



Republic of Sierra Leone

2004 Population and Housing Census

Executive Summary - Population Distribution Migration and Urbanization



UNFPA



SSL



EU

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FOREWORD

Government and other Stakeholders have been eagerly awaiting this report. The long interval between the 1985 and the 2004 population censuses has been mainly attributed to the 10 (ten) years brutal civil war. The 2004 census is an improvement on that of 1985 in that more questions were asked this time, and of course more information will be provided to the public after the analysis of the data.

Following the transformation of the then Central Statistics Office (CSO) which was purely a government institution, to the present Statistics Sierra Leone (SSL) a semi-autonomous Institution, the need for better Strategy for the development of National Statistics has been constantly expressed at all meetings of Stakeholders. The political will, to develop Statistics in Sierra Leone is also there.

The government is very much aware about the need for better statistics to inform the design, implementation and eventual evaluation of various development programmes for economic recovery and national development. Statistics Sierra Leone is expected to play a greater role than before in the development of National Statistics, it will have to develop standards, promote best practices and co-ordinate the entire National Statistical System to ensure that better Statistics are produced for better planning, policy formulation, programme design and development, and effective implementation.

In order to be able to do this and more, Statistics Sierra Leone will have to be strengthened in the first instance as past evidence shows that it has been weak, under-staffed, under-resourced, and therefore vulnerable.

Our expectation is that with a sound Statistics Institution in place and a reinvigorated National Statistical System that is properly co-ordinated, the government and other Stakeholders will get quality Statistics (accurate, consistent, timely, relevant etc) to track progress being made towards meeting our development goals and targets on poverty reduction, job creation, housing, agriculture production, health, education, transport and communications etc.

On behalf of Statistics Sierra Leone, I would like to express our appreciation to the Government of Sierra Leone, to the donor partners (European Union -EU), and United Nations Population Fund – UNFPA) for supporting the 2004 Census activities.

Finally, I would like to express our appreciation to my predecessor Professor Herbert B.S. Kandeh and to all individuals who played a part in the design of the census, and in the generation, processing and analysis of the data. I wish to very much recognize the important roles played by the External Consultant Professor Clifford Odimegwu and also the Local Consultants.

It is impossible to say everything at once about the 2004 population and Housing Census. We have therefore prepared this Executive Summary to serve as a guidebook for the government, the Stakeholders and the general public.

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CHAPTER EIGHT

POPULATION DISTRIBUTION, MIGRATION AND URBANISATION IN SIERRA LEONE

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INTRODUCTION

The importance of migration in population and development interrelationships was recognized by African governments in the eighties when they affirmed that the rates of population growth in their countries may be acceptable but the distributions within the geographic subdivisions were not desirable. But in spite of this general awareness and concern since, many of the African nations lack well-formulated national policies that aim at introducing desired population redistribution that would be more amenable to the development aspiration of the respective countries. The various development frameworks prescribed for the continent such as MDGs, PRSPs, or TICAD do not mainstream migration and population distribution issues into the planning process.

In Sierra Leone, as in other sub-Saharan countries, there is a general paucity of information on migration, population distribution and urban development. This dearth of data notwithstanding, it is reasonable to consider that with the vast population displacements occasioned by the decade long civil war, both the forced movements of people and the consequent settlement geography of the country make it imperative that the demand for studies based on aerial movements of people should now be met. This analysis of the 2004 census data on population distribution, migration and urbanisation provides some basic information for planning and policy-making. Development practitioners and researchers interested in the links between the spatial spread of people and resource availability and allocation in Sierra Leone will find it informative because of its relevance to the post-war reconstruction and development programmes predicated on the poverty reduction strategy programme (PRSP) in an era of renewed decentralisation of governance.

DATA AND METHODS

Census data remain the most reliable source of information for migration research in Sierra Leone. Place of birth data was used to classify the population

into native born and foreign born; thus enabling separate analysis of internal and international migration. The question on place of residence in December 1990 allowed for a comparison with census data on population distribution to give an indication of the extent of population redistribution during the war. Geographic data were available from secondary sources.

In general, the analysis proceeded in a cascade manner from the national to the provincial and district levels. The method of approach employed absolute numbers, percentage distributions and crude density figures, their differences and changes over time to analyse population distribution data. The extent of unevenness in population distribution was measured by the concentration ratio and the dynamic changes in the observed events were brought out by the dissimilarity index.

With regards to urbanization, the analysis used measures that estimate the level and degree of urbanization as well as indices that express the tempo of urbanization. Gibbs scales of urbanization and population concentration and the rank size rule revealed the way in which people were moving into the largest urban units. The urban growth decomposition method isolated the component of growth of the urban settlements due to natural increase from that due to migration.

MAIN FINDINGS

Population Distribution

There were 4,976,871 inhabitants in the country by December 2004. About 35 percent of them were in the Northern Province, 19 percent in the Western Area, and almost 22 percent in each of the Eastern and Southern Provinces. Exactly two-thirds of the population can be found in seven out of the 14 statistical districts – namely, the Western Area, Kenema, Bo, Port Loko, Bombali, Tonkolili and Kailahun Districts. The city of Freetown (Western Urban statistical district) alone accounted for nearly one out of every six people counted in the census and together with Kenema District (the second most populous part of the nation), slightly over one out of every four of them would be accounted for.

Broadly speaking, population distribution in Sierra Leone is affected by physical features, differences in socio-economic endowment, population inertia and attachment to place, and the decade long civil war. The manifestation of these factors lies in the comparative advantage, or disadvantage, of a district with respect to the relative acquisition of one or a mix of these elements; which act in such a way as to make a place attractive (or otherwise) to population concentration.

Population Density

By 2004, the national population density had risen from 49 in 1985 to 69. This figure was only exceeded in the Western Area and the Eastern Province. However, half of the districts recorded population densities in excess of the national average – Western Urban and Rural, Kailahun, Kenema, Bo, Kambia and Port Loko Districts – and can be considered as areas of dense population concentrations. Moderately dense areas recorded between 50 and 70 persons per square kilometers and included the districts of Kono, Pujehun, Bombali and Tonkolili. With densities typically falling between 22 and 40 persons per square kilometer, Bonthe, Moyamba and Koinadugu were the areas of sparse population concentrations.

Application of the concentration ratio on the 2004 census data, it was revealed that 32 percent of the population will have to be relocated in order to attain a completely uniform distribution of population in Sierra Leone. This depicted a very uneven population distribution. By using the index of dissimilarity, it was shown that approximately seven percent of the population would be relocated in order to attain the 1985 spatial distribution. Hence, the pattern of population distribution did not change much during the intercensal period.

International Migration

The number of persons enumerated during the census that were foreign born nationals was 89,876, representing 1.81 percent of the population. Compared with 2.90 in 1974 and 2.81 percent in 1985, this shows a steady reduction in the proportion of aliens in the country. In absolute figures, this represented a steep decline from 93,825 in 1974 and 98,860 in 1985. Declining economic prospects and insecurity of life and property during the war may have been responsible for this decline in foreign-born population.

The vast majority of them (97 percent) are of West African descent. Compared with 87.2 percent in 1963, 84.5 percent in 1974 and 94.8 percent in 1985, there has been a declining proportion of nationals from other parts of the world. Apart from West African nationals, British, American, Indian and Lebanese nationals are significant minorities of alien descent. Most of the aliens are found in areas considered as the economic nerve centers of the nation; the Western Area and Eastern Province. This suggests that the motive for immigration might be economic. The sex distribution shows that 55 percent are males. There is a high proportion of Liberian refugees in Kailahun District and most of them are females.

Internal Migration

The amount of people enumerated in districts other than their district of birth yields the interregional migration rate. This was 21.6 percent at the time of the

2004 census; equal to the 1974 level but slightly higher than in 1985. One would have expected that with the massive displacements of population during the war, the 2004 index should have been the highest. This may be an extent of the success of the programmes for the repatriation of refugee and resettlement of internally displaced persons at the conclusion of the war.

The Northern Province, which was a net sender of persons to other districts and regions, became a net receiver of migrants. Kono District experienced a huge loss of population because the district saw some of the fiercest battles between the forces for control of the diamondiferous fields therein.

Urbanisation

There is no standard official definition of what is urban or what constitutes urbanization in Sierra Leone. The practice has been for the Statistics Sierra Leone (and its predecessor institution – the Central Statistics Office) to create a separate file of settlements of 2,000 population and over. By December 2004, there were 1,825,246 persons living in such settlements. This represented 36.7 of the national population; up from 32.2 percent in 1985. The largest urban agglomeration was Freetown with a population of 772,873.

The way the settlements have been growing is such that the largest increases occurred in the biggest urban units. Freetown has grown so rapidly that it has become a primate city. There were significant increases in the populations of Bo, Kenema, Makeni, Waterloo, Port Loko, Goderich, Daru and Lunsar within the 1985-2004 intercensal period.

When the demographic components of urban growth were decomposed, it showed that although rural-urban migration had for long been the main contributor to urbanization, recent trends give that fertility has become more important. This happened because of the transfer of rural fertility patterns to the urban centers.

Some Policy Options for Population Distribution, Migration and Urbanisation in Sierra Leone

The uneven spread of the population by provinces and the concentration within a few districts pose problems of resource allocation and service provision for the population. In some of these places, difficult relief creates a physical barrier to service provision, the development of communication networks, and social and economic infrastructure, as in Koinadugu District. Similarly, difficult terrain, as in Bonthe and Pujehun Districts, produce the same handicap to development programming. In other instances, over-concentration of people in metropolitan areas poses a huge challenge to city and town councils in service provision.

Rural to urban migration was seen to be important in the urbanization process but rural-rural and urban-rural movements were also noted.

The development problems attendant upon this kind of scenario involved issues of economic growth in sending and receiving areas. Overpopulation, massive youth unemployment, traffic jams, infrequent power supplies, water shortages, congestion of the housing environment and inadequate sanitary conditions are some of the things to be tackled in order to make development balanced and sustainable. Additionally, some social problems like delinquency, social instability, prostitution, drug abuse, idleness, house breaking and larceny have increased. In the larger urban complexes, land grabbing and the juxtaposition of shanties and slums to elegant modern-styled buildings is a familiar litany.

With respect to population distribution and migration, therefore, the study proposed three broad areas of intervention that would make development in Sierra Leone more meaningful. They are the generation of data on population distribution, migration and development, the incorporation of population distribution policy into development policies and programmes, and incorporation of international migration issues into development policy and programmes.

Policy options considered for tackling unbalanced urbanization concerned those that affect the congenial growth of urban areas, urban incomes and prices policies, and promotion of small- and medium-size towns.

Map of West Africa Showing Sierra Leone

