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REPORT ON
A MISSION TO THE REPUBLIC OF BOTSWANA
(22-29 September 1979)

by

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Lusaka

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

1. INTRODUCTION

The mission was undertaken at the request of the Government of the Republic of Botswana to advise on the preparations for the 1981 Population Census of Botswana.

The request was made through the UNFPA Co-ordinator for the sub-region.

In the course of the mission I had discussion with the persons listed in the Appendix.

2. THE CENSUS OFFICE

It is planned that a Census Office will be set up under the Central Statistics Office to undertake the 1981 population census. At the time of my mission a senior statistician had been designated as the Census Officer who will be the de facto head of the Census Office. The Government Statistician will be the de jure head.

a) Office accommodation:

Office space consisting of seven room units have been allocated for the use of the Census Office. I accompanied the Government Statistician and the United Nations Census Adviser, who arrived in the country in the course of my mission, to inspect the rooms and we found them adequate at least for the preparatory stages of the census programme. Additional room units may be required during the clerical processing phase of the census. The rooms were expected to be available shortly.

b) Census Head Office Staff:

The Government Statistician indicated that an Executive Officer and a Clerical Officer would be assigned immediately to census duties. These officers together with the Census Officer would form the nucleus of the Census Head Office. The census plan makes provision for the recruitment of two temporary senior typists and I recommend that they are recruited as soon as possible even though the Government Statistician did indicate that his Secretary could be used to type census material.

It is expected that other Census Head Office Staff, in particular, the Field Organizer and the Census Publicity and Census Education Officers will be seconded from other Government Organisations. The Government Statistician informed me that he had already notified the Ministry of Education concerning the secondment of staff but I urged that particular individuals should first be identified through informal discussions and then their secondment sought. The Central Census Committee which will be at the ministerial level could be used to secure the secondment of the appropriate staff.

3. LEGAL BASIS OF THE CENSUS

The UN Census Adviser and the Government Statistician have started examining the Statistics Act to ascertain whether there is an adequate legal basis for the census and it is essential that this exercise is completed without delay in order to ensure that other operations of the census programme are carried out smoothly and on time.

4. DATA USERS CONFERENCE

I recommended that the proposed topics to be covered in the census should be circulated among the various Government organizations, the appropriate departments of the University and other major institutional users of census data to solicit their comments. Also it will be desirable to organize a data users conference particularly when the draft of the tabulation plan has been prepared. This will ensure that full advantage of the census is taken to meet the data needs of the country.

5. DATA PROCESSING

It is indicated in the Project Document that "the data processing plans, including automatic editing and tabulation will be finalized after the visit of the ECA Regional Adviser in Data Processing". This visit has not been undertaken and the Government Statistician informed me that he had already written to ECA requesting such a mission. It is my view that either the ECA Regional Adviser or the UN Inter-regional Adviser should visit the country as soon as possible to finalize the data processing plans otherwise there will be a serious bottleneck in the data entry phase of the census programme.

It is expected that the census information will be processed at the Government's Computer Bureau. The Bureau has now key-edit machines (5 stations). The Processor, however, can handle sixteen key stations and two discs. The manager of the Bureau informed me that the workload on the five key stations (working one shift) was such that the Bureau cannot undertake the data entry of the census information unless additional key-edit machines were acquired. An alternative plan might be the use of the existing machines on a second shift but it was pointed out that there might be difficulties in recruiting operators for the second shift.

There is no provision in the budget (Project Document) for the purchase or rental of data entry equipment hence it is essential that the data processing mission is undertaken without delay to finalize the plans.

For the census tabulation the indications are that the Computer Bureau is well equipped for the work. The Bureau has an ILC-2956 with 4 EDS200, 4 magnetic tape decks (9 tracks) and 2 printers.

The staffing situation of the Bureau is as follows:-

- 1 Manager
- 4 Principal Programmers
- 1 Senior Programmer
- 2 Trainee Programmers (in U.K.)
- 6 Punch Operators
- 1 Punch room Supervisor
- 4 Computer Operators
- 3 Control Staff

There are also 3 vacancies for programmers.

The trainee programmers are expected in the country in 1980 and it will be desirable if on their return, one of them is made the national counterpart of the UN data processing expert who will be recruited under the census project.

6. CONCLUSION

The mission dealt mainly with the initial preparations for the census. The major issue which needs immediate attention is the finalization of the data processing plans. As I have indicated, a mission needs to be fielded to finalize the plans. I may add that, in my view, it is also essential that the UN data processing expert to be recruited should have experience in the use of the available software packages for census tabulation in order to avoid some of the problems which some countries in the Region have faced in their census data processing.

The Census Adviser also needs to examine the census budget and the time-table and make any necessary revision as soon as possible.

Apart from the discussions on the census plans I had discussions also at the University of Botswana and the Town and Regional Planning Office. The discussion at the University was in connection with the Demographic Unit which is to be established in one of the Departments of the Faculty of Economics and Social Studies. This project has already been approved and the lecturer is expected shortly. It is expected that the lecturer will be actively involved in the census programme and I did indicate that it would be desirable to involve the demography and sociology students in some of the field tests envisaged under the census programme. Both the Dean of the Faculty of Economics and Social Studies and the Head of Sociology Department were receptive to the idea.

The discussion at the Town and Regional Planning Office was in connection with the data needs of the department. My discussion with the Officers gave me the impression that if the Central Statistics Office is unable to provide their demographic data needs then they might establish a field data collection team in the department. I do not think this will be desirable hence the Central Statistics Office should endeavour to establish a continuing household survey capability which will enable the department to provide the data needs of the country during the inter-censal periods. Such a household surveys programme should be a follow-up of the census programme.

APPENDIX

LIST OF PERSONS WITH WHOM DISCUSSIONS WERE HELD

1. Mr. F. Modise, Government Statistician
2. Mr. B. Downine, Research Statistician, Central Statistics Office
3. Mr. J.H. Case, Project Co-ordinator, Botswana National Migration Study, C.S.O.
4. Dr. Nair, WHO Adviser on Medical Statistics
5. Mr. Z. Moapare, Statistical Officer, Medical Statistics Unit
6. Mr. M. Small, Ag. Manager, Computer Bureau
7. Prof. N. Ahmed, Dean of the Faculty of Economics & Social Studies
8. Prof. R.K. Pillai, Head, Dept. of Statistics, U.C.B.
9. Dr. K.K. Prah, Head, Department of Sociology, U.C.B.
10. Mr. York-Smith, Director, Town and Regional Planning
11. Mr. O. Anderson, Principal Urban Planner, Town & Regional Planning Dept.
12. Mr. T. Greenhow, Regional Planner, Town & Regional Planning
13. Ms. Agatha Lapointe, Regional Planner, Town & Regional Planning
14. Mr. D. Persson, Regional Planner, Town and Regional Planning
15. Mr. Teshome, Resident Representative, a.i. UNDP
16. Mr. W. Adegbonryega, UN Census Adviser
17. Mr. C. Spoerel, Junior Programme Officer