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28 December 1996

Dr Herman Haberman,  
The Director,  
UN Statistics Division,  
DESA,  
UNATIONS, New York

Att.: Dr Sam Suharto - 9 pages including cover

RE: re: SAE/94/P01: 1996 SOUTH AFRICA POPULATION CENSUS

Dear Dr Haberman,

I send herewith a report on the census enumeration that took place in October/November, 1996

Best regards

Yours sincerely,

  
Oluwole Adegboyega  
UN Chief Technical Adviser

cc: Dr Jay Parsons, UNFPA Representative, South Africa Fax 27-12 320 4355  
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# **CENSUS '96: ENUMERATION PROCESS**

*Prepared by:*

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SAF/94/P01  
Dec., 1996*

## **CENSUS'96: ENUMERATION PROCESS**

### **1. Introduction**

The census enumeration started on the morning of 10 October, 1996 with the *enumeration of the homeless the preceding night*. The start of enumeration received very good coverage both by the newspapers, radio and television. The party hosted by the Census Project for the homeless persons at various centres throughout the early morning of 10 October was an ingenious publicity coup.

### **2. Field organization for the enumeration**

The country is divided into nine administrative units called provinces. The provinces are in turn divided into magisterial districts, a total of 365. The country, for enumeration purposes, was delimited into 80,000 enumeration areas. The demarcation was within districts. The districts varied widely in size and population density from just under 20 to over 1500 enumeration areas. The districts in urban areas and non-formal settlements have much higher population density than those in the farms and other rural areas.

The enumeration control structure was as follows:

1	enumerator for each enumeration area
1	chief enumerator for a maximum of 5 enumeration areas
1	controller for a maximum of 10 chief enumerators
73	Control offices

These proportions gave a total of 80,000 enumerators; 20,000 chief enumerators and 2,000 controllers. The activities of these field personnel were overseen by the 73 census control offices. Each census control office has direct contact with the Head Office through phones, fax machines and computer modems. In addition at least 200 of the census officials had cellular telephones. All the 2,000 controllers had access to the use of a vehicle.

### **3. Recruitment and training of field officers**

There were three levels of recruitments:

- ◆ the national trainers
- ◆ the enumeration controllers
- ◆ the chief enumerators and the enumerators)

**(i) Qualifications required of field officers**

**(a) National trainers and controllers**

The national trainers were drawn from lecturers in the universities and other tertiary institutions. They were recruited in the period July - August. One crucial mistake, as events unfolded, was that the national controllers were not selected they were recruited on the basis of their academic qualifications and the fact that they are in the teaching profession. Those identified or those who volunteered were just accepted.

On the other hand, the enumerator controllers were required to have a tertiary level of education. They were recruited on a full-time basis between August and September, for a period of three months beginning early September. The job of the controllers in the period before the enumeration started consisted largely in assisting the census control offices in the recruitment and training of enumerators and chief enumerators.

**(b) Enumerators and chief enumerators**

The enumerators and chief enumerators were expected to have a basic educational level of Standard 10 or equivalent (10 to 12 years of schooling). Further, unemployment was rampant in the country, it was decided that where two candidates vying for either of the post of enumerator or chief enumerator have similar qualifications, preference should be given to the unemployed candidate. The ability to communicate in the local language of where the candidate would be deployed was also a major consideration in the recruitment of the candidate.

A checklist of the requirements for the posts were drawn up, each candidate was to be scored according to the checklist and those scoring below certain level were to be dropped. More than 500,000 candidates applied for the jobs of enumerators and chief enumerators. There were only 100,000 places on offer, consequently, selection became a daunting effort. The jobs were advertised in August and the screening had to be done at 73 census control offices over a period of only two weeks.

**(ii) Training of field officers**

A cascading form of training was adopted. In the first stage the national training officers were trained, during the period 29 Aug. - 7 Sept., by the Census Office staff. The duration of training was three days. These national officers in turn trained the enumeration controllers over three days during the period 9-20 September. The controllers trained both the chief enumerators and the enumerators.

The training of enumerators and chief enumerators were in two parts, the first part between during 1-7 October and the second 7-9 October. The first part was planned for three days to cover enumeration and administrative procedures. The second part,

scheduled for two days was designed to enable the controllers to take both the enumerators and the chief enumerators to trace their enumeration boundaries, so that they could identify these boundaries prior to the start of enumeration and further to receive equipment and materials needed for enumeration. However, the administrative and logistic problems that arose in the last few days preceding the enumeration made this second level training virtually impossible in many areas.

Both the enumerators and chief enumerators were trained together. The decision on who got which job depended on the performance of the candidates in the tests that were administered at the end of training.

#### **4. Census Enumeration in the Field**

The start of enumeration was met with considerable enthusiasm particularly by the blacks. This enthusiasm was engendered by the pre-enumeration publicity. On the contrary, there was marked apathy on the part of the whites, partly caused by the political changes (which a considerable proportion of them has not yet reconciled with) and concern for security especially among people living in the sub-urban areas. Much effort had been put into planning in order to reassure the sub-urban area dwellers with regards to their security concerns. Enumerators were conspicuously dressed, they were well documented. They also carried a number of identity documents. Telephone toll-free lines were in operation for householders to ascertain the authenticity of enumeration personnel at their doors or for any queries with regards to the census in general.

#### **5. Problems Arising During Enumeration**

##### **(i) Recruitment of enumerators**

The principle for the selection of enumerators, as can be recalled from the foregoing, was that where two candidates - one currently employed and the other not employed - both qualified for the post of an enumerator or chief enumerator, preference should be given to the unemployed person. However, in view of the short duration of canvassing for application for enumeration field workers, a considerable proportion of the unemployed either did not know about the advertisement or were just unable to apply for the jobs in time. In any case, the level of unemployment in the country was so high that between 5 and 6 persons applied for each of the jobs advertised and consequently disappointment by most of the applicants was inevitable.

During the apartheid era, a number of social organizations developed and were used to air grievances. Most of these organizations are still very active, the most important of them is South Africa National Civil Organization (SANCO). This organization was mobilized by the people who were aggrieved by the method of selection of enumeration field workers and those who just felt frustrated by the fact that they were not employed. The fact that the census was going to create some jobs had been over-stated. This situation lead to considerable problems for the census

enumeration. The process was upset in many ways. Some of the consequences of the labour problems were as follows:

- ◆ due to community based objections, many enumerators that were previously appointed and trained had to be dropped and new ones appointed and trained
- ◆ the start of enumeration was consequently delayed, and where enumeration had started, it was stopped until new enumerators could be recruited and trained
- ◆ in view of new political dispensation in the country, there were many local disputes, particularly boundary disputes; the census was held to ransom in many areas on the ground that enumeration could not proceed until the government attended to the local grievances
- ◆ the unexpected community based grievances upset the training programme as well as the logistics support arrangements in many areas.

## **(ii) Problems with demarcation**

The demarcation of EAs was scheduled to be finalised by the end of August, however, it was impossible to meet this deadline. In fact demarcation continued in many places throughout the duration of enumeration. The logistic nightmare implied by this situation needs no further comments.

### **(a) Demarcation in urban areas and old RSA**

In addition to incomplete demarcation, the demarcation of the urban areas, indeed in all the areas of old Republic of South Africa was based on the 1991 Census demarcation which later events showed had been poorly done. Further, in KwaZulu/Natal, the on-going low intensity civil war in the area has significantly affected the population distribution by 1996 compared with the prevailing situation in 1991. The situation considerably affected the smooth running of enumeration in the areas concerned.

### **(b) Demarcation in the rural areas**

The demarcation in the rural areas and in the former independent and self-governing territories of apartheid era was done for the first time in 1996 for most of the areas. In view of the newness of the demarcation, there were no previous deficiencies to carry forward and consequently the demarcation efforts were more successful in these areas compared with demarcation in the urban and former RSA areas. Even so, this relative success story was not without its short-comings. Supervision of demarcators in some areas was inadequate, consequently some areas were not demarcated. These were the areas that had to be demarcated hand in hand with enumeration.

A remaining consequence of the old apartheid era had its effect on demarcation. Quaint concepts on demarcation such as "mother" EA and "daughter" EA crept into the demarcation process and was not noticed until enumeration started. This concept in practise implied where there was an EA where different racial groups are living, the boundary is regarded as "mother" EA and the components where different racial groups lived were regarded as "daughter" EAs. This lead to quite a lot of confusion during enumeration as EA boundaries over lapped.

### **(iii) Consequences of problems arising from enumeration**

As a result of these problems, enumeration was not completed in a significant number of places until mid-November, about six weeks behind schedule. Further, there were complaints - particularly in the urban and semi-urban areas - that completed enumeration forms in areas where householders had to complete forms themselves were not collected by enumerators. Newspapers reported that a significant number of people were not counted. A Johannesburg newspaper took a straw poll among people walking on the city's pavement and reported that 25 percent of people in Johannesburg were not counted. However, while undercount in places like Johannesburg is possible, due to a number of reasons like security concerns of householders, high mobility of people and fragmented households, the level of possible undercount is unlikely to be as high as the paper has reported. In the rural areas, there is evidence of a good coverage of the population.

## **6. Post Enumeration Census Survey - PES and Provisional Returns**

Despite the lateness in the conclusion of enumeration, the post census enumeration survey went into the field during the third week of November, as scheduled. In view of the unexpected logistics and administrative problems met with during the census enumeration and pressures emanating therefrom, the management and administrative capacity of the CSS was overwhelmed. The payment of field workers, about 110,000 of them, ran into serious problems - both technical - emanating from computer failures and administrative. Various ad hoc steps were taken, yet the payment which should have been completed by mid-December, 1996 is unlikely to be completed until late in January 1997. In view of the prevailing circumstances sketched above, the coding of the PES questionnaires and the data capture were contracted out. However, the capture of data for provisional returns will be done in-house.

The provisional census returns, adjusted by the results of the PES as necessary, are scheduled to be released sometimes in February, 1997. As earlier reported, the census coding and data capture will be done at the nine provincial capitals. A contractor has been hired to help in the administration of this process. The Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) has provided technical support. It is expected that provincial census data and tabulation will start coming on stream by middle of 1997.



## **7. Outstanding Project Activities**

A lot of experience has been gained during the operation of Census '96 which in fact is the first modern census in South Africa. Census '96 is in fact the first population census taken under one central administration that included all the racial groups. A documentation of the activities as a guide for the future is therefore an essential activity to be undertaken early in 1997. The first publication on Census '96 after the provisional returns is a gazetteer of settlements (cities, towns and villages) in the country by administrative divisions. Work on this project is far advanced. The publication should go to the press by middle of 1997. Further, an analysis of the main findings of the census is mandatory especially as no analysis of previous censuses were done. Comparative socio-economic indicators for basic administrative divisions in the country are not available. The preparation and dissemination of such statistics are urgent follow-up activities to the census. The need for such statistics forced the census to be taken at a time when a postment would have lead to much smoother operations and less demanding efforts on the staff.

## **8. Related Activities - the October Household Survey (OHS)**

As mentioned earlier, there is a dearth of comparative statistics for the basic administrative structures and social groups in the country. An interim measure to bridge the gap was the introduction of October Household Survey in October 1994. This was a general multi-purpose household survey. The survey was repeated in 1995. However, there was a lot of debate whether or not it was feasible to carry out the survey in 1996 in view of the Census. After much debate, it was decided to have another survey in November, 1996.

The reasons for the survey are: the two previous surveys did not have the benefit of a national statistical sample frame. The demarcation exercise for the 1996 Census has provided such a sample frame. Secondly, the need for various statistical data almost lead to the 1996 census questionnaire being overwhelmed by the inclusion of many questions on topics solicited for by users. As the questionnaire was severely paired down, it was felt that such questions that could not be carried by the census should be made part of the subjects for the October Household Survey. The survey went to the field almost at the same time with the post census enumeration survey. The administrative infrastructure laid out for the support of the census, made the operations of the PES and OHS easier to administer. In particular most of the mistakes made in the course of census operations were avoided.

## **9. CONCLUSION**

Many problems were met with during the enumeration and immediately thereafter. In retrospect, these problems became financially expensive to resolve, but luckily, the census budget was sufficiently generous to meet these unexpected and possibly avoidable expenses. According to the CSS, most of these problems arose not

because of inadequate or faulty technical advice, but mainly due to the transitional situation of the Government and of the top management of the CSS. The new management in the CSS took over in July 1995. This meant that the census as a project was virtually shelved until it was relaunched in October of that year. As if that was not difficult enough, the whole of the CSS had to be restructured during the middle of 1996. This exercise led to some loss of morale especially among staff that were unlikely to be absorbed by the CSS. The restructuring came at a very awkward time when census preparatory activities were at peak points.

The legacy of hatred and separation of races left its mark. There was a glaring shortage of middle level administrative and technical capability in the country. This was more remarkable during demarcation and enumeration. There were still many areas in the country where it was obviously unsafe for white demarcators to go and similarly there were many areas where black demarcators were not welcome. The same situation applied during enumeration. Thus the little technical and administrative capacity that was available could not be put to optimum use. This left its mark in the unsatisfactory nature of demarcation in some parts of the country and inefficiency in logistical and administrative backup for enumeration. However, the quality of leadership by the management of the CSS had a magnificent and beneficial effect on the operations of Census '96. Staff were willing to walk that extra mile without demure, working late into the night and over weekends and public holidays. The fact that management was also spending considerable hours and working late into the little hours of the day had ~~extraordinary effect~~ but for that willingness and determination to see the census succeed, the story surrounding the enumeration could have been different..

More detail analysis surrounding the taking of the census would be discussed in follow-up reports.