

## **Opportunities for census data collection in Africa for the 2030 PHC round**

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### **Background**

Several African countries have undertaken population and housing censuses (PHC) in the last three rounds with 44 in the 1990 round (1985-1994), 38 in the 2000 round (1995-2004) and 47 in the 2010 round (2005-2014). In the 2020 round (2015-2024) 27 countries have undertaken their censuses, prospectively, it is expected that 49 would have undertaken their censuses by the end of the round.

In the 2020 Round of PHC, all African countries committed to conduct a 'digital' PHC. This was in line with the recommendations of the 7<sup>th</sup> Statistical Commission on transition from manual to digital systems and the use of improved methods and new technologies during implementation of PHC in the 2020 Round of PHC in Africa. The use of technology was aimed to increase the reliability and accessibility of census products and statistics in a timely manner. There have since been continuous efforts to use alternative approaches and technologies to improve on data quality, timeliness and dissemination of census results while considering the ever-increasing costs of carrying out population censuses.

During implementation of 2020 Round of PHC in Africa, ECA in collaboration with UNFPA and ONS supported various African Countries to undertake Digital PHC. In the eight session of the Statistical Commission for Africa, ECA and its partners were encouraged to continue implementing South-South cooperation and other approaches of sharing of technical expertise among countries in implementation of Censuses; member states were called upon to share experiences and key lessons learned from the 2020 round of census and work with ECA and other partners to build a collective knowledge base for all African countries that can be used as a resource during the 2030 round; and called upon ECA, UNFPA and other development partners to continue to provide support to countries in implementation of the 2020 round of censuses and in preparation for the 2030 round of censuses and to coordinate technical assistance to countries to ensure efficient implementation of the censuses. Each country that has implemented a digital census, has had a unique experience and lessons learned while receiving the support within the context of Africa that was worth documenting for future planning and implementation of PHCs.

### **Objective**

This paper aims to 1) demonstrate census data collection opportunities for the 2030 PHC round to ensure accuracy, privacy, and efficiency. These opportunities are drawn from selected African country experiences, key lessons learned, good practices and recommendations during implementation of the 2020 round of PHC long the census business process model. 2) demonstrate innovative approaches and applications for efficient and effective management of census field operations and management. 3) highlight key considerations for adoption of new census methods for the 2030 round,

including mixed methods for census enumeration, with combinations of traditional and Internet based data collection as well as registry-based censuses in the African context.

## **Methodology**

This paper draws its content from experiences of National Statistical Offices, Pan-African Agencies and census experts supporting implementation of PHC in Africa during the 2020 Round of PHC. The information was provided voluntarily by the various stakeholders, reviewed, and will be published.

## **Results**

The opportunities, good practices and lessons learned are aligned to the generic statistical business process of a census, ie census planning, cartographic mapping, pretest and pilot census, recruitment, training, logistics, financial management, procurement, publicity and advocacy, dissemination, ICT infrastructure, enumeration, data transmission and security, data processing, and data archiving. The paper explains the opportunities and strategies presented in each of the census implementation phases.

Regarding innovative approaches and applications, UNECA made various technological innovations to support countries, and these provide ground for leveraging improved data collection in the 2030 round. These innovations include a tablets provisioning application used for automated provisioning of tablets, a robust census and survey monitoring dashboard, a support center system, and a field management toolkit (issue tracker) to address common challenges in the field. In addition, a census dissemination toolkit has been developed as well as a census project management toolkit to be released with the intension to ensure efficiency in the upcoming censuses. This paper explains the advantages that each toolkit presents to the census process.

Despite the existence of guiding documents, there were notable challenges with activity and task scheduling in the 2020 round, hence a census planning checklist has been proposed to address the issue of delays in implementation.

Adoption of new census methods for the 2030 round, including mixed methods for census enumeration, with combinations of traditional and internet-based data collection as well as registry-based censuses in the African context requires careful considerations and extensive planning. This paper elaborates the key issues including duplication, data comparability issues, timelines for each mode, and response integration.

The paper also notes the fact that although there were innovations undertaken during the 2020 round, there were potential technological and methodological challenges to adopting new approaches to census data collection and highlights creative solutions that were adopted.

## **Conclusion**

The good practices and lessons learned from the 2020 round of PHC coupled with innovative technological approaches, applications and toolkits provide an opportunity for full digital censuses to have efficient census data collection processes for the 2030 round in Africa. Nonetheless, it is important to emphasize that transitioning to digital censuses necessitates thoughtful deliberation regarding the design, planning, and allocation of resources to maximize the advantages and minimize potential risks.

Based on the findings, African countries are urged to persevere in implementing the digital census method leveraging on the current opportunities as it brings about several benefits, such as the timely availability of census data, improved accuracy in outcomes, and increased potential for geospatial analysis.