



2008 MALAWI POPULATION AND HOUSING CENSUS¹

Briefing Note # 6: 15 July 2008

1: Introduction

The objective of the 6th Briefing Note is to up-date stakeholders on the conduct of enumeration and the status of post-enumeration activities

Specific issues addressed include: the enumeration exercise; field organization and supervision; enumeration budget and payments of field staff; closure of census enumeration; moving questionnaires and other materials to Zomba; data processing plans; coordination meetings and the workplan.

2: The census enumeration dates

Census enumeration was officially launched on the 8 June and the closing date fixed for the 28th June. Information received from the field indicates that the three weeks ensured that all persons were enumerated without omission or commission. The exercise targeted all Malawians and other persons residing in the country. The diplomatic community and foreign military personnel were however excluded as per the UN recommendations.

The enumeration exercise has been hailed as one of the best compared to past censuses, thanks to extensive publicity exercise that preceded the exercise. All enumerators received maximum cooperation from the general public.

Records at NSO indicate that there was 100% Enumeration Area (EA) coverage. It is expected that household/individual coverage will be equally high but actual levels will be provided through the Post Enumeration Survey (PES) which shall be conducted shortly.

3: Field Organization and supervision.

¹ The census slogan: “Be part of Malawi’s Development, be Counted”

The enumeration exercise involved 13,157 enumerators, 2501 field supervisors, 390 Control Centre supervisors and 91 district supervisors. The three levels were put in place to improve data quality.

Adequate precautions were put in place to ensure that only genuine census enumerators visited people's homes. For that matter, enumerators were given identifiers which included clearly marked census bags, letter of introduction; bibs, hut and T-shirts. Specific enumerators were deployed to conduct interviews in security zones including police training institutions, army barracks, prisons and embassy compounds.

Ensuring data quality was paramount in planning census enumeration. For that matter, three levels of supervision were introduced, namely; field supervisors, Control Centre supervisors and district supervisors. It is important to note that UNFPA staff members were involved in monitoring the census enumeration. Their contribution was highly appreciated by NSO.

The census enumeration owes its success to availability of large fleets (296, including 52 from Government and 244 hired locally) vehicles, 197 motor bikes and 2501 bicycles. The fleet was effectively used in supervisions and movement of materials

The enumeration was witnessed by the donor community (DFID, Irish UNDP) in Dedza District and UNICEFF in Zomba. Other organization had been invited (UNSD, ECA, US Bureau, and Statistics South Africa) but were unable to participate due to short notice given.

4: The enumeration budget and payments to field staff.

Census enumeration budget was US\$ 10.5, which included US\$ 7.6 million for field staff (salaries and allowances), US\$ 1.2 million for census materials, US\$ 1.7 Million for hired vehicle hand purchase of and fuel. Of the total amount, donors (DFID, Irish AID and UNFPA) provided US\$ million 4.8 and Government gave the balance amounting to US\$ 5.7million.

In anticipation of problems associated with daily rates, it was decided to make lumpsum payments to all field personnel. For that matter: enumerators were paid 62,500 Kwacha each (based on successful completion of EA enumeration); field supervisors, 75,000 Kwacha each; Control Centre supervisors, 87,500 each; and District supervisors, 180,000 Kwacha each.

Payments were undertaken in phases, starting with Southern Region, Central and finally Northern. Given that paying Teams were limited in number, payments could not be made at once in all control centres.

To ensure that only genuine enumerators were paid, a payroll was developed and proper identification ensured at all paying points. The paying Teams (nine in total) were accompanied by armed police who ensured security. Further security measures included ensuring that paying Teams handled limited amounts of funds at any time. Thus, they only carried checks for cashing at local banks.

5: Strategies for improving coverage

Although census enumeration was expected to end on 28th June, it was recognised that some EAs were extremely large and could not be completed within the time given. In addition, some areas required substantial call-backs. In such cases, enumeration period was extended and extra enumerators deployed to assist. Furthermore, persons left out through omission were requested to report to NSO or their local chiefs.

6: Moving Questionnaires and other materials to Zomba

Transporting census materials back to NSO is on-going. Taking into account the sensitivity of scannable questionnaires, instructions were given regarding careful handling. The field staff were instructed to carefully place questionnaires in satchels before sending putting them in cartons. Cartons were transported to Zomba in large trucks covered with canvass to avoid questionnaires being rained on.

Other items moved to Zomba include bicycles, motor bikes and vehicles. The NSO has been requested to give bicycles and motor bikes to MEC and UNFPA is finalizing the transfer mechanism.

7: Coordination meetings

The UNFPA/NSO meetings continued during census enumeration. Through such meetings, a number of problems were solved including early release of funds by donors and Government. The Steering Committee will soon be convened.

8: Data processing plans and initial preparation of preliminary reports.

Data capture will be through scanning. It should also be noted that scanning methodology ensures minimal human errors and is capable of identifying specific errors of omission. The NSO has put in place necessary arrangements to undertake key corrections to eliminate all such errors. Other errors like, for example, inconsistencies, duplications and missing data will all be addressed through edit specification programmes that will be developed soon.

8: The workplan.

The post enumeration activities will be as demanding as and thus require maximum attention. The immediate and most critical activities include: (a) accounting for questionnaires from all EAs in the country (b) deploying data processing staff (c) ensuring that shelves, for storage of questionnaires, are ready (d) placing questionnaires, systematically, on shelves (e) preparing summary sheets and entering data onto computer (f) preparing the outline of the preliminary report