

Abstract

## **Future of the Population Census**

(Dr C. Chandramouli, Registrar General & Census Commissioner, India

email: [rgi.rgi@censusindia.gov.in](mailto:rgi.rgi@censusindia.gov.in))

---

Rising costs, growing complexities, widespread apathy and emerging alternatives have raised serious questions on the future of population Censuses in many countries. While the debate is still in its infancy in most countries, some have begun the search for alternatives. The 2010-2011 rounds of Housing and Population Censuses have thrown up an array of alternatives across the world that merit closer scrutiny. The examples of Brazil and India quickly come to mind in this context. This paper attempts to present a case study of India, where three different approaches have been implemented with a fair degree of success - a traditional Housing and Population Census (paper based); a National Population Register (biometric database) and a Socio Economic and Caste Census (direct data collection on an electronic platform). All the three exercises conducted in quick succession within a short period (2010 to 2013) have thrown up learnings that would be of tremendous interest to the community of Census takers the world over.

02. For the next Census in India in 2021, the country has to take into account the experiences from these three major initiatives on the one hand and the challenges of complete geographical coverage, quality issues and the rising cost on the other. Technology is the key driver of change. India has shown that innovative use of modern ICT tools can be effectively harnessed. However, mere technology without process re-engineering will not deliver optimum results. Appropriate technology blended with processes would hold the key to the future.

---