

**Fifth Management Seminar for
The Heads of National Statistical Offices in Asia and the Pacific
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TONGA: Country Paper

- 1) What do we want from the population census (not just for the short-term – i.e. the immediate census, but also in terms of the long term role of the population census within the statistical system)?

The key objective of every census is to count every person (man, woman, child) resident in the country on census night¹, and also collect information on assorted demographic (sex, age, marital status, citizenship) and socio-economic (education/qualifications; labor force and economic activity) information, as well as data pertinent to household and housing characteristics. This count provides a complete picture of the population make-up in each village and town, of each island and region, thus allowing for an assessment of demographic change over time.

With Tonga, as many of the Pacific island neighbors increasingly embracing a culture of informed, or evidence-based policy development and decision-making, national census databases, and the possibility to extract complex cross-tabulations as well as a host of important sub-regional and small-area relevant information, are essential to feed a growing demand for data and information in both public and private sectors.

Obviously data requirements are forefront in what we want from the population census. Thus, the needs of a wide range of data users have to be established. How best to do that? And, are we too restricted in defining “data users”?

The publicity census committee has conducted some TV and Radio programs for the public to aware of the proposed census 2006 and invited any organization/association to express/request what needed to include in the proposed census questionnaire, based on the last census questionnaire 1996. Similarly, the SD circulated the 1996 census questionnaire to Government Ministries/Departments and other organizations for the same purposes. As a result, more people aware of the proposed census and some requested to add more questions to the new census questionnaire.

¹ This includes both visitors, Tongans and non-Tongans alike, who usually live elsewhere, either in other parts of Tonga or overseas (*de facto* census); it also includes short-term expatriate residents, currently working in Tonga.

Of the said publicity programs and other communication, these extend the census data users. Some regional and international organizations were given the new census questionnaire. Thus, no restriction of data users for the proposed census data.

Moreover, population census is commonly accepted as a significant community-wide project and hence it is a good opportunity for building NSO's image, credibility and reputation. How best then to make use of such opportunity?

A timely population census result of high quality has no doubt, will build the NSO image, credibility and reputation. To acquire these, the population must be;

- (1). well planned and documented,
- (2). Steering Committee to monitor the progress of census preparations up to the publication and dissemination.
- (3) Census committee members (heads of census sub-committees) must be well trained particularly in his/her own activity.
- (4). enough time for planning/preparations prior to the main census (census date/week).
- (5). Each census sub-committee's task must be completed successfully according to its time schedule
- (6). Availability of required resources, particularly human and financial ones.
- (7). Well trained supervisors and enumerators, etc.

Furthermore, in preparing for the conduct of the population census, a lot of statistical capabilities have to be created and it would be wasteful if these are not utilized over a wider range of statistical programmes subsequently. So, how, in the planning stage, should such an aspect be best catered for?

We seek assistance to train our concerned staff members as noted in our census proposals. One of the major problems here is to seek donor that can provide financial support for my officers training, like the training attachment. Fortunately a regional organization (SPC) has been able to assist not only Tonga proposed census but also countries in the region, particularly those expected for census this year or the near future. The assistance includes the regional workshops and more visits from SPC to SD in Tonga to monitor the progress of the census preparation and training of concerned SD staff members.

What is the long term role of the population census – how does it fit with other social and economic statistics?

The population census in Tonga is done once in every 10 years, of which, the last one in 1996. Thus, a large number of items of the population census data are used as long term basis if those have no up-to-date information.

While regular national-level surveys, such as Household Income and Expenditure Surveys, Labor force surveys, agriculture surveys and demographic and health surveys – to name but just a few – provide important data and information across specific sectors, these surveys could not be sustained or managed without a national sampling frame (which a census data provides). And the calculation and measurement of all population-based development indicators, such as most MDG indicators, would not be possible without up-to-date population statistics, which usually come from a census or from projections and estimates that are based on census data.

2) What resources are available for use?

At the time of planning the population census 2006, the SD had about 34 staff members, allocated to a number of statistical activities (divisions). The extra budget for the census is far outside from the SD normal budget, since the census is done once in every 10 years here in Tonga. Therefore the planning (proposal) of this census was started. The proposal shows the reallocation of human resources and budget allocation for the census. In fact, Tonga, like some other countries cannot provide full census budget. Therefore, our census budget was further allocated about 35% local and 65% donors. The local budget was provided in the current budget, but only part (about 50%) of the donors' budget will be provided by one interested donor. To-date, the said donor has not sent in its expected donation. One of the important components of census budget for the donors is the census equipments. By the time to set up the census data processing system, the SD paid all required equipments from its local census budget (aimed for employees' daily allowances) with hope the donor fund will switch to.

Senior managers are expected to look at matters in their dynamic, rather than static, scenarios. How may we enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of the resources that we have in hand which are apparently inadequate for our purposes?

a. Human Resources:

- **Training** of all aspects of population census is needed. Financial resources are needed for this human development, through trainings (in-service, attachment, etc.). As noted above, the SPC has settled this requirement. More staff members of the SD will do more than one task for the survey. For instance, senior officers of the department who carried out various census preparations will all going out for training of supervisors and enumerators, about 2 officers in each islands division and remain there during the census period to act as census officers until all census questionnaires are in order from the census supervisors and enumerators.
- **Payments:** Primary School Teachers will be hired from the Ministry of Education to carryout supervisors and field enumerators. Each supervisor/enumerator will receive 50% of per diem at the beginning of the field enumeration and the second 50% after the census period provided his/her questionnaires are all well in order as final check by census officer (from SD) of the division.

b. Financial Resources;

The donor budget has not been fully responded, as noted above. Therefore, some parts of donor's census budget were arranged before the end of last financial year 2005/06, then paid by that budget balance, like furniture, site visit, some equipments, etc. Some equipment is re-considered and reallocation of the current staff members to reduce or to avoid hired employees for official duties, in case we will not get the full donor census budget.

Also, resources should not be seen only in terms of tangible ones like finance, manpower and equipments, but also intangible ones like Nose's positioning in the government, legal provisions, credibility of the NSO etc.

The SD is carrying its duties according to Statistical Act chapter 53 of 1978. This Act authorized the SD to collect data and compile statistics that are needed by government and the public for policy and decision making. Section 8 of this Act is the Census Regulation was amended to be known as Census Regulation 2006. This regulation provided legal framework for the SD to carryout the proposed census. Therefore the SD has some confident to carryout the said census despite the inadequate resources,

due to the fact that Government is behind this important project, protected by the said Act and SD like other NSO are recognized internationally.

3) How do we achieve the population census goals/objectives with what we have?

The 2 important resources for the population census are human and financial resources. Human resources must meet the required number and skills. In addition, their willingness and dedication to carryout this task. Financial resources must be well adequate to meet all necessary requirements. In case, the required resources are not fully available, but need to achieve the census goals/objectives, some sacrifice/further actions will be undertaken as follows;

3.1 Financial Resources;

- Some census cost have other alternatives, reduce the required number of census equipments, then use the current used/old equipments of the department, or borrow from other departments which are represented in the census steering committee.
- Revise the census budget and see some costs that no longer needed, or already been done.
- Locally advertised some costs, like publicity, to those who might be interested
- Advise members of the census steering committee to aware what each member's agency can assist/contribute due to lack of financial resources.

3.2 Human Resources;

- Current staff members will carryout more than one task, as currently proposed
- Again, the awareness of the census steering committee members, what human assistance each member's agency can contribute.
- Recruit supervisors and enumerators (Primary School Teachers) to carryout field enumeration at their work places to avoid traveling expenses.

*There are different skills, tools, strategies and approaches which may be employed.
How can we get our staff to adopt an innovative mindset?*

It is often a problem to change someone from his/her previous experience/skills to a new one in the same field. Therefore, a special session is needed to briefly introduce changes. An expert is needed to do this briefing and also refresh their experience. That is, retraining is necessary.

How do we work with other parts of government to achieve these goals?

The members of Census Steering Committee are mostly heads of other government departments. Private sector and NGO are also represented in this committee. The committee's main terms of reference is to monitor the progress of census activities throughout the entire census operation. Committee members were selected according to type of assistance to the census each member can provide. Therefore some committee members have shown their willingness to render their support, as has been done by the Ministry of Lands,...(census maps), Ministry of Education (supervisors and enumerators). Other ministries are awaiting to SD's request, particularly on staffing assistance.

4) 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?

On achieving the goals/objectives of the proposed population census, the stated parties will enjoy in different ways, such that;

- *Data users* will enjoy to use new and up-to-date data, rather than 10 years old one of 1996.
- *Statistics Office* will also enjoy and proud for the successful completion of the census, as one of its major roles according to Statistical Act and Census Regulation 2006.
- *Other government agencies and the general public* will also enjoy and aware where we are now according to the census results.

The population census is a key feature in the national statistical system (NSS) and its implementation may have cross relationships with other programmers. It is also a significant ground for experience accumulation, infrastructure building and human resources development. How can the benefits accrued be enjoyed across the NSS?

These three are the by-products of population census which is done here in Tonga once in every 10 years. The description of these by-products are as follows;

- *Experience Accumulation.* SD staff members will no doubt, gain experiences in addition to their current work experiences in other statistical duties. The proposed population census is relied mostly on visiting consultants to the department to train the local staff members in most aspects of the census and also monitor the progress of the census preparations.
- *Infrastructure building.* The SD is currently accommodated in 3 suites of a private rented building. The proposed population census has added the 4th suite to the SD at the same building. In addition, the SD earned more equipment for the proposed census, and continue with afterwards.
- *Human resources development.* Tonga needs the population census to be done once in every 5 years rather than in 10 years. This cannot be done due to resources constraints. Of the current staff members of the SD, none had taken a senior role in the last census in 1996. Thus, most senior SD staff members would have been well trained for the proposed census and remain in the department afterward. Hopefully most of them will be around for the following census after five or ten years from this one in November.

Separately, please let us know the time schedules of your population censuses, i.e.

when the last population census was held and when the next one is planned to be held.

Tonga population census is carried out once in every 10 years since 1956. The last one was in November 1996, then the next one in this November 2006.
