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ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA
Conference of African Statisticians
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EXTRACT FROM THE DRAFT REPORT OF THE
SEVENTEENTH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS
POPULATION COMMISSION

1. The Commission considered report E/CN.9/291 on the status of the programme as of 31 July 1973 containing information on the census plans and methods envisaged in the 21 countries participating in the programme. Supplementary information was provided by the representatives of the Economic Commission for Africa and the United Nations Fund for Population Activities. The report had been prepared by the Secretary-General at the request of the Population Commission at its second special session, and will be submitted as well, together with the recommendations of the Population Commission, to the consideration of the Conference of African Statisticians at its eighth session from 21 to 30 November 1973 and Conference of African Demographers at its second session on 13-19 May 1974.
2. The Commission was informed that three countries - Mauritius, Gambia and Sudan - had already undertaken their censuses in 1972 or 1973, and by the end of 1974, twelve more countries would have taken their censuses; of the 29 UN experts required in 1973 in the 21 countries receiving UN assistance under the Programme, 23 were already in position; \$ 16 million or 39 per cent of the total estimated cost of \$ 41 million is being provided by the UNFPA through the UN and the rest by the countries themselves, and that 42 per cent of this contribution will be assigned to contribute to the payment of local costs of the censuses. Considerable resources are also being devoted to the provision of data processing equipment, office equipment, vehicles and supplies required for the censuses, on the understanding that once the census enumerations are carried out, the equipment will continue to be used for further demographic investigations which will follow up the round of censuses.
3. It was noted that the censuses will be taken in successive stages, beginning with a general enumeration undertaken concurrently with a sample survey and followed up by additional demographic surveys. At the present time priority is being given to the complete enumeration.
4. With reference to the items of information to be collected, the analysis of present census plans indicates that in all the countries it will be possible to obtain basic demographic characteristics for the total population in urban and rural sedentary areas; that in a significant number of countries it would not be possible to obtain complete information on the economic characteristics of the population; and that in many countries special attention is being given to items which are of considerable interest to the respective countries, such as for example, the residence, mobility of the population (nomads, semi-nomads and visotirs) as well as the age at the first marriage.
5. Concern was voiced that a number of countries did not plan to collect information on the economic characteristics of the population, as recommended by the African experts in the African Recommendations for the 1970 Population Censuses.^{1/} Noting that such information was basic to economic and social development planning, the Commission urged upon the African countries to give due considerations and a high priority to include questions on economic characteristics in their censuses.

^{1/} United Nations publication (E/CN.14/CAS.6/1).

6. On the processing of the data, members of the Commission indicated that the success of sophisticated equipment would depend on the availability of local expertise.
7. It was noted that arrangements for census publicity in the countries are not reported in detail in the census plans and members of the Commission expressed concern with the danger that the population may not be well informed about the censuses, a matter which is of considerable importance, especially where a census is being taken for the first time.
8. In analysing the number of enumerators to be utilized in the various countries in relation to the population and duration of the census enumeration, concern was expressed at the large number of population to be enumerated per enumerator over a fairly long period of time, which in some cases run up to three months. Several members considered that in the light of experience in other regions the number of enumerators may be too small. The Commission requested the Secretary-General to draw the attention of the Governments and the African statisticians and demographers to this observation. It was indicated that in the face of inter-country migration, simultaneity of enumeration would be most desirable. In this connexion, the Commission noted with satisfaction that efforts were being made to co-ordinate the timing and methods of the censuses in Niger, Mali, and Upper Volta.
9. The Commission re-emphasized the importance of training of personnel for the Census Programme, calling attention to the need to plan carefully for the training of enumerators and supervisors. The training of technical personnel had been mainly oriented to satisfy the immediate needs, but attention should also be given to the provision of adequate training to all levels of national staff on more permanent bases. On the proposal made by the Government of France to provide further assistance for training in the Francophone countries, the Commission was informed that this proposal was being considered by the Secretariat with a view to arranging for a training programme in Yaounde to be initiated as soon as possible.
10. Questions were raised on the qualifications and briefing of the UN experts recruited for the countries. The Commission was informed that arrangements have been made for these experts to be briefed and that they will be called to a meeting where experience will be shared and additional technical support will be provided.
11. It was agreed that in-depth methodological studies are required, relating both to enumeration and analysis; in this connection, reference was made to methodological studies made at the ECA secretariat on various aspects of collection and analysis of demographic data, including those relating to the nomadic population and information on age, marital status, fertility and mortality, migration and urbanization, and economic characteristics. The Commission was informed that the ECA secretariat, in response to an ECA resolution, was preparing, in consultation with African Government departments and institutions, a manual on demographic concepts and definitions, suitable for African conditions.

12. The Commission attached considerable importance to the evaluation of censuses and to the studies of implications of the census results. It noted that a recent ECA Seminar on Techniques of Evaluation of Basic Demographic Data had noted that post-census checks did not form an intergal part of the African Census Programme and had requested the UN to develop plans for evaluation of census and sample survey data, to be considered by the Conference of African Statisticians and the Conference of African Demographers at their next sessions in 1973 and 1974 respectively.
13. Appreciating the magnitude of the Programme, which includes 15 of the 17 countries in Africa which never had a census before, the Commission considered the progress report reassuring, although the pace of census taking was somewhat slower than had been originally planned for by the respective governments, and incited the Secretary-General to report on the results of the Programme at its eighteenth session.
14. Noting that African experts had expressed the view at several ECA meetings that it was important that the World Fertility Survey should not divert resources from the African Census Programme, the Commission considered that it was important to co-ordinate both activities.
15. The Commission agreed that one census enumeration was not enough for analytical purposes (such as the preparation of population projections) or to ensure the continuous production of interrelated demographic, social and economic data and analysis. It noted that a programme of household surveys is being studied which might be conducted as follow-up of the African Census Programme if approved by the regional bodies concerned and subject to availability of resources.
16. On the census operations in the Sahalian area affected by a prolonged drought the Commission considered that prompt census results in these countries would be helpful in adopting medium term and long term measures. It noted with satisfaction that the United Nations and UNFPA had pledged its full support in response to ECOSOC resolution 1759(LIV) to the needs of these countries and would be ready to respond in a large measure to additional requests for assistance to them.