

NAMIBIA LABOUR FORCE SURVEY

SURVEY DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION

Introduction

In Namibia Labour Force Surveys are carried out under the National Household Survey Programme, which had been launched after the Government endorsed the Five Year Plan of Development of Statistics in Namibia in 1993. The Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare has the mandate of conducting all employment and labour related surveys and has conducted a number of surveys in this field. These are the 1997 Labour Force Survey which was the first comprehensive set of statistics on the state of employment and labour to be collected in Namibia, the 1999 Child Activities Survey, the 2000 Namibia Labour Force Survey, the 2001 Informal Economy Survey, the 2004 Namibia Labour Force Survey and the 2005 Child Activities Survey. These excludes information collected from establishment based surveys.

2.2 Planning and questionnaire design

Labour Force Surveys although conducted by the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare (MLSW) this is done in close collaboration with the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) of the National Planning Commission (NPC). Three committees were established to guide its planning and implementation. An Inter-Agency Committee consisting of a core group of members from the Central Bureau of Statistics, other line ministries, research institutions, labour movement, employers federation, Non-Governmental Organisations and officers from the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare. A Technical Committee, which decides on all technical issues, consists of some members of the Inter-Agency Committee. It thus represents most of the users of the survey results. Finally, there is the Survey Committee responsible to handle field logistics. It is composed of officers from the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare and staff from the General Services Division of the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare. The management of the MLSW is kept fully informed of developments on a regular basis. Meetings with management are arranged as needed to decide on important issues.

The first draft questionnaire is designed by the Technical Committee of the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare which is presented to the Inter-Agency Committee consisting of various users and producers of labour statistics. The definitions, concepts and phrasing of questions are discussed in detail using international, regional as well as country documentation and experiences. Draft field manuals are developed concurrently with the design of the questionnaire.

At times there is no time for a full-scale pilot survey covering different parts of the country, a pre-test of the questionnaire is usually carried out in Khomas region where the capital is situated. Based on the lessons of the exercise the questionnaire and draft manuals are revised. Fieldwork plans drawn up and all other logistical aspects examined in detail as time permitted.

2.3 Sample design

The sample design for the survey is a stratified two-stage probability sample where the first stage units were geographical areas designated as the Primary Sampling Units (PSUs) and the second stage units were the households. The first stage units are selected from the sampling frame of PSUs and the second stage units are selected from a current list of households within the PSU, which is compiled just before the interviews for the survey.

The Master Sample Frame and stratification

The national sampling frame, which is maintained by the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS), is based on the enumeration areas (EAs) of the 2001 Population and Housing Census and the households within the EAs. The frame was stratified first by regions and then by urban/rural areas within each region. PSUs in the urban areas were further stratified into the high, middle or low levels of living according to the geographical location. In the regions where these levels contain large number of PSUs separate strata were made, while in the other regions a combined list of PSUs ordered by the levels was made. In the rural areas large proclaimed settlements and villages were stratified separately while the others were combined with the communal area PSUs. Communal and commercial area PSUs were grouped separately and combined to form one list for the rural strata. After all the above groupings the PSUs were geographically ordered within the strata.

Sample size and the master sample

Sample size is determined in order to make reliable estimates at the National urban/ rural and region level. This requirement is satisfied by the Master Sample, which is designed by the CBS to be used for a number of surveys. This is actually the first stage sample, which consists of 239 PSUs. The number of households per PSU is fixed at 25. Additions to the number of sample households within the PSU would not add much to the improvement of the precision but would only increase the cost.

Sample selection

At the first stage PSUs are selected using probability proportional to size where the size measure is the number of households as at the 2001 Population and Housing Census, coupled with the systematic sampling procedure. At the second stage households were selected using the systematic sampling procedure from a current list of households within the PSU, which is compiled just before the interviews for the survey. The extensive stratification of the frames together with the systematic sampling procedure enhanced the representation of different types of sub-population groups in the sample.

2.4 Fieldwork

With 25 sample households in each PSU, teams consisting of four interviewers and a supervisor is established to handle the workload. As a rule, five PSUs were allocated to each team. However, in cases where travel distances between and within PSUs were too large, only three or four PSUs are allocated to the team.

Editing and coding of the questionnaires takes place in regional centres. Each of the 13 regions is assigned two (2) editors/coders. All temporary field staff required (supervisors, interviewers and editors/coders) are recruited from and worked on the survey in their own regions. This measure improved the quality of the data in the sense that respondents were at ease talking to people they know and were at the same time satisfied that young people in their area were employed although only temporary. Another advantage is that the temporary staff found it easy to identify the PSU boundaries in their areas

Supervision was exercised at different levels. At the first level, the *team supervisor* is the immediate supervisor to the interviewers. At the next level is the *regional supervisor* who is in charge of all the fieldwork in the region and the editing and coding staff. Employment Officers and Labour Inspectors of the Ministry who are operating from the regions are appointed as regional supervisors. Finally, the *national supervisor* usually from the Head office is an overall supervisor for all activities within the allocated region.

A one-week training course is held in Windhoek for the team and regional supervisors. The training of interviewers and coders is conducted at five different centres at the same time to ensure uniformity. The team supervisors and the regional supervisors also assist during the one-week training of interviewers.

The field operation consists of two main activities: the listing of households in the sampled PSUs and interviewing the randomly selected households. The total time allocated for fieldwork is usually one month. The editing and coding of the questionnaires are handled in the regional centres and starts about a week later than the fieldwork and ran in parallel. Questionnaires that required further clarification were identified during this process and handed back to the teams for follow-up with the concerned households. This arrangement, proved to be efficient as many of the errors made by the interviewers were detected and corrected by them before the questionnaires left the regional centres.

2.6 Data analysis and processing

Manual processing was done in the field. Therefore the information from the field was ready for data capture. Around 20 data entry operators are recruited and work in different shifts for about two months. The data entry operators are temporary staff. The Census and Survey Processing System (CSPRO) software, a US Census Bureau product, is used for data capture while SPSS software is used for data cleaning, tabulation and analysis together with other packages such as the Microsoft Excel.

2.7 Scope and coverage

The scope of the survey is the population about which information is to be collected. The target population consists of private households in Namibia. The survey collects data pertaining to individuals and households of the target population. The population living in institutions such as hospitals, hostels, barracks and prisons are not covered by the survey. But if there were any private households within the institutions they were also covered.

The survey applies coverage rules to ensure that each person is associated with only one dwelling, and hence has only one chance of being interviewed.

Coverage of the PSUs and the households : Usually all PSU's selected for the survey are covered and the sample size is therefore not reduced. Although not all sampled households are covered during the survey, it is assumed that the characteristics of the households covered are broadly similar to those that were left out.

Challenges

Cognisant of the prevalence of youth unemployment in Namibia, the recruitment drive for field staff sought to mix youth with experience. However, most of the younger field supervisors were occasionally spotted on fast driving sprees. Several road accidents involving survey cars are reported.

Mine workers usually reside in dwelling units belonging to the mines, once there is retrenchment, a substantial number of sample households belonging to mineworkers depart from the mine, thereby making contact with the household virtually impossible in these PSUs.

Isolated instances of refusal are observed during the course of fieldwork. Some of the field teams are literally barred from entering the premises of sampled households. However, these households later agree to be interviewed after the intervention of the team or regional supervisor.

Some interviewers misunderstand certain crucial concepts, possibly due to poor comprehension of language. Respondents who stated that they constructed houses or built traditional huts for sale during the reference week are sometimes mistakenly entered as “homemakers”.