The Need to Capitalize on the 2020 Census Round for Migration Analysis

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As migration, migrants and mobility are increasingly being considered in the context of global development and in national planning strategies, the demand for timely, accurate, nationally relevant and internationally comparable migration data and indicators is expected to rise. The 2030 sustainable development agenda provides the new global development framework for the years between 2015 and 2030. The 17 Sustainable Development Goals and 169 targets with their 244 indicators demonstrate the scale and ambition of this new universal Agenda.

Recognizing the positive contribution of migrants for inclusive growth and sustainable development and that international migration is a multi-dimensional reality of major relevance for the development of countries of origin, transit and destination, which requires coherent and comprehensive responses, thirty of the 244 indicators make reference to migration; 24 indicators will require disaggregation by migration status, 5 indicators concern migration and 1 indicator provides context regarding the density and distribution of health workers. The international community agreed to address these gaps by investing in more methodological work, fuller utilization of existing data and addressing the urgent need to enhance capacities of National Statistical Offices.

The 2020 census round (2015-2024) provides a great opportunity to increase significantly the availability of high-quality, timely and reliable data disaggregated by migratory status and other characteristics relevant in national contexts. As such, all countries are encouraged to collect information on 1) country of birth, 2) citizenship and 3) year or period of arrival to inform the topic of international migration, as recommended as core topics to be included in population censuses by the United Nations Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses. In addition, given current flow of mixed migration including asylum seekers, economic migrants or people migrating without documentation motivated by aspirations, a

desire to unite with other family members etc., UNFPA advocates for the inclusion of a question on reasons for migration.
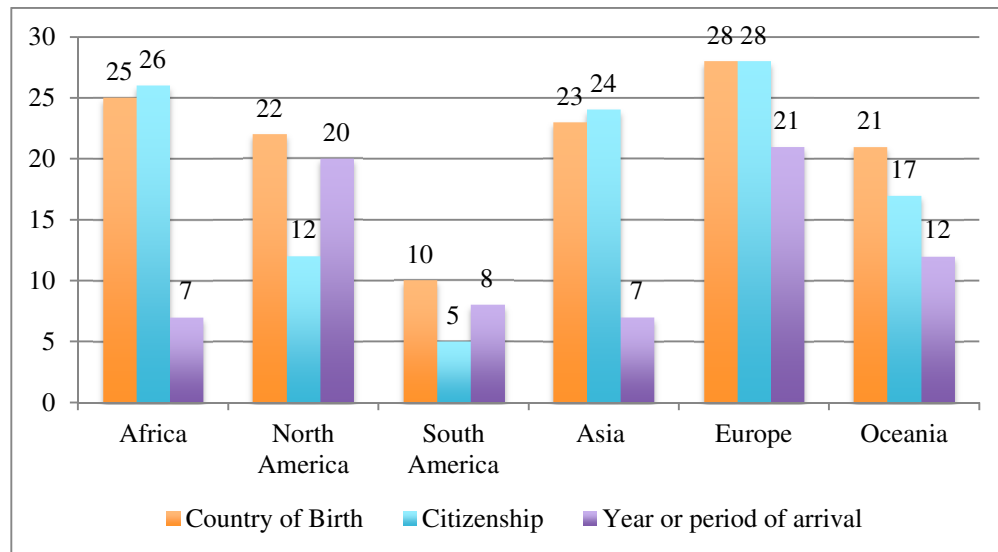

Figure 1: Availability of core questions in national census questionnaires

Lessons learnt from the 2010 census round highlight that 87 percent of all countries for which census questionnaire information are available in the database of the UN Statistics Division included a question about country of birth. This findings suggests that disaggregation of SDG data by foreign-born status should be possible for the majority of countries. However finding that only 66 percent of all censuses included both questions on country of birth and citizenship limits our analytical purposes in the area of integration and discrimination. Further, the finding that only 50.3 percent asked for the year or period of arrival will limit opportunities to disaggregate by length of migration. Additional that were included in census questionnaires of the 2010 census round refer to: previous country of residence; duration of intended stay; and reason for arrival/return. A question relating to the reason for immigration appeared in twenty census questionnaires and five countries asked for the primary reason for emigration.

Yet, the collection of census data does not consistently translate into the widespread utilization of such data. As such, the authors of this brief aim at displaying examples of the use of migration census data to inform development planning in the area of

sustainable development.

Country of Birth: The question on country of birth in a national population and housing census allows distinguishing the native-born from the foreign-born population in the country of enumeration; which means that the foreign-born population has migrated to the country of enumeration at some point in time. The inclusion of the question on country of birth allows for in-depth analysis of census data in the area of economic and demographic development paths recognizing the foreign-born. Together with sex and age variables included in the census, sex and age pyramids of the local and foreign-born population can be created to display the demographic contribution of migration to the local population. At the same time, integrating census data from migrants' country of origin and destinations allows for an estimation of the impact of outmigration on a national population. Another example serves poverty estimates; including question on the country of birth in the census allows for the estimation of the relative risk of poverty of foreign-born children or second generation children.

Country of Citizenship: Asking the question on citizenship allows analysts to determine migrants' rights and responsibilities in the country of destination. Legal nationality is an identifying factor for international migrants and is further important at the national level to determine which people are subject to border control when crossing international borders. Tanzania is among the few African countries, which collects migration data since it conducted its first census in 1948. However, since 1967 most of the migration data collected was by place of birth and residence, which capture mostly lifetime migrants and current migrants. Combining responses from the question on country of citizenship with rural and urban characteristics provides for the opportunity to estimate the distribution of migrants by place of residence. In Tanzania 2012 census data indicate that migrants are found both in rural and urban areas.

Duration of Stay: Information about the country of residence at one year, five years, or ten years prior to the census provides a reference date to international migration during a specific point in in the past. Questions on time or period of arrival for foreign-born persons in the country of destination allow for calculating the duration of stay and classifying migrant populations by time of arrival. In addition, special considerations need to be taken to ensure that all migrant population are fully counted in censuses, while the confidentiality of information at the individual level is

protected.

Reason for Migration: Censuses are only useful for capturing refugees if these populations groups are part of the counted population. In line with the IRRS recommendations, topics that could help identify refugees include a question on reason for migration, as it lends itself to identify people who moved for humanitarian reasons, compared to economic or social reasons. An option for "forced displacement" in the response categories could add that value to the census.

Conclusion

All future population and housing censuses should be encouraged to include these core questions. It is further important to advocate for the greater release of population and census data, and to exploit migration data to their fullest use.

This appeal is consistent with the report of the Secretary-General on international migration statistics, presented to the United Nations Statistical Commission at its 45th session in 2016, which emphasized that more needs to be done to encourage the tabulation and dissemination of international migration data from population and housing censuses in order to enhance the exchange of statistical information between countries, the identification of factors contributing to human vulnerability, and to inform public policies that will serve first those furthest behind.

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