The Objective of this meeting is to

1) Review national and international experiences that are best practice in census data dissemination and use in the 2000 round of censuses.

Background (Information of the Gambia)

The Central Statistics Department (CSD) was established under the Statistics Act of 1972, and is part of the Department of State for Finance and Economic Affairs for which it provides basic statistics for use in national planning and monitoring. The department has the mandate to collect, produce and disseminate key macroeconomic and social data. For that matter it conducts/coordinate censuses and surveys.

The CSD is responsible for the conduct of Gambia’s Population and Housing Census. Gambia’s Population and Housing Census – a decennial census since 1963 - is the official enumeration of persons and building structures within the territorial boundaries of the country at a specified time. This enumeration also implies the collection, compilation, evaluation, analysis and publication of demographic, social and economic statistics relating to the population.

However, records show that a census was taken in The Gambia in 1881 and every tenth year thereafter. The 1941 census could not be held because of the war, and deferred to 1944 when a count of Banjul (then Bathurst) was taken. Then 1951 census covered only Banjul and Kombo St. Mary. The population of the rest of the country for that matter was based on estimates made by Travelling Commissioners.

The 1961 census which was deferred to 1963 on account of general elections, was the first complete and simultaneous count of the country’s population. The 1973 Population Census was the eighth in the series of censuses undertaken in the country but it was the first since Independence. The 1983 Census marked the second, and the third was 1993 whilst the recently conducted 2003 Census became the fourth since Independence.

In The Gambia, legal provision for conducting the Censuses exists in the Statistics Act of 1972. The Act empowers the Government Statistician i.e. The Director of Statistics, to conduct or direct Population Censuses. It makes provision for the appointment of Census Officers, for the completion of census forms and for the protection of confidentiality.

Census undertake in The Gambia is a large-scale operation that progresses from the preparatory activities i.e. mapping and Pilot Census exercises through actual data collection to data processing (i.e. verification and coding), data entry and clearing, analysis and finally the report writing. The release of publication volumes and dissemination of results comes after all these phases. However, preliminary results are released not too distant from the end of the actual data collection exercise which give quick count of Gambia’s population disaggregated by local government area (LGA).
Major pre-census activities include the mapping exercise (i.e. to ensure the complete coverage of the country), Questionnaire Design (i.e. how the format of questions should flow to be easily understand by the enumerator and respondent to avoid confusion) and the pilot census (which is the tool to test censuses before the actual census).

The recently conducted Population and Housing Census of The Gambia – in April 2003, like the 1993 one, followed as much as possible the essential features of a modern Census as recommended by the United Nations.

The main objective of the 2003 Population and Housing Census, like other past censuses, was to provide invaluable benchmark information on the population, housing stock and quality as well as settlement size and its distribution across the country. The information collected on population include, amongst others, education, economic characteristic, fertility, mortality, migration, etc.

Preliminary results of the 2003 Population and Housing Census showed that the population of The Gambia was about 1.4 million persons with an annual growth of 2.8 per cent. The results revealed a population density of about 127 persons per square kilometre. The final results, and publications for that matter, will be released after all the remaining phases have been completed.

Development

Recent past have increasingly witnessed new demand for statistics. The Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) and other national strategy processes, such as the Vision 2020, have generated new demand for statistics; thus this have put emphasis to enhance our data production capability. Poverty related information management system is being put in place to meet this new demand.

In the Gambia, the Central Statistics Department has been one of the key players in both the preparation of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) and its implementation, in terms of monitoring and evaluation. The use of data produced by CSD in the PRSP preparation is evident of this.

Population figures are viewed as one of the most important source of information for PRSP, placing emphasis on regular production of population figures through censuses. This is so because whilst population figures are important for national policy planning and monitoring, they are also considered to be very useful to serve as denominators for a number of poverty indicators.

Furthermore, in September 2000, a meeting convened at the United Nations in New York by Head of States from 147 countries adopted a Millennium Declaration which called for the international community to undertake a number of actions necessary to achieve certain fundamental goals with respect to global peace, security and sustainable human development for all peoples, including environment, human rights and governance. This led to setting up of monitorable goals and targets that were needed to track progress not only at the global level but, more importantly, at the national level where the real battle for sustainable human development would be fought.
Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) therefore became an agreed international framework to monitor development progress. This framework has also called for countries to enhance their statistical system so as to better meet the demand for monitoring of progress. The role of CSD, especially, in the production of data such as population data is very crucial in this process.

The Central Statistics Department has in fact participated in the reporting of progress on MDGs in 2003 on the following goals and targets:

**Goal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger.**
Target 1
- Poverty incidence, food (%)
- Poverty incidence, overall (%)
Target 2
- Minimum dietary consumption (%)

**Goal 2: Universal primary education**
Target 3
- Net enrolment rate (%)
- Completion rate (100)
- Adult literacy rate (15-25 yrs) (%)

**Goal 3: Gender equality**
Target 4
- Primary school parity

**Goal 4: Reduce child mortality**
Target 5
- Under-five mortality (per 1,000)

**Goal 5: Improve maternal mortality**
Target 6
- Maternal mortality (per 100,000)
- Births attended by skilled personnel (%)

**Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, Malaria and other diseases**
Target 7
- HIV/AIDS prevalence (%)
- Know prevention (women 15-49 yrs) (%)
- Contraceptives prevalence (%)

**Goal 7: Environmental sustainability**
Target 10
- Access to drinking water (%)

Target 11
- Secure accommodation tenure (%)
- Sanitary excreta disposal (%)
The developments have called for a more efficient, effective and outward National Statistical System in The Gambia. The Government of The Gambia in collaboration with development institutions is the process of enhancing the statistical capacity of the country, and has therefore, through the World Bank Lending Facility, earmarked funds for that purpose. It is expected that a New Statistical System will be put in place with all facets of a modern Statistical System. A master plan for the new system which is being prepared will be widely discussed for approval and adoption.

Under the said programme, the legal instrument will be revised to back a modern statistical system. The organisational structure as well as the management style of the current CSD will be restructured. Aspects such as data collection system, methodology and standards will all be addressed.

Capacity in terms of human and equipment will also be addressed as well as training of the personnel. Accommodation issue will be addressed as well.

Publications

The 1993 Population and Housing Census witnessed release of ten thematic volumes containing varying information about the dynamics and characteristics of Gambia’s population and building structures.

The thematic volumes were as follows:

i) Building Structure;
ii) Mortality;
iii) Fertility;
iv) Migration;
v) Spatial Distribution;
vi) Housing and Household Characteristics;
vii) Economic Characteristics;
viii) Education Characteristics;
ix) Gender; and,
x) Statistics on the Settlements.

It is expected that the 2003 Census will follow similar pattern.

The Indicators

1) Population
2) Health
3) Poverty
4) Migration

The target audience for data dissemination

The target audience for census results on population and housing stock and related issues includes:
- The Government sector – especially, the policy and planning offices;
- International and donor community that includes UN Agencies;
• Non-governmental organisations as well as the civic societies;
• The wider private sector;
• Researchers in the academia and commercial sectors; and,
• The wider public sector.
• Government Officials
• Men, Women and young people
• Parliamentarians
• Data Users

**How the data should be disseminated (i.e. at what level)**

As the Central Statistics Department is yet to develop and adopt a Dissemination and Publication Strategy/Policy, it has however been trying to make population data more accessible to users and the general public. Population data have been disseminated through hard copy publications, on diskettes, cd-rom and adhoc data request - with free hard copies disseminated to some key institutions and the rest for sale.

The use of electronic and internet dissemination is on the verge of being ventured by the department. The department is in advance stage of developing and launching a website for access by the wider user community. Furthermore, under the World Bank Lending Facility Reform Programme, CSD, through a transformation programme, will develop and adopt Dissemination and Publication Strategy/Policy. This will help spell out the nature and format of dissemination and release of publications.

**Publicity & Advocacy**

The Gambia’s Population and Housing Census have enjoyed publicity and advocacy through media, sensitisation workshops, the local authorities as well as the use of posters. These approaches have rendered the censuses a success.

The 2003 Census have experienced a special kind of interest from newspapers with frequent articles on the conduct and nature of the census. This has, however, helped create awareness within the general public.

Publicity and advocacy strategy is also being looked into under the World Bank project for development and adoption.