



Opening Remarks by
Dr. Asa Torkelsson
Country Director of UNFPA Thailand and Representative of UNFPA
Malaysia
for the International Forum on Digital First Approach
for the Preparation of the Thailand Population and Housing Census
8 November 2023

Honourable guests, distinguished delegates, and valued partners in development,

Distinguished hosts:

Prof. Wisit Wisitsora-At, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Digital Economy and Society;

Dr. Piyanuch Wuttisorn, Director-General of the National Statistical Office of Thailand;

and

Ms. Siriluck Chiengwong, Head of Office, UNFPA Thailand.

Distinguished experts from the Australian Bureau of Statistics: Ms. Kathy Belka, Director, Census Digital Service, and Mr. James Koen, Director, Census Enumeration Approach,

Distinguished experts from the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, Ms. Rabia Awan, Deputy Director General and colleagues from the Census Planning and Coordination Section/Census Project Management Section.



I am overjoyed to be able to extend to you the warmest of welcomes as you make your way to the SIAM@SIAM DESIGN HOTEL in the heart of Bangkok for the International Forum on the Digital First Approach for the Preparation of the Thailand Population and Housing Census 2023.

This event is being held in conjunction with the preparations being made for the Thailand Population and Housing Census in 2025. Your presence here is a sign that we are all dedicated to making the most of the potential offered by digital technological advancement in order to improve the census enumeration, increase response rate, and improve accuracy and breadth of demographic data for Thailand.

This forum is a one-of-a-kind convergence of knowledge and foresight, bridging continents and cultures in the service of a shared objective. The schedule for the forum has been meticulously planned to unfold over the course of three days, beginning on November 8 and continuing through the 10th. As we set out on this journey, we do so with a strong sense of purpose and the expectation that we will break new ground in terms of digital census-taking.

I would like to take this opportunity to extend my appreciation to the six statistical agencies from Australia, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America, whose contributions both in person and virtually are essential to the accomplishment of the goals set forth by this forum. Their knowledge is not merely complementary; rather, it is transformative. Equally commendable is the role that the Thailand National Statistical Office has played in acting as our host and providing a forum in which these exchanges can take place.



The agenda that lies ahead is extensive, and it will feature thematic sessions that promise to address the overarching aspects of the preparation for the digital census. We will investigate the various aspects of planning, designing, and managing a digital census project that are required for a transformation of this magnitude.

Experts from a variety of statistical offices will discuss the difficulties they've encountered as well as the successes they've had while working with mapping technology and managing projects that require extensive consultation with stakeholders.

We are going to delve into the complexities of various national statistical systems, the evolution of digital census methodologies, and the pressing rationale for adopting a digital-first census for Thailand, which would be a significant step towards achieving comprehensive and reliable population data for the country.

The discussion will become even more in-depth on day two, when topics such as data protection and novel approaches to data collection will be brought to the forefront. We will hear from seasoned professionals about the delicate balance that must be maintained between the advancement of technology and the protection of personal information; this balance is essential to the maintenance of public trust.

The agenda for the third day is just as compelling as the agenda for the previous two days, with a focus on the use of media to foster effective communication and public awareness as well as the practical application of information technology in census operations. The insights that were gained will be crystallised, and a path



forward will be forged for all of the experts that are represented here during the reflections and discussions that are planned for the concluding panel.

As we move forward with the sessions for today, I am particularly looking forward to hearing the perspectives of the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics and the Australian Bureau of Statistics on their transition from paper-based to digital censuses. Their work as pioneers is of great relevance to us as we navigate transitions that are similar to theirs.

This evening's welcoming reception at Chim Chim Restaurant is not simply a social gathering; rather, it is an integral part of our agenda, and its purpose is to facilitate an environment in which connections that are not only casual but also potentially groundbreaking can be made.

As we come to the end of these opening remarks, I'd like to bring to everyone's attention the vital significance of the work that we do. Not only for Thailand but also for all other countries that are interested in realising the full potential of digital integration in census taking, our combined efforts over the next few days will contribute to shaping the future of population and housing censuses. This will not only be the case for Thailand.

I would like to express my gratitude once more for your dedication and cooperation. In the firm conviction that the outcomes of this forum will lead us towards more informed decision-making and, ultimately, the betterment of the societies we serve, let us together embark on this journey of learning, sharing, and innovation.



Let's make a global standard for digital censuses that is inclusive, all-encompassing, and reflective of all populations, especially women and girls from the most marginalised people among us, and may we make a significant contribution to the conversation about how digital innovation is changing the way censuses are taken.

Let's make this discussion forum as impactful as possible.

Khob Khun Kha.