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PREPARATION OF THE CENSUS QUESTIONNAIRE AND INSTRUCTIONS FOR ENUMERATION

Note: This is an extract of the corresponding Spanish document.

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/I. INTRODUCTION

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The census questionnaire and instructions for enumeration should be prepared early in the planning stage, and great care should be taken, as the quality of the results is determined by the questionnaire. When a questionnaire has been badly designed or the instructions are deficient in any way, poor data are obtained, whatever measures may be taken after the enumeration, and the cost of all the later stages of data-processing is liable to increase.

2. The questionnaire and corresponding instructions should be prepared together since they are interchangeable in content, and thus constitute the same stage of census work. It is necessary to know how a question has been framed in order to give instructions on the kind of reply needed; conversely, it is necessary to know what the instructions are on a particular question to decide whether it has been clearly stated. The questionnaire should supply all the data needed for the tabulations, but refrain from asking for data that would be irrelevant. Consequently, before a start is made on the design of the questionnaire, it is necessary to have a clear idea of the scope of the tabulation programme. However, the final form of the tabulations should not be decided on until the requisite questions have been closely examined and their feasibility determined. No attempt will be made in this paper to discuss the topics to be covered by a census, since it will deal only with the business of preparing the questionnaires and instructions once the census coverage has been determined.

3. Field tests are often needed to determine the possibilities of the proposed questionnaire and instructions, and ensure that they are workable. If the results of the checks show that changes should be made, the tabulation programme should be altered at the same time as the questionnaire and instructions.

4. The questionnaire and instructions should be ready in their definitive form well enough in advance of the census for the census officials to be properly trained and for the general public to be fully informed about them. Delays in printing should be foreseen and allowed for.

/II. CENSUS

II. CENSUS QUESTIONNAIRE

5. The factors that have to be taken into account in the preparation of a questionnaire are the method of enumeration, the type of schedule to be used, the kind of data to be collected and the processing techniques to be employed. Preparation comprises the type of questionnaire chosen and its characteristics, and the way in which the questions are to be put.

A. Type of questionnaire

6. Different types of questionnaires can be used for population and housing censuses, depending on the unit of enumeration chosen (person or household) and their purpose.

7. The different types of questionnaires are listed below by unit of enumeration:

(a) Individual: for collecting data on one person.

(b) Single census household or set of living quarters[1/]: for collecting data on all the members of a single census household or set of living quarters, whichever is adopted as the basic unit.

(c) Multi-person census households or living quarters: for collecting data on the members of as many census households or set of living quarters as can be conveniently and successively dealt with in one questionnaire.

(d) Group enumeration: for collecting summarized data on all the members of a particular group.

The choice of questionnaire should be governed by the method of enumeration to be used. If the reporting is to be done on the basis of self-enumeration, the only possible types of questionnaire are those for one person or one census household. If however, the canvassing method is to be adopted, all the types listed here are suitable, but a questionnaire for a single census household or set of living quarters is usually preferred.

1/ The term "household" covers family and multi-person households.

/The questionnaire

The questionnaire for group enumeration is mainly used to collect data on population groups with special characteristics, such as native tribes, as will be explained later in discussing ancillary questionnaires. The questionnaires that are best suited to the different census operations and are most commonly used are those based on one person or on one census household or set of living quarters.

8. The questionnaire for individual persons has several advantages: it is small and can therefore be easily handled by the enumerator; a larger amount of data can be amassed; it is easier to tabulate manually than the other types and, in general, lends itself particularly well to more advanced processing techniques, such as electronic reading devices, because of its limited size and content. A list of the members of the census household can be appended to it to provide a check on the reliability of the main schedule. These lists can be combined into a single schedule with the part comprising the questions on living quarters.

9. The questionnaire for individual households or sets of living quarters also presents certain advantages: it is quicker to enumerate, edit and codify; and it gives clearer information on households and families, which are the units of enumeration and analysis. Moreover, there is no danger that the composition of a family or household will be wrongly represented if a page of the questionnaire is omitted.

10. The questionnaires can be divided into basic and ancillary, according to purpose, and can be used in conjunction. Basic questionnaires are used to gather general population and housing data. They are usually identical in design and content, but, in some cases, more than one type may be prepared:

- Questionnaires of different colours can be used for urban and rural areas. The part dealing with living quarters which vary in nature in the two types of area can also vary in content.
- The questionnaire designed for multi-person households should leave space for a larger number of persons than is necessary in the basic questionnaire on family households. Moreover, the questions put in this type of schedule can be more easily adapted to the characteristics of multiple households, and extract more information on them.
- When the canvassing method is adopted, different questionnaires, with the necessary instructions for self-enumeration, can be prepared for individuals who cannot be interviewed personally and on whom no one can provide any information.

/The purpose

The purpose of the ancillary questionnaires is to gather special information which cannot be obtained through the basic questionnaire, sampling data, or ordinary data for a small segment of the population with different characteristics from the other groups.

The ancillary questionnaires differ in form and content from the basic questionnaires. The more common types are listed below:

- Ancillary questionnaires that replace the basic type: when a large number of the questions on the basic questionnaire are not applicable to special population groups which exist outside the social and economic structure of the country, a special questionnaire is prepared for them, omitting the questions that are irrelevant. Special questionnaires for the enumeration of travellers in ships and trains and for native tribes are an example of this.
- Supplementary ancillary questionnaires for particular population groups: some countries supplement the basic census data by additional information on a particular population group (persons or households), for instance, special data on children of less than a year old, detailed data on the economically active population, special information on multi-person households, and data on buildings (when not included in the basic questionnaire). In these cases, an ancillary questionnaire may be designed to gather the additional data, and used by the enumerators whenever the instructions indicate that it is necessary, or the supplementary questions can be included in the basic questionnaire together with an indication, both there and in the instructions, of the cases to which they are applicable.
- Supplementary ancillary questionnaires, for taking a sample of households or persons on a subject that has not been explored in the basic questionnaire. An ancillary questionnaire can be prepared with the additional data required, or the relevant questions can be included in the basic schedule.

11. The points discussed below have to do with the organization of the schedule and questions and the design of the different sections, and relate specifically to basic questionnaires for a single census household or set of living quarters applied by the canvasser method, which is the one most frequently used.

/B. <u>Characteristics</u>

B. Characteristics of the questionnaire

Format

12. The format for the questionnaires may be any of the following:

(a) In lines: the headings or questions are written horizontally across the upper part of the questionnaire, a separate line being used for each person;

(b) In columns: the headings or questions are set out vertically on the left side of the questionnaire, a different vertical column being used for each person;

(c) In blocks: the headings, questions and spaces for replies are arranged in the form of blocks so that all available space is used. The layout is suitable for questionnaires on individuals and single households.

Advantages of the linear over the columnar format

13. (a) The space allowed for replies can be adapted to the requirements of each question, whereas the layout in columns allows the same amount of space for each person;

(b) This format can be adapted for reporting on a larger number of persons.

Disadvantages

14. (a) The questions have to be printed in smaller type because of the shortage of space;

(b) The questions are hard to read because they are run on over several lines;

(c) It is very difficult to insert instructions in the requisite parts of the schedule near the questions.

15. The choice of format depends partly on the type of questionnaire to be used. If individuals are to be reported on, the questionnaire can be designed in the form of blocks or columns, but if it is for households or living quarters, the linear or columnar layout is preferable. A linear format is best when more space is needed to report on a larger number of persons. The columnar format should be used when there are a great many questions, and when the questions and examples or definitions are very long.

/Presentation and

Presentation and format of the questionnaire

16. Size

The sheet on which the questionnaire is printed should not be too large for confortable handling, but it should be big enough for the type to be easy to read and there should be plenty of room for the answers. It should be neither too long nor too wide, as that leads to mistakes in the distribution of spaces and makes it awkward to fill in.

The size depends mainly on the number of questions, the width of the columns, the space for code numbers, the number of lines and the space between them, the place for the heading and the name of the office, identification data, reference to the Act which provides regulations for the census, general instructions and printed codes in the questionnaire, etc.

17. Paper

It is recommended that good quality paper be used which will withstand constant handling during the various operations.

18. Appearance

The questionnaire should be of agreeable appearance to the persons working on it in the various stages.

19. Printing

A suitable type of print should be chosen; variations in the type, indenting and the use of appropriate margins make the questionnaire more legible, but too much variety might cause confusion. Small or artistic types and vertical or diagonal headings should as far as possible be avoided, since they are difficult to read and this wastes time.

C. Nature of the questions

20. The questions in the census questionnaire may be either in the affirmative or the interrogative. The affirmative form requires less printing space. The questionnaire should be limited to topics which, on being read once, convey the idea of what type of information is required, or to subjects on which the enumerator has no difficulty in framing suitable questions. In the latter case the enumerator should be instructed

/in the

in the way in which he should put his questions, since in changing from the affirmative to the interrogative he may alter the meaning of the question by introducing some suggestion, or his questions may be offensive to the respondent.

21. The interrogative form has the advantage that the questions can be set out exactly as they should be put to the respondent, who has merely to read them to understand them. Moreover, the uniform nature of the questions precludes the possibility of the enumerator asking them in a subjective manner and thus obtaining an unsatisfactory reply. The interrogative form also makes for greater uniformity in the data collected, and avoids awkward situations for the less skilled enumerators who might otherwise be too slow; it therefore gives them more confidence, since the interview will probably go more smoothly.

22. The following types of questions can be included in a questionnaire:

(a) Requiring an affirmative or negative reply: The simplest type of question is that presenting the alternative "Yes" or "No". There is less likelihood of error in this type of question than in any other. In population censuses, however, it is used only to a limited extent.

(b) Presenting a limited number of options, from which the respondent must select one. These options may be included in the question or indicated in the space for the reply, with check boxes in which to mark the appropriate answer. When there are many possible answers and some occur more frequently than others, these are listed separately and the rest are grouped under the head of "others". They should be real categories, exclusive of one another and not so closely related as to leave room for errors, and they should cover all the possible replies. The disadvantages of including the category "others" is that if it is very broad it prevents the collection of detailed data for any subsequent research that might be of interest. This can be overcome by a request that the answers in this category be duly specified.

(c) Open questions: In the third type of question a blank space should be left for the reply, because of the wide range of possible categories, as in the case of employment data. The answers to these questions should be given in full. A careful explanation should be

/given of

given of the type of answer desired. As far as possible, the questionnaire itself should contain examples of appropriate answers, and a list of those most frequently given should be provided in the instructions.

23. That part of the questionnaire which is used for the subsequent data processing operations should be prepared according to the type of questions asked and the processing method used. If the questionnaire is designed with blank spaces for the answers, a space can be left after each answer, or elsewhere in the questionnaire, for the code numbers. If, on the other hand, alternative categories have been printed in the space for the answer, with check boxes to be marked accordingly, the answers can be pre-coded by printing next to the check box for each category the code number it will have in the tabulation. Where the answers are pre-coded, special care should be taken to decide what code numbers will be printed in the questionnaire, so that they will be in line with the method of classification and the tabulation plan. There is another type of questionnaire in which neither of these systems is used, the code number being marked in the actual space for the answer.

24. The questions must be framed bearing in mind the following points:

(a) They must relate directly and specifically to the information it is whished to obtain;

(b) They must be simple and clear and focus on one main idea;

(c) They must be brief, without sacrificing clarity;

(d) They must be couched in simple terms that are easily understandable or easy to explain to the respondent. It is not necessary to use the terminology of national or international publications;

(e) Questions inferring a certain reply must be avoided;

(f) They must not be offensive, and the enumerators should be instructed accordingly, particularly in the case of marital status and fertility;

(g) They should be arranged in such an order as to make the questionnaire as clear as possible. The layout of the questionnaire should be easy to follow. The wrong order might place the enumerator in the embarrassing position of asking the same question twice, or he might leave out a question altogether noting down the information on the basis of a previous question;

/(h) Questions

(h) Questions on the same subject should, as far as possible, be consecutive;

(i) When the framing of a question depends on a previous answer, or when it should be put to specific persons; this should be indicated at the beginning of the question, e.g.: "If you replied to question... in the affirmative...";

(j) When two or three questions are interrelated, with the answers to the last ones depending on that given to the first, it is advisable to set each question on a separate column;

(k) Questions that are directed only to specific persons should be placed at the end of the group (if they form part of a group relating to a single topic) or at the end of the questionnaire (if on a separate topic). There are usually various cases of this kind in a questionnaire: educational characteristics (for persons aged seven over), economic characteristics (for persons aged twelve and over), and fertility (for women aged fifteen and over). In these cases, it is best to arrange the questions in order of the size of the group concerned.

D. Sections of a census questionnaire

25. Broadly speaking, a questionnaire consists of the following sections:

(a) Information section:

Heading, indication of the institution conducting the census, and date of the census.

Indication of the Act governing and laying down regulations for the conduct of the census, particularly the provisions concerning the obligation to supply data, their confidential nature, etc.

General instructions and important definitions, which can be printed at the top or on the back of the questionnaire. Specific instructions or examples can be printed immediately after the relevant question.

More detailed information on the instructions will be found in chapter III.

26. (b) Section for the collection of data; two types of data are collected through the census questionnaire:

Administrative data: the number of the questionnaire, the number of the enumeration area or sector, identification data for the enumerator, supervisor and respondent;

Statistical data: geographical, population and housing, and special observations.

The geographical data relate, in general, to the geographical location of the dwelling in a political and administrative sector and, in particular, to the locality in which it is situated (city, township, village, etc.). These data are used for both administrative and statistical purposes. From the statistical standpoint, they are used for derived tabulations such as urban and rural population, population by administrative sectors, population by locality, etc.

The questions regarding geographical characteristics must be sufficiently detailed for purposes of the necessary tabulations, but they vary according to the conditions in each country.

Population data comprise the individual data for each person living in the household or to be found in the household on the date of the census, according to whether the de jure or de facto population is being enumerated.

Housing data: If the housing census and the population census are being carried out simultaneously, either a single questionnaire can be utilized to collect information on both population and housing, or separate questionnaires can be used. The first system has the advantage of saving resources and time, facilitates the enumerators' work since they would have only one questionnaire to deal with, avoids duplication etc.; but if it is decided to use separate questionnaires they should be adequately identified so as to permit subsequent matching of data for each set of living quarters with data that refer to the occupants.

/Observations:

Observations: A space should be set aside in the questionnaire for "Observations", so that the enumerator can use it for any explanation he wishes to make about an answer, or if he considers that the respondent's answer does not belong to any of the categories mentioned in the questionnaire. The enumerator should be properly instructed on how to make these annotations in order to avoid errors or confusion, e.g., how to identify the person and the question to which the observation relates.

(c) Data processing section:

Spaces for code numbers in the case of open questions;

Actual code numbers, where the answers are pre-coded.

27. The method of dealing with the specific topics covered be a census questionnaire must be taken into account in preparing the instructions in each case.

The annex contains a sample census questionnaire which includes the most common questions on population.

III. INSTRUCTIONS ON ENUMERATION

28. As the questions in the questionnaire need to be concise, the persons responsible for filling in the questionnaires must be given instructions containing definitions and any additional explanations needed to ensure, that the answers are accurate and complete.

A. Type of instructions

29. Depending on the form in which they are presented

(a) Instructions included in the questionnaire, which might be:

- general instructions, placed at the foot of the page or on the back;
- specific instructions, included in the questions to which they refer.

(b) A handbook or leaflet, containing definitions and detailed instructions regarding the enumeration.

/30. Depending

30. Depending on the level for which they are intended

(a) For respondents: instructions of this type are used only on certain occasions. They should be easy to understand and should avoid technical terms, since they are not generally supplemented by verbal instructions. The content will vary according to the method of enumeration employed.

- When the householder method is used, it is essential to provide the respondents with detailed instructions on how to fill in the census questionnaire. These instructions may be printed in the questionnaire itself or as a separate leaflet.
- When the canvasser method is used, special instructions on how to fill in the questionnaire are sometimes printed for those persons who cannot be interviewed directly, and these should have the same format as the instructions for self-enumeration.

(b) For enumerators: in addition to the definitions and examples included in the questionnaire to help enumerators, a handbook or leaflet of very detailed instructions should be compiled to enable these census officials to prepare themselves for their responsibilities, to become acquainted with the concepts and definitions used in relation to the different topics and to clear up any doubts that might arise in the course of their work. These instructions should be clear and precise and the terminology should be appropriate to the level of the enumerators and should depend on the amount of training they receive.

- If the canvasser method is used, the instructions for enumerators should include guidance on how to conduct the interview and how to formulate the questions, as well as general information for enumerators and instructions on how to fill in the questionnaire.
- When the householder method is used, the census officials might need to give advice to the respondents, and should therefore be given detailed instructions for this purpose.

/(a) For

(a) For supervisors: depending on the method of enumeration used, instruction leaflets should be prepared for supervisors in the field and for local offices responsible for checking the questionnaires and/or giving advice to enumerators. The form and content of these instructions can be determined according to the method of enumeration employed, the subjects dealt with in the courses for enumerators and the level of the supervisory personnel. In any event, they should contain the necessary instructions on the checking of questionnaires and should deal in detail with the conceptual problems most likely to give rise to errors or doubts.

31. The points discussed below relate to a handbook of instructions for enumerators in a census employing the canvasser method.

B. Content and format of a handbook of instructions for enumerators

32. A handbook of instructions for enumerators should be so designed as to facilitate the task of enumeration. For this purpose, the points discussed in the following paragraphs should be taken into consideration.

33. Format. The handbook should be of suitable size, paper and type. The topics should be arranged systematically, following the same order as the questionnaire. The classifications should be clearly indicated under each topic, the titles and sub-titles should stand out and spaces should be left between topics, in order to make the handbook easier to understand. In addition, the paragraphs should be numbered consecutively throughout the manual, for ease of reference in the index to topics and concepts.

34. Content. The alphabetical indexes of topics and definitions are of great assistance to the enumerator.

It is vital that the wording should be clear and long paragraphs tedious explanations, which might confuse the enumerator or be ignored by him, should be avoided.

/In addition

In addition to the necessary definitions, the instructions should contain examples of the most usual answers and solutions to the most common problems. Another way of presenting examples of answers, which helps to improve their accuracy, is to show two columns: one with examples of "incorrect answers" and another with the corresponding "correct answers".

The inclusion in the handbook of drawings or photographs (generally applicable to sketch-maps of the areas and to types and conditions of housing), although it adds to the cost, may make the handbook easier to understand and may facilitate training.

C. Layout of the handbook of instructions

35. Generally speaking, a handbook of instructions for enumerators should be made up of the following parts:

General information

- Concept of the census, its objective and its importance, references to the census law.
- Responsibilities of the enumerator.
- Responsibilities of the respondent.
- Method of enumeration.

Instructions regarding the enumeration

- Reconnaissance of the area, sketch-map, boundaries.
- Forms to be filled in by the enumerator.
- Other documents to be carried by the enumerator.
- Instructions for enumerating buildings and sites.
- Instructions on how to conduct the interview.
- Instructions for special cases (locked house, refusal to give information, etc.).

Instructions on how to fill in the census forms

- Instructions on how to fill in the census questionnaire (see paragraph 36).
- Instructions on how to fill in the other census forms (control sheets or summaries of the questionnaire, or other administrative reports).

/Indexes and

Indexes and annexes

- Alphabetical index of topics.
- Alphabetical index of definitions.
- Annexes: lists of occupations, economic activities, educational establishments at all levels of education, etc.

36. The instructions on how to fill in the census questionnaire consist of general instructions on basic concepts and norms, and special instructions in which the topics and questions contained in the questionnaire are dealt with in turn.

(a) The general instructions include:

- The sections of the census questionnaire.
- The system of annotation.
- The population included in the census, or the persons who should be enumerated (concept of present and absent population).
- The census moment.
- Concept of the unit of enumeration (household, living quarters, etc.).

(b) The special instructions include definitions, explanations and examples in respect of each question in the questionnaire. The topics included in a census questionnaire and the questions relating to each topic are dealt with in detail in chapter II of this document, but it should be emphasized that the following three aspects require very detailed and complete instructions: educational characteristics, economic characteristics and the section relating to housing.

37. In this document, a very general description has been given of how to prepare a census questionnaire and instructions regarding the enumeration. It should be borne in mind, however, that the questions included should be determined in accordance with each country's tabulation programme and individual requirements. A model census questionnaire will be found in the annex.