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Experience from the Pacific – Lessons learned for 2020

Session 5 : FIELDWORK RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING

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1. INTRODUCTION

The paper will present and discuss key preparation procedures in recruiting and training census fieldworkers. This is followed by highlighting common issues and problems encountered and experienced by some countries that SDP has been involved with in this area. Finally, the paper will present suggestions and recommendations to be considered on how to address these issues for the next census round.

2. BACKGROUND

Census operation is a big statistical data collection exercise that involves recruiting and training huge number of fieldworkers. Because of the wide nature scale of the census that covers the whole country, proper recruitment and training procedures are always a requirement in order to minimise errors and problems during census field work data collection.

In the census and other data collection exercise, the key important resources are the fieldworkers as they are responsible for collecting the data. Therefore it is essential that recruitment procedures are carried out accordingly so that the right numbers of fieldworkers needed are recruited and that those recruited are capable to do the job. The quality of the recruitment procedure will directly affect the quality of the data to be collected during the fieldwork and the success of the census.

Training on the other hand is of great importance since those staff recruited in the census exercises are usually short term staff with limited knowledge and experience in statistical data collection exercise. The training is sufficient to assist the fieldworkers in understanding their roles and duties in the census operation.

The outcome of recruitment and training of fieldworkers will affect the fieldwork management. So if the process is of efficient then problems in the fieldwork will be minimised.

3. FIELD WORK RECRUITMENT

This first section will look at major important tasks required during fieldwork recruitment which can be divided into three steps:

- Establishing the workforce structure
- Determining the number of fieldworkers
- Selection of field workers

In most cases, the census managers are responsible to recruit census staff in complying with national rules and regulations of the country.

Prior to the recruitment, it is important that the structure of the workforce has been established well and used as the baseline of the recruitment. For instance, in some bigger countries the operational framework can involve four to five layers of hierarchy management such as regional managers, deputy regional managers, quality data controllers, supervisors and enumerators. In small island countries, the hierarchy can consist of 3 layers only. Specific roles and working ratio at each different layers of hierarchy should also be well defined accordingly and considered in the recruitment process.

The duration of the job and the budget are the two important factors in determining the number of staff required in the field. The total households from the listing exercise is used to determine the work load formation for the enumerator. In working through this, it is advisable to start from the lowest level upward, in this case, the enumerator. The enumerator is usually responsible for covering 3-4 enumeration areas with the maximum of 60 households for two weeks. Having the total number of enumeration areas and the duration of the fieldwork, the total number of enumerators required can be determined when using a ratio of one enumerator per 4 enumeration areas. Usually supervisors are responsible for a group of 4 or 5 enumerators; the regional managers will be responsible for another group of supervisors and so on. Whether the country used 6 or 2 working structure hierarchy, the same approach should be applied. This is also usually applied in determining the number of staff for other field activities such as household listing.

The selection criteria also play an important role in the recruitment process. The qualification criteria required for recruitment can differ according to the kind of jobs been provided, whether the deputy manager or the fieldwork enumerator. It can also differ among countries. However, the selection criteria should consist of the most significant qualities and experience that an applicant should possess in order to successfully undertake the duties. In some countries, the criteria include Form 5 or 6 secondary certificates with experience in surveys and censuses. Other countries involved teachers or retired civil servants as census fieldworkers.

Recruitment of census fieldworkers can be a long process as it involves recruiting a big number of workers and involves different stages such as public awareness (radio announcement), registration, test, interview and selection. However, recruiting of fieldworkers should occur as close as possible to the date when the activity commences.

The results of the recruitment process had great impact on the fieldwork management and the quality of data being collected in the census. Recruiting the wrong number of field workers and wrong people affected both the workload formation for fieldworkers and the end results of the work. Having shortage of staff recruited could lead to having one enumerator doing more than required – resulted in more unfinished work, resulted in poor results. On another hand, recruiting unqualified people contributed to poor quality of the data.

In the 2010 census round, PICTs NSO managed the recruitment of census fieldworkers. However, experience shows that the process of recruitment had not done properly for some countries. Usually,

there are no strategic plan developed and so often, the strategic plan for recruitment are always based on past experience without any proper review done to accommodate any changes happened since the last census which can change the structure of the fieldwork workforce. NSO are not always taking time to sit down and review the structure of the working team thoroughly.

The selection criteria been set were not always followed resulting in recruiting unsuitable candidate to do the job. As a result the output of the interview was poor – creating doubt in the data quality.

Also the procedure for recruitment sometimes do not always follow best practice and as a result, many unnecessary problems emerge in the form of a shortage of, or over-recruitment of fieldworkers, unsuitable recruits, or late recruitment interfering with proper training.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENTS

- *When developing strategic plans for staff recruitment, PICTs NSO should consider carefully on how the census workforce structure is formed, the working ratio and the selection criteria for the fieldworkers.*
- *That PICT NSO should follow best practices in developing strategic plans for staff recruitment*
- *To ensure that recruitment of field staff is consistent and used throughout the country and that recruitment exercise is done at the required time*
- *In developing plans for recruitment, PICTs NSO could seek assistance from other agencies such SPC, UNFPA or even from other NSO offices.*

4. FIELDWORK TRAINING

The last section will focus mainly on key activities that are important to take in preparation for the training of the census field enumerators. These activities are grouped into:

- Type/Duration of training
- Training manuals
- Conducting of training

In all census undertakings involved, a high proportion of staff from all levels of the census field workforce are usually short-term temporary staff with limited or no experience or training at all in statistical collection activities. It is therefore essential that they are provided with sufficient training to assist them in understanding the importance of their roles and duties, how their work feed into the overall census goals and objectives, to know and aware of other census issues such as confidentiality and understand the way they are expected to undertake their different duties.

The type and the length of the training depend on the kind of training required for each staff level. Therefore the training can be in a short or a long approach. For example, those staff dealing with administration side can be trained within one day while those supervisors and fieldworker should have longer period of trainings. The census manager should identify the kind of trainings and training duration required for the fieldworkers and plans should be put in place well ahead of the training time.

Likewise, training manuals can vary in complexity, depending on the type of training provided. When developing training manuals, a review of past training manuals is always a good starting point, to see what could be learned from previous experience and what needs to be updated. The results and

findings from the pilot census will also need to be reflected too. The training manual should contain brief introduction of the importance of the census, instructions and detail descriptions of the subject that the fieldworker need when in the field. For instance, the interviewer's manual should contain instructions on how to fill in the questionnaire, descriptions on the questions – what is the purpose of the question, why it is important and how to ask.

The census manager should be responsible for the development of training manuals and other training materials required with the assistance and support from other subject matter specialist. The census manager should ensure that training manuals are ready and printed prior the training commences.

In conducting the training for the field enumerators, the training can be approached in 2 stages – the training of trainers (TOT) and the training of supervisors and enumerators. The TOT involves training a group of trainers who will train the supervisors and enumerators. In other small island countries, the supervisors can be trained as trainers who in turn train the enumerators in their respected areas. These trainings should take more than one week preferable a maximum of two weeks consisting of classroom discussions and lecturers, power points presentations, mock interview in class and outside class, role play in class, tests and quizzes, and 2 or 3 days field practice in some EAs to test the listing result, the questionnaire and other field logistics. It is important that the trainings particularly the enumerator's training are done simultaneously and close to the field work dates.

The trainers should be provided with the training materials and training schedule to use when conducting the training in their assigned areas. This provides consistency in the delivery of the training.

It has been observed, that preparatory work required for the training of fieldworkers are often left to “the last minute”, ranging from the production of training manuals, provision of training materials such as pens, training venue arrangement and late recruitment of fieldworkers . These are the most common issues that have been experienced which require urgent attention.

The census manager should be responsible for updating the training manual and training materials for the training with assistance and support from census subject matter specialist and others. This was not always the case and so often assistance providers tend to undertake the job instead of providing advices or guidelines alone.

Often, PICT NSO are less involved in the training putting much reliance on assistance providers (consultant) to lead the training. It was also found that the number of fieldworkers to be trained is way too high that one trainer is required to train more than 80 fieldworkers.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENTS

- *NSO should ensure that all preparatory work required for the training of field enumerators are well accomplished before the training in terms of training materials and equipment and training logistics and management whether for training of trainers (TOT) or training of supervisors and enumerators.*
- *When developing training manuals, NSO should involve other census stakeholders to work on their related questions as part of the training manual and should try to involve them during the training.*
- *When assistance provided in this area, NSO should ensure to take the lead in developing training materials and in conducting the training of fieldworkers.*
- *NSO should organise training load for trainers to ensure that the load is manageable and controllable and also to ensure that the standard training package is prepared for all trainers when training the supervisors and enumerators.*

5. CONCLUSION

The quality of the fieldworkers' recruitment and training procedures has a significant impact on the quality of the fieldwork and the quality of the data. Having the total right number required for the job and the right people who are capable to do the jobs will contribute positively to the fieldwork management and to the quality of the census data.

Therefore countries need to take great attention when developing plans for fieldworkers. Most importantly, countries should realise the importance of following and keeping best approaches when recruiting and training fieldworkers so that fieldwork is manageable and controllable. Although most countries managed to undertake census exercise for many years, there is still a need to improve in this area.
