



# NEPAL POPULATION AND HOUSING CENSUS 2021

PREPARATION AND CONTENTIOUS ISSUES

July 2021

**DEMOCRACY**  
**RESOURCE CENTER**

Democracy Resource Center Nepal (DRCN)

## **NEPAL POPULATION AND HOUSING CENSUS 2021: PREPARATION AND CONTENTIOUS ISSUES**

Published year: July 2021

Ishwari Bhattarai  
Ankalal Chalaune  
Sovit Subedi  
Aruna Limbu

### ***Publisher***

Democracy Resource Center Nepal (DRCN)  
Kupandole, Lalitpur  
Phone: 01-5902286  
Email: [info@democracyresource.org](mailto:info@democracyresource.org)  
Website: [www.democracyresource.org](http://www.democracyresource.org)

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DRCN Periodic Report - 12

Printed in Kathmandu, Nepal

*This study received financial and technical support from The Asia Foundation. All conclusions and analyses in this report are based on DRCN study and may not necessarily represent the opinions of the supporting institution.*

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## 1. Introduction

The 12<sup>th</sup> National Population and Housing Census in Nepal is taking place in 2021. Nepal has been holding a decennial census since 1911. Initial few censuses were limited simply to a ‘head count’. It was only from the year 1952 that a regular census using scientific procedures and processes has been held.<sup>1</sup> The data obtained from any census holds multi-dimensional importance. This data is useful to determine the electoral constituency and the number of representatives in the parliament. Additionally, a periodic national census contributes towards ensuring the constitutionally guaranteed rights of women, Dalits, children, senior citizens, sexual minorities, people with disabilities, etc. It is used to evaluate the implementation of their rights, increase the effectiveness of social justice and social welfare programs like housing, and provide directives for the proportional inclusion of various ethnic and caste groups and minorities.

The census, taking place this year (2021), is the first under the federal structure. This will generate new data about the seven provinces and the 753 local units. The Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) is collecting, processing, and publishing the census data. The bureau had scheduled the census between 8 and 22 of June, 2021.<sup>2</sup> It conducted a pilot census in June, 2020. The main census questionnaire, with a few amendments based upon the pilot census, was published in the National Gazette.

It is in this context that Democracy Resource Center Nepal (DRCN) carried out a study on the activities done in preparation for the National Census 2021. DRCN has interviewed various stakeholders, and information regarding the planning and preparations for the census was collected through in-person

meetings. Telephone conversations were held with organizations directly or indirectly related to the census, CBS, relevant constitutional commissions, caste and ethnic organizations, and other stakeholders, including representatives from Dalit and other minority communities. This report also includes information gathered through media monitoring.

The next section of this report mentions the structural provisions made for conducting the National Census 2021. The legal, administrative, and human resource management aspects of the census have been examined. The third section provides a snapshot of the procedures employed for the census. It looks at preparatory activities like the formulation of questionnaires, delineation of census areas, training of enumerators and supervisors, stakeholder-discussions, dissemination of census-related information, and activities following the census. The fourth section analyzes different aspects of the census like people’s participation and various social dimensions including the census on individuals from several castes, ethnicities, languages, religions, sexual minorities, and people with disabilities.

## 2. Organizational structure of the National Census

### *Legal structure*

Schedule 5 of the Constitution of Nepal designates ‘Central Statistics (National and International Standards and Quality)’ as the responsibility of the federal government. Similarly, Schedule 6 designates that ‘Provincial Statistics’ shall be under provincial governments while Schedule 8 designates that ‘Local Statistics and Records Collection’ shall be under the local government. Outside of these instances, the Constitution makes no mention of a census or national data collection. A bill aimed at amending and consolidating existing data laws is under consideration at the federal parliament. Until the bill is passed by the parliament, the *Statistics Act, 1958* remains the main basis for the census. This Act delegates all the rights pertaining to data collection, management, facilitation, and other institutional structuring to CBS under the

<sup>1</sup> The National Census of 1952 divided Nepal into the Eastern Zone and Western Zone, and was conducted over a period of two years, with the east being enumerated in 1952 and the west by 1954.

<sup>2</sup> Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Government of Nepal halted all census-related activities on May 2, 2021 until further notice. However, at that time Central Bureau of Statistics had been carrying out its scheduled preparatory work. The schedule is available at: Working Schedule of Population Census 2021- <https://censusnepal.cbs.gov.np/Home/Details?tpid=1&dcid=579e8914-c770-4ae2-b893-b1ab1d9f8903>

National Planning Commission. Additionally, the laws like *Statistical Regulations, 1984*; *National Census Operation and Management Order, 2019*; and *National Census Operation Directives, 2019* direct the census. Apart from these, the *National Strategy for Development of Statistics, 2019*; and *Administrative Management and Fiscal Services Standards, 2019* are also useful from a legal standpoint. Accordingly, CBS has created an organizational and administrative structure based on these provisions, programs, policies, and directives to conduct the National Census 2021.

As deemed necessary, additional bylaws, directives, and management orders are issued based on the Primary Act. Bylaws are mostly related to the management aspects of the census. Since the process and procedure followed for the census affect its results, these aspects should be studied, observed, and discussed. But scant attention has been paid to these aspects. Although some attempts have been made in this regard at the citizenry level by some organizations, the proactivity of CBS on this seems inadequate.<sup>3</sup>

There is no legal clarity regarding the role of local and provincial governments in the new census taking place under the federal structure. There is also confusion regarding the relationship of provincial and local governments with CBS, which operates under the federal government. This bureau continues to operate according to a unitary structure. However, it has been coordinating with provincial and local governments on the census.

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<sup>3</sup> The Act to Amend and Consolidate Laws Related to Statistics, created to restructure activities like data collection, processing, storage, and publication in accordance with the federal structure is under consideration at the federal parliament. Once it is promulgated, it will displace the *Statistics Act, 1958*. The legislation contains provisions like establishing the national statistics system as an integrated statistical system, creating a National Statistics Office to function as a central entity for statistics, etc. The citizen-led National Census 2011 Citizens' Monitoring Committee 2011 pointed out in its report that there is not a separate law pertaining to the census and that such a law is necessary. The report mentioned that it would be appropriate to establish the Central Bureau of Statistics as a 'constitutional commission'. (See: Nepal Census Observation Committee 2011 (NCOC 2011). 2012. Nepal National Population and Housing Census 2011: Observation Report. Kathmandu: NCOC)

## Administrative structure

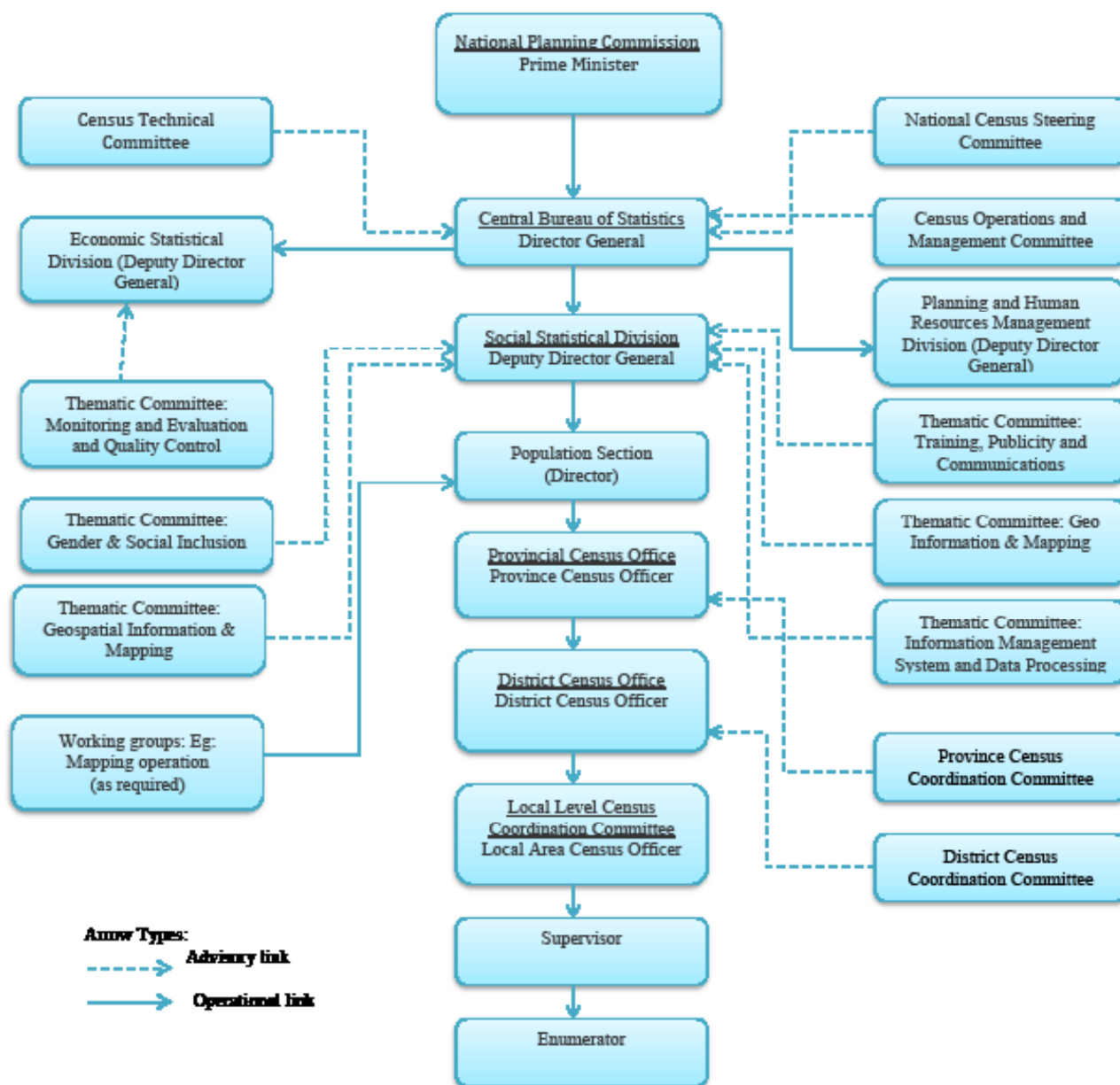
CBS is the main entity responsible for the census. The *National Census Operation and Management Order, 2019* has provided for a National Census Steering Committee at the secretariat-level in the federal government. This committee makes the most important decisions regarding the census. It is chaired by the deputy-chairperson of the National Planning Commission. Secretaries of various federal ministries (Office of the Prime Minister and Council of Ministers, Finance, Home, Education, Science and Technology, Federal Affairs and General Administration, and Health and Population), the secretary at the Planning Commission who oversees statistics, the secretary of the National Natural Resources and Fiscal Commission, the head of the Central Department for Statistics, and the head of the Central Department for Population Studies at Tribhuvan University are its members. The Director General of CBS is designated its member-secretary. The committee directs the census, forms the necessary technical and thematic committees, manages the coordination and cooperation between various entities and levels, and carries out the necessary initiatives with development partner entities. The committee also determines the final questionnaire for the census.<sup>4</sup>

Just as CBS has a vital function in the overall management of the census, policy-related responsibilities fall upon the Directorate Committee. CBS forms work groups as necessary for the census. Accordingly, the Census Fieldwork Monitoring and Supervision Management Work Group, the Census Management Work Group, the Communications and Promotions Work Group, and the Census Data Publication and Distribution Work Group were formed. Similarly, the Storage and Transportation Work Group was created to transport census questionnaire forms to local units and to manage the filling-in of forms collected from the fieldwork. The Inquiry and Field Assistance Work Group was formed to address the complaints and queries from stakeholders, etc.

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<sup>4</sup> CBS presents questionnaires before the Directorate Committee. The Directorate Committee may study it and create a Technical Committee to present its suggestions. Based on these suggestions, the Directorate Committee prepares the final questionnaire.

### Organizational structure of Nepal National Census 2021



Source: Nepal National Census 2021 website of CBS

CBS has established offices at provincial and district levels. However, the plan to establish local census offices in the 753 local units was delayed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Due to the uncertainty around the census due to the COVID-19, nearly 350 offices that were established at the local level have been closed. There are 87 district offices across 77 districts because multiple offices were established in some

districts, according to their population density and geography. According to the CBS organizational chart, there shall also be coordination committees at provincial, district, and local levels.<sup>5</sup> Their function

<sup>5</sup> The provision is for the chief secretary of the Office of the Chief Minister and Council of Ministers to be appointed the coordinator of the Coordination Committee. This committee has three secretaries of provincial ministries and the provincial chief of

will be to provide assistance to and coordinate with census offices established by CBS to promote and carry out communications on the census. They will also monitor and supervise the enumeration process. These committees will not have any direct role in the census work itself.

## Human resources management

The number of employees working at CBS along with the available appointments is not adequate to conduct the census. Therefore, the National Census Operation and Management Order gives the bureau the provision for requisitioning employees from the federal government, provincial governments and local governments.<sup>6</sup> Thus, the bureau can deploy employees from other offices on assignment, and it can also appoint necessary employees under contract. There is a provision for securing the census material and the questionnaires containing data in coordination and cooperation with three levels of governments.

CBS has made fixed-term appointment contracts for enumerators and supervisors to collect the data necessary for the census and supervise the process. In past censuses, teachers from community schools were made enumerators and supervisors. For this census, enumerators and supervisors have been selected through an open competition.<sup>7</sup> The policy was to select – as far as possible – educated youth

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police as members, with the provincial census officer acting as the member secretary of the committee. Additionally, there is a District Census Coordination Committee under the coordination of the chief district officer, and at the local level, a Local Census Coordination Committee under the coordination of the chief administrative officer or an official appointed by them. (See Annex 1)

<sup>6</sup> There are a total of 532 employees engaged, with 148 employees at CBS and 384 employees at its 33 statistics offices around the country.

<sup>7</sup> Enumerators must have passed 10+2, and supervisors must be college graduates or equivalent; male candidates must be between 18 years and 40 years of age at the time of the final date for applications; and women must be under 45 years of age. The selection process gave special preference to persons who could speak and understand Nepali and the local languages of Nepal, and could explain matters to others in those languages; who held post-graduate degrees in statistics or population or equivalent, respectively.

at the local level to function as enumerators and supervisors. The application form requires enumerators and supervisors to select two local units of their preference for deployment. CBS claims that the data collection process will become easier, and the collected data will be more trustworthy since local youths with the knowledge of local languages and cultures have been selected as supervisors and enumerators. Most stakeholders have found this change, made for the upcoming census, positive. A professor at the Central Department for Population Studies, Tribhuvan University, said, “The structure adopted this time will also reduce accusations that, in previous censuses, enumerators sat at crossroads and under *chautari* rest-stops to collect data.” According to CBS, some improvements have been introduced by gathering experiences related to the processes and activities employed during past censuses.<sup>8</sup>

Maps were drawn by dividing the country into around 32,000 enumeration areas to include all households. Applications were called for the contractual employment of about 38,000 enumerators and 8,000 supervisors so that each enumeration area would have at least one enumerator and there would be a supervisor for a set of four enumerators.<sup>9</sup> During the 2011 census, CBS had mobilized a total of 30,793 enumerators and 7,909 supervisors, and the census was held over 12 days.<sup>10</sup> According to the 2011 census, there were 5.4 million households, with a total population of 26,494,500. Projecting on the basis of these figures, the population of Nepal is estimated to be around 30.4 million. The

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<sup>8</sup> Based on opinions expressed by the director of the Central Bureau of Statistics at a program jointly organized by Democracy Resource Center Nepal (DRCN) and Martin Chautari. A recording of the program is available at: <https://www.facebook.com/martinchautari/videos/507537994013777/>

<sup>9</sup> 136,000 persons applied to become enumerators while 18,500 persons applied to become supervisors. According to a notice issued by CBS on January 24, 2021, the contract period for the enumerators has been fixed at one month and the supervisors at two months. Both posts receive salaries equivalent to the *Kharidar* and *Subba* posts in the Government of Nepal respectively, at NPR 26,600 and NPR 28,200. Additionally, employees deployed for the census also receive accidents and injury insurance worth NPR 500,000 and compensations up to NPR 50,000 in case of injuries.

<sup>10</sup> CBS. 2012. National Population and Housing Census 2011 (National Report). Kathmandu: Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS). Available at: <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/sources/census/wphc/Nepal/Nepal-Census-2011-Vol1.pdf>

2021 census will see about 9,000 more enumerators (38,000) and 100 more supervisors (8,000) than the 2011 census.<sup>11</sup> The 2021 census has also set aside 15 days for the enumeration work. According to CBS, on average, an enumerator will have to collect data from 160 households in the Himalaya region, 190 households in the mountains, and 220 households in the Tarai. Although the number of enumerators and days allocated for enumeration are more than in the previous census, a straightforward calculation based on the projected size of the population suggests that the available numbers will be inadequate.

The 2021 census aims to ask every household the entirety of the comprehensive questionnaire, whereas during the 2011 census, only one out of eight households was asked the comprehensive questionnaire. The rest were asked only a concise questionnaire. Also, in the 15-day period allocated for the 2021 census, the supervisors have to fill in the community questionnaire for each ward. This creates the possibility of putting additional work-pressure upon the enumerators and supervisors. Since an inadequate time for enumeration and supervision may affect the quality of the data obtained, it is important for census offices to give this issue due consideration.

### 3. Census procedure and process

There are mainly three procedures for a census, each of which takes as its basis the individual and the family's habitation: *De facto* – which counts a person wherever they are found living at the time of the census; *de jure* – which counts people based only upon the location of their permanent residence, and does not count people found in locations of temporary residence; and *modified de jure* – where people are counted according to the location where they live most often. In Nepal, the period for qualifying as temporary residence is taken to be six months or more. The census in Nepal follows the four fundamental characteristics suggested by the

United Nations: individual enumeration, universality, simultaneity, and defined periodicity.<sup>12</sup>

The entire census process can be divided into three stages: preparation, enumeration, and processing. The preparatory stage involves activities like preparing and finalizing questionnaires, conducting the pilot census, mapping out enumeration areas, and training employees, supervisors, and enumerators involved in the census, etc. These activities are discussed briefly here.

#### 3.1. Census preparation

##### *Questionnaire*

On August 31, 2020, CBS published its questionnaires for the 2021 census in the National Gazette.<sup>13</sup> It contains three kinds of questionnaires: the household and family enlistment form, the personal questionnaire (main), and the community questionnaire. The community questionnaire is being employed for the first time. Ward-level details will be collected through the community questionnaire from each ward at the local level. The household and family enlistment form contains 20 questions divided between five categories. The main questionnaire contains 17 questions under the family section, and 37 under the personal section, for a total of 54 questions. The community questionnaire contains 21 questions.

In the 2001 and 2011 censuses, a concise questionnaire was asked to most households while one in every

<sup>12</sup> UN. 2008. Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses: Revision 2. New York: United Nations (UN). Pg. no: 8. Available at: [https://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic-social/Standards-and-Methods/files/Principles\\_and\\_Recommendations/Population-and-Housing-Censuses/Series\\_M67Rev2-E.pdf](https://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic-social/Standards-and-Methods/files/Principles_and_Recommendations/Population-and-Housing-Censuses/Series_M67Rev2-E.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> According to the National Census Operation and Management Order 2020, CBS must prepare the questionnaire and present it before the Directorate Committee. The Directorate Committee forms the Technical Committee and directs it to study the questionnaire and present suggestions, and the final questionnaire is prepared in accordance with the suggestions received. Thereafter, the questionnaire is approved by the Government of Nepal and sent for publication in the Nepal Gazette.

<sup>11</sup> A previous statement by CBS indicates a plan to deploy 42,000 enumerators and 10,000 supervisors.



eight households was asked the comprehensive questionnaire. National and regional statistics were estimated on the basis of such sample households. This process had its limitations. The 2021 census will employ the comprehensive questionnaire for every household. However, using the comprehensive questionnaire is likely to create confusion among respondents and enumerators thereby impacting in the data collection. A professor of the Central Department for Population Studies at Tribhuvan University said, “The questions are long – respondents will tend to ignore them.”

Two procedures are being used for the census – the traditional ledger management system of Paper Assisted Personal Interview (PAPI), and the modern Computer Assisted Personal Interview (CAPI).<sup>14</sup> Before this, only the PAPI procedure had been employed.<sup>15</sup> Only a few enumeration areas in some municipal units within the Kathmandu Valley will see the CAPI process used to conduct the census through the use of computer-tablets.<sup>16</sup> In the remaining enumeration areas, the questionnaires will be filled using PAPI. The pilot census showed that the collection and processing of data was easier with the use of computer-tablets. However, it was reported that it would be impossible to employ tablets across the country since a large budget would be required to purchase tablets, and such tablets would have no utility for the next ten years.

Data related to officials employed at Nepali diplomatic missions and embassies and their family members will be collected by e-mailing the questionnaire to them in coordination with diplomatic missions and embassies. This procedure has been termed the ‘e-census’ by CBS.

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<sup>14</sup> In the 2021 census, CSPro software is being used to collect data using this procedure. Wherever they have access to the internet, the enumerators and supervisors have been instructed to synchronize with the central server between 6 pm and 8 pm in the evening all of the data collected on their tablets during the day. The software being used on the tablet allows for partial or full data to be saved, but enumerators have been instructed to not fill in partial data as much as possible. <https://censusnepal.cbs.gov.np/Home/Details?tpid=8>

<sup>15</sup> The PAPI system was in use universally before 2017. But after 2017, the CAPI system was started for programs like Climate Change Effects Survey 2017, Details Collection Earthquake Housing Reconstruction Program, etc.

<sup>16</sup> It was reported that the use of tablets received assistance from the donor agency UNFPA.

This is the first time that the bureau has adopted this procedure. The bureau plans to utilize the last day of the census to enumerate wandering people without permanent residences, mendicants and monks, street-dwellers, etc., wherever they are met. It will not be easy to enumerate all the individuals without permanent residences in one day, which raises the possibility of many such individuals being left out of the census.

### ***Mapping enumeration areas***

CBS has delineated enumeration areas based on the estimated numbers of households. Each area has between 130 and 150 households in the Himalaya region, between 160 and 190 in the hill region, and between 200 and 250 households in the Tarai region. At least one enumerator will be deployed in each of these enumeration areas. The enumeration area map assists the enumerator and supervisor in understanding the geography of their working area. This will make it easier for them to travel between places within their area. If discrepancies are found in the maps provided by CBS, the supervisor is responsible for determining the enumeration area in consultation with local individuals with local area knowledge, and to immediately update such details in the map. Thereafter, the supervisor will ask the enumerator to utilize the updated map. Although areas like Lipulekh, Limpiyadhura, and Kalapani have been included in the amended political map of Nepal in 2020, officials at CBS stated that it is not possible to deploy enumerators and supervisors in these areas to conduct the census.

### ***Pilot census***

A pilot census is carried out in order to test the enumeration process, managerial aspects of the census, the enumeration area mapping, the questionnaire and directives, the adequacy of available human resources and technology, test the census equipment, etc. The last pilot census concluded in June of 2020.<sup>17</sup> CBS

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<sup>17</sup> The plan was to conduct the pilot census over two stages in March and April of 2020 to fill in the Household and Family

had estimated that the pilot census, carried out in June-July 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic, would only be able to enumerate half of the designated pilot census area. However, the pilot census managed to enumerate nearly 10,000 out of the designated 11,610 households. Since people renting accommodations in urban households had returned to their rural permanent residences during the lockdown, their details could not be collected.<sup>18</sup> A total of 122 employees, including 15 supervisors, 60 enumerators, and 47 administrative officials were involved in the pilot census. Of 60 enumerators, 15 used computer-tablets, while others filled in paper-based questionnaires.

Following the pilot census, no major change was made to questionnaires for the main census. However, some words were amended and confusing phrases were clarified in the main questionnaire. For example, question 2 in the family section of the pilot census asked, 'How is the foundation of the house used by your family?' In the main questionnaire, it asks, 'What is the foundation of the house used by your family made of?' Similar nominal changes have been made to questions 3 and 4 in the family section. There are more significant changes to the questions detailing fiscal activities under the personal details section.<sup>19</sup> Question 31 of the pilot census asks, 'In what nature of economic activity was [Name] involved over the past seven days, even if just for a minimum of 1 hour?' The answer options provided include salary/wage, non-agricultural entrepreneurship, agriculture and farming, and no economic activity. This question has been amended in the main questionnaire. The question now asks, 'In the past 12 months, how many months did [Name] engage in any kind of economic activity that generated or did not generate income?' The answer options provided include, 'Six months or more, between three months and six months, under three months, and no economic

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Enlistment and the main questionnaire, and eventually the Community Questionnaire. But the plan had to be postponed by three months because of the COVID-19 pandemic. 55 wards across 14 districts in seven provinces had been delineated into 60 census areas for the pilot.

<sup>18</sup> Lama, Shanti. 2020. 'Pilot Census Concluded amidst Lockdown, No Significant Obstacle Encountered.' *Gorkhapatra*, 5 July. Available at <https://gorkhapatraonline.com/national/2020-07-05-17900>

<sup>19</sup> These questions occur as nos. 32 to 38 in the pilot census and as nos. 31 to 37 in the main questionnaire.

activity.' It also includes a note for the enumerator: 'Include if engaged in any family farming, enterprise or economic activity, whether partial or full.'

### *Training of enumerators and supervisors*

Since the quality of the data obtained is dependent upon the skills, capacities, and expertise of enumerators and supervisors, it is vitally important that they receive training. CBS has published the Enumeration Directives, Supervision Directives, Instruction Manual and Training Schedule, Census Official Manual, and Classwork Practice Book for in-class instructions along with additional reference materials and multimedia slides for trainings and instruction. Many of these materials are available on the National Census 2021 website. Seven documentaries prepared for training have been published.<sup>20</sup> The training material contains information regarding the definition and legal basis of the census, the functions of enumerators and supervisors, topics for the interviews, the use of maps, the coded boxes for registering answers, the intention behind every question, and the definitions of words and phrases used in the questions and their answers. Reference manuals on gender equality and social inclusion have also been published. Various problems that may arise while enumerating individuals of various castes and ethnicities, religion, disability, etc., have also been discussed.

CBS has adopted a multi-level process regarding the orientation and training of enumerators and supervisors. At the first level, national trainers are prepared to train trainers in each of the seven provinces. At the second level, province-level trainings will prepare trainers to train enumerators and supervisors. At the third level, trainings will be carried out for enumerators and supervisors at district and local level offices.

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<sup>20</sup> Supervisor Training Material, available at: <https://censusnepal.cbs.gov.np/Home/Details?tpid=8>

### ***Stakeholder consultations and discussions***

To prepare a conducive environment for identifying population data and indexes at provincial and local levels, CBS has been consulting representatives from all three levels of government since the initial stages of the census preparations. It also held interactions with various national and international organizations along with representatives of various caste, ethnic, linguistic, religious, and sexual minority communities.<sup>21</sup> However, representatives of many such communities expressed dissatisfaction that the concerns they raised during these discussions had gone unaddressed. A representative who had participated in a discussion organized by CBS said, “CBS organizes meetings between ethnic organizations and statistics experts, but these meetings seem to be limited to functioning as a medium where CBS informs others of its plans and preparations. The concerns raised by various stakeholder organizations go unaddressed. These are discussions for the sake of discussions, mere formalities.”

### ***Information dissemination and awareness among the citizenry***

CBS is advertising and promoting the National Census 2021 with the slogan ‘*Mero Ganana, Mero Sahabagita*’, or ‘My Census, My Participation’. A Communications and Promotions Working Group was established with the Director of the Population Division at CBS as the coordinator to facilitate all related activities.<sup>22</sup> CBS, along with census offices at provincial and district levels, carry out promotional activities. The bureau has created a website for its promotional activities. The 2021 census also has its own YouTube channel to disseminate audio-visual material. Various news items and interviews related to

the census have been uploaded on to it. Information has also been translated into various languages spoken in Nepal. A Facebook page and a Twitter handle were created to join social media.<sup>23</sup> The toll-free number 1178 is dedicated to answering queries and collecting suggestions. An employee overseeing the toll-free number said that dozens of calls are received each day. Most calls inquired about the enumerator and supervisor selection and training program. With the coordination, cooperation, and assistance of telecommunications service providers, there are plans to expand the toll-free service to the provincial and district levels and to disseminate information and notices through bulk SMS, email, webchat, and as the Caller Ring Back Tone (CRBT) on mobile phones, etc.

Audio-visual materials regarding the census have been prepared in 13 languages. There are also specialized audio-visual materials aimed at children and senior citizens.<sup>24</sup> Various organizations, non-government entities, and communities have also been carrying out various initiatives to promote and disseminate information regarding the census. Such organizations, which represent target-groups, have been carrying out campaigns that go so far as to suggest what answers to give to enumerators during the census. Claiming that the information disseminated by CBS is largely Kathmandu-centric, appeals are being made to communities through radio, television, posters, pamphlets, wall-magazines, etc., to participate in the census at the local level and provide accurate data. Organizations representing specific communities, like the Tharu Commission, Madheshi Commission, Muslim Commission, etc., said that they were preparing to deploy volunteers to assist and monitor enumerators and supervisors during the data collection process. Additionally, various assemblies and gatherings, workshops, discussions, meetings, etc., have also been organized.

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<sup>21</sup> CBS has published a report containing the conclusion reached through discussions and interactions, ‘National Census 2021: Multi-level Cooperation, Coordination and Assistance Study Report’.

<sup>22</sup> Three members comprise the Working Group -- two statistics officers from CBS’s Publication, Distribution and Library Division and the Population Division, and a media expert.

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<sup>23</sup> Census website: <https://censusnepal.cbs.gov.np>, Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/Censusnepal-100119991821399/>, Census Twitter handle: @CensusNepal, Census YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCoidjNDWNJkg-RbfYrg1Vjg>

<sup>24</sup> These materials are available at: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCoidjNDWNJkg-RbfYrg1Vjg/videos>

### **3.2 Enumeration and post-enumeration activities**

After the conclusion of the census, activities like the post-enumeration survey, based on a few samples to test the accuracy of the census, and the publication of the census results are carried out. The bureau has made provisions to establish a separate center to process the data. Data processing mainly involves data-entry from the paper questionnaire, coding, editing, and verification. In order to reduce errors in data-entry, the data is verified after double-entering and testing. However, since the data collected using computer technology is directly stored in the central server, the hassle of repeating the data-entry and testing is avoided.

The Census Operation Manual does not contain any clear provisions regarding the post-enumeration survey. Although it states that some entries will be selected from among the data entered to be tested via repeated data-entry, the number of entries to be selected is not stipulated nor is a clear procedure defined for this process. The number of entries to be tested for accuracy is determined by the frequency of errors encountered in a sample.

After the data is processed, the publication stage begins. That is followed by the publication of preliminary results, and after some time, the publication of the final results, and thematic and regional reports, etc. The bureau has plans to prepare reports on different themes in order to address the need of and demand for data right down to the local levels. Finally, the bureau also plans to publish granular data.

## **4. Participation and enumeration of social diversity in the census**

The enumeration of the social diversity of Nepal – its languages, castes, ethnicities, religions, and minority communities – and the data obtained on it have often created debate and conflict. In the transformed political context of the past few decades, various castes, ethnicities, and communities have increasingly organized to establish their identity and ensure

inclusivity. During stakeholder-dialogues on the census, divergent understandings were found on these issues. Especially, Janajatis, Dalits, Madheshis, Muslims, and people living with disabilities were concerned and worried that their groups and communities will be under-counted in the census. The main concern of these communities was found to be focused on questions related to gender (other genders), caste, ethnicity, religion, language and disability. Similarly, issues like the awareness of enumerators and supervisors regarding local culture, their training, and data-processing have also been issues of concern for them. They suspected that the correct statistics on minority communities will not be obtained due to procedural errors or the limited comprehension of individuals involved in conducting the census. Representatives of such communities participated in discussion programs organized by CBS and put forth their demands.

The Madheshi Commission, Tharu Commission, Kirat Rai Yayokkha, and a few other communities and organizations took the initiative to invite officials from CBS to discussion programs organized by them. Various communities, organizations, and civil society organizations were found to have engaged in various activities to ensure the accurate enumeration of their communities. Activities undertaken by these organizations have, on the one hand, increased popular consciousness regarding the census while, on the other hand, it appears that the answers of the respondents will be affected by the activities of individuals in leadership positions within these organizations. Mostly, suspicions and conflicts prevailed regarding the following issues:

### ***Enumeration of caste and ethnic groups***

Data on various castes and ethnicities is politically significant from the perspective of inclusion and identity. Various ethnic communities have complained that inaccurate enumerations in the past resulted in a decrease in the number of people counted as part of their communities. This issue is complicated in the 2021 census. Question no. 7 of the main questionnaire enumerates caste and ethnicity. This question asks, ‘What is the caste/ethnicity of [Name...]?’ This

question anticipates a short answer. The Census Resource Manual of CBS defines ‘caste’ as the various sub-groups within the *varnashram* system of the Hindu religion, while it defines ‘ethnicity’ as Janajati groups with a distinct language and culture. But a few Janajati activists do not agree with such an explanation of ‘caste’ and ‘ethnicity’.<sup>25</sup> They argue that this question creates confusion by lumping caste and ethnicity together. It appears that the understanding of enumerators and respondents regarding the terms ‘caste and ethnicity’ will also affect the census.

Most stakeholders worry that the common practice of assuming the caste or ethnicity of a person based on their surnames will result in enumerators filling in details based on guesswork. Many stakeholders expressed the concern that such assumptions would result in the caste or ethnicity of an individual being erased or that some castes and ethnicities would end up being over or under counted. Many surnames are common across Bahun-Chhetris, Madheshis, Tharus, Muslims, and Dalits. “Since surnames like Mishra, Pandey, Sharma and others are common across the Tarai and among hill communities, the data may end up showing fewer than the actual number of people in Madheshi communities. Unless enumerators are careful about this, the census will not record an accurate number of Madheshis,” a representative of the Madheshi Commission said.

A representative of the Dalit Commission had similar concerns. According to the representative, many Dalit surnames match non-Dalit surnames. The representative claimed that the fact that many Dalits are ‘obligated’ to hide their true surnames and pass under non-Dalit surnames will also result in a lower count of Dalits. “The previous census showed a decrease in the Dalits population compared to the past, but various studies have shown that the birth rate among Dalits is higher in comparison to other communities. Errors in the data collection process are responsible for the apparent decrease in the number of Dalits,” he shared.

<sup>25</sup> Central Bureau of Statistics. 2021. National Census 2021, Pilot Census 2020. Kathmandu: Central Bureau of Statistics. Available at: <https://censusnepal.cbs.gov.np/Home/Details?tpid=5&dcid=b38c6b94-edf7-4e6b-a946-d67cc6f1f20b&tfsid=17>

According to the representative of the Tharu Commission, Tharus also face a similar problem. The chairperson of the Tharu Commission said that the commission was preparing to send the bureau a comprehensive list of the surnames prevalent in Tharu communities across Nepal. Similarly, Madheshis, Muslims, Rais, Limbus and other community organizations are understood to be creating lists of surnames prevailing in their communities. Some communities reported they had already made such lists of surnames available to CBS. Thus, it appears that some castes and ethnicities will be over-reported while others will be under-reported because of the definitions of surnames, castes, and ethnicities, and confusion regarding these categories. Even if enumerators understand these issues and count accurately, the lack of clarity in definitions will continue to cast doubt upon the data.

Questions on caste and ethnicities are also frequently controversial because of a lack of common understanding within a particular community about its religion, language, culture, history, and traditions, and regarding what to enter as its caste or ethnicity. For instance, there is no uniformity regarding whether the Kulung community should identify as ‘Kulung’ or as ‘Rai’. Regarding these contestations a writer noted, “Since most Kulung Rais entered their caste or ethnicity as ‘Kulung Rai’ instead of just ‘Kulung’ during the 2011 Census, accurate data about the number of Kulungs could not be obtained. People who wrote ‘Kulung Rai’ and ‘Rai’ were bundled under the category of Rai. Therefore, for the upcoming census, we (Kulungs) should train our community (Kulung) to write only ‘Kulung’ instead of ‘Kulung Rai’ or ‘Rai’ – regardless of what others (who identify as Rais) write in the census.”<sup>26</sup> Similar debates and contestations are also present in other ethnic, religious, and linguistic groups. Janajati activists and leadership were found to be conducting campaigns regarding how to answer these questions according to their own individual notions.

Since local unemployed youths are being deployed as enumerators and supervisors, the expectation is that their knowledge on castes and ethnicities living in the

<sup>26</sup> Kulung, Ninam ‘Mangaley’. 2021. 2021 Census and the Status of Kulung People. *Karobar*, 16 April. Available at: <https://www.karobardaily.com/news/135267>

area, and of local languages and culture, will contribute towards an accurate census. In past censuses, teachers from local community schools were mobilized as enumerators, but they lacked adequate knowledge of local languages and cultures. Janajati activists allege that such enumerators often input information based on assumptions. The bureau has tried to address this concern by providing some definitions and explanations in the training material prepared for enumerators and supervisors. The Enumeration Manual mentions, 'Caste denotes various groups within the Hindu *varnashram* system... For example, Brahmin, Chhetri, Dasnami, Kami, Rajput, Kayastha, Marwari, etc. Ethnicity denotes various groups with their own language and cultures, like Sherpa, Limbu, Tamang, etc.'<sup>27</sup> Additionally, the answer-sheet also includes codes for the 125 castes and ethnicities identified during the 2011 census, and for 'Other'.

The Enumeration Manual also explains that the surname should not be taken to denote caste or ethnicity; that a particular surname may denote different castes and ethnicities, and that the castes and ethnicities of a son or a daughter born to inter-caste marriages may be different. If enumerators are provided adequate orientation and training on these issues, errors regarding castes and ethnicities during the census may be reduced by a significant extent. Some Janajati activists argued that the decision to utilize the community questionnaire during this census will help obtain information on caste and ethnic groups living in a particular ward, and that it would be helpful in verifying the data obtained. Both CBS and community activists held the opinion that the community questionnaire would assist in verifying and correcting discrepancies in the data.

### *Enumeration of languages*

The number of languages spoken and written in Nepal used to fluctuate quite a lot across censuses in the past.

<sup>27</sup> Central Bureau of Statistics. 2020. National Census 2021, Pilot Census 2020. Kathmandu: Central Bureau of Statistics. Available at: <https://censusnepal.cbs.gov.np/Home/Details?tpid=5&dclid=b38c6b94-edf7-4e6b-a946-d67cc6f1f20b&tfsid=17>

The census of 1951-53 identified 44 languages in Nepal. In 1962, the number decreased to 36; in 1971 to 17; and in 1981 to 18. However, the number of reported languages has been steadily increasing since the political change of 1990. In the 1991 census, the number increased to 31; in 2001 to 92; and a total of 123 languages were identified in the 2011 census. With the addition of eight more languages in the latest report by the Language Commission, the number of recorded languages in Nepal is at 131.<sup>28</sup> According to most indigenous organization activists, languages spoken by minority groups have been subjected to oppression.

In the 2021 census, questions related to language are listed under numbers 8, 9, and 10 of the personal section. They ask, respectively, about the ancestral language, mother-tongue, and second languages. There are 123 codes to indicate languages, and for an additional 'other'. The 2011 census only asked about mother-tongue and the second language spoken, but this census also asks about the ancestral language. Many Janajati community organizations have expressed suspicion regarding the intention and utility of the additional question.

However, CBS has said that the questions were included after suggestions from and consultation with the Language Commission. The Language Commission argues that most communities in Nepal have already stopped speaking their ancestral languages, and that this question will assist in identifying if certain languages are moving toward extinction. According to an official at the commission, these questions have been included because, even though many people have stopped speaking their mother-tongues or their mother-tongues went extinct over generations, such people were included in previous census data regarding languages. CBS reported that the Language Commission suggested the inclusion of the question based upon the opinion of 11 linguists. The Language Commission believes that ascertaining the ancestral languages of specific castes and ethnicities, along with which language is used in the family as the mother-tongue, and which language is spoken as the second language will provide data on which languages are

<sup>28</sup> Language Commission. 2020. Annual Report of the Language (Vol. 4) Commission, August 2019 - July 2020. Kathmandu: Language Commission

going or have gone extinct. It will also help identify the rate at which the number of speakers of specific mother-tongues are increasing or decreasing and thereby assist in creating programs and policies aimed at the preservation and promotion of languages.

However, representatives of Janajati organizations seemed to have divergent understandings on 'ancestral language'. A central member of the Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities expressed suspicion regarding the inclusion of the question on ancestral language, "CBS may have anticipated receiving Sanskrit as an answer to the question on ancestral language. The intention may be to use this data to manage the education of the Sanskrit language and its curriculum."

A population expert at the Central Department for Population Studies of Tribhuvan University, expressed similar suspicions. The expert said, "Like many other stakeholders, I am also suspicious of the question on ancestral language which has been included in the census questionnaire. The hidden intent behind this seems to be to point to the number of people who claim Sanskrit as their ancestral language and make it an official language or make its study in schools compulsory." Members of various indigenous organizations like the Kirat Yakthung Chumlung, the Kirat Rai Yayokkha, the Nepal Tamang Ghedung, etc., also expressed similar suspicions. A representative of the Nepal Tamang Ghedung said, "It isn't just about the question of ancestral question. What is the need to ask about the second language? In that case, why not also ask what their third or fourth language is?" Since the Nepali language has been the government's official language across Nepal for a long time, there is a high possibility that nearly all ethnicities will list Nepali as their second language. Thus, following the inclusion in the questionnaire of the question on ancestral language, Janajati activists have been campaigning at the citizenry-level to respond to these questions with languages other than Nepali. If such an atmosphere of distrust prevails, the data regarding languages will likely be affected.

On the other hand, the similarity between certain sets of languages seems to have resulted in conflicts and issues regarding the categorization of languages. The latest report published by the Language Commission, published in 2020, mentions that 8 new languages

exist in Nepal.<sup>29</sup> Of these, the 'Rana Tharu' language spoken in Kailali and Kanchanpur is one. However, Tharu activists have been questioning why it was listed as a separate language rather than under the Tharu language. Some Tharu activists claim that this is a 'ploy to splinter' the Tharu community. But, according to an official at the Tharu Commission, activists from the Rana Tharu community are delighted to have their language recognized.

Some respondents emphasized the possibility that many ethnicities and communities would get confused by the question about mother-tongue and ancestral language. A member of the Madheshi Commission said, "The Muslim community in the Tarai-Madhesh speaks Maithili or Bhojpuri, but often claim Urdu as its language in the data. Maithili-speaking Tharus in Province 2 also write Tharu as their language in the census." In this complicated context, there is a high chance that respondents will be confused by questions on ancestral language and mother-tongue. There are also complications regarding which answer to record for questions on the second-language if the respondent is multilingual. A member of the Tharu Commission pointed out that the number of Tharu speakers always appears smaller in the census than the population of Tharus and said, "Because the language of Tharus in eastern Nepal was recorded as Maithili, the number of people who spoke the Tharu language was seen as smaller than the number of Tharu people. There is the suspicion that perhaps this was done to inflate the number of Maithili speakers."

### *Enumeration of religions*

There is mutual suspicion and conflict between groups following minority religions and those following Hinduism. On the one hand, minority religions are asserting their identity, while on the other hand Hindu groups are expressing alarm that their majoritarian status is suffering diminishment. Amidst such suspicion and fear, these religious groups are campaigning at

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<sup>29</sup> Language Commission. 2020. Annual Report of the Language (Vol. 4) Commission, August 2019 - July 2020. Kathmandu: Language Commission

the citizenry-level to record their specific religions in the census.

A citizen from Dharan Sub-metropolitan City has filed a writ with the Supreme Court to reject the census form, accusing that the census questionnaire has been prepared with the intention of ‘splintering the Hindu religion’. According to him, the options ‘Nature’ and ‘Others (Describe...)’ listed under this question are intended to show a decrease in the number of Hindus.<sup>30</sup> On the other side, the leadership groups of various communities have been carrying out campaigns to persuade members of their communities to record specific answers under the category of religion. The Gurung community in Chitwan, arguing that, ‘the rate of religious conversion has been increasing recently, and the Bon religion is going extinct,’ has been organizing interaction programs and promoting a campaign to get Gurungs to record Bon as their religion.<sup>31</sup> In the hill districts of Province 1, activists from the Rai and Limbu communities have also been campaigning about which religion to declare. Many representatives from Janajati and minority communities accused that, previous censuses have tried to show a larger number of Hindus, and that Janajati and other minorities were enlisted as Hindus under various pretexts. Representatives of some Janajati organizations claimed that their campaigns were to encourage respondents to ‘independently’ record their answers regarding religion and that they would not influence the process, while some others were campaigning to have non-Hindu religions recorded. A representative of the Tharu Commission said that individuals were free to exercise their conscience when it came to religion. Some representatives of religious communities have raised questions about why accurate census data cannot be obtained regarding religion.

### *Enumeration of gender and sexual minorities*

The gender and sexual identity of a person is a sensitive issue. Discrimination and violence based on physical or sexual difference is rampant in society. Therefore, it is not easy to collect accurate data on gender minority communities. The collected data may show fewer than actual numbers because respondents may hesitate to open up to enumerators and supervisors, or because the latter may be insensitive toward respondents. There is also the possibility that the data will be abused if adequate attention is not given to data privacy.<sup>32</sup>

Activists from sexual minority and transgender communities have expressed dissatisfaction that the 2021 census fails to differentiate between gender and sexual preference, and that it has forcibly included the category of ‘other gender’.<sup>33</sup> The Household Enlistment questionnaire contains the three categories of ‘woman’, ‘man’, and ‘other gender’ as options for enumerating sexual and gender minorities. The 2011 census identified only about 1,500 individuals as ‘third gender’. It is possible that the gender of many individuals from sexual and gender minorities were recorded as men or women, thus under-counting them. Since the 2021 census uses the same method, there is an equal possibility that a similar under-counting will recur.

CBS has defined ‘other genders’ as consisting ‘lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgender, and intersex persons.’ The bureau has used the definition from the law to enumerate this community.<sup>34</sup> The question that will obtain details on gender and sexual minorities is included in the Household Enlistment questionnaire, but not in the main questionnaire. According to the

<sup>30</sup> Ratopati. 2020. Writ Petition against the Government for Attempting to Splinter the Hindu Religion. 13 February. Available at: [https://ratopati.com/story/167752/2021/2/13/jana-ganana-](https://ratopati.com/story/167752/2021/2/13/jana-ganana)

<sup>31</sup> RSS. 2020. Gurungs to Record Their Religion as Bon. *Onlinekhabar*, 20 July. Available at: <https://www.onlinekhabar.com/2020/07/883012>

<sup>32</sup> Cooley, Lawrence. 2019. LGBT Activism and the Census: A Battle Half-won? LSE Blog, 11 February. Available at: <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/gender/2019/02/11/lgbt-activism-and-the-census-a-battle-half-won/>

<sup>33</sup> Khadgi, Ankit. 2020. A Group of Activists Strives to End Forced Imposition of the Third Gender Label. *The Kathmandu Post*, 22 October. Available at: <https://tkpo.st/2ITDnNX>

<sup>34</sup> In 2012, the Ministry of Home Affairs had issued directives to create a separate category of ‘Other’ while issuing citizenship certificates to members of the LGBTIQ+ community. But members of the community argue that this contradicts the provision in Article 12 of the Constitution of Nepal, which provides for citizenship with the gender identity of the individual’s preference.



bureau, this has been done in consultation with gender and sexual minority rights activists in order to only obtain their total number.<sup>35</sup>

The Queer Youth Group has raised objections against the definition of sexual minorities and the questionnaire, and have expressed their demands through public litigation. Their demand is that, alongside the ‘man’ and ‘woman’ on questions categorizing sexual orientations, ‘non-binary and third gender’ categories should also be included. They have claimed that that the term ‘other gender’ has been incorrectly defined in Question 4.4 of the ‘Frequently Residing Person’ section, and 3.2 of Section 3 of the Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Reference Manual. They have also demanded that the terminology ‘non-binary and third gender’ should be used to define ‘individuals with sexual identities other than male and female’, and that a separate survey should be carried out within five years of the conclusion of the National Census 2021 in order to collect data to include Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression, and Sex Characteristics (SOGISEC).<sup>36</sup>

### *Enumeration of persons with disabilities*

Accurate data regarding persons with disabilities is necessary because the state provides priority to such persons in education, health, employment, social security, and other areas. It allocates resources and a fiscal budget according to this data. However, some activists working in the field of disability rights said that the enumeration of persons with disabilities is very complicated. The level of societal consciousness regarding disability is minimal, while the negative attitude towards persons with disability has pushed them to be neglected. Family members hesitate to disclose details on disability. This creates the possibility of persons with disabilities being under-

counted or of many individuals being omitted from the census.

Question no. 30 of the main questionnaire asks, ‘What kind of disability does [Name ...] have?’ A total of 13 options are provided as alternative answers. They include 12 types of disabilities.<sup>37</sup> Since 2011, autism, hereditary hemophilia and other alternative forms of disability have been included. But the 2011 and 2021 questionnaires do not differ substantially in terms of the categorization of answers and the construction of the questions. There is a risk that the alternative answers will confuse respondents and enumerators. Even though only one option needs to be chosen, some options appear inter-related. For instance, the same person can be listed under many alternatives including ‘multiple-disabilities’, ‘deaf’, and ‘speech and voice impediments.’

Organizations representing disability and disability rights activists said that a questionnaire like this would result in many persons with disabilities being omitted from the census. An activist said that CBS was given the suggestion to utilize the internationally widely adopted Washington Group of Questions, but that the bureau had ignored this suggestion.<sup>38</sup> National Federation of the Disabled – Nepal has accused past censuses of failing to reflect the true number of persons with disabilities. The 2011 census had shown less than 2 percent of the total population was living

<sup>35</sup> Central Bureau of Statistics, 2020. 110 Years of the Census (1911 - 2021). National Census 2021: Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Reference Manual. Kathmandu, Central Bureau of Statistics. Available at: <http://censusnepal.cbs.gov.np/Home/Details?tpid=9>

<sup>36</sup> Queer Youth Group, 2021. Demands of Civic Society Regarding Provisions for ‘Other Genders’ in the National Census 2021. Change.org, 24 May. Available at: <https://bit.ly/2RIilGE>

<sup>37</sup> ‘No disabilities’ is also one of the options available. Answers include physical disability, deafness, hard of hearing, total blindness, low vision, speech and voice impediment, hearing and sight impaired, hereditary hemophiliac, autism, intellectual disability, psychosocial disability, and multiple disabilities.

<sup>38</sup> There are a few useful procedures and questionnaires being utilized to enumerate persons with disabilities. The Washington Group on Disability of the United Nations Statistical Commission has prepared a questionnaire of six short questions and 35 long questions. Similarly, the Model Disability Survey Questions contains 38 questions in its concise version and 294 questions in its comprehensive version. An activist said that using such questionnaires would expand the definition of disabilities, and assist in collecting accurate data. Since the concise version of the Washington Group contains only six questions, it would assist in gathering the data in a short time, while other questionnaires would take relatively longer periods. <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/epidemiology-health-care/which-one-use-washington-group-questions-or-model-disability-survey-0>. An official at the CBS said that these questions could not be utilized because of the ‘limitations of the census.’

with disabilities. However, National Federation of the Disabled – Nepal pointed to statistics from studies by World Health Organization and other organizations which show that, on average across the world, more than 10 percent of the population comprises persons living with disabilities, and that persons with disabilities in Nepal are under-counted because of errors in defining and enumerating disability.<sup>39</sup> A disability rights activist said that there are huge differences in the rates of disability prevailing in developed nations versus that of low-income nations. This difference arises from how disability is understood and defined in the population census. The activist said that persons with disabilities also get under-counted because of the paucity of awareness among enumerators, supervisors, and common citizens regarding disability. There is a discrepancy in the understanding of the issue and various social and cultural perceptions on disability.

To decrease the possibility of under-counting persons with disabilities, National Federation of the Disabled – Nepal had prepared an interaction program titled ‘Context of the National Census 2021 and Disable-Inclusive Data’. An official from CBS said at the program, to ensure the correct enumeration of persons with disabilities, the bureau has coordinated with the federation and other related organizations. It has prepared a separate training session at every level regarding disability, and these attempts were being made to collect correct information through the use of disable-friendly communication materials.

It appears that attempts are being made through trainings given to enumerators and supervisors to address the limitations in the questions on disability and their structure, and address the negative mindset and prejudices around disability in order to collect accurate data. The training material and reference manual emphasizes that especial attention must be paid while identifying each of the 12 categories of disability since the collection of details around disability is complicated by social and cultural factors. Since direct

questions about disability may not result in accurate answers, it seems that attempts have been made to orient enumerators and supervisors towards asking questions indirectly.

However, with no substantial difference between the 2011 and 2021 questionnaires, there is scant possibility that the number of persons with disabilities will increase significantly in comparison to the previous figure. Moreover, accurate details may be difficult to collect if enumerators and supervisors do not easily comprehend the available options on disability, or if they become confused about persons with multiple disabilities.

## 5. Conclusion

A population census is an expensive and complicated process because it is conducted simultaneously across the country. A significantly large budget and human resources need to be mobilized for its preparation, data collection, and data processing. Last few censuses in Nepal have been conducted on the basis of internationally practiced procedures and processes. CBS has attempted to hold discussions with various stakeholders. It has also attempted to address the expectations of the Government of Nepal, various ministries, organizations, and other stakeholders. It has included many questions under a variety of categories out of a ‘pressure’ to fulfil the expectations of diverse stakeholders. Consequently, the main questionnaire has become very long. An attempt to accommodate as many topics as possible makes the questionnaire burdensome.

Thematic overabundance can result in a lack of uniform comprehension. A complicated questionnaire may be viewed with suspicion by stakeholders, and may also result in a lack of uniformity between enumerators, supervisors, and respondents during form-filling. If the questionnaire is too long, or if the terminology and phrasing in it are unclear, it will further complicate the data collection process. Therefore, good quality data can be collected if a minimum number of the most important questions are included. This will also save on time and costs.

<sup>39</sup> National Federation of the Disabled – Nepal. 2020. Inclusive Census 2021. 13 December. Available at: <https://nfdn.org.np/समावेशी-जनगणना-२०७८/> and Thapaliya, Mukti Prakash. 2016. A Report on Disability in Nepal 2016. Report submitted to Australian Himalayan Foundation (AHF), Sydney, Australia. Available at: [https://www.australianhimalayanfoundation.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/2016\\_Nepal\\_Disability\\_Report.pdf](https://www.australianhimalayanfoundation.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/2016_Nepal_Disability_Report.pdf)

Nearly all stakeholders, organizations, communities, classes, castes, and ethnic communities and minority groups have been closely observing the census and raising their concerns and issues. CBS says that it has consulted stakeholders and addressed most of their concerns. However, some organizations and representatives of castes, ethnicities, and minority groups have criticized the organizational structure, procedures, and processes along with the categorization of castes, ethnicities, sexual identities, languages and religions in the questionnaire.

Indigenous ethnicity organizations and activists have been conducting awareness campaigns and various

other activities. These activities aim to raise community awareness regarding the census. However, since the enumeration of languages, castes and ethnicities, and religions are also connected to aspects of community identity, debates and conflicts are bound to appear at various levels. Therefore, to make the census as least controversial as possible, it is important to pay especial attention to the concerns raised by stakeholders on the census procedure, process, structure, questionnaires, quality of training for enumerators and supervisors, etc. It is necessary to include various stakeholders in important components of the census.



## Annex 1

### Coordination Mechanism for National Census 2021

<b><u>National Census Steering Committee</u></b> (Vice Chairperson, National Planning Commission)	<b><u>Provincial Census Coordination Committee</u></b> (Chairperson – Chief Secretary, Office of the Chief Minister and Council of Ministers)
<b><u>National Census Coordination Committee</u></b> (Chairperson-Member, National Planning Commission)	<b><u>District Census Coordination Committee</u></b> (Chairperson – Chief District Officer, District Administration Office)
<b><u>Technical Committee</u></b> (Chairperson – Director General, Central Bureau of Statistics)	<b><u>Local Census Coordination Committee</u></b> (Chairperson – Chief Administrative Officer, Relevant Local Unit)
	<b><u>Ward-level Census Facilitation Committee</u></b> (Chairperson-Ward Chairperson, Relevant Local Level)

#### ***National Census 2021 Steering Committee***

Vice-Chairperson, National Planning Commission	Chairperson
Member, National Planning Commission (Statistics In-charge)	Member
Secretary, Office of the Prime Minister and Council of Ministers	Member
Secretary, National Planning Commission	Member
Secretary, National Natural Resources and Fiscal Commission	Member
Secretary, Ministry of Finance	Member
Secretary, Ministry of Home Affairs	Member
Secretary, Ministry of Education, Science and Technology	Member
Secretary, Ministry of Federal Affairs and General Administration	Member
Secretary, Ministry of Health and Population	Member
Department Head, Central Department for Statistics, Tribhuvan University	Member
Department Head, Central Department for Population Studies, Tribhuvan University	Member
Director General, Central Bureau of Statistics	Member-Secretary

#### ***National Census 2021 Coordination Committee***

Member, National Planning Commission (Statistics)	Coordinator
Secretary, Office of the Chief Minister and Council of Ministers – All seven provinces	Member
Assistant Secretary, Office of the Prime Minister and Council of Ministers	Member
Assistant Secretary, Ministry of Home Affairs	Member
Assistant Secretary, Ministry of Finance	Member
Assistant Secretary, National Planning Commission	Member
Assistant Secretary, Ministry of Federal Affairs and General Administration	Member
Assistant Secretary, Ministry of Education, Science and Technology	Member
Chairperson, Association of District Development Committees of Nepal	Member
Chairperson, Municipal Association of Nepal	Member
Chairperson, National Association of Rural Municipality in Nepal	Member
Deputy Director General - National Census 2021 program in-charge, Central Bureau of Statistics	Member Secretary