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ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA
Working Group on Censuses of Population
and Housing
Addis Ababa, 21 - 29 June 1965

THE 1970 POPULATION AND HOUSING
CENSUS PROGRAMMES IN THE AFRICAN REGION

65-1868

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Paragraphs</u>
I.. INTRODUCTION.....	1 - 4
II. PROGRESS TO DATE.....	5 - 7
Population census programme.....	5 - 6
Housing census programme.....	7
III. FUTURE ACTIVITIES.....	8 - 14
The Working Group.....	8 - 9
The Conference of African Statisticians.....	10
The Economic Commission.....	11
Time-table.....	12 - 14

ANNEX

Time-table of International and African Meetings Concerned with the Development of the United Nations 1970 "Principles and Recommendations for a Population Census" and "Principles and Recommendations for a Housing Census" and with the Formulation of the African Census Programmes

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction

1. Introduction 1

2. Objectives 2

3. Methodology 3

4. Results 4

5. Discussion 5

6. Conclusion 6

7. References 7

8. Appendix 8

9. Glossary 9

10. Bibliography 10

The following table shows the results of the experiment. The data indicates that the system is highly effective in reducing the number of errors. The results are consistent across all trials, suggesting a high level of reliability. The data also shows that the system is able to adapt to different conditions, which is a key feature of a good system. The results are presented in the following table:

I. INTRODUCTION

1. In the document entitled Progress Report on the 1970 World Population and Housing Census Programmes (E/CN.3/337), the Secretary General of the United Nations reported to the Thirteenth Session of the Statistical Commission on the objectives of and the promotional activities envisaged for the world programme of censuses to be taken around 1970. The programme, as set out in that document, will comprise a number of related international, regional and national activities to encourage in the period 1965-74 the maximum number of population and housing censuses designed so as to provide reliable basic data for social and economic planning and research.

2. Whereas this is the third period for which census programmes have been formulated on a worldwide basis, for the African region as a whole it represents the second stage of participation. In the period 1955-64 almost every country in Africa conducted a national population census or survey, a number of them for the first time in their history. Housing inquiries are a relatively new field in Africa as in other parts of the world; however, considerable progress was made in this respect also. These operations are reviewed in the papers: Methods and Problems of Population Censuses and Surveys in Africa, 1955-64 (E/CN.14/CAS.3/3/Rev.1) and Methods of Housing Censuses and Surveys: International Recommendations and African Practice (E/CN.14/CAS.4/CPH/7).

3. With this background of national experiences on which to draw, it becomes possible for countries of the region to consider to what extent their requirements may differ from those examined in the United Nations paper: Principles and Recommendations for a Population Census: Draft Recommendations for the 1970 Censuses (E/CN.3/330) and Principles and Recommendations for a Housing Census: Draft Recommendations for the 1970 Censuses (E/CN.3/332). If, as seem likely, it is felt that there is need to amplify certain parts of the international recommendations for use in Africa, they may be supplemented by suggestions as to their applicability in population and

housing censuses in the particular conditions of the African region.

4. Therefore, the Working Group has been convened in order to give to representatives of countries of the region the opportunity to formulate a preliminary African programme for the 1970 censuses. Suggestions are made below for the procedure by which this preliminary programme may be developed and approved. The suggested procedure is parallel to that proposed in Europe, in Asia and the Far East and in Latin America.

II. PROGRESS TO DATE

Population census programme

5. At three recent meetings major steps were taken in the promotion of a balanced programme of collection of reliable data:

- a) The Seminar on Population Problems in Africa, held in Cairo in 1962, which stressed the need for extension and improvement of basic demographic statistics and recommended the study of several topics of direct relevance to census-taking;
- b) The Third Conference of African Statisticians held in Addis Ababa in 1963, which endorsed the recommendations of the Cairo Seminar;
- c) The African Seminar on Vital Statistics held in Addis Ababa in 1964 in fulfillment of one of these recommendations; the conclusions reached at this meeting are relevant to the census programme because of the tendency in African countries to use the census as a means of obtaining substitutes for current vital statistics.

6. Apart from organising the Seminar on Vital Statistics, the Economic Commission has fulfilled other recommendations of the Cairo Seminar on Population Problems and the Third Conference of

African Statisticians by making the review of the censuses of 1954-64 referred to in paragraph 2 above, and by preparing studies of aspects of data collection which present special difficulties in Africa: the enumeration of nomads, the investigation of economic characteristics, the investigation of marital status and the problems of migration statistics, all of which will be presented to the Working Group and to the Fourth Conference of African Statisticians.

Housing census programme

7. As noted above, this is a relatively new field in Africa and the major activity has been the review of recent housing censuses and surveys referred to in paragraph 2 above. Like the review of population censuses and surveys, this paper will be presented to the Working Group and to the Fourth Conference of Statisticians.

8. The promotion of the collection of housing statistics in Africa will be advanced by the seminar on this subject which it is proposed should be held in 1966.

III. FUTURE ACTIVITIES

The Working Group

9. The priority for the near future is the preparation of regional recommendations for African participation in the 1970 Census Programme. This may be initiated by the Working Group's conclusions in regard to the experience of the 1960 censuses and the special studies which will be examined during the meeting, which may lead to recommendations concerning the types of data which should be collected, the methods of collecting the required data, the control of accuracy, the tabulations likely to be most useful, etc. It may not be possible for the Working Group to complete its work in one session, and for this reason, it may be necessary, subject to the availability of funds, to convene a second meeting perhaps early in 1967.

10. Obviously the formulation of an African programme will have implications for the Principles and Recommendations formulated by the United Nations and, to assist in the subsequent revision of these drafts, the Working Group may wish to summarise this aspect of its findings in the form of brief comments on the draft versions of the documents.

The Conference of African Statisticians

11. As the body which most widely represents the statistical interests of African countries, the Conference may serve (a) to promote the 1970 Programme in its general aspects and (b) to consider the conclusions reached by the Working Group on both the African Programme and the comments on the Principles and Recommendations and (c) to make such additional contributions as it may see fit on any aspect of the Programme.

The Economic Commission

12. The Secretariat of the Commission may participate in the census programme in a variety of ways according to the needs and wishes of the countries of the region, for example:-

- a) by assisting with technical meetings, such as the proposed Housing Statistics Seminar;
- b) by coordinating the training programme in the region (See paragraphs 21 - 24 of Progress Report on the 1970 World Population and Housing Census Programme);
- c) by coordinating other forms of technical assistance in the region, for example, through country experts or through the regional advisory service.

Time-table

13. It is suggested that the Working Group should submit its comments on the Principles and Recommendations to the Fourth Conference of African Statisticians in October 1965. In addition it may submit

such sections of the African Programme as it may be able to formulate in the time available during the June meeting of the Working Group.

14. The comments on the Principles and Recommendations, in the form approved by the Fourth Conference, could then be submitted for the consideration of the United Nations and the specialised agencies. Comments will be sought from member and associate member countries in each region by early 1966, after which the United Nations will prepare a revised draft of each of the documents, which will then be presented to a small group of international census experts and to the Statistical Commission of the United Nations. Endorsement of the recommendations for population censuses would also be sought from the Population Commission. The dates of the relevant sessions of these two bodies are not yet final, but it is hoped that they will be fixed at times which will enable the final adoption of the worldwide recommendations in 1967 and their publication in 1968.

15. Meanwhile, for the African region provision may be made for the Working Group to meet again in early 1967 to complete the formulation of the African programme which could be presented to the Fifth Conference of Statisticians in 1967 for endorsement.

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June 1965 ECA: Working Group on Censuses of Population and Housing (1st Session)

Will consider drafts of United Nations Principles and Recommendations for 1970 censuses and the experience of African countries and will begin to formulate a census programme for the region.

October 1965 ECA: Fourth Conference of African Statisticians

Will consider the report of the first session of the Working Group on Censuses of Population and Housing and drafts of United Nations Principles and Recommendations for 1970 censuses, and make such suggestions as it may see fit on the promotion of the regional programme.

Late 1965
early 1966 Governments of African countries will be asked for their comments on the Principles and Recommendations

Early 1966 Revision by the United Nations of the draft Principles and Recommendations

Date to be fixed United Nations: Meeting of group of international experts on population and housing censuses

Will review the revised drafts of the Principles and Recommendations.

Date to be fixed United Nations Statistical Commission
(14th Session)

Will consider the second revised draft of the Principles and Recommendations and may adopt United Nations recommendations.

Early 1967 ECA: Working Group on Censuses of Population and Housing (2nd Session)

Will continue the formulation of the African census programme.

---1967 ECA: Fifth Conference of African Statisticians

May adopt final recommendations for the African census programme.

Date to be fixed United Nations: Population Commission
(14th Session)

Will consider the revised draft of Principles and Recommendations (for Population Censuses) and may adopt United Nations recommendations.