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Current 2008 Population Census of Cambodia

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1. Introduction

When Cambodia was a French protectorate (1863-1953), the modern statistical activities began, however, it was only in 1948 a separate department titled the Statistics Department of Cambodia was formally established as a central statistics office. Since then, the Department has undergone many transformations due to political, economic and social circumstances. Its name, role and activities have changed from time to time. Between 1948 and 1953 it was titled the Statistics Department of Cambodia and from 1953 to 1963 it was named the Department of Statistics and Economic Study and from 1963 to 1975 it was known as the National Institute of Statistics and Economic Research under the Ministry of Planning. The statistical system had deteriorated in the early 1970s and was dismantled in 1975 and it was re-established only in 1979. During this period the qualified statisticians and statistical cadres have either died or left the country. From 1979 to 1981 Department of Statistics was under the Ministry of Finance and it was assigned to the Ministry of Planning (MOP) in the same year under which it continued to function.

According to the Statistics Law, enacted in 2005, the NIS is the Directorate General of the Ministry of Planning but the technical independence is ensured by statistical legislation. The title of Director of NIS and Deputy Director of NIS has changed to Director General and Deputy Director General of NIS in early 2006. The number of staff has increased particularly at central level and the budget has reached 6 million US\$ in 2007. The NIS has a total staff strength of 283 at central level and 375 staff at local offices (provinces and districts). Cambodia participated in the GDDS of IMF since 2001. The Statistics Law was enacted in May 2005 and statistics on statistics organization approved in December 2006. NIS has opened policies, NIS website launched in December 2000, NIS Data Users Service Center opened to the public. NIS has team to disseminate important statistical findings and statistical legislation like population census, DHS, Statistics Law to wide range of users and population including policy makers, technical staff at central and local level (all provinces and districts staff, users of statistics). The Statistics Law is widely known in Cambodia.

The previous census, conducted in 1998, was the first in 36 years, as Cambodia did not have a census from 1962 until 1998 due to civil strife and instability. The 1998 Census together with the 2000 Cambodia Demographic and Health Survey (2000 CDHS), the 2004 Cambodia Inter-Censal Population Survey (2004 CIPS), and Cambodia Socio-Economic Surveys have contributed in a large measure to benchmarking important aspects of socio economic conditions of the people of Cambodia. The set of population projections prepared on the basis of these sources facilitate informed decision-making.

The Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) is implementing a poverty oriented reform process. To guide the implementation of the policy agenda of the Government, the

Rectangular Strategy (RS) for Growth, Employment, Equity and Efficiency was launched in July 2004. In order to implement the development vision set out in the RS, the Government and development partners have agreed to prepare a single planning document, the National Strategic Development Plan (NSDP), for the period 2006-2010. The NSDP builds on the Cambodia Millennium Development Goals (CMDG), the Socio-Economic Development Plan 2001-2005, the National Poverty Reduction Strategy 2003-2005 (NPRS) and the Governance Action Plan (including the National Public Administration reform).

A wide range of population and socio-economic statistics are needed for monitoring progress, making assessments, and guiding further policy formulation. A new Statistical Law came into force on March 14, 2005 that provides a clear demarcation of responsibilities and relationships, which is essential for the smooth and efficient working of a decentralized statistical system. It specifies that a population census should be conducted at least once every ten years. The proposed Statistics Master Plan (SMP) is expected to provide the long-term strategies and financing plan needed for organizing such necessary statistical activities.

The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) provided primary support for the 1996 Demographic Survey, the 1998 Census, the 2000 Cambodia Demographic and Health Survey (CDHS) and the 2004 CIPS. The Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) have provided extensive support on capacity building and data collections for macro economic and industrial statistics. Training courses were conducted, and on-the-job training given, on a variety of topics of economic statistics. The Cambodia Socio Economic Surveys of Cambodia were conducted in 1993/1994 and 1996 with ADB assistance, and in 1997, 1999, and in 2003/04 with UNDP and Sida funding and World Bank execution. Establishment surveys were carried out in 1993, 1995 and 2000 with support received from ADB. USAID, UNFPA, UNICEF, and DFID/ADB have financed rounds of the Cambodia Demographic and Health Survey in 2000 and 2005.

The ADB, after a decade, discontinued its support in 2003. The collection of prices in five provinces for the CPI (Consumer Price Index) was started with assistance from ADB but NIS continued to collect these data. Training activities continued with IMF support. UNDP, the Sida and World Bank have funded the 2003/2004 Cambodia Household Socio-Economic Survey, which includes an income and expenditure diary. Several other donors have also supported the development of demographic and social statistics. Bilateral donors have also helped build capacity for economic and social sector statistics.

The 1998 Census process and results were rated as a successful partnership in national capacity building and in producing high quality population data sets for planning. For the 1998 Census work, the NIS had to ensure the recruitment and training of thousands of data collectors in the field. The methodology for the census and the questionnaire itself required substantial input from the managerial staff of the NIS and the technical advisers.

In sum the implementation of the census analysis and its dissemination resulted in strengthening the development planning process in Cambodia at various levels, and ensuring that demographic concerns were taken into consideration within various sector plans and programs.

There has been a continuous effort in national capacity building in NIS. The different surveys carried out with donor assistance have always included promotion of national capacity. The NIS is having well qualified and experienced staff to carry out the census. The technical assistance received by NIS in the last decade has contributed significantly to capacity building of national staff in undertaking census activities. The training program of the census and survey staff at different levels has resulted in creating a core of trained field staff. However it is necessary to expose the national staff to various latest developments in the fields of data processing, GIS and census analysis. The UNDP project on capacity development of national statistical system with NIS as the implementing agency, and having focus on the four components – integrated national statistical system, statistical governance, national statistics dissemination strategy and statistical capacity development strategy. The two upcoming projects, one initiated by Sida and the other by JICA focus on training and capacity building. The current Director General of Statistics Bureau of Japan (SBJ) has dispatched the SBJ experts through this JICA project to NIS.

Provision has therefore been made in the present proposal for external training/study tours in these areas. As capacity for census taking and data processing has been developed in the NIS, a resident census adviser (CTA) on a long-term basis, as was done in the last census, does not appear necessary for the present census. Long-term data processing advisor does also not be required. Technical assistance by consultants would however be necessary at some important stages of the operation.

It is observed that there is striking improvement in national capacity for demographic data collection, processing and dissemination. However, the level of capacity in respect to data analysis and interpretation is low. While JICA and SIDA will provide some support for developing data analysis and interpretation skills, additional training are required for in-depth analysis of census data.

2. Importance of the Census

Following the success in the creation of a valuable population database as a result of the 1998 Census, the RGC is committed to further build and strengthen the population database through the current census. There has been an increase in the demand of governmental agencies planners and researchers for reliable and updated demographic and social data in order to review their plans and programs.

The 2008 Census represents the cornerstone of population statistics within the Statistical Master Plan of Cambodia. It would update and provide a continuous series of reliable and

comprehensive data on population size, composition and characteristics, which is essential for economic and social development. Censuses are to be taken at regular intervals, so as to have comparable information in a fixed sequence. A series of censuses makes it possible to appraise the past, accurately describe the present and estimate the future.

The 2008 census is critical for a number of reasons:

- The 2008 census would help contribute to updating and comparing population and other development indicators with reference to the census in 1998 that provided the benchmark data after a gap of more than three decades. It would also help to assess the trends and patterns in fertility, mortality, migration and other demographic and socio-economic variables over the last decade.
- The NSDP for the period 2006-2010 will help implement the development vision set out in the RS. It draws together CMDG, the Socio-Economic Development Plan 2001-2005, the National Poverty Reduction Strategy 2003-2005 (NPRS) and the Governance Action Plan (including the National Public Administration Reform). Many of the indicators for monitoring and assessing the NSDP will be based on data obtained from the 2008 Census.
- The data obtained from the census are crucially needed by the RGC for integrating demographic factors into the overall development planning process. The line Ministries have expressed the need for data for sectoral planning as well.
- Small area statistics cannot be obtained from sample surveys. The census is the only source of such data that and is critical for development planning at the village and commune level.
- It is proposed to adopt the new urban classification for the 2008 Census and obtain fresh urban-rural population data for statistical purposes and urban planning.
- RGC's firm commitment to the MDGs is clearly expressed through the adoption of the first country report CMDGR in 2003, and in the adoption of CMDGs as an overarching framework for the NSDP which is being currently formulated. With the commencement of NSDP implementation, there will be a need to put in place a monitoring system that will enable tracking achievements. In addition, such a monitoring ought to include empirical and analytical exercises supporting policymaking towards the attainment of the Plan objectives. Since the CMDGs largely define the NSDP vision, and 45 out of 66 NSDP monitoring indicators are drawn from CMDGs, Census 2008 will contribute towards monitoring of NSDP implementation as well as CMDGs.

- Adequate gender-sensitive poverty assessments would be possible only with the sex- disaggregated information provided by the latest census.
- Due to security concerns, the 1998 Census could not cover some areas in the North West. The 2008 census will cover all areas in Cambodia and give a complete demographic picture of the entire country without any exceptions.
- The population projections for Cambodia based on the 1998 Census, 2000 CDHS and 2004 CIPS will be updated based on the 2008 census data.
- The Master sample frame provided by the 1998 Census will be updated by the 2008 census. This sample frame is a critical based for all national household surveys, including the CDHS, socio-economic household surveys, and inter-censal population surveys.
- One of the aims of the census is the establishment of comprehensive population databases, which greatly expand the usability and enhance the dissemination of census data. The 2008 census will help create updated population databases.

3. Census Strategy and Activities

From 1995 onwards a census office has been functioning within the NIS. After the 1998 census fieldwork was completed, data processing, analysis and dissemination of data were undertaken by the census office. Apart from producing census tables, analytical reports and four CD-ROMs containing 1998 census data, the census office of NIS promoted the availability, accessibility and utilization of population data in Cambodia. The census office also produced the revised urban classification for Cambodia in 2004, was involved in the Cambodia Inter-Censal Population Survey in 2004 (2004 CIPS), and produced the Administrative and Health Facility Mapping.

The census office has a core staff of approximately 27. For the 2008 Census, the following divisions have to be re-established using the available staff and supplementing with qualified staff from other Departments of the NIS: Administrative and finance; planning and monitoring; cartography; analysis and research; and data processing. All the divisions function under the overall charge of Director General of Census (D.G). He was assisted in his task by the planning and monitoring division, Deputy Director Generals of the NIS, Director of Census and Division Chiefs. Province planning directorates will function as field offices.

The enumeration is proposed to be undertaken during two weeks in March 2008, as this is considered to be a period of stability and low level of international and internal mobility, which would allow accurate estimates of population size and distribution. It will also exactly mark a ten-year interval after the first census in 1998. In regards to the overall activities of the census, the following approaches were adopted:

1. It is to continue the canvasser method utilized in 1998. House-to-house visit was made by enumerator for enumeration of each individual in every household. For this purpose each household was identified in all buildings and structures in each EA, the households include normal, institutional and homeless household. The *de facto* method was adopted for census enumeration.

The reference time for the census was the census night (provisionally March 3, 2008). The number of usual members present, usual members absent, and visitors present in the household on the census night were collected. Detailed information on social, economic, cultural and demographic characteristics of usual members present and visitors were recorded in the questionnaire.

Building and household numbering and listing preceded the enumeration. This operation took place for four days. For this, a separate form (Form A) was used. Apart from serving as an inventory for buildings and households in the EA, this form also furnished useful information on housing characteristics.

The census enumeration (Form B) was conducted for two weeks. The homeless population who were identified during the house listing, and will be enumerated on the census night itself. Special arrangements also were made to enumerate the following groups of persons: persons in military barracks, inmates of penal institutions, those in hospitals or other such institutions, those staying in hotels and boarding houses, those living in boats, and nomads.

2. Intensified information and communication activities are needed throughout the various phases of the census to create awareness, ensure public cooperation and utilization of data.

3. Systems to reduce the level of non-response were created by adopting well-defined procedures for callbacks.

4. Quality control measures will be adopted at various stages of the census, especially at data collection stage, to ensure accuracy.

5. Data processing will be completed using state-of the-art technology (micro computer hardware and software) to carry out data entry and analysis.

6. Apart from evaluation of various stages of the process, the outcome of the census were evaluated with regard to contents and coverage. This included a post enumeration survey and in-depth evaluation of the findings.

In the 1998 census, sketch maps of villages and EAs were prepared. For the 2008 census, it is useful if village locations and other places/features are plotted at their actual locations using GPS. This also bring in a degree of precision and accuracy in the base maps needed for computerized mapping and GIS applications.

4. Institutional Framework and executive agency

The NIS is responsible for the execution of the census activities. This capitalized on NIS's increased capacity developed during the last decade. On the whole, the current structure of the NIS and its substantive activities confirm its ability to establish an up-to-date, efficient and reliable national statistical system, based on sound scientific methodologies. It also enjoys a high-level of credibility.

The overall responsibility for overseeing the implementation of census activities is to be shouldered by the DG. Consultants on census, data processing, cartography and census analysis could provide technical back stopping to the NIS at appropriate stages of the census operations as indicated in the work plan. The consultants may be supported from development partner agencies.

5. Related Activities

The 2008 census activities were closely coordinated with other on-going projects of NIS. The large surveys like CSES provide the basis for most of the economic social and demographic information available. The training components of these activities have developed the skills and capacity of NIS. Ministry of planning is the principal agency responsible for coordinating efforts in monitoring the National Poverty Reduction Strategy.

Social data are collected in all villages annually for Commune development plans by the Ministry of Planning supported by SEILA and UNICEF.

Close collaboration is maintained by the census office with these and other projects for the successful conduct of the 2008 census. There is a needed for improved consultation and agreement with other stakeholders on census tabulation and analysis and in the production of socio-demographic indicators.
