

610937 (AY)

UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA

REPORT ON A MISSION TO LIBERIA  
(16 October to 13 November 1983)

BY

E. A. COLECRAFT  
REGIONAL ADVISER IN DEMOGRAPHIC STATISTICS  
STATISTICS DIVISION

December 1983  
Addis Ababa

This report is the sole responsibility of the writer. It has been submitted to the Department of Technical Co-operation for Development, United Nations which may alter or supplement the findings.

## Introduction

The mission was the first phase of a two months consultancy mission requested by the Government to advise and assist in the preparatory activities of the 1984 population census of Liberia.

ECA Statistics Division assisted the Government of Liberia in the formulation of a project document on the census which was subsequently approved for assistance by UNFPA.

The UNFPA contribution to the census project includes the provision of equipment, training fellowships and the services of a cartographic adviser and consultants in data processing and census analysis. It was also indicated in the project document that ECA Regional Advisors would provide any necessary back-stopping for the project.

During the mission discussions were held with the following to whom I wish to express my appreciation for their assistance and co-operation:

Mrs. Amelia Ward	Deputy Minister, Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs/Deputy Census Commissioner
Mr. Philip Gadegbeku	Assistant Minister, Bureau of Statistics
Mr. Abel Z. Massalee	Census Co-ordinator
Mr. Charles Green	Data Processing Manager, Bureau of Statistics
Mrs. Dorothy Chea-Johnson	Head, Statistical Planning Section, Census Office
Mr. John Howard	Senior Statistical Officer, Bureau of Statistics
Mr. G.K. Greenidge	Resident Representative, UNDP
Mrs. Normah Walker	Deputy Resident Representative, UNDP
Mr. R.R. Tripathi	U.N. Advisor in Census Cartography
Mr. Charles Caine	Programme Officer, UNDP

## Census Office

It was indicated in the census project document that the Population Division of the Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs (MPEA) would be reconstituted to set up a Census Office which would be responsible for the planning and execution of the 1984 population census. It was expected that the Census Office would have the following sections: statistical planning, publicity, field organization and administrative support. A Census Commissioner would have overall responsibility for the Census Office but the day-to-day administration of the Census Office was to be the responsibility of a Deputy Census Commissioner.

The Census Head Office was expected to be made up mainly of staff of the Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs and other government organizations/agencies who were to be seconded on full-time basis for census duties. The inclusion of staff from other organizations was to ensure that full use was made of available local expertise particularly in the fields of publicity and field organization and also to give the census the necessary national image.

I observed at the start of my mission that a Census Office with adequate office space and the full complement of staff as envisaged in the census project document had not been established even though census enumeration was expected to be carried out in about three months time.

The Population Division of MPEA had been reconstituted into statistical planning and cartography sections of a census organization at the time of the mission and were operating in the same office building but the activities in connection with publicity, field organization and administration were supposed to be performed by various other offices under the Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs. Those other offices, however, were performing census duties on part-time basis. Further, there was communication problem since the offices dealing with publicity, field organization and administration were housed in another building. The situation regarding administrative support was particularly disturbing. For instance, I observed that the Census Co-ordinator and U.N. Advisor on cartography were spending significant amount of time on administrative and sometimes clerical issues which should be handled by census Administrative/Accounts Officer. Thus, there were delays in resolving some outstanding technical problems and it was therefore not surprising that the census time-table was behind schedule.

My concerns about the organizational set up were brought to the attention of the census organizers and the Resident Representative, UNDP and as a result some officers of MPEA were assigned responsibility for administrative support, publicity and field organization on a full-time basis. It was emphasized that the release of staff for census duties on full-time basis should be considered as essential first step and that the census organizers should ensure effective division of labour and co-ordination of activities in order to overcome the bottlenecks being experienced.

#### Pilot Census

A pilot census to test the census questionnaire was conducted in July/August 1983 in six urban centres and twenty-three rural areas.

Junior Statistical Officers and Field Co-ordinators of the Population Division of the Bureau of Statistics were used as enumerators/supervisors after they had received three days training. Each enumerator was assigned an area where he had to enumerate about 60 households. The enumeration lasted one week and a total of 2340 households (1000 in urban areas and 1340 in rural areas) were covered.

After the enumeration the census organizers held a general meeting with the enumerators and supervisors to discuss problems and difficulties encountered. Some of the completed questionnaires were also screened to obtain impressions about areas of difficulty in the completion of the questionnaire. The comments of the field staff and the results of the screening were used to make the necessary amendments to the census questionnaire.

I was informed that the pilot census questionnaires would be coded and used to test the machine processing procedures including the testing of computer programs for the tabulation of the main census results.

#### Cartographic preparations

At the time of the mission, field demarcation of Enumeration Areas in Monrovia was in progress. Field work in all other areas had been completed and fair drawing of maps and delineation of Supervision and Enumeration Areas in the office were in the final stages.

It had been expected that the cartographic preparations including the production of Supervision and Enumeration Area maps would be completed by the end of October 1983 but at the end of my mission (12 November 1983) work was still in progress. The staff was, however, working overtime to ensure completion of all pre-enumeration cartographic work shortly after my departure.

The delay in the installation of air-conditioners in the map production room and the late acquisition of a photo-copying machine were given as some of the reasons for the failure to meet the target date for the completion of the work.

Since the Enumeration Area maps had not been printed at the time of the pilot census none of the maps could be tested at that time.

The ECA Regional Advisor in census cartography, Mr. Roger Hare visited Monrovia soon after my departure to assess the status of the cartographic preparations. A full account of the pre-enumeration cartographic work can be found in his mission report.

#### Census documents

The principal activity during the mission was the review of census documents which were in various stages of preparation. The documents included the following: Census questionnaire, Administrative Guidelines, Handbooks for Regional Census Officers, Field Supervisors and Enumerators, Training Manual, a number of control forms, list of proposed tables and their format and editing instructions.

At the time of the mission the manuscripts of the census questionnaires were ready to be sent to the printer so only minimal amendments in respect of the wording of some questions were recommended. In the case of some of the other documents, however, substantial revisions were considered necessary. For instance, the Enumerator's Handbook had to be revised in the light of later amendments to the questionnaire. It was also suggested that the Handbook should include sections

on techniques of interview and enumerator behaviour during enumeration as well as instructions on how to enumerate persons in group quarters and homeless persons. In the case of the Field Supervisor's Handbook, an elaboration of the types of checks to be carried out by the Field Supervisor during and after enumeration was recommended. Suggestions were also made for the revision of the Training Manual. For instance, it was suggested that specimen training time-table and tests to be administered during and after the training be prepared for inclusion in the Manual.

At the time of my departure final revision of some documents was near completion while other documents had reached the typing/duplication stage.

It was stressed that every effort should be made to ensure completion of the duplication of the Handbooks before the training of the field staff.

### Field organization

Liberia is administratively divided into nine counties and six territories. The counties/territories are further subdivided into districts. Under the districts are city corporations, townships and chiefdoms. For purposes of census field work the counties/territories have been grouped into five census regions and it was expected that a Census Office would be established in each of the five census regions. It was also intended to set up a Census Office in each administrative district.

At the time of my mission, however, neither a field organization unit at the national level nor census field offices at regional and district levels had been set up. I was informed that a sub-committee with responsibility for census activities at sub-national level had been established and there were plans for some members of the committee to visit various districts.

At my suggestion, a full-time Field Organizer was appointed and he started making arrangements for the recruitment and training of Regional Census Officers, Census Inspectors and District Supervisors. The training was expected to be conducted in Monrovia during the third week of November 1983.

The recruitment and training of Field Supervisors and Enumerators was expected to begin immediately after the deployment of Regional and District Census Officers and the establishment of census field offices. According to the time-table the training of all field staff would be completed by the middle of January 1984 so that Field Supervisors and Enumerators could get enough time to check the boundaries of their respective enumeration areas before 1 February 1984 when census enumeration was expected to begin.

### Publicity

A publicity and education sub-committee has been set up to plan the census publicity programme. However, at the time of the mission, with the exception of the publication of the Census Proclamation and a press conference in September 1983, the census had not been much publicized.

It had been planned that census publicity campaign would begin in November 1983 and it would comprise press releases/conferences, radio announcements, essay contest for schools, posters and stickers, as well as meetings with Chiefs and local headmen to solicit their co-operation. During the mission a full-time publicity officer was appointed to co-ordinate the publicity programme.

The need for adequate census education programme for all phases of census field activities was emphasized. In fact, the delay in the implementation of a census education and publicity programme seemed to have had some adverse effect on some of the census pre-enumeration activities. For instance, some of the cartographic assistants reported some problems with the public in connection with house numbering in Monrovia and those problems were attributed to the fact that the public had not been sufficiently informed about the census programme.

#### Census time-table

Census enumeration has been scheduled for 1 to 14 February 1984 and at the time of the mission a time-table of the census activities had been prepared. Unfortunately, due mainly to the loose census organizational set up, administrative bottlenecks, delay in provision of essential inputs, in particular vehicles, and financial constraints, the planned activities were behind schedule.

I called the attention of the census organizers to the critical state of affairs and pointed out that unless extra hours of work were put in, the census organization strengthened and effective supervision maintained, some essential activities might not be fully completed before the census enumeration date. I also cautioned against the temptation of reducing the period for the training of Field Supervisors and Enumerators and thus sending poorly trained Supervisors and Enumerators to the field in order to make up for lost time.

#### Data processing

Most of the questionnaire items are precoded so manual processing will be limited to screening and the coding of a few items. These are: geographical identification particulars, relationship to head of household, place of birth, ethnic affiliation, occupation and industry.

The machine processing is expected to be done by the Data Processing Division of the Bureau of Statistics on Wang VS80 computer which was installed in May 1983. The configuration of the installation is as follows:

- VS80 with CPU of 256K
- 1 Tape Unit
- 2 disk drives
- 1 printer (600 l.p.m.)
- 6 workstations

I was informed that six more workstations were expected before the start of the keying of the census information. It was also indicated that additional disk drive would be required for the processing of the census data since those in use were overloaded.

COCENTS and CONCOR software packages had already been installed and it was expected that USAID would provide the necessary funds for U.S. Bureau of the Census to install CENTS IV and conduct training for local personnel in February/March 1984.

At the time of the mission the Data Processing Division had the following staff: 1 Data Processing Manager, 4 Programmers (two of them were on study leave and were expected to return in 1984), 2 Trainee Programmers, 4 Computer Operators, 8 Keying Operators and 2 Supervisors. About 22 more Keying Operators were required to be recruited for the keying of the census information.

### Conclusion

The technical preparations for the census were proceeding fairly satisfactorily although production of some census documents including Enumeration Area maps were behind schedule. On the other hand, the census organizational structure in particular field organization, census education and publicity and office space including storage facilities for census activities at the Bureau of Statistics were far from satisfactory.

As stated earlier, the attention of the census organizers was called to the critical state of affairs and the need to redress the situation promptly.

In the course of the mission the Minister, Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs, who was also the Census Commissioner took steps to improve the situation. Officers were appointed to be responsible for field organization, publicity and administrative/financial matters on full-time basis. The next step is for the census organizers to ensure effective co-ordination and supervision of the census activities. It was also emphasized that adequate office space with storage facilities should be provided for census activities.