

18th Population Census Conference: 26-29 August 1998

Program on Population, East-West Center, Honolulu, Hawaii USA

Exploiting New Information Technology in Conducting Census Operations and Meeting User Needs

The East-West Center Program on Population is pleased to announce that the 18th Population Census Conference will be held in Honolulu, Wednesday through Saturday, 26-29 August 1998. The conference will be organized and hosted by the Program on Population in cooperation with the Association of National Census and Statistics Directors of America, Asia and the Pacific (ANSCDAAP).

Countries throughout the world are experiencing an explosion of information technology that will change every aspect of the way in which population censuses and other statistical operations are carried out and their results are used. The 2000 round censuses will provide an information benchmark for the 21st century. They should also mark a milestone in the use of emerging information technology, both in the conduct of census operations and in information services provided to users.

The population census is one of the most complex and expensive operations conducted by any national statistical office. To be a worthwhile use of national resources, census information must yield value at least equal to the cost of its collection. Most use occurs outside the national statistical office—in other government agencies, in universities and research organizations, and in business and professional work. Part of the task of the national statistical office is to enable these users to realize the greatest possible value from census information.

As users rapidly become better equipped with computer technology, they will increasingly expect census information in convenient digital form. More importantly, information technology will change the nature of the relationship between producers and users of census information. Users will increasingly view the census as an information source to be drawn on and interacted with on a continuing basis, rather than a set of publications issued following the enumeration.

These trends will proceed more rapidly in some countries than in others, but few countries will be unaffected. Most users not ready for digital products now will be ready for them five years from now when the 2000 round census information becomes fully available.

Conference Agenda In accordance with the tradition established in previous conferences, each participating national statistical office will contribute a paper on a topic of their choosing, taking account of the conference theme and the specific agenda areas proposed by the organizers. The following paragraphs describe several agenda areas proposed for the conference.

New Technology in Census Operations The 2000 round censuses will see new information technology in all aspects of census operations—in questionnaire design, data capture, field operation, data processing, and dissemination. Sharing experience with new technologies has been one of the most valuable aspects of previous conferences.

Digital Dissemination Technical decisions about media and format will need to be made by every national statistical office. More fundamentally, the nature of the census product will change. With current technology the entire published output of most national population censuses can be placed on a single CD-ROM costing less than US\$0.50 to produce in modest quantity and weighing less than one ounce. Internet and the World Wide Web dissemination raise costing, user-authentication, and security issues.

Ease of Use Despite all our efforts, it is still much too difficult for most users to find the information they want in the scores or hundreds of printed volumes produced from each census. Digital technology will enable us to provide users with much better 'metadata.' It should be possible, for example, to learn more or less instantly via digital search whether a particular table exists anywhere in 10,000, 100,000, or 1,000,000 pages of census tables. It should also be

possible to determine in the same operation whether the same or similar tables are available from past censuses or from more recent surveys. Future users will expect to be able to extend such searches over all countries in a region or throughout the world.

Data Integration Users are interested in information relevant to their interests, and are not concerned whether the source is a census, survey, vital registration or administrative records. One of the most important ways to maximize the use of census data may be to give users a better 'interface' to all the information available from the national statistical office, an interface that will guide them to all sources containing information relevant to their needs.

Statistical Training Centers Many national statistical offices include or are affiliated with a statistical training center. What role should these centers play in keeping national statistical office staff not just abreast of, but productively using new developments in information technology? How can we enable them to play this role effectively? What are the opportunities for international cooperation and exchange?

Arrangements Conference participants should make their own arrangements for travel to and from Honolulu. It is recommended that participants arrive on Tuesday August 25 and depart Saturday afternoon August 29 or on Sunday August 30.

Airfare and living expenses will be borne by participants. Other expenses of carrying out the conference will be born by the East-West Center Program on Population and the Association of National Census and Statistics Directors of America, Asia and the Pacific (ANCSDAAP).

Please complete and return the accompanying Conference Planning Form by facsimile to Jeanne Hamasaki. Please return the form within a week even if you do not have full information at this time. We will contact you for updated information as the need arises. Invitations and a detailed Memorandum of Arrangements will be mailed at a later date.

Report of Last Conference Available The 17th Population Census Conference was held 4-7 November 1996 in Jakarta, Indonesia. The conference was organized by the Indonesian Central Bureau of Statistics, the Office of the State Minister for Population/National Family Planning Coordinating Board, and the East-West Center. It included 59 participants from 20 national governments and 8 international agencies. Persons who did not attend may request copies of the report from the Central Bureau of Statistics, Jalan Dr. Sutomo No. 8, Jakarta, Indonesia. Copies will be provided gratis as long as supplies last.

The Population Census Conference Series The Population Census Conference series was initiated in 1972 by Dr. Lee-Jay Cho, then Director of the East-West Population Institute (known since 1992 as the Program on Population) of the East-West Center. The purpose of the conferences is to share experience, knowledge, and techniques relevant to the collection, processing, dissemination, and utilization of population census and related statistical information. Past conferences have been hosted by the East-West Center in Honolulu (1971, 1973, 1974, 1975, 1977, 1978, 1979, 1985, 1990) and by the national statistical offices of the Republic of Korea (1981, 1993), Japan (1983, 1992), Australia (1987), China (1988), India (1995), and Indonesia (1996).

Contact Information

Please mark all communications "Attention: 18th Population Census Conference."

Agenda

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Arrangements

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