

**REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA**

**NATIONAL POPULATION AND HOUSING CENSUS 2008**

**FACTS ABOUT THE 2008 CENSUS**

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## **BACKGROUND**

The Government of Liberia with support from its development partners will be conducting a National Population and Housing Census (NPHC) in March 2008. The 2008 census will be the fourth in Liberia. The other censuses were conducted in 1962, 1974 and 1984 and enumerated 1.1 million, 1.5 million and 2.1 million persons, respectively. Due to continued civil war in Liberia between 1989 and 2003, the country has gone through 23 years without reliable data to base its planning and decision making process. The United Nations also recommends that countries conduct censuses every 10 years to be able to generate reliable and timely data. These two factors necessitates that a census be undertaken as soon as possible in Liberia.

The information collected in the 2008 census will assist the Government and other stakeholders in putting up schools, health facilities, setting business, generate employment opportunities, houses both rural and urban areas, etc. The information will also assist in developing policies, plans and programs in various sectors across the country. It is from the census data that targets and goals of both national and international initiatives like MDGs, ICPD, etc. will be monitored and assessed.

This document is tailored for leaders who are expected to assist in sensitizing the public on the importance of the 2008 census and the need to give correct and accurate information. The document should also be read by the public so as to get accurate information regarding the 2008 census. It is important that all people in Liberia are aware of the census dates as well as the roles they are expected to play in making the 2008 census a success.

## **DEFINITION**

What is a population census?

A population census is a complete count (enumeration) of all persons in a country at a specified time. The census collects information on the size, distribution, composition and other social and economic characteristics of the population.

## **CENSUS DATES AND DURATION**

When will the 2008 census take place and for how long?

The enumeration of the 2008 census will start on the night of 20/21 March 2008 and continue for 7 days up to and including 27th March 2008. Ideally, the census exercise should take place in 1 day. However, it is not possible to enumerate the entire population within one day, especially in areas where homes are scattered, hence the provision for 7 days. So make sure that you are at the place you normally live during this period so that census officers will visit your home/house and collect the required information.

## **OBJECTIVES**

What are the main objectives of the 2008 census?

The Government as well as other stakeholders require to know the size and composition of the population to plan for. The data collected in the 2008 census will assist in planning, monitoring and evaluating policies, programs and research in the country.

The main objectives of the census, therefore, are to establish the following:

1. The size, composition and distribution of the population at all administrative levels

This establishes the actual number of people to be catered for and identifies the different social and economic needs of the population. Like the persons of school going age, women in reproductive ages hence the need to offer maternal health care facilities, economically active population hence the need to plan for employment opportunities.

2. How the population is changing?

Changes in population size occur due to people being born, dying and moving within and between counties, districts or other countries. To predict future population trends, precise information on birth, death and migration rates is necessary.

3. How the urbanization process is emerging and how it affects the urban development?

The proportion of the population classified as residing in urban areas rose significantly from 1984 up-to now as a result of the civil war. This increase in urban population has several consequences, e.g. Unemployment, pressure on urban amenities, etc. Data to be collected in the 2008 Census will assist in the formulation of effective urban development plans.

4. The size and deployment of the labour force

To come up with effective policies on employment, it is necessary to establish the number of people available for work now, and in future.

5. The current stock and condition of housing

This enables the formulation of effective policies on housing and the improvement in availability of amenities such as water, electricity, means of communication, etc.

6. The proportion of the population who are engaged in agricultural production

This will provide information on the proportion of households engaged in agricultural activities by farming type.

7. The census will provide information on the population of voting age by electoral units so as to enhance the conduct of voter registration and participation during subsequent elections envisaged in the democratization process in Liberia.

8. The census will provide information required for development of the national sample design to be used in undertaking subsequent national sample surveys

## **LEGAL AUTHORITY**

The Census will be taken under the provision of the LISGIS Act (chap 50A) of the Laws of Republic of Liberia. In addition, a Census Law No. .... of .... April 2007 has been enacted by the National Legislature to facilitate the census undertaking.

The Law requires that census officials be accorded access to all premises, compound or house. Persons are required by Law to answer truthfully and completely the questions they will be asked about themselves and other members of the household for the purpose of completing the census questionnaire. Similarly, the Law requires census officials to conduct themselves properly in order to avoid misunderstanding and suspicion by members of the public.

### **Confidentiality**

All the information collected from individuals during the 2008 census will be confidential. Only officers working on the census will be allowed access to the information. All census officers will take an oath of secrecy. Legal action will be taken against those who breach the oath of secrecy.

## **PRE -CENSUS ACTIVITIES**

What preparations take place before the Census?

The carrying out of a National Population and Housing census is a very complex, massive and expensive exercise which requires a lot of preparatory work. The preparatory activities encompass cartographic mapping which involves drawing of census enumeration maps using existing administrative boundaries; preparation of census questionnaires and training materials, conduct a pilot census, recruitment and training of personnel, creating awareness on the census process, mobilization of resources to cater for the various activities. Detailed information about some preparatory stages is provided herein after.

### **Cartographic Mapping**

Cartographic mapping is one of the most important preparatory activities that have to be undertaken before embarking on a census. In order to reflect the increase in population as well as include any changes in administrative boundaries, the whole country has to be divided into small areas known as enumeration areas [EAs] that can be covered by an enumerator within the census period of 7 days. Accurate mapping ensures that there is no overlapping or omission of any part of the country which could bring about either double counting or under-counting of the population.

The field mapping teams are currently in the various parts of the country in preparation for the census. Members of the public are requested to provide the teams with accurate

information and also ensure that their locality is included in the EA maps so that they are not left out during the census enumeration. Remember, if your locality or household is not covered during the census then the Government and other stakeholders will not be able to plan and not provide the necessary services in the areas.

### **Pilot Census**

A pilot census is a rehearsal of the census process which is usually carried out one year before the main census count. Through the pilot exercise, successes, challenges, problems related to the census can be identified and resolved before the main census. The pilot census was undertaken in April/May 2007 where one clan was selected in each county. The experiences gained from the pilot census are being utilized to improve both technical and administrative issues relating to the main census.

### **Recruitment of Census Personnel**

All census supervisors and interviewers will be recruited from the areas where they will be working. It is hoped that since the residents will know the officers personally, it will be easier for the respondents to provide correct information. During the census, the supervisors and interviewers will be assisted by local leaders to identify the boundaries and the households within their assigned areas of work. The effective identification of the boundaries will ensure that every household is covered within each enumeration area and in the whole country.

### **Security**

All census officers will carry identification badges. Members of the public are encouraged to ask the officers to identify themselves if in doubt. Adequate security will be put in place by the Government and UNMILL to ensure the safety of both the census officials and members of the public. In case you are in doubt with the census officer, always contact your local leader.

## **THE ENUMERATION EXERCISE**

### **Census night**

It is extremely important that everybody takes note of where she/he will be on the census night, **20<sup>th</sup>/21<sup>st</sup> March 2008**, and the two months before the Census Night or where s/he intends to live thereafter. The census officials will be seeking information on persons who are usual residents of the households. It is therefore recommended that people keep a record of the persons who usually live in their households. In addition to persons who live in normal housing units, arrangement will be made to enumerate persons we live in special institutions like boarding schools, prisons, barracks or those who are homeless.

What will happen during the actual enumeration exercise?

The most responsible person in the household at the time of the interviewer's visit will be interviewed. However, some questions will be specific to females aged 10 years and above. These questions will have to be answered personally by individual women.

Once the interviewer is in the household and has introduced himself/herself to the persons who live there, he/she will proceed to ask the necessary questions as precisely as possible. The respondent will be expected to give accurate and complete information. This mutual collaboration will greatly assist in the completion of the census questionnaire in the shortest possible time.

In case there is no responsible person in the household, the interviewer will leave a message with the nearest neighbour indicating the time and date when he/she will return. On finding such a message, household members will be requested to wait for the interviewer to avoid his/her having to make many callbacks.

Once the enumerator has completed his/her exercise in a household, he/she will write a number on a visible place of the house/building, which will serve to show census officials that this particular household has been enumerated. It is important that these numbers are not erased until after about three months.

If after 27<sup>th</sup> March 2008 no interviewer has called on your household, a responsible member of the household will be required to inform the local leader or clan chief so that arrangements can be made to enumerate members of his/her household. Likewise, if any person establishes that for whatever reason they were not enumerated, they should inform their local leader or clan chief.

## **PERSONS TO BE COUNTED**

All persons living in Liberia during the census period will be enumerated regardless of whether they are citizens or not. People will be enumerated in the households where they live or in institutions. Clear criteria have been developed as to who should be enumerated in each households.

In cases where some persons would normally be in the households on that night but due to the nature of their work are not at home, they will be enumerated with their usual household members. Examples of such persons are: nurses, watchmen, shift workers on night duty, herdsmen out with livestock, night fishermen, persons attending hospital outpatient departments, etc. However, persons staying in institutions like hospitals as inpatients, prisoners, boarding schools, etc. for more than 2 months will be enumerated in these institutions. Arrangements will be made to ensure that the homeless persons or bush communities are all enumerated.

Very young children, old persons and/or persons with disability(ies) are sometimes forgotten or considered not important. We must emphasize that every person who will be in Liberia during the census time must be enumerated whether young or old.

## **QUESTIONS TO BE ASKED**

The interviewer will ask various questions which may seem irrelevant to the respondents. However, all questions that will be asked are important and we appeal to everybody to provide the answers as accurately as possible. Let us quickly go through the questions and try to understand the significance of each question:

### **Age and Sex**

Apart from the total population size, the most important characteristic of a population is its age-sex structure. The age-sex structure of the population determines the needs of the population and the potential for future growth of the total population as well as of specific age groups. The needs like schools for the young persons, health facilities for a sizable population, roads to areas where population density is high, employment opportunities for the economically active portion of the population, etc. For this reason, the age structure is important. For example, the 1984 census data showed that 48% of the total population in Liberia was aged below 15 years and only 3% were aged 65 years and above. Such a young population means that the country needs to allocate more resources to provide for health, education and consumption needs for the young

### **Relationship**

This question is aimed at establishing the relationship between the head of the household and other members in the same household in order to determine the composition of a household e.g. wife, daughter, nephew etc. It would be important to find out the composition of households in the country especially after many years of war.

### **Ethnic Affiliation/Citizenship**

Ethnic affiliation determines the culture of a person. To be able to understand the population growth and socio-economic trends of a certain area, one has to understand the beliefs and norms of the people residing in the area. Data on ethnic affiliation therefore, captures this important aspect of the population.

### **Religion**

Religion plays a very major role in determining the moral code of any society. Religious beliefs can have far reaching implications as far as the growth of the population and schooling aspirations are concerned.

### **Marital status**

Marital status is significant because it has a strong relationship with the level of fertility. That is the level of fertility declines with delayed married. Studies in most countries shows that married women have higher fertility rate compared to the never married. The age of a woman at her first birth also has a significant influence on fertility i.e. if a woman gets her first child at age 30, chances are that she will get less children than if she had got her first child at age 20.

### **Displacement and Resettlement**

The effect of civil war on the population movement will be collected especially since 1990. It would be important to know the proportion of the population who were displaced by war and those who have been resettled.

### **Disability**

Questions pertaining to disability and its cause will be asked with an aim of establishing the prevalence of disability in the country. The country is estimated to have high prevalence of disability especially arising from the war but no accurate information on this exists.

### **Education**

Questions pertaining to literacy, school attendance and attainment will be aimed at establishing literacy and school attainment levels in the various parts of the country. This information is extremely useful in identifying areas that are lagging behind in education hence require concerted efforts to boost education programmes.

### **Labour Force**

This question provides information on employment/ unemployment level as well as the actual size of the labour force [number of people who are available for work]. This information is crucial in formulating labour policies.

### **Birth place, previous residence and duration of residence**

Questions regarding birthplace, previous residence and duration of residence are geared towards establishing levels and patterns of migration. Migration is the movement of people across a specified boundary between countries or different areas within a country. The most common pattern of migration is from rural areas to urban centres. Migration is one of the determinants of the rate of population growth in an area. If for example a lot of people have moved from one county to another, you will find that the population of one county has reduced its people while that the other county has increased. Over time, migration contributes more than just the number of people moving into an area. The grandchildren children of the migrants add several times to the original number of the population base. If for some reasons such as drought or war, people have moved out in large numbers between censuses, you will find that the population growth may be lower than it could have been if the above mentioned movement had not taken place.

### **Orphan-hood**

Information on people that have been orphaned is a good determinant of the level of adult mortality [death] rates. Mortality contributes to the decrease in the population size. This information helps in identifying areas where adult mortality is high and disadvantaged children. In addition, all people under age 18 years will be classified by either maternal, paternal or double orphans.

### **Particulars of live births**

This question will be asked of females aged 10 years and above. The question is aimed at determining levels of fertility and child mortality [death] rates. Although sometimes a reduction in child mortality can be associated with other factors, provision of health care facilities plays a very big role in reducing levels of mortality. The infant mortality rate of a country is one of the most sensitive indicators of a country's levels of development. When a country has a high rate of infant deaths, it usually means that it has not eliminated the deaths associated with general hygiene, poor sanitary conditions and malnourishment. Therefore, if a certain area is experiencing high mortality rates, the Government and other stakeholders will know that health programmes which are in place are inadequate and need to be improved.

### **Housing conditions and household amenities**

To come up with effective housing policies as well as improve availability of amenities in the country, the census will take stock of the current housing, their conditions and amenities owned by the household members

### **Agriculture**

The country is classified as dependant on agriculture. The census would establish the proportion of households engaged in agricultural production and of those who are in agricultural production, which crops and/or livestock they are producing.

### **PUBLICATION OF CENSUS RESULTS**

The processing, analysis and dissemination of the 2008 census will be undertaken using computers and skilled manpower. The results of the census will be released within 12 months (March 2009) after the enumeration. The results will be released to the Government, other stakeholders and the public.

### **CONCLUSION**

As mentioned earlier, a National Population and Housing census is a complex, massive and expensive exercise. It is therefore, mandatory that it succeeds. Whereas the Government, Development partners and the census officers will have done their best to ensure that the exercise goes smoothly, the actual success of the exercise depends wholly on the people themselves. If people understand the reasons for carrying out the census, chances are that they will cooperate and provide accurate information. As organizers of the census we request that everybody in every part of Liberia come out and stand out to be counted during the census period. Let us make this census the best so as to determine the destiny of this great country.

### **KEY POINTS TO EMPHASIZE WHEN YOU TALK TO PEOPLE ABOUT THE CENSUS**

- The 2008 National Population and Housing census will take place between the night of 20th /21st March and 27<sup>th</sup> March 2008.

- The census reference day will be the night of 20<sup>th</sup>/21<sup>st</sup> March 2008. Everybody household head is required to know the usual members of his/her household during the period including those who have gone away for short visits.
- All information collected from individuals will be confidential hence there should be no fear of answering any question.
- It is to the people's benefit to give accurate information to the census officers. Correct information will assist the Government and other stakeholders in their efforts to make sound development policies, plans and programs for the betterment of the population of Liberia.
- Questions to be asked will include: Name, Age, Religion, Ethnic Affiliation, Birth Place, Marital Status, Previous Residence, Duration of Residence, Displacement by civil war, Status of resettlement, Disability, Education, Labour force, particulars of children females ages 10 years and over have ever given birth to, stock and quality of housing materials, Availability of social amenities, and Agriculture.