

Population and Housing Census in Nigeria

Pillah, Tyodzer Patrick, PhD

Department of Public Administration, Faculty of Management Sciences,
Veritas University, Abuja

Email: pillahp@veritas.edu.ng Contact: +234 803 627 5160

Abstract

The housing census plays an important role in estimating the population of Nigeria. It provides valuable insights into population structure, distribution and housing conditions in the country. The Housing Census is a comprehensive data collection effort that helps planners, urban planners, and researchers make informed decisions. The main objectives are to identify the critical issues in conducting census exercise for the federation of Nigeria. Conducting decennial population and housing census, although being phased out in developed nations, has especially in developing states, remained the main source of quality demographic data. In Nigeria, such censuses conducted have not in her history, been only the crucial source of statistical data for socio-economic, political and sustainable development, but also problematic, sensitive, divisive, expensive, and controversial. This study used secondary sources of data and historical method of data analysis to identify the major issues confronting future census exercise in Nigeria. For any future census to be conducted in Nigeria, there are major issues/challenges of inaccessibility to some areas due to militancy in the Niger Delta; renewed Boko Haram insurgency, resultant effects of ethno-religious conflicts; agitations for re-structuring Nigeria, internally displaced persons and camps, proper and timely sourcing of funding, proper management/administration of ethno-religious issues involving sensitive questions, recruitment/appointment scams of census officials and enumerators, among others. This study recommends shift from the traditional and decennial to administrative census; intensive and extensive enlightenment, involvement of traditional and communities' leaders, among others.

Keywords: Housing census, population, urbanization. developing nations

INTRODUCTION

Population Census is a periodic process of collecting, compiling, evaluating, analyzing and publishing or disseminating demographic, economic and social data on all persons in a delineated part of a country. The census can also be conducted on the entire population of a country. This periodic but routine census is often done within a span of five to ten years depending on the country. Census provides data, facts and figures for institutional and national planning; it also enables governments across the world to understand the housing and demographic wellbeing and deficit of the people in a nation.

In every country, the population is one of the major features that capture landmass, water, age distribution and gender or any other resource that should be harnessed for planning, growth and development. Nigeria, as the most populous nation in Africa and the most populous black nation on earth, has been using previous projections on its actual figure as it has not had a population census since 2006 (Kozah, 2023). The country relies on figures from different sources based on acceptable parameters that may not be holistic and completely accurate for its planning.

The world population review report of 2021 placed Nigeria as the seventh most populated nation in the world with two hundred and thirteen million, one hundred and sixteen thousand, two hundred

and twelve people across the thirty-six States and the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. The report also indicated that Nigeria's population growth in the five-year interval had grown faster than its peers with similar size. However, the 2021 report predicted a slow rate from the current 2.62 percent to 2.04 percent by the year 2050 (Imoukhhome, 2022).

The National Population and Housing Census scheduled for May 3, to May 7, 2023 is to give the correct enumeration of people living in the country to create data for planning and development purposes in the country (Kozah, 2023). The census will enable Nigeria collect information on socio-demographic data on the population which include literacy, fertility, mortality, migration, assets owned and usage of Information Communication Technology, ICT.

Other information to be garnered includes housing, type of houses, household amenities, sanitation amongst others. This is expected to give planners of both government and non-governmental organizations accurate information of the number of people both foreigners and citizens living in Nigeria. The census otherwise, national count, will also capture who they are, where they are, what they do for a living as well as their living conditions (Kozah, 2023). The process gives government at all levels reliable information to plan for provision of the basic needs of the people such as social and economic amenities like schools, hospitals, housing, markets, electricity, roads and sanitation (Kozah, 2023). The information generated during the Census would not just stop at the government confers alone. It will also aid the private sector to plan their businesses and also look at areas of investment.

International bodies such as the United Nations, International Monetary Funds, IMF, World Banks and other development partners will also utilize the data generated from the Population and Housing Census when planning for Nigeria. It is therefore a people-oriented project that requires the cooperation and support of the people at every stage of its implementation (The World Bank, 2023). The Nigerian government must come up with strong and aggressive sensitization campaigns to educate its citizenry and all residents in the country to ensure they are counted. The national population and housing census is not an election where you must vote only where you registered rather it is a national count which requires you to be counted at your place of residence. The exodus of people leaving their places of residence to their State of Origin during census defeats the whole idea of the national count. This does not give the true reflection of the data collated at some communities or States at the end of the day. This is akin to the last national count in 2006 where similar issue was raised regarding the figures of some States and the Federal Capital Territory that were contested.

By accurately assessing the population, the census provides the basis for socio-economic planning, resource allocation and planning. This allows officials to identify densely populated areas, estimate housing needs and plan infrastructure. Furthermore, the number of housing units helps to understand the demographic characteristics of the population. It provides information on age distribution, gender, ethnicity, educational level and household composition. This information is important for targeted policies such as health, education and social welfare programs to address the specific needs and differences of different populations. The National Population Commission is expected to device effective strategies that will ensure that religion, cultural and traditional cleavages would not hinder accurate head count in any location or community in Nigeria.

In Nigeria, the housing census has been significantly impacted by population increase. There are several issues that impact the accuracy, dependability, and efficiency of performing housing censuses when the nation's population is growing quickly. Reaching rural places and underprivileged people

is hampered by a lack of financial and logistical resources, resulting in inadequate and distorted data. This restriction limits the capacity of policymakers to make defensible judgments based on precise housing information. Hence, this study is carried out to examine these limitations. The study is divided into five sections; introduction, conceptual clarification, literature review, summary and recommendation.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

Population Census

The idea of population census is that, everybody is counted, but the fact remains that everybody cannot be counted; that is, a complete and accurate population census in any part of the world is impossible. Afolayan (1982) once pointed out that population constitutes a vital component of the resource base and the development potential of any country. This is because according to Fred (1988) 'there is growing recognition of the complexity of the relationship between development and population'. Former President of Nigeria, Chief Olsegun Obasanjo in 2006, stressed and noted that census is indispensable to the nation's quest of sustainable development' (Obasanjo, 2006). From the foregoing therefore, population census becomes a vital aspect of any nation, developed or developing. On the account of the increasing realization that population is a factor for planning and development, the Nigerian Government has over the years expended and exerted much in order to achieve a reliable census (Bamgbose, 2009).

Housing Census

A housing census is a total process of collecting, compiling, evaluating, analyzing, and publishing or otherwise disseminating statistical data relating to the number and condition of housing units and facilities as available to the households pertaining, at a specific time, to all living quarters and occupants thereof in a country or in a well-delimited part of a country.

Housing Policy

Housing policy refers to the actions of government, including legislation and program delivery, which have a direct or indirect impact on housing supply and availability, housing standards and urban planning (Hood, 2023).

LITERATURE REVIEW

A robust literature is available on population, statistics and sustainable development, some of which have concentrated on population growth and explosion, problems, patterns of population distribution and population and sustainable development, while others worked on population and environmental issues.

Mason, Losos and Singer (2011:1165) observe that there are three characteristics of a population as: population range (the area occupied by the population and on which it occurs); pattern of spacing individuals and the range of such spaces in the population; and how the population increases or decreases over specific time. Accordingly, Ogunjuyigbe (as cited in Ogunbameru & Rotimi, 2006: 283), notes that human population modifies its environment, the environment also modifies the

population, and population distribution depends on an environment and the density of that same population. Starr, Evers and Starr (2010:326) also observe that the quantity of resources in an environment affects the population size that it can sustain, and a population occupying an environment with limited resources undergoes logistic growth. It is also maintained by Miller & Spoolman (2008:123 & 137) that half of the world's population lives in the urban areas and so the problems of the population explosion, pressure and accommodation are mainly encountered in urban areas just as housing and accommodation problem in Nigeria is mainly in the urban areas due to rapid urbanization and high population growth (Adeniyi, 1981). For Nigeria, the carrying capacity of her environment in relation to its population and resources has not been exhausted, despite the large population, but it is rather under utilised (resource-population analysis in Starr, et al., 2010:327).

Miller & Spoolman (2008:124-6) have observed that during the last 200 years, human population has all over the world increased rapidly due to man's ability to expand to new and diverse habitat, climate zones, improved agricultural services and output, improved sanitation and the development of antibiotics and vaccines, which helped greatly to limit diseases. The growth of world population is, however, unevenly distributed and expected to increase from 6.7 billion in 2007 to about 9.2 billion by the year 2050 with more than 82% of the world's population in developing countries. Many also argue that the world is over populated/not over-populated; others maintain that developing countries constitute the global problem of population; and yet to some others, the developed countries are the problem for the fact that they have high resource consumption (Miller, 2007:171). In the same vein, Weller and Bouvier (1992:46) have asserted that stopping the world population growth alone would not solve the problem of population explosion, but that the wealthy nations would have to share the population and resources with the poorer ones, with improvement in the distribution system, better enforcement of existing laws, and development of greater social conscience. Similarly, Starr et al. (2010:326) and Miller (2007:173-4) have noted that birth, death and movement rates of individuals affect the size of the population as it increases due to more birth and immigration, and also reduces as a result of death and emigration. While the factors that limit population growth are of two categories – Density Dependent Factors (DDF), which decrease or increase birth rate and also worsen with crowding of people, e.g., competition for resources and diseases; and Density Independent Factors (DIF), which also decrease births or increase deaths, but are not influenced by crowding of people, e.g., fire, storms, earthquakes and other natural calamities that affect both crowded and uncrowded populations.

Reverend Malthus Thomas is the most popular theorist on population and although his essay titled 'An Essay on the Principle of Population' written in 1798 was much more centred on population rise, food and standard of living, his work is still used as a background in population. It has, however, been argued and proved that Malthusian Theory on the population had little or no impact on the industrially developed nations as it has in and on developing countries. It is maintained that in developed countries, population has been growing, but standard of living is still rising, rather than falling and noted that the theory failed to envisage industrial revolution and technological advancement adding that population rise is a mixed blessing in relation to growth (Lipsey & Chrystal, 1995:653; McConnell, 1987:426-7).

Similarly, McEarchern (2005:563) has observed that the Sub-Saharan African countries are the poorest in the world, but yet have the fastest population growth rate that exceed their Gross Domestic Production (GDP) growth, which also means an increase in population size, but with falling standard of living. It is also observed that rapid population growth is a fundamental problem of economic development and decried that it specifically causes negative GDP growth rate in developing

countries. The population of industrialised nations has become stable, but that of developing countries is skyrocketing while about 97% of the world's total population growth between now and the year 2050 is expected to occur in developing countries and total of world population is expected to then reach 10bn people (Ross, Forsyth & Huq, 2009:365-73; Miller, 2007:171; Lipsey & Chrystal, 1995:652-3).

Thompson and Turk (2007:14 & 16) have also observe that globally, man is currently challenged by three major trends as: large and continuing increase in population; reduction in extreme poverty; pollution and increased pressure on the available resources on earth, and further note that only about 20% of the world's total population lives where there are efficient life amenities (Water, sewage, sanitation and health care), and those are mostly found in developed and industrialised countries. In the same vein, developing countries have more cases of rural-urban migration (Miller & Spoolman, 2008:137). McConnell (1987:4756) also observes that an ecological system that can only accommodate 50100 million people will begin to break down under pressure if it comes to or, for example, have 200-300 million people under the same ecosystem. Thus, Thompson and Turk (2007:16) quote Professor Diamond, who maintained that humanity is now in a 'horse race'. One horse, representing increased human consumption and resource depletion, while the other horse gallops to healthy life, happiness and a sustainable society.

In relation to that, the population pressure in Sub-Saharan Africa has led to over planting and grazing which have altogether also resulted in soil erosion, drought and widespread famine (McConnell, 1987: 427). Additionally, many African, South America and Asian countries have rapid growth of and much population problems and thereby find it difficult to raise their living standards, which is contrary to the trend in advanced nations, where there is growing population and at the same time rising standards of living. Similarly, population growth in developing countries has risen on since 1980 with an average yearly increase of 2.0% above the population growth of developed countries (McEarchern, 1994:562; Lipsey & Chrystal, 1995: 653). In the same vein, population growth in developing countries, such as Nigeria, is difficult to control through government policies because social values place emphasis on families' sizes with children, who are also seen as a source of economic and social security (McConnell, 1987: 427; McEarchern, 1994:562).

Population control, especially (birth) in developing countries is also seen as anti-religious, anti-privacy, breach against personal freedom, while it is politically seen as genocide in order to check population and reduce its political power (Miller, 2007:171). On the other hand, population growth is not and would not be a problem for any country so long as socio-economic adjustments are being appropriately made as emphasized by the World Bank (1984:144). In support of the World Bank's argument, Simon (1981:3-4) has also submitted that population growth and control with multi-faceted consequences are some of the major challenges of the present age and is a responsibility on all (Allison, 1970:7). It is true that there is a problem of population all over the world, but the main issue, not that there are just too many people, but others must support some/others before they also begin to in turn support some others well-being.

ISSUES BEFORE THE NIGERIA 2023 NATIONAL POPULATION AND HOUSING CENSUS

Like the previous Censuses conducted in Nigeria, the future census exercise is not devoid of both general and peculiar challenges, which will ultimately determine the conduct and success or failure of the exercise.

The need for an updated national census

The importance of having accurate data cannot be overemphasized, as a nation cannot fully attain its national socio-economic development potential without giving the numbers a human face.

The President, Muhammadu Buhari, while speaking on the 2023 census, said having correct figures from the headcount will help the country plan for the citizens and purpose for development to reinforce the social security programme that targets more vulnerable Nigerians.

In addition to the aforementioned reasons, there have been arguments across social media platforms casting aspersions on the actual figures of Nigeria's population. An updated population census will help dispel these doubts in more ways than one.

CENSUS RESULT CONTROVERSIES

2023 census will be Nigeria's first digital

Census exercise is one of the most rigorous activities a nation could embark on as it involves data generation through solicitation of detailed information from respondents. Using manual imputation and computation leaves room for human error, thus the need for digital census to reduce such error to minimal.

According to the National Population Commission, the digital nature of the census would increase the accuracy of information as such, the use of electronic forms placed in Personal Digital Assistant (PDA) tablet devices will be used to capture information on all buildings, houses and people in enumeration areas. This is in addition to geographic information systems (GIS) and satellite imageries that would be used to construct a census map on dividing the country into enumeration areas.

The commission said "the digital frame produced is a major tool for the planning of human and material resources for the Census. This determines the enumerators' assignment areas and forms a basis for distribution of materials during the Census" (Selectiondc, 2022). With this, it stated that activities of enumerators will be monitored to avoid collection of data from different enumeration areas as the PAD has been geofenced. The census, initially stated for March 29 to April 2 was shifted to May 3 to May 7 due to postponement of the gubernatorial elections by a week.

CENSUS FUNDING, TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Relying on technology means the exercise would be cost sensitive to build the data infrastructure for the exercise which would be subsequently relied on. The NPC therefore said for this to be achieved, N869bn is needed for its success out of which N626bn would be expended on the actual census while N243bn would be used for follow-up operations through 2025 (Nations Population Division, 2022).

From this, it said N60.7bn would go to acquisition of 405,000 additional local content tablets and accessories; N76.8bn to train 885,000 persons for building numbering and household listing of all building and households in the country for 7 days at an average cost of N12,410 per person per day, building numbering and household listing of all building and households in the country for five days at an average cost of N12,018 per person per day for the cost of N53.1bn (Nations Population Division, 2022).

It also includes the enumeration of all persons listed during the building numbering and household listing in the entire country for 5 days at an average cost of N12,018 per person for the cost of N53.1bn, data analysis, dissemination, production of monographs, thematic maps, population atlas for dissemination in all states and the 774 LGAs for N5bn, internet and connectivity for data transmission by census functionaries for N2.7bn, conduct of post enumeration survey in sampled EAs to match the household data for validation at the cost of N18bn, among others to be spent for the exercise (Nations Population Division, 2022).

To avoid the controversies that census has generated in the past, the commission decided to remove questions on religion and ethnicity in the questionnaire. This, it stated, was taken in due consideration of the sensitive nature of the issues within the Nigerian polity and the need to save the census data from needless controversies and attention.

A statement by the Director, Public Affairs of NPC, Isiaka Yahaya, stated that the two notable questions were removed after “extensive consultation with data users and stakeholders in coming up with the questions to be canvassed in the next census. The overarching goal of the questionnaire is to generate data that will facilitate sustainable development. The questionnaire is robust and includes demographic characteristics of respondents and other socio-economic characteristics but without any question whatsoever on religion and ethnicity.”

POLITICS OF CONSTITUENCIES AND REVENUE ALLOCATION

No need to travel for census

Since the essence of the census is to have data for effective planning and necessary interventions, citizens need to be counted where they reside for policy makers to fashion out policies that would be encompassing. According to Yahaya: “People should stay where they are, to be counted. They are not to move to their states of origin. It is totally against the essence of the census. You have to be counted where you reside because that’s where you enjoy the social facilities like education and health, among others.” “Apart from this, when the time comes for people to be provided with infrastructure and other things, you will not allow the planners to have accurate figures. People are not to move.”

Effective Awareness and Mobilization

The entire success of every public exercise is substantially dependent upon the awareness it receives from the general public who are the subject. Indeed, a major exercise such as population and housing census cannot achieve any meaningful success if adequate and timely mobilization is not made. The major media with which this can be achieved many and their use is dependent upon the particular category of subject targeted, but key among them are the radio and television which are easily listened and viewed by many whether rural or urban areas. But the means and mode to be used have a significant impact on the entire exercise as only positive and objective awareness and mobilization would yield the objectives and desired results of the exercise. The types and pattern of mobilization and awareness should themselves be regulated by authorities in terms of context, content and also quality. This is simply because census is an exercise surrounded by ulterior controversial, conflicting and selfish interests which stakeholders may manipulate it to achieve perceived interests, eliminate rivals, inflate/deflate figures or some reasons, include or exclude one area or the other all for other interests.

Conduct of census exercises in Nigeria have been characterized by sensitive legal battles, political instability and controversies which had led to the 1962/63 census crisis and legal battle, which extended to the January, 1966 coup, the 1973 census cancellation, and various political manipulations among others. Nigerians have gone further and advanced in the manipulation of interests on religious, social, ethno-regional and other avenues, thus the need for effective regulation of the mobilization and awareness processes and content in order to achieve the desired results of such exercise. The social media, which is a recent development, can also be used to target the literate, remote and near population, where there are more facilities, especially those of communication. Musicians can also be used and through songs, many people, especially the youth can be reached and captured in the exercise.

Proper Data Collection and Management

Census is a very crucial and scientific exercise, which requires comprehensive demarcation and enumeration of areas and people, tabulation and validation of the data accepting error margin of 5% as there can hardly be a 100% perfect Census exercise. Although it is sometimes criticized, for long and all over the world, population and housing census has been the most dependable means of gathering reliable demographic/statistical data, especially in the developing states. This places strategic importance to proper collection, effective and efficient management of data from the future census exercise in Nigeria. There is the challenge of proper gathering/collection and management of the census data both during and after the exercise (Moser & Kalton, 2017). Hence, it is critical that the data to be gathered from the field should be properly collected and managed. Therefore, all the data to be gathered from the field should be safely handled and only by the competent personnel/authority. With the advancement in information and communication technology, there more opportunities for optimal gathering, storage/management and administration of the census data, but the process of data collection and management must only be handled by experts only, who should be additionally oriented on how to handle the census data in order to achieve the desired objectives.

LOGISTICS, MANPOWER, TIMELY AND ADEQUATE PREPARATIONS

The NPC also disclosed that 885,000 people will be recruited as ad-hoc staff to conduct the exercise through e-recruitment. The commission explained that this model was adopted to ensure widespread applications from all over the localities in the country, minimize bias and ascertain that all qualified Nigerians are given equal opportunity to apply and be recruited (NPC, 2022). Those to be engaged during the exercise are facilitators, training centre administrators, monitoring & evaluation officers, data quality managers, data quality assistants, supervisors, enumerators and special work force (NPC, 2022). Also, it stated that the bulk of personnel for the 2023 census will be drawn from the communities where they are resident to remove the huge logistics of moving personnel across the country (NPC, 2022).

MODIFICATION OF CENSUS QUESTIONS

In a bid to update the questions that would be asked during the exercise, the commission said it has modified the questionnaire with the introduction of new questions when compared to the 2006 Census. Some of the new questions introduced include: Questions on birth registration to identify people that have registered their births in the country and with which agency, for literacy, options have been changed to know those that can read or write with understanding and those that can only read but cannot write with understanding.

“Under nationality, a variable has been introduced, that is, dual nationality to identify people who are Nigerians and have another nationality. The title ‘Persons living with disability’ was replaced with ‘Persons with difficulties in performing certain tasks’ in line with the Washington D.C recommendations.”

It said two variables, albinos and speech, have been introduced into the questions. “On Economic Characteristics, the 2023 PHC questionnaire will reference 7 days from census night. New variables have also been added to this section namely, engagement in work, reason for inactivity and employment status.” “The Information Communication Technology section has been introduced into the individual person’s section with the aim of soliciting answers to three variables – owned ICT devices, devices used to access internet, and usual place of Internet access.”

“Also, the Fertility and Mortality section was introduced into the persons section of the questionnaire because of the need for robust data to close gaps in development planning. “In the Housing and Amenities section, more questions on sanitation has been introduced with variables covering Solid Waste Storage, Solid Waste Disposal, Number of Toilet Rooms, Waste Water Disposal, and Sharing of Toilet Facility which is in line with the Sustainable Development Goals 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation) which states that, by year 2030, Nigeria according to MENA (2022) can achieve access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all and end open defecation, paying special attention to the needs of women and girls and those in vulnerable situations.”

Issues of Refugees/Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), and Destroyed Houses

For an inclusive census, the commission stated that it would capture Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in their camps and ex-insurgents/terrorists kept in special holding facilities in Borno. In an event in February, NPC’s State Director Kaxhalla Yerima, said “We will capture every Nigerian whether in their homes or at IDP camps, including those who have repented.”

Similarly, the commission stated that careful consideration has been given to the identification of IDPs, which it described as a new phenomenon in the social strata of the country. “It is understood that each person can be found in varying locations in the country under different circumstances. IDPs have been created as a type of residence in the 2023 Census Questionnaire to ensure that they are captured under their varying population classification. The Census Department from the pre-tests of the methodologies and instruments for the 2023 census have identified that IDPS can be within a Regular household setting, in an Institutional (Long stay) setting or in a Floating/Transient Population setting.”

The Challenges of Population Census in Nigeria

The British Government that colonized Nigeria thought it necessary to introduce population Census in Nigeria but attitudinal dispositions of many Nigerians and politicization of population censuses have been resulting into a series of undercounts and unnecessary data falsification. From the inception therefore, censuses in Nigeria have been experiencing credibility crises. A number of disagreements have arisen over the conduct of population censuses which have been threatening Nigerian unity.

The Political Bureau appointed by the Babangida administration was aware of the problematic nature of Nigeria’s population census when it remarked that:

An overview of the Nigerian political experience since independence in 1960 shows clearly that among the many issues that have created great anxiety and brought the country to the brink of collapse has been the attempt at obtaining an accurate count of the country's population. The potency of the issue as a source of confusion and a national discord is underscored by the fact that attempts made by civilians (1962 – 1963) and the military (1973) were greeted with the same degree of cynicism, suspicion and controversies and had to be cancelled (Political Bureau Report, 1987)

Thus, while the Bureau's report actually described the situation with Nigeria's census from 1960, the problem goes beyond 1960. Beginning with 1789 population census which was the first census in Nigeria and other population censuses that followed such as those of 1815, 1855, 1861, 1866 and 1868, 1871, 1881, and 1891 were restricted to Lagos. Such head counts were not extended to other parts of the country. Many methods were used for enumeration; besides, enumerators in 1881 were paid by the head count that is, according to the number of people each of them recorded (Ugwu, 1993).

The main factor militating against a successful and acceptable census in the country has been identified as over politicization. It is a general opinion that too many things are tied to population. For example, revenue allocation, legislative representation, location of industries and the provision of other social amenities have so far been based on population which resulted in officials and indigenes inflating figures in favour of their place of origin. Other problems include selfish sectional interest, dishonesty on the part of census officials.

Most Nigerians are ignorant of the nature of a census, its basic elements, its execution and its position as the cornerstone for social and economic planning for overall development of a country. The result of such general ignorance is that citizens who are to be counted in a census have been suspicious of enumerators, and in some cases have been uncooperative or openly hostile. Wrong assumptions about the use to which census data are put are mainly responsible for some spurious information given to enumerators or attempts by some to be counted several times.

BENEFITS OF HAVING A NATIONAL AND HOUSING CENSUS

There are several compensations to having correct and actual figures from a census, since it helps propel a nation on the path of prosperity. Some of these benefits include:

- i. **Resource allocation:** A census helps in the equitable distribution of resources to different states, local governments, and communities based on their population. It provides accurate information on the population size, age, gender, education level, and income, which the government can use to plan and allocate resources effectively.
- ii. **Proper planning and development:** Data gathered during the process can be used for planning and development purposes. The information collected from the census can help government agencies to plan for infrastructure development, such as roads, bridges, and public utilities.
- iii. **Electoral process:** This is majorly the elephant in the room when data gathering is brought to the front burner. It helps redraw electoral districts and allocate constituencies based on population size, ensuring that the government fairly represents all regions and communities fairly.
- iv. **Demographic scrutiny:** Similarly, data from this process helps understand the population's demographic characteristics. It provides information on the age

distribution, gender balance, ethnic diversity, and migration patterns of the people, which can be used to make informed policy decisions.

- v. **Monitoring and evaluation** : To track the implementation of projects, policies and programs, data helps in monitoring and evaluating timelines. It provides a baseline for measuring progress and identifying areas where additional resources and interventions are needed.

SUMMARY

Conducting decennial population and housing census is an indispensable part of Nigeria's socio-economic, political and sustainable development. Although it has been missed at some times in Nigeria's census history and is not devoid of challenges, the census objectives can only be achieved when reliable statistical data is properly collected and analysed, and the statistical figures properly managed by the relevant authorities, and then on transmitted to other stakeholders in Nigeria's development drive. Such exercises have in the past been characterized by poor collection, controversy in acceptance, corruption, and undue or excessive politicisation. This time for the 2023 exercise, there are more challenging threats to the exercise as prevailing ethno-religious rivalry, conflicts and manipulation all over Nigeria, issues of accessibility to some parts of the North-East, North Central and the Niger Delta areas, tens of thousands of refugees and internally displaced persons across the country, threats of secession, issues of adequate funding and timely preparations, as well as logistics have necessitated the shift of the exercise earlier scheduled for the year 2016 to 2019, and are great threats to the success of the exercise, and so much have to be done therefore, to ensure its success. Sustainable development, which population census is an integral part of, has been marred in Nigeria due to poor statistical data collection, management and political will to execute plans. The forthcoming National Population and Housing Census is, indeed, a unique opportunity for Nigeria and Nigerians to use the properly collected and managed statistical results to achieve the much-desired sustainable development. Nigeria will turn 63 on October 1. 2023, and citizens may clamour for robust national development. This implies that a housing census that may seek to update the nation's national database may turn the tide towards a pathway of socio-economic prosperity.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Nigerian government should fully involve and join hands with the private sector for all necessary support, especially in terms of funding and logistics in the future census exercise. Nigeria should shift from physical counting and opt for administrative census using and harmonizing all available data banks of Bank Verification Numbers (BVN), National Identity Card, Tax Identification Number (TIN), Voters Registration Card, Drivers' Licenses, SIM Card Registration records, etc., which are all sources of administrative data that are safer and more accessible, which inexpensive, more reliable and can also easily replace the resource intensive physical head counting.

All avenues of creating awareness for the exercise, especially radio for the rural and remote areas and over the social media for the urban areas to ensure and achieve intensive and extensive awareness should be used. Religious, cultural institutions and organizations should be coopted to ensure full mobilization and participation of their members towards the success such the exercise. All preparations (budget, recruitments, appointments, time, logistics, etc.) should commence in advance so as to meet the target. All sensitive questions should be fully resolved and properly set so as to avoid any form of sentiments/fear/mistrust, etc., during the exercise. Resources to be used for the exercise should be fully utilized, monitored and accounted for in order to reduce the extent of corruption and mismanagement of public resources.

Adequate security should be provided for both the target population, census officials and the enumerators especially in volatile areas such as North-East, Niger Delta, Benue and Plateau States. All security agencies should be on alert to crush any attempt to thwart the exercise, especially from the areas hit by the insurgency, the Igbo South-East Biafran agitators, and parts of the South-South where there has been militant. All the relevant authorities and stakeholders to be involved in the exercise should ensure that as much transparency as possible is demonstrated so as to avoid any doubt, manipulation of figures, suspicion or controversy during the exercise. The Federal government of Nigeria should take bold and strict steps to ensure proper management and dissemination of the census data to protect it from all bad elements, hackers and any possible damage/manipulations. All the powers conferred on the National Population Commission should be strictly exercised in accordance with Sections 153 (1j), 158 (2a-d) and Third Schedule, Part I (J23) of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria so as forestall any conflict or controversy during the exercise, final figures declaration and acceptance. The processes and requirements for selection, recruitment and appointment of all census enumerators and officials should be clearly set out and conducted in the most meritorious and transparent ways in order to avoid scams of appointments and selections which have characterized the last census exercise in Nigeria.

REFERENCES

- Azinge, E., & Udombana, N. (2012). *Drafting legislation in Nigeria: Constitutional imperatives*. Lagos: Nigeria Institute of Advanced Legal Studies.
- Della Pergola, S. (2018). Ethno-religious intermarriage in Israel: an exploration of the 2008 census. *Journal of Israeli History*, 1-22.
- Doxsey-Whitfield, E., MacManus, K., Adamo, S. B., Pistolesi, L., Squires, J., Borkovska, O., & Baptista, S. R. (2015). Taking advantage of the improved availability of census data: a first look at the gridded population of the world. *Applied Geography*, 1(3), 226-234.
- Elaigwu, J. I., & Garba, A. A. (2015). Green federalism - The Nigerian experience. In Chakrabarti, P. D., & Srivastava, N. *Green federalism experiences and practices* (eds., 81-102). New Delhi: The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI) Press.
- <http://www.population.gov.ng/>
- <http://www.nigerianstat.gov.ng/National>
- Hood, (2023). Housing policy – Hood project. <https://hoodproject.org/glossary/housing-policy/>
- Idike, A., & Eme, O. I. (2015). Census politics in Nigeria: An examination of 2006 population census. *Journal of Policy and Development Studies*, 289(1851), 1-26.
- Imouokhome, P. (January 5, 2022) Absence of credible population data to mar newly launched Nigeria development plan 2021-2025 <https://businessday.ng/features/article/absence-of-credible-population-data-to-mar-newly-launched-nigeria-development-plan-2021-2025/>
- Iwuoha, C. M. A (2017). Religious plurality and ethnicity: A bane to population census in Nigeria. *International Journal of Current Innovation Research*, 3(8) 733-737.
- Kozah, B. (April 24, 2023). The 2023 national population and housing census in Nigeria <https://von.gov.ng/the-2023-national-population-and-housing-census-in-nigeria/>
- Mason, K. A., Losos, J. B. & Singer, S. R (2011). *Biology*. New York: McGraw-Hills Company.
- MENA, (November 21, 2022). South Africa: Department to hand over sanitation units in Vhembe. MENA Report.
- Mohammed, I. S. & Aisha, A. A. (2018). *Fulani/herdsmen-farmers conflict in Nigeria: The emerging dimensions, complications and the theatre*. Beau Bassin, Mauritius: Lambert Academic Publishing.
- Mohammed, I. S. (2018). Post Boko Haram insurgency, Nigeria's national security and emergent threats. *Journal of Humanities and Cultural Studies R&D*, 3(2), 1-15.

- Mohammed, I. S., Aisha, A. A., & Saidu, A. (2018). *Nigerian political development*. Beau Bassin, Mauritius: Lambert Academic Publishing.
- Moser, C. A., & Kalton, G. (2017). *Survey methods in social investigation*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Mosher, S. (2017). *Population control: Real costs, illusory benefits*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- National Bureau of Statistics (NBS). (2018). *Multi-indicator cluster Survey 2016-2018 survey finding report*. Abuja, Nigeria: NBS.
- National Emergency Management Agency (2015). Report on Nigeria. <https://nema.gov.ng>
- NPC, (2022). NPC unveils portal for e-recruitment - Continental economy magazine. <https://continentaleconomy.com/2022/11/02/npc-unveils-portal-for-e-recruitment/>
- Okafor, S. O. (2015). Misconception of population census and vital registration in Nigeria: A factor in socio economic and political stagnation. In Conference Proceedings, 20th-22nd October 2015, University of Nigeria, Nsukka.
- Selectiondc (2022). NPC Recruitment 2022/2023. <https://selectiondc.com/npc-recruitment-2022-2023/>
- The World Bank (2023). The World Bank Group and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). <https://www.worldbank.org/en/about/history/the-world-bank-group-and-the-imf>
- United Nations Population Division (2022). Population data and reports for Nigeria. <http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/index.shtml>
- United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Nigeria (2022). Reports and publications related to population and development in Nigeria. <http://www.ng.undp.org/>