

CHAPTER I

HISTORY OF CENSUS TAKING IN MALDIVES

By
Mr. Ibrahim Naseem & Mr. Ahmed Nihad

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INTRODUCTION

The Republic of Maldives is an Indian Ocean archipelago located 600 km south of India extending from 0 degree 42 minutes 24 seconds south of the equator to 7 degrees 6 minutes 35 seconds north. It consists of 1192 small islands forming a chain, scattered across 820 km in length and a maximum of 120 km in width within an area of 90,000 sq km. The Exclusive Economic Zone of the Maldives extends over an area of 859,000 square kilometers. For administrative purposes, the 26 natural atolls of the Maldives have been classified into 20 groups, each of which is referred to as an "administrative atoll".

The islands are low lying with an average elevation of 1.6 m above main sea level. Few of the islands have a land area in excess of one square km and only 199 islands are inhabited. The capital Male' with an area of about 2 sq. km. accommodates 27 percent of the country's population of 270,101. The total land area is estimated to be 300 sq. km of which only 10 percent are suitable for agriculture.

The climate is tropical: warm and humid, with two pronounced monsoon seasons. Daily temperatures vary little throughout the year. The average maximum temperature is 31° Celsius and the average minimum temperature is 26° Celsius. Relative humidity ranges from 73 percent to 85 percent.

Average annual rainfall in the period 1996 to 2000 was 2140 millimeters. Monthly variations in rainfall are significant, ranging from 22 millimeters in March to 258 millimeters in September.

CENSUS HISTORY

The available historical documents indicate that the practice of registration of population was adopted prior to 1573. The exact year of the adoption of the practice is never known. In the seventeenth century, efforts were made annually during a period of three days prior to the close of Ramazan to prepare lists of all people in the country including children and adults. Such lists were used mainly to identify the persons who were expected to make charity contribution, Zakaat, as a religious obligation. Later, during the period 1779-1889, enumerations were made annually of adult population of the country, (15-60 years of age) with a view of identifying potential taxpayers.

MODERN TYPE CENSUSES

A population census was taken for the first time in the year 1911. This was followed by decennial censuses in 1921 and 1931. Decennial census taking is carried most of the countries of the world till today. These censuses were counted at the same time as the censuses of Sri Lanka. The practice was interrupted during World War II and was resumed again in 1946. For reasons not easily ascertainable, the next census was held in 1953, followed by another in 1957. Thereafter annual censuses were taken until 1972 and then in 1974, followed by the 1977 census. The Ministry of Home Affairs was responsible for census operation throughout.

For most censuses during the period 1911-74, important details, such as the organization and administration, training, period of enumeration, data of census and detailed tabulations are not available. For the first three decennial censuses, the office of the Superintendent of Census of Sri Lanka prepared the questionnaires, which were translated into Dhivehi in the office of the Maldivian Government Representative in Colombo, and forwarded to the Maldives for canvassing. In the 1911 census, the filled questionnaires were sent back to Colombo for tabulation of data, while in the next two censuses only abstracts of necessary information were sent, which were tabulated by

the Maldivian Government Representative in Colombo. From 1946 onwards, the census data were tabulated in the Maldives itself.

In the censuses during the period 1969-74, particulars of individual members of a family were collected in separate rows of a household schedule. Information was collected on sex, age, literacy, education, marital status, occupation and activity status. Information was also collected about the persons special needs. Data were also obtained on the number of children born and the number of children currently living for all women.

The enumeration in the outer islands was done by the island chiefs, and in Male' by selected secretaries and clerks of the Government departments. The island chiefs prepared tabulations of data for each island and the atoll chiefs did tabulations for the atolls. Compilation of data at national level was done in the Ministry of Home Affairs, Male'.

In all the past censuses, only the Maldivian citizens were enumerated on *de jure* basis and no information was collected on *de facto* resident at census time.

The first modern type census was conducted in 1977, with financial and technical assistance from the United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA), which laid the foundation for a new era of census taking in the country. The enormity of the cost involved, and the experience of the 1977 census, as well as the rapid change in population characteristics led to the decision by the government that censuses at a regular interval of five years would be appropriate in the Maldives. The new quinquennial series began in 1985. Next census was in 1990, and then in 1995 and the last one in 2000.

Population and Housing Census 2000





CENSUS ADMINISTRATION

1. Coverage and Data Collection

The most important aspects of the coverage and data collected in the Population and Housing Census 2000 are:

As in all past censuses, all Maldivian citizens were enumerated in the census 2000.

Foreign nationals who were in the country with a work permit or resident permit were also enumerated in the census 2000. Tourists on tourist visa were not counted in the census.

Information were collected in the census regarding the types of materials used for the construction of walls and roofs of all houses in the country regardless if occupied or unoccupied, either by Maldivians or foreigners. Data were collected on the available source of water, latrine and electricity facilities in the houses only in respect of the living quarters that were occupied.

As in the past four censuses, the enumeration of people in the census 2000 was done on de facto basis, i.e. where they were currently residing. Information was also collected of the Maldivians living abroad. Maldivians living abroad at the time of census for various reasons were collected at the place where they were residing before leaving the country.

In addition to the general information on social and economic characteristics of the enumerated population, attempts were also made in the census 2000 to collect data on nuptiality, education, economic activities, age at marriage, number of marriages, disability and data on the past and current fertility and mortality.

The population of the country, 244814 (124,622 males and 120,192 females) at the previous census of 25 March 1995, increased to 270,101 (137,200 males and 132,901 females) at the current census of 31 March 2000, showing an increase of 1.96 percent during the period of 5 years and 6 days.

2. Organization

The President appointed a ministerial committee to oversee and guide the Ministry in conducting the Population and Housing Census. The Minister was the chairperson of the Ministerial Committee, which includes the Minister of Education, the Minister of Health, the Minister of Home Affairs, Housing and Environment, the Minister of Human Resources, Employment and Labour, The Attorney General, the Minister of State for Defence and National Security, the Minister of State for Finance and Treasury and the Deputy Minister of Planning and National Development.

The Statistics Section of Ministry of Planning and National Development was responsible for the census 2000. The technical, administrative and managerial tasks are shouldered by the Director of the Census and the Technical Committee comprising staff from the different ministries and departments of the government. Around 3820 enumerators, supervisors and officials were engaged in the data collection phase of the census 2000.

This was the first time that coordinators from the ministry were sent to each atoll. The coordinators functioned as the technical advisors of the census operation. Atoll chiefs or assistant atoll chiefs functioned as the administrative chiefs of the operation. Teachers were appointed as the officials or supervisors. Boys and girls completed their

schooling, secondary or higher secondary education, were employed as enumerators in the census 2000.

Data processing activities were handled by a staff of twelve persons from the Statistics Section and additional 20 persons recruited on temporary basis for the special operations, such as editing, coding and data entry of the census data.

The United Nations Population Fund provided technical assistance of a consultant from Country Support Team based in Kathmandu. The consultant's advice and guidance were received in finalizing the census data.

3. Training

Primary and Secondary teachers from all over the country were selected as trainers for the training of enumerators and supervisors and were trained in Male' for a week. The senior officials from the Statistics Section conducted this training programme. Coordinators for the 20 atolls were trained along with the training of trainers. This was held from 23 to 27 January 2000. A total of 85 participants were enrolled in the training.

Training of enumerators was conducted in three phases; the first phase was conducted in 17 atolls, the second was conducted in the remaining three atolls. The final training was held in Male' for the enumerators in Male'. The first phase and second phase was conducted from 28 January to 10 February 2000. In Male' training was conducted from 27 February to 24 March 2000. These training sessions were 7 hours per day for a week and in Male' training were given for 2 hours per day for 2 weeks.

Administrative training for the atoll chiefs or assistant atoll chiefs was conducted for 2 days in Male'. This training programme was aimed at informing the responsibilities of the administrators and coordinators who were supposed to work in the Atolls.

Training in data processing on Integrated Microcomputer Processing System (IMPS) was conducted in the Ministry from 28 February to 9 March 2000. UNESCAP Regional Advisor on Census Data Processing, Mr. Nuri Ozserver and UNFPA/CST Advisor on Population Census, Dr. Luisa T. Engrasia conducted the training. Four senior staff of the ministry participated in this training.

Special training session was organized for the temporary staff hired for data editing, data coding and data entry. This training was given to the 20 persons employed for the data processing tasks.

4. House lists and Island Maps

Island Maps were collected from each administrative island. These maps were redrawn for each island and prepared for census fieldwork. Male' map was updated from Male' Municipality and block maps and supervisor maps were prepared for the census 2000. These maps demarcated the roads and house compounds and vacant sites. No maps were made for the tourist islands as they have a comparatively small population known to the resort's administration and enumerator selected from the resort's staff. The inhabited area of each island was divided into a number of clearly demarcated census blocks. Each block containing a certain number of houses was assigned to one enumerator. Census blocks varied from a population of 200 to 380.

The enumerators carried out the housing census and recorded information in the questionnaire called the "house list". The listing of houses was done in an orderly manner commencing with the census house situated in the northeastern corner of each census block, and visiting all houses in the block by the shortest systematic route. The structures were identified by continuous serial number given to them in the same order as in the route followed by the enumerator. These numbers were different from the registration numbers already given by the local administration to the houses and affixed on their entrances. The serial numbers given for the census enumeration were used only for the purposes of census fieldwork and its control.

5. Enumeration of Population

During the enumeration of population each enumerator visited every household in the assigned census block. By interviewing the head or responsible member of the household, data were collected regarding each person. The cover page of each questionnaire had identification of the census block, structure serial number, household serial number and total number persons to be enumerated in the household. Each book contains 10 persons information and if the persons exceed 10, a second book is used identifying the same block number identifying that it was the second book for the same household. Individual information was collected on the allocated questionnaire format. One set of questionnaire was designed for normal households and the other for collective households.

The enumeration of population was completed during a period of 8 days from 31 March to 7 April 2000. The census enumerators checked the information and any unfilled information was filled and corrected from 8 April to 9 April 2000.

A slip of enumerations was provided to the travelers from island to islands or for island to other countries in order not to double count them. Another slip was given to people such as people who work in the National Security Services and in the industrial islands where they have 2 usual places of residence. This was done not to double count them.

The supervision of the field work in Male' was done by the 61 supervisors and 6 senior officials of the Statistics Section of the Ministry. The results proved to be quite satisfactory. In the atolls, the coordinators visited most of the islands in their respective atolls to supervise the fieldwork of the enumerators. All the islands were not completed mainly due to transport problem.

After a complete revisit to all households on 3 April 2000 in Male' it was assured that the complete information for each household and each member is included in the preliminary results sheet. These entries indicated the census population by sex in the

census block as of 31 March 2000. The coordinators in the atolls collected the population figures for each island. These population figures were sent by fax to census center in Male', where daily progress checks were monitored.

6. Preliminary Figures

On the receipt of the population figures from Male' and all atolls, the Ministry of Planning and National Development released preliminary census figures, by sex for the whole country, Male' and each atoll on 24 April 2000. His Excellency the President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom inaugurated preliminary results of the census 2000. According to the preliminary estimates, the population was 269,010 of which 137,743 were males and 131,267 females. The population growth rate was 1.9 percent per annum between the intercensal period 1995 to 2000. Male' had a population of 74,497 out of which 39,040 were males and 35,457 were females. Information from most of the atolls received within one week after the census, excepting some resort islands where preliminary sheets were not prepared. Census forms were brought from these resort islands and preliminary sheets were made in the census center.

7. Editing, Coding, Ceying of Cata and Production of Tables

It took six months to complete editing, coding and keying of the census data. A total of 12 computers were used on 2 shifts of 7 hours each, for data entry and its verification. The data entry system was set up by the assigned staff of the Statistics Section under the guidance and advice from Mr. Nuri Oszerver, Advisor on Census Data Processing, UNESCAP. Editing specifications and computer edit programs were finalized with the assistance and consultation with Dr. Luisa Engrasia, consultant from Country Support Team (CST) UNFPA.

This time coding and editing was done simultaneously. Consistency checks of the recorded information were made during the coding operation. If there were any mistakes or errors in the forms, the information was edited according to the given procedures. If there was a major error, first the forms were checked more carefully and

corrections were made after discussing with the technical and subject matter persons. The data editing process also involved correcting the data. This required checking the raw data and removal of the errors. For the data editing, the program was developed so that it was possible to impute correction automatically. Validation procedures were built into the system and permit to edit the data. The editing process was a very slow and time-consuming job. Members among the senior most staff with subject matter and technical expertise were assigned the responsibility of editing.

8. Final Result of the Census 2000.

The Minister of Planning and National Development Mr. Ibrahim Hussain Zaki released the final result of the Population and Housing Census of Maldives 2000 on August 2001.

The population was 270,101 (137,200 males and 132,901 females). The population of Male' (Capital) was 74,069 (38,559 males and 35,510 females). The atoll population was 196,032 (98,641 males and 97,391 females).

This was the first time that the result of the population and housing census are being published on CD-ROM and on the Internet in addition to the book. This publication contains 50 tables, 20 tables on housing and 30 tables on population.