



6th Africa Symposium on Statistical Development
31 October – 2 November 2010: Cairo, Egypt

*'Data Analysis and Use in the 2010 Round of
Population and Housing Censuses'*

EXECUTIVE REPORT

18 November 2010

1. Background

The Africa Symposia on Statistical Development (ASSD) provides a platform for all African statistics agencies and statisticians to work together in building the requisite capacity for Africa to produce and utilize data and information necessary for evidence-based decision-making.

It all started in Yaoundé, Cameroon in November 2005 when African countries mandated South Africa to host them to discuss the 2010 censuses and to come up with an African position and contribution into the Principles and Recommendations of the 2010 World Programme on Population and Housing Censuses (RPHCs). At the advent of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), Africa's contribution to global dialogue on revisions and recommendations made to the 2010 round of population and housing censuses and the role that population and housing censuses play as the source of the necessary underlying data, is crucial.

In close consultation with the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) and the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD), the first ASSD conference was held in Cape Town, South Africa titled the '2006 Africa Symposium on Statistical Development: The 2010 Round of Population & Housing Censuses'. The African Development Bank (AfDB), African Union Commission and other partners are making significant contributions in the advancement of the ASSD course.

Aimed at mobilising all of Africa to take statistics seriously, the ASSD is held annually and has outlined for itself a 53-year journey that will see the symposia traverse 53 African countries in the period. In addition to the inaugural ASSD held in Cape Town in 2006; to date five more conferences have been successfully held in Kigali (Rwanda), Accra (Ghana), Luanda (Angola), Dakar (Senegal) and recently in Cairo (Egypt).

The ASSD has increased the ability of statistical practitioners to work together and embrace an Afro-centric approach to statistical development characterized by such frameworks as the Reference Regional Strategic Framework for the development of statistics in Africa, the African Charter on Statistics, and so forth. Almost all the African countries bar Somalia have conducted or are planning to undertake censuses in the 2010 Round of Population and Housing Censuses (RPHC). Through the ASSD, it has been possible to provide support to countries emerging out of conflict to enable them to undertake censuses and the fourth ASSD in Angola has given birth to an African Census Peer Support Mechanism intended to guide and manage an Africa-wide framework of properly coordinated actions to support countries undertaking censuses with particular emphasis on fragile states.

2. Introduction

The 6th ASSD attracted about 350 participants with interest in statistics from across the globe. This report provides an executive summary of proceedings, deliberations, decisions taken at the 6th ASSD held in Cairo from 31 October to 2 November 2010 and follows the structure of the scientific programme of the symposium.

Participants at the 6th ASSD represented a broad spectrum of players from National Statistics Offices, Pan-African institutions, international partners, ISIBalo Young African Statisticians, Organs of State and Development Agencies.

3. Opening Messages

The messages delivered by the main speakers of the symposium such as the Prime Minister of Egypt, the chairperson of the ASSD, CAPMAS President, representatives of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, the African Development Bank and the African Union Commission (AUC) echoed the importance of the ASSD as a statistical collaboration forum of the continent, its achievements and areas of improvement.

The main speaker applauded the ASSD and saw its activities as a reflection of the countries' recognition of the importance of statistics and their keenness to work collaboratively. The timeliness of celebrating the many achievements of official statistics during World Statistics Day and Africa's ability to scale up its commitment and ability to double its performance in undertaking the population and housing censuses in the 2010 RPHC's compared to the 2000 round were commended. While noting the achievements of the ASSD since Cape Town in the pursuit of the mandate to ensure that all countries undertook a census in the 2010 RPHC and the need to continue monitoring of same, the speakers were in one accord that a shift in focus to the strengthening of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) was necessary. There was also an emphasis on the importance of the National Strategies for the Development of Statistics in the quest for a viable African Statistics System (ASS). The African Charter on Statistics should provide a framework that will minimize overlaps and to effectively implement the charter the Strategy on the Harmonisation of Statistics (SHaSA) has been developed.

4. Overview of Progress Made on the ASSD Journey and Pertinent Matters

The ASSD Secretariat tabled a report that focused on progress made in the implementation of resolutions and recommendations arising out of the previous five symposia. 11 out of 16 resolutions were implemented partly or wholly. However, the following still need further attention:

Resolution 2 (c) and (d)

- Collective acquisition of census equipment by regional organizations
- Countries documenting statistical processes, coordinated by regional organization

Resolution 3

- Joining efforts by AfDB and UNFPA

Resolution 5

- Countries' strategies on collective bargaining mechanism with suppliers

Resolution 7

- Task team on timely release of census data in support of NSS initiatives

Resolution 13

- Lobby groups to promote the Goree Declaration

It was also agreed that National Statistical Associations in Africa have to be rejuvenated and an African Statistical Association formed to help deal with the unprecedented increase in demand for statistics; challenges of statistical development in Africa as well as organizational and technical challenges. The association will be best suited to publish the African Statistical Journal. An African Statistical Association Interim Committee was set up during a side meeting and constituted Tunisia as President, South Africa as Vice-President, Uganda as Secretary, Mali as Treasurer, Egypt, Mozambique and Nigeria as committee members.

5. Ministerial Conference Report on Civil and Vital Registration Systems (CRVS)

The ECA gave a report on the Ministerial Conference Report on Civil and Vital Registration Systems (CRVS) held in Addis Ababa in the month of August 2010. The report highlighted the Ministerial Statement drawn from the conference with the theme *'Towards Improved Civil Status Information for Efficient Public Administration and Generation of Vital Statistics for National Development and MDGs Monitoring in Africa'*. The statement advocated the importance of CRVS as there is a lack of adequate, viable and complete systems in many African countries and made a call to ECA, AfDB, AUC and partners to support efforts in capacity building and evaluation of national CRVS. The participants to the 6th ASSD agreed that the ASSD as a statistics development platform must henceforth prioritise mobilization of Africa to improve CRVS.

6. Health Statistics and Information, World Health Organization

It was reported that monitoring of vital events is critical for monitoring in the health sector. Country commitment and leadership can take forward the development of CRVS systems. Health Metrics Network is committed to mobilizing global partners and work with countries to catalyze policy changes. Again the ASSD was cited as critical instrument for taking forward the process in Africa.

7. Census Data Evaluation

All countries that presented on Census Data Evaluation concurred that census evaluation is crucial and should be part of census core planning. Post Enumeration Survey (PES) is important to investigate the coverage of the census and also to identify types and sources of error in order to assist the planning of future censuses. It was proposed that the statistical training institutions should incorporate PES training in their curriculum. Another proposal made was a need to engage well-trained, experienced fieldworkers who are not involved in the main census fieldwork to undertake PES.

8. Socio-economic Characteristics of the Population

All presentations emphasized the importance of population and housing censuses as the major source of data that could be used to develop the socio-economic indicators at various geographic levels.

9. Geographic Distribution of Population

Presentations from Senegal and Cameroon noted that the population is mainly concentrated in the urban areas compared to the remote rural areas due to economic opportunities found in the urban areas. This information is crucial to policy makers to tackle development issues.

10. Internal and International Migration

The main focus of the country presentations was on the challenges posed by migration and they also touched on the policies and legal frameworks that pertain to migration. Both Zimbabwe and Ghana indicated that there is a progressive increase in emigration in their countries especially of the highly skilled people in the fields of health and education. The

brain-drain does not augur well for these countries. Countries were encouraged to formulate migration policies and frameworks that will deal with the challenges of migration.

11. Labour Force Levels and Trends

The presentations highlighted that there is awareness of political and social factors on gender discrimination and that there is a need to improve the socio-economic status of women through better representation in the higher positions at the work place.

12. Population Ageing

It was deliberated that population ageing is an international phenomenon and with time it will affect all countries as they develop. Policy-makers should draw their attention to this matter and plan ahead.

13. Population Projections by Age and Sex

Knowledge of age and sex composition of the population at any point in time is fundamental to the projection of the population. Interaction with major stakeholders is a necessary part of work so that confidence is built in the whole process

14. Characteristics of People with Disabilities

The Census questionnaire needs improvement when it comes to the questions that seek to measure population disabilities. The questions lacked clarity and missed out some people with disabilities. There is a marked variance in response when comparing questionnaires that directly ask people if they are disabled or not to those that are incorporated in the Washington short questions on disability. It was agreed that questions on disability should be in line with the Washington Group Module as they elicit a clear picture of population disabilities.

15. Census in Post-conflict Countries

Post-conflict countries need to develop a Census Framework that will guide them on how to conduct a census. Technical and financial support on census-taking should be provided. Strategies and methodologies need to be in place to avoid or minimize the undercount. It was resolved that peer support should be proactively given to countries in conflict and to those that are emerging out of conflict.

16. Resolutions/Conclusion

The following twelve resolutions were taken:

1. The ASSD will adopt the strengthening of National Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems as its theme for the next five years beginning in 2012;
2. There is a need to reinforce the capacity of stakeholders of African statistical systems in the analysis of census data;

3. The interim committee on the revival of the African statistical association to take necessary step in the inception of the association and report to the next session of the Statistical Commission for Africa in January 2012;
 4. The AfDB, ECA, and AUC should ensure that the work on ICP Africa take place according to agreed upon schedule in line with the global implementation plan. We therefore:
 - i. Call upon AfDB, ECA, AUC to prepare a communication strategy for the dissemination of the ICP 2011 Round results to decision-makers for policy formulation, monitoring and evaluation of their development effort;
 - ii. Call upon sub-regional organizations to continue assisting AfDB in implementing the ICP Programme in their member states and their capacity should be strengthened accordingly;
 - iii. Request that Technical Working Groups be established in critical areas such as communications strategy, poverty analysis, use and dissemination of ICP data, infrastructure, etc.; and
 - iv. Request that detailed anonymized, microdata be accessed by analysts and researchers, subject to the preservation of confidentiality;
 5. The World Bank should share household surveys data on African countries available to them with AfDB, ECA, AUC, ACBF;
 6. Strengthening the capacity to stakeholders in census data analysis;
 7. Statistical association: to take necessary steps to revive the African statistical association and report to the next session of the Statistical Commission for Africa;
 8. ICP-Africa calls upon:
 - Countries to ensure timely release and analysis of census data in support of their policy and programmatic formulation, monitoring, and evaluation of their development efforts; and
 - Regional and international organizations to support countries in their efforts;
 9. Research institutions and Statistical Training Centers should be at the forefront of the building of capacities of countries in census data analysis;
 10. Regional organizations and partners are called upon to reinforce the capacity of countries in census post evaluation through workshops, training and provisions of guidelines;
 11. AfDB, ECA, AUC and partners to work out modalities that will ensure the harmonization of population projections inter-censal periods; and
 12. Call on ECA, AUC, AfDB, United Nations Statistics Division, and Health Metrics Network to work with countries to deploy the application of existing standards associated with the collection and processing of census and CRVS-related data, for use through hand-held, web-based and other technology platforms.
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