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BASE FOR THE POST-2015 DEVELOPMENT AGENDA

Population Division

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LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE 2015

ROUND TABLE OF PHC AND PLANNING FOR THE 2020 ROUND TO  
15 DEVELOPMENT AGENDA<sup>1</sup>

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# **Lessons learned from the 2010 round of PHC and planning for the 2020 round to meet the post-2015 development agenda**

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## **A. DEMOGRAPHIC AND SOCIAL STATISTICS BRANCH—UNITED NATIONS STATISTICS DIVISION**

Conducting a population and housing census is a fundamental statistical activity of a country. Population and housing censuses generate national data on population size, demographic, social and economic characteristics as well as their distribution, which are at the base of almost all major planning decisions. The UN Statistics Division (UNSD), as the secretariat of the decennial **World Population and Housing Census Programme**, has supported national efforts to conduct censuses through the provision of international census guidelines and technical assistance. It has also closely monitored the implementation of censuses worldwide under the authority of the UN Statistical Commission, which is the apex entity of the global statistical system.

Based on the review of the 2010 World Population and Housing Census Programme which spanned the period 2005 to 2014, this brief note 1) summarizes the experiences of demographic data collection through population and housing censuses in the context of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs); 2) discusses challenges of existing data sources to fulfill the needs of the 2030 agenda for sustainable development, and 3) recommends how to strengthen demographic evidence base through concrete actions.

## **B. EXPERIENCES OF DEMOGRAPHIC DATA COLLECTION THROUGH POPULATION AND HOUSING CENSUSES IN THE CONTEXT OF THE MDGS**

Among the key essential features of population and housing censuses are “individual enumeration” and “universality within a defined territory” (United Nations, 2015a)

are included in the Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses. These are a few core topics that would allow the production of MDG indicators from censuses. Table 1 shows that in most countries where the information is available, censuses served as an important source of information to generate several demographic or socio-economic MDG indicators, except for those related to mortality and literacy on which relatively fewer countries collected the information.

TABLE 1. NUMBER AND PROPORTION OF COUNTRIES OR AREAS THAT INCLUDED MDG RELATED CENSUS TOPICS

Topic	Countries	Percentage
<b>Demographic topics</b>		
Sex	124	100
Age	124	100
Marital status	122	98
Household deaths	48	39
Maternal and paternal orphanhood*	27	22
<b>Socioeconomic topics</b>		
Literacy	75	60
School attendance	117	94
Educational attainment	105	85
Activity status	124	100
Occupation	120	97
Industry	114	92
Status in employment	113	91

Source United Nations (2013a)

\* Non-core

TABLE 2: NUMBER AND PROPORTION OF COUNTRIES THAT INCLUDED MDG AND OTHER RELATED TOPICS

Topic	Countries	Percentage
Living quarters-type of	92	74
Water supply system	75	60
Drinking water-main source of	47	38
Toilet-type of	99	80
Sewage disposal	61	49
Bathing facilities	64	52
Kitchen-availability of	46	37
Fuel used for cooking	75	60

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progress towards the achievement sustainable development can be closely monitored with appropriate statistical evidence.

First and foremost, the SDGs comprise 17 Goals and 169 targets, covering much broader policy issues, compared with the MDGs. Also, large data gaps exist in many development areas covered by the SDGs. For instance, there are a number of newly added or expanded areas to the development framework, such as disaster management or governance where statistical sources vary and statistical concepts for measurement require much refinement. Given the diversity of what is covered under the SDGs, it is obvious that the data required for SDG monitoring cannot be generated by a single source such as

principles outlined therein by the United Nations. The increased use of modern technologies (such as GIS, PDA, computer tablets and the Internet) in all stages of the census operation during the 2010 census round is a welcome trend, that contributes to improvements in the quality and timeliness of statistics, and that should be further encouraged during the 2020 census round.

Strengthening of the civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) system should be also a priority in advancing the demographic evidence base in a country. The civil registration system is often perceived to be an instrument for providing a birth or death certificate and nothing beyond that. More advocacy efforts are needed to garner the support of citizens and decision makers who are not fully aware of the full value of the system. The infrastructure of CRVS administration can be improved in many countries by creating coordinating mechanisms among various stakeholders, but typically between civil registrars' offices and statistical offices which receive statistical outputs out of administrative information.

Among demographic statistics, international migration statistics are considered the poorest in terms

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