracting the individual records from a census data base, greater will be the deviation in the absolute numbers of individuals, their location and even their basic characteristics in the population data base.
- Once static, the population register is as good as dead and non-functional.

# SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

- People are likely to be confused if the conventional focus of the census is shifted primarily from statistical demographic abstracts for development purposes to creation of population data base for individual benefits.
- Accurate names and proper address may not be collected during census- the critical ingredients for population data base.

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# SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

- Larger the time lag between extraction of names from the census data and creating a population data base, greater will be the inaccuracy in its creation.
- A comprehensive civil registration system must be in existence throughout the country before establishing a population data base.
- Mechanisms must be in place for effecting changes in the population data base due its dynamic nature **and for it to be on real time basis.**

**THANKS FOR YOUR TIME  
AND ATTENTION**