



**Association of
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Lessons Learned from Organizing and Implementing the Kenya Population Censuses*

KEY MESSAGES

- The 2019 National Population and Housing Census provides Kenya with yet another opportunity to produce data on the population of Kenya and its diversity.
- The exercise will also establish a number key statistical indicators to guide and measure economic and social development for the coming decade, especially in support of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- The 2019 National Population and Housing Census will be conducted for the first time with the participation of 47 county governments in the country. This will entail challenges that have been faced before in similar exercises.
- Prudent use of census data will facilitate the establishment of empirical ground on which to negotiate and develop national policies and provide the basis for evidence-based development planning, especially in relation to Vision 2030.
- AFICS-Kenya brings a wide range of expertise on population, census and survey methodology and other development matters that can support the various efforts in ensuring that the exercise is fully beneficial to Kenya.

1. Introduction

Kenya takes pride in having successfully conducted five population and housing censuses, the results of which have been used for different social and economic purposes. The next census, however, will be conducted under a new constitution with the participation of 47 county governments. As a result, this will be a much more challenging undertaking than any previous census. Regardless of position or political opinion, the forthcoming census should be embraced as a genuine effort to produce critical data and information for Kenya.

Around the world, census data have been used in analysing demographic and socio-economic diversity and disparities across the country, and to benchmark development indicators. The conduct of a census also has the symbolic effect of making people feel important and part of a whole. In this AFICS-Kenya briefing note, these sentiments are taken fully into consideration, as issues are identified which should be taken into account in the preparation of the forthcoming census. The briefing note also offers some food for thought with the aim of ensuring that the 2019 census exercise is perceived and carried out in a manner most beneficial to the

country. At the action stage, this note offers some ideas about ensuring impartial implementation of the exercise, and guaranteeing sound use of the 2019 census data.

It is not uncommon that population censuses are beset with technical and non-technical problems (sometimes of a political nature), apart from the very heavy cost associated with the exercise. In addition, in many developing countries the effective use of census data is impeded by poor follow-up and insufficient capacity to make more detailed analyses of the data once they have been collected. Over the last 20 years, censuses have been compromised by the politicization of the process, or, on occasion, outright doctoring of data. The best example of such politicization is given by Arikpo (1988) in the case of Nigeria, describing how the Government has been unable to effectively use the data that it needs to plan its development agenda.

In Kenya's case, the 2019 Population and Housing Census will be the first under the country's new constitution, the intricacies of which were not envisaged in the 2006 Statistical Act. This necessitates a well-thought-out approach, which must support this process to its successful completion.

2. Background

Since independence, Kenya has conducted five censuses: in 1969, 1979, 1989, 1999 and 2009. The last population census in Kenya was conducted in 2009, following the decennial census programme recommended by the United Nations. Accordingly, the next census is scheduled for August 2019. Statistical Act No. 4 of 2006 mandates the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS) to be the sole government agency for the collection, analysis and dissemination of official demographic, social and economic statistics.

A population census, as defined by the United Nations, covers the total process of collecting, compiling, evaluating, analysing and publishing or otherwise disseminating demographic, economic and social data pertaining, at a specified time, to all persons in a country or in a well delimited part of a country.

In the 2009 census in Kenya, it was estimated that 38,610,097 people were living in the country (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2001). Under current estimates, it is projected that the population will surpass 50 million, an increase of over 10 million over the past decade. By all standards, this increase is beyond any development agenda that the Government has put in place. Census population data are essential for effective development planning and policy formulation, as well as for evaluating and monitoring development programmes. The modern approach to development planning involves ensuring that relevant, reliable and recent data are available and properly used.

Kenya's population is both young and diverse and home to many of Africa's linguistic and ethnic groups. With at least three quarters of the population aged under 30 years, the country is set for rapid population growth and rapid urbanization, with little prospects of any decline in fertility. These factors are critical in the national development debate, hence the importance of the 2019 population and housing census.

The importance of recent and reliable data becomes more compelling in the context of Kenya's devolution agenda and decentralization policies that require data at sub-national levels. Censuses are generally recognized as the most useful source of information on demographic and socio-economic characteristics for all members of a given society. Inadequate or a total lack of population data has seriously hampered policymaking and planning across a broad range of sectors in many countries, including the measurement of progress towards national and international development goals (Norfariza, 2001).

3. National statistical systems

The National Statistical System in Kenya, like those of all other countries in the world, is a rich source of statistical

information. In 2007, the Government of Kenya embarked on a project to develop the national statistics system (also known as the Statistical Capacity Building Programme, or STATCAP), the objective of which was "to establish a sustainable national statistical system to provide reliable, timely and accurate data in accordance with international standards" (World Bank, 2007). It encompassed institutional reforms to create a strong agency with clear mandates, training, and technical assistance to enhance managerial and professional skills, along with statistical infrastructure and information and communications technology equipment. The Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS) was the project's implementing agency.

Upon completion of the project, the KNBS and other data producers benefited from increased recognition. At the agency level, KNBS exhibited improved capacity for data generation and management. World Bank staff who evaluated the project in 2015 found significant improvements in almost all aspects of data management but were quick to add that there were still areas where further improvements were needed (World Bank, 2016). Data entry, quality analysis and dissemination were rated on a scale from moderate to satisfactory, suggesting that there was room for progress. The only major problem identified was corruption and its effect in the process of data management.

4. Lessons learned in the conduct of population and housing censuses

During the 2009 population and housing census, detailed data were collected on demographic, social and economic characteristics that were deemed vital for policy formulation and decision-making in the planning process (KNBS, 2001). With the assistance of development partners with special expertise, a detailed analysis was undertaken and five monographs produced, on such areas as economic characteristics, advocacy, education, fertility and marriage, housing characteristics, mortality and gender. The reports have been widely used.

While it is not envisaged that problems encountered in 2009 will repeat themselves (see box below), it is possible that recent political events and the drought in the country might create obstacles to the collection, analysis and dissemination of data. In this regard, concerted efforts should be made to ensure that as far as possible the 2019 census is depoliticized and that data can be used to push forward the country's development agenda.

It should be mentioned that the process of census planning and implementation is a complex and expensive exercise that tests the resolve and resilience of statistical agencies, including KNBS, government ministries, organizations, institutions and individuals. There is no doubt that, as in the 2009 census, KNBS will require substantial support from development partners in terms of finance, resources and technical consultations.

Box 1:**2009 Population and Housing Census****Lessons learned**

- The census was guided by UN principles and recommendations for the 2010 round of population and housing censuses (United Nations Statistics Division, 2008)
- The Government received adequate technical assistance from a number of parties and donors
- Technical assistance was provided to key census personnel such as supervisors, enumerators and even local guides
- Adequate tools were made available and other necessary support provided for field work

Challenges

- Competing national interests such as famine, drought, resettlement of IDPs
- Insecurity concerns
- Post-election violence disrupted mapping activities
- Complex logistics for enumeration of pastoralist communities required more resources
- Creation of new districts raised the census budget
- Cash-flow problems
- Delays in releasing the results due to conflicting figures, especially from the northern part of the country

5. Key technical challenges related to the 2019 population and housing census

As already mentioned, various organizations and consultancies assisted with the planning and implementation of the 2009 population and housing census. These include the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the U. S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the UK Department for International Development (DfID) and a number of individual consultants (KNBS, 2001). The organizations provided necessary resources and technical skills that ensured the success of the census. Although KNBS has well trained staff, past experience has demonstrated a number of technical areas which will need buttressing, such as detailed demographic and social analysis of data, evaluation of data quality, and the dissemination and full use of census results. Some of these issues are highlighted below.

5.1 Census data analysis

It has been observed that most national statistical offices become complacent after producing basic national and subnational census reports. In addition, there are many examples in other countries where there are greater financial incentives to collect data (e.g., per diem for field work) but no financial incentives for data analysis. Since censuses provide data at every subnational level, more should be done to ensure that census data are fully analysed and then put to good use at those lower administrative levels. Given the reasonable efforts that have been made at the national level in the conduct of in-depth data analysis, more can be undertaken at the subnational level too. Analysis at the county level will ensure better planning at that level.

One strategy that can be deployed is the training of staff at the subnational level to enable analysis and interpretation of data. Senior staff at headquarters and consultants can assist in training. The prevailing human resource development, management and infrastructural limitations in the statistics industry could be remedied through a deliberate action to

design a human resource management and development strategy to respond to the identified needs for all categories of practitioners and users of statistics at the subnational level.

5.2 Data quality evaluation

With the advent of more advanced technologies, countries are now undertaking post-enumeration surveys. These surveys are designed, among other things, to serve the following purposes: to quantitatively evaluate the accuracy of the census data in terms of coverage and content error; to evaluate the quality of enumeration areas as sampling units for intercensal and household-based surveys; to provide a basis for documenting lessons learned for the conduct of future censuses; to furnish information on sources and causes of errors; and to provide the quantitative information required for determining the success of census programmes (Onsembe, 2002). KNBS should consider undertaking a post-enumeration survey immediately after August 2019.

5.3 Dissemination of results

There is a need for KNBS to appropriately package existing data so as to facilitate their use in analysis, with a view to informing policy debate and contributing to the knowledge base. It is important to mention that "Results-based Management (RBM)", a tool promoted by international and intergovernmental organizations, more specifically UNFPA, is dependent on availability of up-to-date and reliable data. RBM, which emphasizes evidence-based planning, policy formulation and decision-making, should be applied by all decision makers, in particular, those in government (national and county) and private business.

5.4 Data use

Overall, there has been poor utilization of data generated by KNBS. Possible reasons for this include late production of the results; poor dissemination strategies; inadequate processing; poor quality data that may not meet the expectations of users; and the inaccessibility of data due to

poor government policies. It can be further argued that, as in many other countries in the region, secondary analysis has not been properly planned and undertaken in Kenya. It is not uncommon to find that most census reports are at national and regional levels, and very rare at subnational levels. In the same vein, although census data exist in most countries, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms of international programmes remain weak or non-existent.

5.5 Non-technical issues

Regardless of how effectively they might have been prepared, censuses in many countries are often beset with non-technical issues which can completely disrupt an otherwise well-prepared exercise. Principal among these is the politicization of census for different reasons. Bearing in mind that the 2019 census will come just before the 2022 general election, care must be taken to delink the two and ensure that political considerations do not affect the census. This is a very delicate issue which calls for very careful thought. Extensive consultations and efforts will be needed to ensure the political and policy buy-in necessary for a successful census.

6. Concluding observations

- Even though the Government conducted a successful census in 2009, AFICS-K believes that, for the 2019 exercise, the Government should ensure that both technical and non-technical areas are addressed before the census is conducted. These include the question of how in-depth data analysis will be carried out and the issues relating to demographics and social analysis, evaluation and data quality, and the packaging and dissemination of census results. Moreover, the Government should work closely with county governments to ensure that the exercise is depoliticized so as to ensure successful completion.
- From the lessons learned in 2009, AFICS-Kenya recommends taking key proactive actions concentrating on issues that might otherwise prevent a successful census. The AFICS-K multidisciplinary team is willing and ready to support the Government and, together with other stakeholders, to work to ensure a successful census.

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