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Population and Housing Censuses Activities in the African Region: Key Issues and Challenges*

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1 Introduction

- 1. The United Nations Statistical Commission, at its lat meeting in March 2005, approved the 2010 World Programme on Population and Housing Censuses (RPHC) and established an Expert Group to coordinate its preparation. The Expert Group, in turn, proposed the formation of working groups and technical subgroups to carry out its mandate. The main purpose the Expert Group is to carry out the revision and update of the global *United Nations Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses*.
- 2. The membership of African countries, regional and sub regional organizations in the above groups is composed of: ten (10) countries, three (3) sub regional organizations (Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Southern African Development Community (SADC), and The *Observatoire Économique et statistique d'Afrique Subsaharienne* (AFRISTAT)), three (3) United Nations Population Fund's Country Support Teams (UNFPA/CSTs) --Addis Ababa, Dakar, and Harare, and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA).
- 3. In this regard, and in the particular context of the 2010 RPHC, the Commission has decided to initiate the process of consulting member States on their population and housing census activities since the 2000 RPHC. Accordingly, the UNECA carried out a survey to gather information in support of the work of the Expert Group of the 2010 RPHC. Therefore, the Commission administrated a questionnaire to the 53 member States aimed at:
 - Sharing experiences and lessons learned from the 2000 RPHC;
 - Compiling information that can be shared with other member States, sub regional, and regional organizations on Census activities;
 - Providing a series of critical issues and new challenges in the region with respect to the 2010 RPHC.
- 4. This paper presents the results emerging from the consultation process launched by the UNECA. It is organized as follow. After the introduction, the second section gives summary statistics on the survey. The third section presents an overview of the implementation of the 2000 RPHC by African countries, their experiences and lessons learnt. The following section presents recurrent and emerging issues for consideration in the 2010 RPHC. Finally, a conclusion closes the presentation of the paper.

2 The Survey

5. The Statistics Team of the UNECA has designed a questionnaire¹, and forwarded it to the 53 member States in order to collect the information required to compile the African countries experiences with the census operations². The questionnaires were sent by email and copies of both the French and English versions were posted on the UNECA statistical activities website³. The questionnaires are divided in three parts. The first part was designed to gather data on countries' participation to the 2000 RPHC. The second part

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¹ This questionnaire has been shared with our colleagues of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (UNESCWA) on their demand.

² A copy of the questionnaire is in the appendix II to the present document.

³ http://www.uneca.org/statistics/.

- focused on the last census conducted in member States while the last one dealt with the upcoming 2010 RPHC.
- 6. From the 53 member States, we have received 12 filled questionnaires resulting in a 23% response rate. The filled questionnaires were checked for consistency and missing values according to standard rules.
- 7. The results show that Census operations are mainly conducted by National Statistical Offices (NSOs) as opposed to Census Bureaus and other organizations according to 92% of the respondents. Among the respondents, only Cameroon has censuses operations conducted by a Census bureau separate from the NSO.

3 The 2000 round of censuses in the African region

3.1 Overall participation and topics coverage

8. With the exception of Cameroon all the respondents participated in the 2000 RPHC (1995—2004) according to the survey results. The earliest census in the round was carried out by Burkina Faso in 1996 while the last one took place in Morocco in 2004.

Country	Last Census	Next Census
1. Botswana	2001	2011
2. Burkina Faso	1996	2006
3. Cameroon	1987	2005
4. Gabon	2003	2013
5. Kenya	1999	2009
6. Malawi	1998	2008
7. Mauritius	2000	2010
8. Morocco	2004	2010
9. Mozambique	1997	2007
10. Seychelles	1997	2008
11. Sierra Leone	2000	2014
12. Zambia	2000	2010

Table 1: Census dates in the ECA region

- 9. In terms of coverage, all respondents with the exception of Malawi and Seychelles collected data on the following topics during their last the 2000 round: Education; migration; economic activity; fertility; population; and housing. Malawi did not collect data on migration while Seychelles did not collect data on fertility.
- 10. Most of the countries have also reported to have alternative sources on population and housing censuses such as demographic and health surveys, labour force surveys, informal sector surveys, surveys on household living conditions, household surveys, national literacy surveys, demographic survey of education, core welfare questionnaire survey, integrated household surveys, poverty surveys, administrative data, national population databases, agriculture surveys, and economic surveys.

3.2 The role of international organizations

11. International organizations played a major role in the participation of countries in the 2000 RPHC. The contribution was mainly in terms of financial and technical assistance. Technical assistance was the main mean of contribution from international organizations

as opposed to financial contribution. The UNFPA/CST comes first as the major organization that helped countries in terms of technical assistance followed by other agencies such as the French cooperation for most French speaking countries, the European Union, the US Bureau of Census, and other aid agencies (CIDA, USAID, JAICA, UNDP, DFID). Financial assistance to African countries during this round of censuses originated mainly from the UNFPA/CST. In fact, 42% of respondents have received funds from this organization followed by other sources with 25%. These include organizations such as the EU, the French Cooperation Agency, and the respective governments.

3.3 The use of information and communication technologies (ICTs)

12. Many countries made use of ICTs during the 2000 RPHC. Census mapping was the main use of ICTs by African countries followed by data capture and dissemination. As can be observed from the results of the study, 50% of respondents made use of ICTs for census mapping as opposed to 42 % for data capture and dissemination. On the other hand, it appears that countries made little use of ICTs in data collection: only 17% of respondents have reported having used ICTs for this purpose during the 2000 RPHC.

3.4 Data dissemination

13. Papers publication was the most important method used for dissemination of census results by the respondents during the 2000 RPHC. All respondents used this dissemination method during. It is worth noting that while paper publications constituted an important part of the dissemination process, 67% of the respondents also used the Internet and CD-ROMs for dissemination purposes.

3.5 Experiences and lessons learned

- 14. African countries that have participated in the 2000 RPHC have faced different problems and issues. Nevertheless, there are some common issues that are worth mentioning as they may serve as lessons learned for all of them during the next rounds⁴. The problems and issues faced by most of the countries include:
 - Limited financial and human resources especially for enumeration and proper supervision;
 - Limited dissemination of census results;
 - Inadequate transportation to field due to budgetary constraints;
 - Organizational and coordination problems; and
 - Inadequate/late funding.

15. Beside the above-mentioned common factors, Kenya has reported to have face difficulties arising from the use of new technologies (ICTs) in census operations. The Kenyan NSO has started using new technology in cartographic mapping and data capture which staff was not familiar with. This resulted in delays in the production of enumeration areas maps as well as many scanning errors, which could otherwise have been avoided. Accordingly, the census office relied on contracted services for most of the census operations. In addition, the demand for census data at some geographical levels not in the

⁴ Detailed summary of issues/problems encountered during the 2000 RPHC appear in appendix I to this report.

- geographical coding during the preparation for the last census has complicated the data collection process.
- 16. Wholly absent households from Mauritius on the night of census were not enumerated since they could not be contacted. This caused problems to the Mauritius authorities in charge of the census. In addition, there was confusion in the coding of "usual address" of some non-Mauritians working in the country as there was not specified time period for a person's stay in Mauritius for his usual address to be considered as being in Mauritius. It has been then proposed to set a clearly defined time period in the future.
- 17. Seychelles has reported under coverage of about 5% due to the limited number of staff for proper supervision and an unusual high level of refusals coupled with delayed action to follow up with legal intervention. Moreover, lack of infrastructure was mentioned as a serious impediment to censuses operations. Seychelles also pointed out the lack of accommodation for training census personnel since the NSO is set up in inadequate and inconvenient premises, across four different locations with no proper training facilities as an important impediment to census operations during the 2000 round.
- 18. During the 2000 round, Zambia has encountered problems with cartographic mapping. The country reports to have used the old cartographic maps from the 1990 Census. Moreover, other specific problems are pointed out by the Zambian NSO such as the delay in data analysis due to lack of timely funding by the Government and the external debt that were not cleared at the end of the census undertaking due to inadequate allocation of funds by the Government and collaborating partners for census undertaking.
- 19. Bureaucracy appears to have constituted a problem that hampered the normal undertaking of censuses operations in Botswana. This country reports that the grading of census officers is too low to communicate with relevant officials in district and line ministries, creating unnecessary bureaucracy in dealing with urgent issues.
- 20. In the case of Mozambique, the census mapping of remote areas was particularly difficult due to land mines in this post conflict country.

4 Issues for consideration in the 2010 RPHC

- 21. All African countries that have responded to the questionnaire are willing to participate in the 2010 RPHC. Beside the topics usually covered in their last censuses, the respondents would like to cover the following topics during the 2010 RPHC given their importance:
 - Agriculture;
 - Environment;
 - Household budget;
 - Disability;
 - Health;
 - Leisure:
 - ICTs: and
 - Additional mortality questions for life table construction.

4.1 Specific concerns for the African region

- 22. Beside this enthusiasm in favor of the participation in the 2010 RPHC, African countries have underlined what they thought were the main problems with respect to the participation of countries from the region in the 2010 RPHC. These include:
 - Lack of financial resources given the high costs of censuses operations;
 - Financial and technical resources are inadequate because governments are unable to conduct Censuses on their own;
 - Inability to mobilize financial resources given the critical financial situation of many African countries: deficits, debt burden;
 - Lack of interest from donors in funding census operations;
 - Capacity building is required to mobilize and train staff;
 - New technology as institutions charged with the responsibilities for undertaking the census don't have the required knowledge on new technologies to be used;
 - Funding delays due to lack of financial discipline;
 - Lack of funds and qualified human resources since many African countries have a high population, scattered over large areas. So fieldwork becomes difficult; and
 - Lack of capacity and infrastructure to support Census undertaking due to inadequate support to NSOs by Governments.

5 Conclusions

- 23. This paper has presented the main issues/problems facing African countries in their efforts to undertake censuses operations. It has also presented their experiences and lessons learnt during the 2000 RPHC as well as the main topics covered.
- 24. International organizations played an important role in helping African countries to conduct census operations. In fact, most African countries have received financial and technical assistance to carry out censuses and this originated usually from the same international organizations. The UNFPA/CST comes out as the major organization that helped countries in terms of technical assistance followed by other aid agencies.
- 25. African countries mainly use of ICTs in censuses operations was in census mapping. Papers publication remains the most important method used for dissemination of census results by African countries despite the fact that more countries are also using the Internet and CD-ROMs.
- 26. Most African countries have identified the lack of financial and human resources as serious issues in censuses undertaking.
- 27. While the above-mentioned problems and issues constitute serious impediment for the correct undertaking of censuses operations, African countries are willing to participate in the 2010 round. It is therefore imperative to find a way to mobilize and coordinate efforts so that as many countries as possible can participate in this round.

6 References

Economic and Social Council, "Report of the Secretary General on Population and Housing Censuses," United Nations Statistical Commission, Thirty-sixth sessions (E/CN.3/205/2).

United Nations Statistics Division, "Proposal for Working Groups of the Expert Group on the 2010 World Programme on Population and Housing Censuses".

Appendix I: Summary of Countries Statements: Issues and Problems

Country	Important Issues	Problems Encountered	2010 Round of Populat	ion and Housing Censuses	Next Planned Census
	2000 RPHC	Latest census in the country	Potential additional topics to be considered	Main Africa specific problems with respect to the participation	
Botswana	Issues /Problems: Human resources due to attrition rate of staff after the 1991 census The grading of the Census Officer is too low to communicate with relevant Officials in district and line ministries, creating unnecessary bureaucracy in dealing with urgent issues	Date: 2001 Topics covered: Education Migration Economic activity Fertility Population Housing	Additional Topics: Agriculture Environment Household budget Health Education	■ Resources	<u>Date:</u> 2011
Burkina Faso	Issues /Problems: Organizational and coordination problems due to lack of transportation facilities Financial arrangements were not finalized before the censuses operations Limited dissemination of results	Date: 1996 Topics covered: Education Migration Economic activity Fertility Population Housing	Additional Topics: Agriculture Environment Disability Parental survival Water	 Financial resources due to the high costs of censuses operations Human resources 	<u>Date:</u> 2006

Country	Important	Important Issues /Problems Encountered		ion and Housing Censuses	Next Planned Census
	2000 RPHC	Latest census in the country	Potential additional topics to be considered	Main Africa specific problems with respect to the participation	
Cameroon	Issues /Problems: Did not participate	Date: 1987 Topics covered: Education Migration Economic activity Fertility Population Housing Issues /Problems: Lack of financial resources for publications and dissemination purposes	Additional Topics: Agriculture Environment Household budget	Inability to mobilize financial resources given the critical financial situation of many African countries: deficits, debt burden	<u>Date:</u> 2006
Gabon	 Issues /Problems: Financial resources from donors and the government were not mobilized in time The post-census survey was not conducted due to lack of financial resources Only few partners have been involved in the financing of the census Delays in census operations 	Date: 2003 Topics covered: Education Migration Economic activity Fertility Population Housing	Additional Topics: Environment	 Lack of interest from donors in funding census operations Capacity building is required to mobilize and train staff 	<u>Date:</u> 2013

Country	Important Issues /Problems Enco	ountered	2010 Round of Popul Censu		Next Planned Census
	2000 RPHC	Latest census in the country	Potential additional topics to be considered	Main Africa specific problems with respect to the participation	
Kenya	 Issues /Problems: Inadequate and late funding of census operations which would affect the implementation of some activities Use and adoption of unfamiliar scanning technology the department started using new technology in cartographic mapping and data capture which staff was not familiar with. This resulted in delays in the production of EA maps and also in many scanning errors which could otherwise have been avoided Inadequacy of qualified personnel due to poor planning in the area of training led to shortages of qualified personnel. Consequently, the census office relied on contracted services for most of the census operations Late procurement of essential goods and services resulting to wastage and over-pricing Demand for census data at some geographical levels not in the geographical coding during the preparation for the last census For political reasons, information on ethnicity was suppressed 	Date: 1999 Topics covered: Education Migration Economic activity Fertility Population Housing	Additional Topics: Health Education Literacy Disability	 Inadequate funding as government may not have adequate resources to finance all census activities. New technology as institutions charged with the responsibilities for undertaking the census don't have the required knowledge on new technologies to be used 	<u>Date:</u> 2009
Malawi	Issues /Problems:	Date: 1998 Topics covered: Education Economic activity Fertility Population Housing	Additional Topics: • Migration	 Funding delays due to lack of financial discipline 	<u>Date:</u> 2008

Country	Important Issues /Problems Encountered	2010 Round of Pop Cen	Next Planned Census		
	2000 RPHC	Latest census in the country	Potential additional topics to be considered	Main Africa specific problems with respect to the participation	
Mauritius	 Issues /Problems: Shortage of staff: field workers, editors and coders, data entry operators due to: scarcity of field workers mainly in remote areas; editors & Coders are not recruited and retained by the CSO but by the Ministry of Civil Service Affairs; data entry operators are staff of another Government department – the Central Information System Division and hence in some instances, other work was given priority over census Editing and coding was delayed by one month which led to the delays in the publication of census reports due to lack of editors, coders and data entry operators as mentioned above Wholly absent households from Mauritius on the night of census were not enumerated since they could not be contacted Confusion arose while coding 'usual address' of some non-Mauritians working in the country as there was no specified time period for a person's stay in Mauritius for his usual address to be considered as being in Mauritius. It is proposed to set a clearly defined time period in the future. 	Date: 2000 Topics covered: Education Migration Economic activity Fertility Population Housing Disability Total household income	Additional Topics:	 Lack of funds and qualified human resources since many African countries have a high population, scattered over large areas. So fieldwork becomes difficult. Other priorities 	<u>Date:</u> 2010
Mozambique	Issues /Problems: ■ Census mapping of remote areas, land mines	Date: 1997 Topics covered: Education Migration Economic activity Fertility Population Housing	Additional Topics: Health Education		<u>Date:</u> 2007

Country	Important Issues /Problem	ns Encountered	2010 Round of Popu Cens		Next Planned Census
	2000 RPHC	Latest census in the country	Potential additional topics to be considered	Main Africa specific problems with respect to the participation	
Seychelles	 Lack of accommodation for training census personnel since the National Statistics Office is set up in inadequate and inconvenient premises, across four different locations with no proper training facilities. Inadequate support from government to house the Statistics Office in proper accommodation prior to the Census Lack of human resources for enumeration and proper supervision, and inadequate transportation for fieldwork due to budgetary constraints Under coverage (about 5%) as there are no enough staff for proper supervision; unusually high level of refusals coupled with delayed action to follow up with legal intervention. Lack of TA for demographic analysis due to late applications to potential organizations 	Date: 1997 Topics covered: Education Migration Economic activity Population Housin	Additional Topics: Household budget Health Disability	Probably funding will inhibits the operations for training and employing enough people to carry out the necessary tasks.	<u>Date:</u> 2008
Sierra Leone	 Shifting of census dates due to late funding of some census activities Inadequate census education due to late start and poor status of district census vehicles Delayed publication of final census results 	Date: 2000 Topics covered: Education Migration Economic activity Fertility Population Housing	Additional Topics: Agriculture Household budget		<u>Date:</u> 2014

Country	Important Issues /Problems Encoun	tered	2010 Round of Popu	lation and Housing Censuses	Next Planned Census
	2000 RPHC	Latest census in the country	Potential additional topics to be considered	Main Africa specific problems with respect to the participation	
Morocco	Issues /Problems: Training of enumerators. They didn't easily understand and apply the concepts.	Date: 200 Topics covered: Education Migration Economic activity Fertility Population Housing	Additional Topics: Leisure ICT	Budgetary constraints	<u>Date:</u> 2010
Zambia	 Issues /Problems: Cartographic mapping was not 100 percent done: Hence relied on old cartographic maps used during the 1990 census of population and housing; Inadequate and late release of funds to CSO by government and collaborating partners; The GPS equipment purchased by CSO was not sensitive to urban setup. Hence, there was hiring of another equipment at the last minute to map urban areas The use optical mark reader machines posed a problem in merging household information. Thus some forms were unreadable due to moisture content and dirty marks made by interviewers in the field. Data analysis was delayed and hence delayed dissemination of census reports because funds were not made available on time by government. External analysts were not contracted to write various chapters in the census reports. Hence, compromised the quality of statistical analysis. CSO incurred external debts that were not cleared at the end of census undertaking due to inadequate allocation of funds by government and collaborating partners for census undertaking. 	Date: 2000 Topics covered: Education Migration Economic activity Fertility Population Housing .	Additional Topics: Register of business establishment Additional mortality questions for life table construction	 Financial and technical resources are inadequate because governments are unable to conduct Censuses on their own Lack of capacity and infrastructure to support Census undertaking due to inadequate support to NSOs by Governments 	<u>Date:</u> 2010

Appendix II: Questionnaire on the 2010 Round of Population and Housing Censuses



UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA

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Questionnaire on the 2010 World Programme of Population and Housing Censuses

Country:	
Name of Respondent:	
Function:	
Telephone Number:	
Email:	
This questionnaire is aimed at:	
Census (RPHC)	ns learned from the 2000 Round of Population and Housing ues and new challenges in the region with respect to the
	I as a contribution to the preparation of a regional position be presented at the 22-26 Expert Group Meeting in New
What kind of institution is in ch	narge of conducting censuses in your country?
☐ The National Statistical Of ☐ Census Bureau ☐ Other Please Specify	ffice/Institute

Part I: The 2000 Round of Population and Housing Censuses

1.	Did y	our country conduct a Census during t	he 20	00 round?	Yes	No	
lf	No, go	o to question 7.					
2.		ng the 2000 RPHC, did your country recesse organizations? (<i>Tick as many as ar</i>			sistanc	e from ar	ıy
	ur	NFPA NDP NSD ther please specify					
3.	of the	ng the 2000 RPHC, did your country recesse organizations? (<i>Tick as many as ar</i> NSD NFPA/CST			stance	e from an	У
		D Agencies (e.g. CIDA, USAID)					
		ther please specify					
4.		ng the 2000 round, did your country manunication Technologies (ICTs) in	ake us	se of Inform	ation a	and	
	a)b)c)d)	Census mapping Data Collection Data capture Dissemination	Yes	No			

5. Did your country make use of one of these dissemination methods? (<i>Tick as many as are relevant</i>)
Paper publications
☐ Internet
☐ CD-ROM
6. List the most important issues/problems encountered during the 2000 RPHC
(a).
Why?
(b).
Why?
(c).
Why?

Part II: The Last Census Conducted in the Country

7.	. When did your country conduc	ct the last census?	
8.	During the above-mentioned assistance from any of these of		
	UNFPA		
	UNDP		
	UNSD		
	Other please specify		
9.	During the above-mentioned of assistance from any of these of	<u> </u>	•
	UNSD		
	☐ UNFPA/CST		
	AID Agencies (e.g. CIDA, U	JSAID)	
	Other please specify		
10	Did your country collect da relevant)	ta on the following topic	cs? (Tick as many as are
	☐ Education		
	Migration		
	☐ Economic Activity		
	☐ Fertility		
	Population		
	Housing		

11. <i>as</i>	Did your country make use of these dissemination methods? (<i>Tick as many are relevant</i>)
	Paper publications
	Internet
	CD-ROM
12. Te	Did your country make use of Information and Communication echnologies (ICTs) in
	Yes No a) Census mapping
	b) Data Collection
	c) Data capture
	d) Dissemination
13. Ias	What are the critical issues/problems that you have encountered during the st census?

Part III: The 2010 Round of Population and Housing Censuses

14.	When is your country planning to conduct the next Census?
15. ho	Does your country have alternative data sources on population and using?
	Demographic and health survey (DHS)
	Labour force survey
	Informal sector survey
	Other, please specify
16.	Is your country willing to participate in the 2010 RPHC?
	☐ Yes ☐ No
lf	No, what are the impeding factors?
	☐ Human resource
	☐ Financial resource
	☐ Equipments and software
	□ Documentation
	Others, please specify
Со	omments:

17. What additional topics (information) do you think are important to be included in the 2010 RPHC?
☐ Agriculture
☐ Environment
☐ Household budget
☐ Health
☐ Education
☐ Others, please specify
18. On your viewpoint, what are the main African countries' specific problems with respect to the participation in the 2010 RPHC?
(a).
Why?
(b).
Why?

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR COOPERATION