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Seminar on Techniques of Evaluation
of Basic Demographic Data

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THE AFRICAN CENSUS PROGRAMME AS A SOURCE OF DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

The African Census Programme as a Source of Demographic Data

1. When one considers the importance of up-to-date and reliable demographic data for practically all programmes of economic and social development, the impact of the African Census Programme on national and regional development programmes over the next few years can be appreciated.
2. Of the 41 African States which are members of ECA, 24 have taken censuses of their population since 1960, but the remaining 17 countries have never had a full-scale population census. Under the African Census Programme, 19 countries are definitely planning to take censuses of their population during the next two years and two others may take censuses which were originally scheduled for 1972. For 15 of these countries, this will be the first complete census in the country's history.
3. Two countries - Mauritius and Guinea - took censuses of their population in 1972; and two others - Gambia and Sudan - conducted censuses in April of this year. For the remainder of the year, censuses are scheduled in Libya, Mali, Cameroon, Nigeria, Central African Republic, and Upper Volta.
4. The African Census Programme is aimed primarily at those States which have not had a recent census of population and which would not be able to participate in the current round of censuses without external assistance. It is designed not only to provide information on the present structure of the population (age, sex, urban-rural residence, etc.), but also to supply information on the dynamics of population change (fertility, mortality, and both internal and international migration).
5. Assistance for national census programmes is available from the United Nations Fund for Population Activities, with the United Nations serving as the executing agency for such projects. The Economic Commission for Africa, in co-operation with the United Nations Statistical Office, the Population Division, and the Office of Technical Co-operation, has primary responsibility for the implementation of this programme.
6. At the regional level, a group of advisers is available to provide short-term assistance in the development of basic census plans formulation of country projects, organisation and administration, and general census methodology. The regional staff also includes specialists in sampling, data processing, census mapping, and demographic analysis, who are available to assist country experts on those aspects of their census programmes.
7. At the country level, one or more census experts will be provided to assist with the overall planning and conduct of the census programme in each of the participating countries. To date a total of 41 experts have been requested including 19 general census experts, 4 cartographers, 3 sampling experts, 6 data processing advisers, and 9 demographers. About half of these experts are already at their assigned posts or are in process of assignment.

8. While the major thrust of the African Census Programme will come in 1973 and 1974, most of the countries are already actively engaged in mapping operations, pretesting of questionnaires and procedures, training of staff, and other preparatory work.

9. Most of the 21 countries which are taking censuses of their population under the African Census Programme plan to carry out a complete count, household by household, with minimum subject coverage, and to supplement this count with a sample survey for additional subject detail. In some countries the sample survey will be conducted simultaneously with the complete count, while in other countries the sample enumeration will follow the complete count. A few countries do not plan to use sampling in their census programmes and several countries are still undecided.

10. The broad outlines of the programme, including a list of minimum and additional recommended items for inclusion in national censuses of population were adopted at the first meeting of the Consultative Group on the African Census Programme held in Addis Ababa in January 1971. (See Annex I). This list is presently under review (in connection with a list of recommended tabulations) and may be modified slightly for presentation at the Conference of African Statisticians and the Conference of African Demographers to be held respectively in Addis Ababa in November and December of this year.

11. Although the census plans for many countries are tentative and the information available at ECA Headquarters is admittedly incomplete, still it may be useful to review the list of items to see what information is likely to become available as a result of the 21 censuses being taken under the African Census Programme.

12. With regard to the minimum items, practically all of the countries will include questions for the entire population on name, place where found at the time of enumeration, sex, and age. Most of the countries will also ask a question on place of birth, but in several countries this question will be limited to the urban population.

13. The questions on fertility and mortality - children born alive, children living, live births in the past 12 months, and deaths in the past 12 months - will also be asked in most of the countries, but for about half of the countries, on a sample basis. Nevertheless data should be available at the national level for all countries, and at the province level for about half of them.

14. For the additional first-priority items, most of the countries plan to include questions on type of (economic) activity, occupation, educational attainment, and marital status, but in about half of the countries these questions will be asked only in the urban areas, and in several countries they will be restricted to a sample of the population. However, from the information presently available, it appears that information on these topics will be available for the urban population of most countries and for the rural population in about half of the countries.

15. With regard to the additional second-priority items, the plans of individual countries vary widely. None of the countries have indicated that they plan to include questions on the last three items on the list, i.e. number of years since first marriage, children below school age, and whether the person worked at any time in the past 12 months. Presumably the number of children below school age could be obtained in each country by relating the question on age to the standard age for school attendance. The items on number of years since first marriage and whether the person worked at any time in the past 12 months apparently were not considered sufficiently important to be included in any of the census programmes for which information is available.

16. The items, relationship to head of household and ethnic group or citizenship, are included in the census plans for most of the countries, although in several countries the question on ethnic group will be asked only in rural areas, and in at least four countries these questions will be restricted to a sample of the population.

17. Surprisingly, only about half of the countries have indicated that they plan to include a question on literacy, and for half of these, the question will only be asked in urban areas. For some of the remaining countries, literacy rates will probably be inferred from the information obtained on educational attainment.

18. About half of the countries plan to include questions on their census questionnaires for school attendance, employment status, and duration of residence but for several of the countries these questions will be asked only in urban areas, and in a few countries they will be limited to a sample of the population.

19. Questions on industry, usual place of residence, and previous place of residence, apparently will be asked only in a few countries and in most cases, only for the urban population.

20. Questions on religion will be asked only in four or five countries and a question on number of wives is to be asked only in one country.

21. As noted above, this information is tentative and subject to revision. However, it does provide some basis for anticipating the kind of demographic data that will be provided by the African Census Programme.

A N N E X

ESTIMATES REQUIRED FOR THE COUNTRIES AND ITEMS OF INFORMATION

I. Estimates required for each country

1. Total population by sex and geographic divisions
2. Age composition
3. Internal and international migration
4. Levels and trends of fertility
5. Levels and trends of mortality
6. Other items on economic activity, education, etc.

II. List of required items of information

I. Minimum list of items recommended at this meeting which are included in the "African Recommendations"

1. Name
2. Place where found at the time of enumeration
3. Place of birth
4. Sex
5. Age
6. Children born alive
7. Children living
8. Live births in past 12 months (by sex)⁺
9. Deaths in past 12 months (by sex and age)⁺

II. List of additional items recommended at this meeting which are included in the "African Recommendations"

(i) First Priority :

1. Type of (economic) activity
2. Occupation
3. Educational attainment
4. Marital status

(ii) Second Priority :

1. Relationship to head of household
2. Ethnic group (or citizenship)
3. Literacy
4. School attendance
5. Industry
6. Status (employer, employee, etc)
7. Usual place of resident +
8. Duration of residence +
9. Previous place of residence +

10. Religion⁺
11. Number of wives⁺
12. Number of years since first marriage⁺
13. Children below school age⁺
14. Worked any time in the past 12 months⁺

⁺ Considered "other useful topics" in the African Recommendations.