

**FIFTH MANAGEMENT SEMINAR FOR**

**THE HEADS OF NATIONAL STATISTICS OFFICES IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC**

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**COUNTRY PAPER**

**CAMBODIA**

**1. Introduction**

**1.1** The Royal Kingdom of Cambodia situated in South-east Asia is spread over 181,035 square kilometers. It is bound by Laos on the north-east, by Viet Nam on the east and south-east, by Thailand on the west and by the Gulf of Thailand on the southwest. A low -lying alluvial plain at the central part accounts for most of the country. To the south-east of the plain lies the Mekong river delta. To the east, the southwest and the north there are mountain ranges serving as natural barriers. Though a developing country, Cambodia has forest which are rich in valuable timber. Cambodia's famous Angkor Wat, the world's largest cultural monument built between the ninth and twelfth centuries attracts tourists from far and near. Cambodia is administratively divided into 24 provinces, 185 districts, 1621 communes and 13,886 villages.

**1.2** Therawada Buddhism is the state religion. Most of the people are Buddhists. Khmer is the national language. The country suffered from a combination of war and internal strife from more than two decades that caused mass destruction and deterioration of the social and economic infrastructure of the country. With peace finally setting in most parts of Cambodia and with the establishment of a Democratic Government in 1993, massive reconstruction efforts have been under way to rehabilitate the country from the ravages of war. Cambodia's economy which has undergone many changes over the years is today in transition towards a free market economy. Cambodia is among the poorest countries of the world. Approximately 36 per cent of Cambodia's population is living below the poverty line according to 1997 socio-economic survey data.

**2. Censuses in the past**

**2.1** Cambodia which was under French rule became an independent nation in 1953. The first census conducted in 1962 revealed a population of 5.729 million. No nation-wide count of the population took place during the 1970s because of civil strife and disruption. An administrative count of the population carried out in 1980 by the Government of the People's Republic of Kampuchea following the Khmer Rouge regime enumerated a population of 6.590 million. The population census conducted in March 1998 was the first census since 1962. During the 36-year interval, the much needed comprehensive population data for social and economic planning had been lacking. After 1980, the first data on economic and social characteristics of the population were provided by the Socio-Economic Survey of Cambodia, 1993/1994. That survey yielded valuable estimates for the whole country, Phnom Penh, other urban areas, and rural areas, but not for individual provinces or lower administrative levels. In preparation for the 1998 population census, the National Institute of Statistics conducted the Demographic Survey of Cambodia in March 1996, which covered about 20,000 households. Among other social indicators, the Survey enabled estimates of fertility and mortality to be made at the national level. Survey data were presented only for the country as a whole rural and urban areas. The national population total of 10.7 million persons estimated by the Demographic Survey of Cambodia in March 1996 was roughly consistent with the population count in 1980, with plausible assumptions regarding mortality and international migration.

**2.2** The United Nations recommends that a national census be taken every ten years. The new Statistics Law of Cambodia that came into force in March 2004 also lays down that population census should be conducted at least once every ten years. Cambodia which did not have periodical censuses in the past would conduct a population and housing census once in ten years beginning 1998. The Royal government of Cambodia (RGC) is implementing a reform process that is basically poverty oriented. Apart from a series of governance reforms that have been initiated, major programs of economic and social infrastructure development are in progress. A wide range of population and socio-economic statistics is very much needed for monitoring the development, making assessments, and guiding further policy formulation in respect of these reforms. Following the success in the creation of a valuable population database as a result of the 1998 Census, the RGC is committed to further build and strengthen the population database through the next census. There has been an increase in the demand of governmental agencies, planners and researchers for reliable and updated demographic and social data in order to review their plans and programs. Though the next commune elections and national elections are scheduled for 2007 and 2008 respectively, the next census could still be held in the year 2008, as there will be a gap of about three to four months between the two operations.

### **3. The Last Census in 1998**

**3.1** The 1998 Census, the most recent census, was conducted with the reference date of 3 March 1998. It enumerated a total of 11,437,656 persons. A post-enumeration survey (PES) was carried out soon after the census in 100 enumeration areas in order to estimate the completeness of coverage and the accuracy of reporting on some census questions. The PES estimated that there was a net undercount of 1.78 per cent of the population by the census. In addition to this undercount, there were some villages and districts in the provinces of Odar Mean Chey, Banteay Mean Chey, Battambang and Pursat that were not enumerated for security reasons. The National Institute of Statistics estimated that the population of these areas combined equaled 45,000. At the time of the census, there were 60,000 Cambodians temporarily displaced to camps in Thailand and they were properly not included in the census. As they all returned to Cambodia later in 1998, however, they may be considered to be part of the population of the country.

**3.2** The holding of a census in 1998 marked the process of recovery of Cambodia to increasing stability and normalization and placed the country back on the demographic map of the world. All of those involved in planning, research and development, from policy makers and administrators to businesspersons and investors, were benefited by the wealth of data produced by the census. Most of the results of the 1998 Census were released in about a year through printed reports and electronic media. The other notable achievements of the census are:

Incorporation of population dynamics and demographic variables in all aspects of development planning.

Release of population projections at National and provincial levels

Formulation of a National Population policy for Cambodia

Production of priority Tables and socio-economic indicators used in policy and research

Publication of analytical reports useful for sector planning

National Capacity building on large scale data collection, processing, analysis and dissemination.

Creation of village databases

Development of computerized geographical database for population data.

Population database with WinR+

Reclassification of urban areas in Cambodia based on a consistent set of criteria

Development of Master Sample

Administrative and Health Facility Mapping

**3.3** The 1998 Census together with the 2000 Cambodia Demographic and Health Survey (2000 CDHS) and the 2004 Cambodia Inter-censal Population Survey (2004CIPS) have contributed in a large measure to benchmarking important aspects of socio economic conditions of the people of Cambodia. In the absence of a satisfactory civil registration system these sources provide fairly reliable data on levels, patterns and trends of fertility and mortality in the country. The set of population projections prepared on the basis of these sources facilitate informed decision-making.

**3.4** The available population data provide a picture of population size, structure and growth rates, along with estimates of fertility and mortality. The population characteristics of Cambodia, while being similar to those of some of the comparable developing countries, reflect distinctively the consequences of war and political instability in the recent past. The effects of high mortality and large scale out migration from the country during the Khmer rouge period (1975-79) are revealed by very low sex ratios in the age groups 40-44 onwards. The largest cohort reported by the census is that of ages 5 -9 closely followed by the cohort of ages 10-14. This may be attributed to a baby boom reported in the early 1980s after the Khmer Rouge era ended and an estimated high fertility in the following years.

**3.5.** The 2000CDHS estimated the Total fertility Rate (TFR) for 1998 as 4 children per woman. This marked a substantial decline from 6 children and more per woman estimated for the 1980s. The direct estimate of TFR from the 2004 CIPS has revealed a further decline of TFR to 3.3. Infant and child mortality have shown declining trends after a period of erratic variations within a high level range.

**3.6** According to the projections made, population of Cambodia will continue to grow in spite of the fertility decline. The rate of population growth during the second half of the present decade would be high with an average annual rate of 1.9 per cent. This is due to what is called population momentum that occurs when the large cohorts of women that were born during the period of high fertility rates (1980-1995) reach the reproductive age. By the end of the decade the country's population would touch 15 million.

**3.7** The preliminary results of the census held in March 1998 were released with a brief analysis in the form of a report (September 1998). The report was based mainly on the field population totals by province, disaggregated by sex. The final results of the census, at the national and provincial level, were released in September 1999. It included an analysis of salient demographic and social aspects as revealed by the census. This was followed by the production of several analytical census reports and data sets in CD-ROMs based on more than 50 statistical tables covering all priority areas recommended by the international statistical guidelines for census tabulation. The findings of the Post-Enumeration Survey (PES) confirmed the high quality of the fieldwork and the high-level of cooperation and response from the public at large in the census operations.

**3.8** The initial population projections made was extensively used by the Council of Ministers, Ministry of Planning and other line Ministries. The census reports were translated in Khmer for easy understanding by civil service officers and the public. Several dissemination workshops were held in Phnom Penh and in provincial headquarters with participants drawn from the user departments at central, provincial, and district and commune levels. NGOs and researchers also participated in some of these workshops. Apart from familiarizing the participants with the census results these dissemination workshops trained the participants in the utilization of census data available in census publications and CD-ROMs. Overall the fact that the data from the census were adopted as the official national statistics by all Ministries and departments of the ROC, NGOs, international agencies and researchers had given further credibility to it.

**3.9** To put it in a nutshell, the implementation of the census analysis and its dissemination resulted in strengthening the development planning process in Cambodia at various levels, and ensuring that demographic concerns were taken into consideration within various sector plans and programs. UNFPA support to the analysis and dissemination of census data initially, and the 2000 CDHS and 2004CIPS data subsequently, is continuing.

#### 4. The next Census in 2008

**4.1** The proposed 2008 Census would be very crucial at the present juncture when Cambodia is in the process of social and economic development. In fact it would act as the cornerstone of population statistics within the Statistical Master Plan of Cambodia. In particular the next census would be essential for the following reasons:

- a- The 2008 Census would help in updating and comparing the population and other development indicators with reference to the census in 1998 that provided the benchmark data after a gap of more than three decades. It would also help to assess the trends and patterns in fertility, mortality, migration and other demographic and socio-economic variables over the last decade.
- b- At the time of the 1998 Census the designation of places as urban and rural was based on only administrative criteria, which were somewhat unsatisfactory for planning for the needs of actual urban-rural populations. There was no functional classification of the urban areas.

Recognizing the need for a proper classification of urban areas, that was consistent with Cambodian conditions, and optimum for planning purposes, a reclassification of urban areas has been done by NIS on a scientific basis using the 1998 Census data on population density, percentage of male employment in agriculture and total population size at commune level. It is proposed to adopt the new urban classification for the 2008 Census and obtain fresh urban-rural population data for statistical purposes and urban planning.

- c- RGC is committed to the MDGs. In the case of Cambodia, the MDGs are monitored at two points in time: 1998 and 2008. Hence, the 2008 census will have a very important role in monitoring MDG indicators, which were measured in 1998.
- d- Due to security concerns, the 1998 Census could not cover the following areas in the North West: (i) Whole district of Anlong Vaeng in Otdar Mean Chey province, Samlot in Battambang province and Veal Veang in Pursat province (ii) Ou Bei Choan village of Ou Chrov district in Banteay Mean Chey province. The 2008 Census will be planned to cover all areas without exception to have a complete enumeration of the population of Cambodia. Moreover due to several capacity building activities and progress of education in the last decade, it will be possible to get the services of better-qualified and trained staff to function as enumerators and supervisors in all areas. For example, in the commune development plan within the decentralized concept of planning supported by SILA and UNICEF the technical group of the Ministry of Planning collects social data through village chiefs in all villages on an annual basis for the past four years to facilitate commune investment plan. The commune council members are trained to analyze and utilize them in commune level planning. This type of activity has created awareness among the provincial, district, commune level staff and village chiefs about the importance of data collection and use of data and strengthened their data collection skills. This is bound to improve the quality of data to be collected in the 2008 census in which these staff would play a big role.
- e. The population projections for Cambodia available based on the 1998 Census, 2000 CDHS and 2004CIPS have to be updated in the light of the next census.
- f. The Master sample frame provided by the 1998 Census has been used for 2000CDHS and several other household surveys. There is a need for an updated Master Sample frame based on the 2008 census to carry out socio-economic household surveys and inter-censal population/ demographic surveys.
- g. The conducting of a major statistical exercise like the census will further help in improving capabilities of professionals at the NIS.

- h. One of the aims of the census is the establishment of comprehensive population databases, which greatly expand the usability and enhance the dissemination of census data. The 2008 census will help create updated population databases.

**4.2** The census will be conducted under the authority of existing Royal Decree. The Royal Sub-decree on Specification of census date, Organization and functioning of 2008 General Population Census was signed officially on 30 January 2006. According to this sub-decree, Cambodia will conduct the population census March 3, 2008. Samdech Prime Minister of Cambodia presided over the National Launch of 2008 Census of Cambodia Plan which was attended by about 300 senior government officials, representatives of international and non-governmental organizations. The Prime Minister exhorted the participants about the importance and need of census statistics for planning for the development of Cambodia and called for the cooperation of all concerned.

**4.3** The National Census Committee (NCC) under the chairmanship of the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for the Interior has been established by the Royal Government of Cambodia for giving overall guidance to the Ministry of Planning in implementing and conducting the General Population Census of Cambodia in March 2008. It held its first meeting on May 22, 2006 and focused on census administration, work plan and appointment of Census Technical Committee (CTC) to advise on technical issues related to the census. The first meeting of the CTC held on May 31, 2006 appointed separate technical sub-committees to advise and monitor important activities like questionnaire preparation, cartography, census publicity, data processing, tabulation, analysis and dissemination. It was also proposed the 1998 Census logo would be continued with suitable changes in the color scheme.

**4.4** The preparations for the census began in April 2006. With technical assistance provided by UNFPA, a work plan has been prepared carefully for the implementation of the pre-census, census and post-census activities. The census questionnaires have already been drafted after preliminary pre-test and in consultation with line Ministries. It is expected to be finalized after consultations with data users and further pre-tests. The preliminary cartographic work using GPS to identify village and Enumeration Area (EA) boundaries is now under way with JICA assistance.

**4.5** Gender perspective needs will be considered at all stages of the census particularly at the stage of questionnaire design and formulation. Aspects like female economic activity and work status, child labor especially among girls, social, demographic and economic characteristics of women will be given particular emphasis at all stages of census operations. Employment of female enumerators will also be encouraged. In planning the census full use will be made of the United Nations global and regional recommendations for the organization and conduct of a population census and the analysis, dissemination and utilization of the data.

**4.6** The enumeration is proposed to be undertaken during March 2008 for two weeks this is considered to be a period of stability and low level of international and internal mobility, which would allow accurate estimates of population size and distribution. It will also exactly mark a ten-year interval after the first census in 1998. It is proposed continue the canvasser method of census taking in 2008 census also. House-to-house visit will be made by enumerator for enumeration of each individual in every household. For this purpose each household will be identified in all buildings and structures, in every EA. The households will include normal, institutional and homeless households. The *de facto* method will be adopted for census enumeration.

**4.7** The number of usual members present, usual members absent, and visitors present in the household on census night will be collected. Detailed information on social, economic, cultural and demographic characteristics of usual members present and visitors will be recorded in the questionnaire.

**4.8** Building and household numbering and listing will precede the enumeration. This operation will take place for four days. For this, a separate form (Form A) will be used. Apart from serving as an inventory for buildings and households in the EA, this form will also furnish useful information on housing characteristics.

**4.9** The census enumeration (Form B) will be conducted for two weeks. The homeless population who will be identified the house listing, will be enumerated on the census night itself. Special arrangements will also be made to enumerate the following groups of persons: persons in military barracks, inmates of penal institutions, those in hospitals or other such institutions, those staying in hotels and boarding houses, those living in boats and nomads.

**4.10** Intensified Information and communication activities are needed throughout the various phases of the census to create awareness, ensure public cooperation and utilization of data.. Apart from evaluation of various stages of the process, the outcome of the census will be evaluated with regard to contents and coverage. This will include a post enumeration survey and in-depth evaluation of the findings.

## **5- Objectives of the 2008 Population Census ( What do we want from the Population census?)**

1. To promote wider utilization of census findings and contribute to integration of population data in the planning activities at various levels.
2. To strengthen and augment the capabilities of the NIS to conduct their population activities through State of-the-art technology in data processing to establish a dynamic integrated population information system.
3. To provide external and on-the-job training for professional staff of NIS.
4. To further develop capability in NIS in producing continuous of reliable and timely demographic data through population censuses and surveys as well as in the processing, analysis, evaluation and dissemination of population data sets required for policy formulation, development planning and administration.
5. To strengthen national capacity building and enhance the capabilities of NIS in conducting periodic censuses and surveys.
6. To create awareness between the public at large and senior level officials about the importance of high quality data for the various aspects of development.
7. To develop and maintain a comprehensive national population database that can be a step toward establishing an integrated population information system.

## **6- What resources are available for use?**

The Royal Government of Cambodia has attached great attention to reforms in all sectors. The objective to reduce poverty, is the core of every policy and development strategy of the Royal Government, especially the “Rectangular Strategy”, in which the Royal Government has clear stated the importance of promoting economic growth, creating jobs and ensuring full employment, enhancing equality and social justice as well as strengthening efficiency in the public sector. In order to develop such a vision, the Royal Government and its development partners established the National Strategic Development Plan 2006-2010, a combination of the MDGs, the Socio-Economic Development Plan 2001-2005, the National Poverty Reduction Strategy 2003-2005 and the Government Action Plan including the Public Administration Reform elements at the national level.

The population census is of great importance, especially for ministries, institutions, development partners, planners and researchers to update their plans and programs using reliable social and population data. The collection of this extensive data set will require external technical and financial assistance. This is extremely crucial if quality and reliability of data to an international standard is to be achieved.

It is also of paramount importance that broad-based local political and economic support for a successful 2008 population census is mobilized. While the Cambodian Government is committed to ensuring the availability of quality population data, given the competing national priorities, current allocation of national budget support for the upcoming 2008 census is less than sufficient.

In the Census Plan, the total budget proposed for the 2008 Census is about six million US dollars. So far, the Ministry of Planning has received some funds and technical assistance from UNFPA. The German Government has expressed interest to provide part of the funding required. JICA has already agreed to provide assistance, technically and financially for cartography and data processing activities. However the existing big funding gap has to be filled in by further donor assistance. It is expected that by census advocacy and resource mobilization this will be accomplished. The Royal Government of Cambodia has also approved the request for counterpart funds from Japanese Government for constructing census building. In the long run, the proposed Statistics Master Plan (SMP) is expected to provide the long-term strategies and financing plan needed for organizing statistical activities.

The current contribution of the Cambodia Government are : senior staff, census offices, water, and electricity. The request national budget letter has been sent to the ministry of Economic and Finance.

#### **7- How do we achieve the population census goals/objectives with what we have?**

The new Law on Statistics came into force in May 2005. It ensures fixing of a responsibility, smooth relations between different tasks and increased efficiency of decentralized statistical system. Moreover, the Law on Statistics and other related sub-decrees shall provide a framework for necessary tasks and enhancing the integration of statistical activities into national statistical system. In addition, the Law on Statistics should also provide the National Institute of Statistics with the ability to implement its activities in a wider, clearer and legal based manner, especially in relation to its role as the facilitator in statistical works. On top of that, the Statistics Council will also be established in order to assist the Ministry of Planning in developing the National Statistical System.

The 2008 census activities will be closely coordinated with other on-going projects of NIS. The large surveys like CSES provide the basis for most of the economic social and demographic information available. The training components of these activities have developed the skills and capacity of NIS. Ministry of Planning is the principal agency responsible for coordinating efforts in monitoring the National Poverty Reduction Strategy.

Close collaboration will be maintained by the census office with the on-going projects of NIS and other projects for the successful conduct of the 2008 census. It is also necessary for census office to be in close touch with the Ministry of Interior regarding elections so as to ensure smooth progress of census work without any overlapping of date or other logistic arrangements. There is a needed for improved consultation and agreement with other stake holders on census tabulation and analysis and in the production of socio-demographic indicators.

#### **8- What will be the impact on various parties, including data users, the Statistical Office managing the population census, other government agencies and the general public on achieving the goals/objectives?**

The NIS plays a great role in servicing the users of census data. At the data users service cell at the NIS is very popular with the data users. The importance of NIS as a resourceful organization arises out of its capable and trained staff and provisions in the Statistical Law project it as a lead agency in Statistics. Moreover the line Ministries, NGOs, other user, organization and the public interact with NIS at the time of Census preparation and contribute towards questionnaire design and tabulations through consultation meetings. A by adding suitable questions the National needs of data are given paramount importance.