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**POPULATION CENSUSES - LESSONS FROM THE 2010 ROUND OF CE
THE 2020 ROUND TO MEET THE POST-2015 AC**

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Population Censuses—Lessons from the 2010 Round of Censuses and Planning for the 2020 Round to Meet the Post-2015 Agenda

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A. INTRODUCTION

Population and Housing Censuses (PHCs) have remained a major source of demographic and socio-economic data for many countries. Their importance is even higher in many African countries that do not have a functional civil registration system. The United Nations has highlighted the importance of population censuses in the development process and recommends that all countries should produce detailed population and housing statistics for small area domains at least once every 10 years.

B. EXPERIENCES AND LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE 2010 ROUND OF CENSUSES

The United Nations designated the period 2005-2014 as the 2010 Round of Population and Housing Censuses (RPHCs). During this round, 49 out of the 55 African countries undertook a population census. All the EAC countries (Burundi, Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda and Uganda) had a population census during this round.

Census evaluation was an integral part of the census operations to guarantee quality of the exercise. Specifically, a post-enumeration survey (PES) was conducted in 1 per cent of the EAs. The enumeration for the PES took place two months after the main census enumeration.

The data dissemination will be undertaken in 2017-2018, and is expected that a multi-media approach will be used, i.e., a mixture of the traditional channels and the upcoming electronic media.

Digitised administrative area maps will be used to support the dissemination of the census findings, especially for the small areas.

C. USE OF CENSUSES TO MONITOR THE MDGs—THE UGANDA CASE

A typical population census is a good source of data for some of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The MDG indicators can be classified into three broad categories:

- i). Those that are being provided by the Population Census;
- ii). Those that can be provided by a Population Census but are currently NOT being provided;
and
- iii). Those that cannot be provided by the Population Census.

In Uganda, population census data was used to generate only a few (less than 20) of the MDG indicators, while the rest of the indicators were generated from sample surveys and administrative data.

The biggest strength of the population census was in localisation of the MDG monitoring. Because of its feature of being able to produce 'small area statistics', the population census in Uganda was used as a tool to directly and/or indirectly monitor some MDG indicators at the sub-national level. This practice is more critical in countries that don't have a sound civil registration system.

In some cases, regression techniques were applied on census data to obtain MDG indicators (specifically poverty-level estimates) at the sub-national level. However, because censuses are usually conducted after 10 years, this approach could not be used to frequently monitor progress on the MDGs.

In 2009, Uganda undertook a pilot MDG localisation survey in five local Governments to increase awareness about MDGs and assess their progress towards achieving the MDGs. It was evident that the estimation of the MDG indicators is key in focusing local government planning towards the national and international agenda. However, the capacity gaps within the local governments posed a challenge to conducting such a survey in other local governments.

In the case of the MDGs that are derived from administrative data, the population projections from the census have remained the most credible source of the target population (which is the denominator for the rate). However, this has had challenges especially at the sub-national levels, in some cases resulting into implausible rates.

The use of scanning technology for data processing has improved on the timeliness of the census data. However, there is still a big lag between the conclusion of data collection and availability of results.

Technological advancements have also eased the dissemination of census findings. In Uganda, in addition to the digital reports and web-based dissemination tools, census information was packaged in the

more robust in measuring some of the indicators such as unemployment rate, they have the limitation of not being able to provide lower level estimates.

- v. The use of proxy indicators. The census may not be able to provide some of the indicators such as school enrolment. Instead, a proxy indicator (school attendance) is used.
- vi. There is no national consensus on some concepts (such as population living in slums). This situation is further worsened by the fact that the common practice is to geo-reference the census data and subsequently publish the census results by administrative areas while slum areas cross area boundaries. Thus, it is not usually easy to obtain the population that resides in slum areas.
- vii. The Uganda censuses of 1991 and 2002 generated infant and under-five mortality rates using indirect methods. These have a reference date, which is several years prior to the census enumeration date, hence not very useful for baseline setting or monitoring MDG progress.
- viii. It is desirable that the data are internationally comparable. However, in addition to the varying census dates, methodology, concepts and categorizations may not be comparable across countries. This renders the international comparison difficult.

E. RECOMMENDATIONS

a. *Principles and standards*

b. *Technology innovation and analysis*

- f) **Use of technology:** NSOs should take advantage of the current advancement in technology to share the Census Information more widely

c. *Capacity and resource*

- g) **Funding:** Census undertaking is an expensive exercise, there is need to ensure sustainable funding for production of statistics to inform the SDGs. These may include:
 - o Use of innovative approaches to minimise the cost of census undertaking;
 - o In as much as possible, spread out the census cost over a wider period to minimise the heavy burden during the enumeration period;
- h) **Human Capital:** Africa has developed a critical mass of experts in census management although some gaps still exist in the census analysis skills. African countries should emphasise utilising these skills within the framework of the South-to-South cooperation;
- i) **Data Literacy/Utilisation:** The current levels of data utilisation are quite low. Alongside the dissemination of the census findings, National Statistics Offices (NSOs) should educate the general public about the importance and inevitability of data in the planning processes;
- j) **Private Sector Involvement:** NSOs should interest/invite the private sector to support some of the census activities, without compromising the objectives of either the private sector or the census activity. A case in point is use of the private sector to support census education and publicity.

F. CONCLUSION

Population censuses were very instrumental in defining the baseline and monitoring of the MDGs. However, this was with some challenges of both technical and managerial nature. In the post-2015 era, censuses are still expected to have an influential role in setting the baseline and monitoring the SDGs. The censuses are expected to build on the lessons from the 2010 round of population and housing censuses.

REFERENCE

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