



UNITED NATIONS INFORMATION CENTRE

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Press Release

Yangon, Myanmar

Date: 14 August 2014

Independent Observation Mission says Myanmar Census was an overall success

An independent Census Observation Mission that observed the country's first census in 30 years, has reported that the census was a success and says it was in line with international standards.

The Mission described the Myanmar Census as successful on the whole and in line with international standards, except in Rakhine, where almost all communities that wanted to self-identify as "Rohingya" (who the Government call Bengali) were not counted. At the time of the observation, it was noted that some parts of Kachin State, controlled by the Kachin Independence Organisation, were not enumerated.

Despite these difficulties, the Independent Observers report that the census was well organised, staff including trainers, enumerators and supervisors were well trained. Also, the publicity efforts around the census successfully raised awareness even in remote areas. The report notes that the population were generally positive about the census, with 99.6% of respondents observed agreeing to be counted and 98.6% of those observed responding to all questions on the questionnaire. There were however some difficulties in understanding some of the questions.

The observers also stressed the importance of the fact that in most cases, enumerators were familiar with the geography, customs and language of people participating in the census. This facilitated trust, may have contributed to respondents giving more credible responses and minimised the chances of either the questions or responses being misrepresented during the interview. All of which will positively impact on the quality of the data collected.

The Mission stressed the need to find a solution to count the people in certain areas of Northern Rakhine. Other challenges identified included the lack of preparation and space for storage facilities, in some instances, for census forms at the Township level, and enumerators prompting answers to questions for respondents where they felt the answer was obvious.

Observers from the Independent Observation Mission visited all the 15 States/Regions of Myanmar, 41 districts (55% of the total), 121 Townships (37% of the total) and 901 Enumeration Areas (1.1% of the total). They observed 2,193 interviews across the country, which the mission noted was a large sample for a census observation.

Their findings were released in a recent report which highlights the achievements of the 2014 Myanmar census and identifies some of the challenges.

The mission's objectives were to: document the census process and the way data were collected in select townships and Enumeration Areas; provide feedback to the Government during and after the enumeration; objectively assess the exercise against international standards and national legislation; and document lessons learned and good practices to improve the Government's capacity to conduct future censuses.

The observers, all of whom have solid census background in developing and post-conflict countries, cited this as one of the best enumeration exercises they had seen in their observation of censuses worldwide. The observations made by the observers will provide valuable input for future data collection exercises in Myanmar.

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To view Findings of the Census Observation Mission: An Overview: (English), or the Census Observation Mission Report 2014 Population and Housing Census (English): please visit www.dop.gov.mm or <http://myanmar.unfpa.org/census>. The Findings of the Census Observation Mission: An Overview, will be available in Myanmar soon.