A Comparison between Candidate Data Collection & Census Data Collection

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Executive Summary

This report compares the data collection process of the candidate information with the conduction process of the 2014 Household Census. In explaining how the census was designed and conducted, this report will highlight multiple factors that influence the accuracy of the data. Simple visualizations of the data collection process comparison chart will also be available on the EMReF website to serve a range of audience members with different interests and needs.

Who collected the data for the census?

The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) guided the Department of Population (DOP) in the Ministry of Immigration and Population in carrying out the first official census in Myanmar since 1983.[1] Prior to the enumeration process of the 2014 Population and Housing Census, the Ministry of Immigration and Population established census maps and divided the country into 81,744 total Enumeration Areas (EAs).[2] The enumerators, 100,000 junior school teachers, were responsible for interviewing all households in their determined EA.[3] Enumerators received EA assignments in their home region to increase the likelihood that they were familiar with the terrain, language, and residents.[4]

The collection procedure raises a number of questions regarding the reliability of the data. The official census questionnaires were filled out by the enumerators who interviewed household individuals and not by the respondents themselves.[5] Although most questions were multiple-choice, other questions required the enumerator to fill in an open-ended question in the Burmese language or with Arabic numerals.[6] Translation into non-Burmese languages posed a problem in some instances. There was no standardized training for enumerators based in minority language regions. As a result, the enumerators translated the complex questions to the best of their ability and based on their own interpretation. This discredits the data

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[1] "Ethnicity without Meaning, Data without Context," Transnational Institute (February 2014), 14, https://www.tni.org/en/briefing/ethnicity-without-meaning-data-without-context.
[2] "Ensuring the accuracy of Myanmar census data step by step," UNFPA (August 2014), 4.
[3] Ibid, 7.
[4] Ibid.
[5] "Ethnicity without Meaning, Data without Context," 15.
[6] Ibid.

reliability.[7] Additionally, many EAs in rural areas are zones of linguistic complexity, creating communication barriers for enumerators not comfortable in all present languages.[8] Although there may be a shared lingua franca for basic social communication, the complexity of census questions likely extend beyond the language capacity of those with a different mother tongue.

What sensitive questions did the census ask?

With an array of 41 questions in the survey, some of which addressed politically sensitive topics, it is doubtful that the enumeration process captured accurate household information.[9] Additionally, despite the promise of confidentiality in the 2014 Population Household Census (PHC), an environment built on deep-rooted historical structures of surveillance and censorship continues to invoke fear among the general public in providing a "wrong answer."[10] In the past, political officials have used information collection for law enforcement, punishment, and asset seizure.[11] Thus, personal identity questions and questions with legal implications are likely to yield flawed responses. People are generally cautious about answering questions on ethnicity and religion. Questions pertaining to citizenship status, the names of household members abroad, and possession of taxable goods are also highly sensitive because of the legal implications returns have for respondents. Therefore, the accuracy of the census data is questionable as a result of Myanmar's information-sharing sensitive environment and translation issues.

When was the census conducted?

The enumeration period lasted from March 29 to April 10, 2014.[12] This was both a vital period of political transition leading into the 2015 general election and a time of growing conflict in the borderlands. These conflict regions posed complications for enumeration as many communities were displaced and potentially out of reach.[13] It is still a puzzle how the enumerators handled such logistical barriers while attempting to assess populations in conflict areas.[14] Considering the complex political environment of the country during the enumeration period, the census claim of a 100-percent headcount is questionable.

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[7] Ibid, 19.
[8] "Ethnicity without Meaning, Data without Context," 19.
[9] Ibid, 2.
[10] Ibid, 19.
[11] Ibid.
[12] "Field Instructions Manuals for Enumerators and Supervisors," Department of Population, Ministry of Immigration and Population, the Union of Myanmar with technical support from UNFPA (Dec 2013), 8.
[13] "Ethnicity without Meaning, Data without Context," 2.
[14] Ibid, 15.

Why is ethnicity a complex factor?

The 2014 census calls for respondents to identify themselves with one major race of the eight national races on the code sheet and one of the corresponding sub-groups. In total, there were 135 recognized ethnic groups. There was also an "other" option where the respondent's answer was written in the given box by the enumerator.[15] The "other" option, however, is grouped together with the foreign races and therefore not considered one of the 135 recognized ethnicities, or races. Many activists complained that the 135 "lu-myo" formulations do not fit with the lived experience of identity in the country.[16] It appears that smaller ethnic groups (e.g. Lahu, Wa) are listed under the name of the state where they are most populous (e.g. Shan state), while others are categorized by language or dialect spoken (e.g. Dawei [Tavoyan], who are placed under "Bamar").[17] This inconsistency in grouping different ethnicities led to some cases of double-counting certain minority groups using different names. This likely prevented the census results from capturing Myanmar's diverse landscape.[18]

Data Collection Process: Census Data vs. Candidate Date

	Census Data	Candidate Date
People (Organizations) involved	Enumerators: Based on the information from the UNFPA website, the census required an estimated 100,000 enumerators who were mainly primary school teachers recruited by the Ministry of Education, to conduct the interviews.[19]	Candidates: The candidates filled out the candidate forms themselves and submitted them to their respective district office. The district offices faxed the forms to the Union Election Commission office in Nay Pyi Daw.

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[15] Ferguson, Jane M, "Who's Counting? Ethnicity, Belonging, and the National Census in Burma/Myanmar," *Bijdragen Tot De Taal- Land- En Volkenkunde* 171, no. 1 (2015): 17.

[16] "Ethnicity without Meaning, Data without Context," 16.

[17] Ibid, 17.

[18] Ibid.

[19] UNFPA Myanmar, "About the Census," December 07, 2013, accessed April 24, 2016, http://countryoffice.unfpa.org/myanmar/2013/07/15/7339/about_the_census/.

	They visited every household, residential institution, and other population settlements to document personal information on each individual living in Myanmar. Supervisors: Around 20,000 secondary school teachers were in charge of supervising the work of the enumerators.[20] They helped to check for completion of and consistency in the questionnaires.[21] Community Leaders: Members of Parliament, political leaders, religious leaders, ethnic leaders, state/region administration officers, district administration officers, township officers, ward/village track leaders, and community leaders all assisted in communicating the government's perceived importance of the census to the general population.[22]	Union Election Commission: The UEC checked the submitted forms for completion. Forms with missing or illegible information were verified against other candidate documents or, in rare cases, sent back to their respective district offices for verification. The Asia Foundation: The Asia Foundation received the candidate data from the UEC. A team of twenty people entered the candidate data into a data entry interface system that was desired specifically for this project.[23]

[20] UNFPA Myanmar, "About the Census," December 07, 2013, accessed April 24, 2016, http://countryoffice.unfpa.org/myanmar/2013/07/15/7339/about_the_census/.
[21] Ibid.
[22] UNFPA Myanmar, "About the Census," December 07, 2013, accessed April 24, 2016, http://countryoffice.unfpa.org/myanmar/2013/07/15/7339/about_the_census/.
[23] Mi Ki Kyaw Myint, e-mail message, April 24, 2016.

	Immigration Officials: Immigration officials from the Department of Immigration and National Registration managed the local coordination of data processing. Officials were in charge of receiving, dispatching, collecting and returning all census documents and questionnaires to the Department of Population in the Ministry of Immigration and Population for data processing.	
Collection Process	1.Enumerators and site supervisors ensured all households were counted 2. Township Census Officers verified the data collected 3. Professional transport companies securely delivered questionnaires to the Census Office in Nay Pyi Daw 4. Staff at the Census Office organized and stored the questionnaires 5. Township Census Officers verified the count of completed questionnaires received 6. Specially trained staff	1. Candidates filled out the information forms 2. Candidates submitted the forms to their respective district office 3. The Union Election Commission office in Nay Pyi Daw received all completed forms via fax 4. The UEC began to organize and check the forms 5. The data were sent to The Asia Foundation 6. The Asia Foundation Data Entry Team entered the candidate data 7. The completed

	prepared the questionnaires to be scanned 7. The checking office clerk transcribed any damaged questionnaires with a supervisor's approval 8. Staff at the Census Office scanned the forms using a high-tech scanning device 9. Staff at the Census Office inspected the computerized Burmese font 10. A responsible operator made necessary corrections and sent the unsure cases to the supervisor 11. Staff at the Census Office checked that the population totals added up correctly on the summary sheet and made necessary corrections 12. Staff managers tracked the scanning progress throughout and reallocated staff as needed 13. Staff addressed data inconsistencies with guidelines from the United Nations 14. The Census Office protected the data: all census data were backed up locally and remotely every day.	digitalized database was sent back to the UEC 8. The UEC published the database with the demographic information of all representatives.

Additional Project	The UNFPA is supporting the Myanmar government in developing thematic reports that will showcase the country's demographic and social conditions to support policy and planning.	Myanmar Election Hack Challenge: Let's Vote! Voter education initiative through the creation and development of mobile apps.[24] The new EMReF website is publishing Burmese language and English language databases on the representatives and providing contextual reports and visualizations with assistance from the University of Washington.

[24] Ninh, Kim N.B., Mi Ki Yaw Mymint, and Susan Lee, "Myanmar Elections Hack Challenge: 'Let's Vote!'," September 23, 2015, accessed April 24, 2016. http://asiafoundation.org/in-asia/2015/09/23/myanmar-elections-hack-challenge-lets-vote/.

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