

NEPAL NATIONAL POPULATION AND HOUSING CENSUS 2021

ENUMERATION OBSERVATION



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**Nepal National Population and Housing Census 2021:
Enumeration Observation**

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1. Introduction

A national census has been conducted in Nepal every 10 years since 1911. The Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) conducts the national population census in accordance with scientific methods emphasized by the United Nations Organization (UN).¹ The 2021 National Population Census is the 12th national census, and the first in Nepal since the implementation of the federal structure. This will generate, for the first time, significant statistics pertaining to the demographic, social and economic aspects of the seven provinces, 753 local governments, and 6,473 wards. The CBS mainly carried out three activities in connection with the census. Firstly, pre-census activities; secondly, enumeration,² and thirdly, post-enumeration activities. The CBS carried out the census in two phases after completing its preparations. In the first stage, between September 15 and October 4, 2021, the enlistment of houses and families was completed. In the second phase, between November 11 and 25, 2021, detailed statistics were collected through the main questionnaire. In the second phase, details regarding basic resources, instruments, capabilities, infrastructures and disaster at every ward across the nation were collected through the community questionnaire.

After observing the processes and activities associated the first phase of the National Population Census 2021, Democracy Resource Center Nepal (DRCN) published a report in June 2021.³ This report was prepared based upon the observation of the enumeration process. Its main aim is

¹ The United Nations Organization emphasizes individual enumeration, universality within a defined territory, simultaneity, defined periodicity, and capacity to produce small-area statistics in a census. See pp. 3–4 available at https://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic-social/Standards-and-Methods/files/Principles_and_Recommendations/Population-and-Housing-Censuses/Series_M67rev3-E.pdf; accessed February 14, 2022.

² The Bureau had utilized three kinds of questionnaires: Houses and Family Enlistment Questionnaire; Main Questionnaire (for collection of individual and family data); and Community Questionnaire (for collection of ward-level data).

³ Report available at www.democracyresource.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/FINAL-Nepal-National-Census-2078-v.s.-13July2021-1.pdf; accessed on February 14, 2022.

to examine the data collection process and procedure of the census along with its theoretical and practical aspects; and to contribute to policy-related and practical reforms in the future by introducing the findings to relevant stakeholders.

2. Observation methodology and area

DRCN carried out observation during the National Census 2021 and focused on the qualitative aspects of the census. The provinces, districts, local units and enumeration areas for observation were chosen to reflect the geographic and social diversity of the nation. In Province 1, Suryodaya Municipality, Mechinagar Municipality, Kachankawal Rural Municipality, Inaruwa Municipality and Dewanganj Rural Municipality were chosen. In Madhesh Province, Janakpur Sub-Metropolitan City, Mithila Municipality, Nagarain Municipality and Bateshwar Rural Municipality were chosen. In Bagmati Province, Hetauda Sub-Metropolitan City, Thaha Municipality and Bhimphedi Rural Municipality were chosen. In Lumbini Province, Gadhawa Rural Municipality, Lamahi Municipality, Ghorahi Sub-Metropolitan City, Babai Rural Municipality, Runtigadhi Rural Municipality, Triveni Rural Municipality and Thabang Rural Municipality were chosen. In Gandaki Province, Dhorpatan Municipality and Nisikhola Rural Municipality were chosen. Thus, observation was carried out across 21 local units. A total of 250 respondents were interviewed at the provincial, district and local levels. This included census officials, supervisors, enumerators, representatives of various organizations and citizens. Researchers were aware of not interfering with the census data and respecting the privacy and functioning of enumerators, supervisors and census officials. Information thus obtained was analyzed through a qualitative process. It may not be possible to generalize the conclusions and insights of this study carried out over a limited area and through conversations with a limited number of individuals and stakeholders.

In the next section of this report, the administrative structure and human resource management of the census are discussed. This includes the establishment of offices, the recruitment and training of human resources,

and communications about the census. The fourth section weighs the coordination and cooperation undertaken during the census. Houses and families are discussed in the fifth section. The sixth section contains information obtained during census observation. Similarly, a description of organized campaigns by various communities, and their effect upon the census forms the seventh section. Conclusions are at the very end of the report.

3. Administrative structure and human resource management

3.1 Census office and official

The Central Bureau of Statistics established district-level offices in every district to conduct and manage the census. Since more than one office was established in some districts on the basis of population density and geography, there were a total of 87 offices across 77 districts. Of these, the offices established in districts where provincial capitals were located were also made the provincial census offices to coordinate with provincial governments. At the local level, a total of 349 local census offices were established to oversee a total of 753 local governments. A local census office conducted and managed the census in at least two, and up to three local municipal units.

Province census offices were provided a maximum of 10 employees. Of this number, four positions were set aside for the local census office. In nearly every local census office, between three to four employees were deployed. These employees were responsible for functions like conducting and managing trainings, mobilizing enumerators, and facilitating enumerators and supervisors. Additionally, the employees were responsible for supplying census material, and for supervising the work of enumerators and supervisors.

3.2 Recruitment and training of supervisor and enumerator

Previous censuses used to deploy teachers from local community schools as enumerators and supervisors. This time around, the CBS, in accordance with the policy to recruit enumerators and supervisors through open competition, specified the required qualifications and opened an online call for application. On the basis of applications received between January 24 and March 24, 2021, the CBS prepared a shortlist of supervisors and enumerators to be selected by the relevant district census office. This list was 30 percent longer than required due to the inclusion of alternative candidates. Applicants were asked to select two municipal units they preferred to be deployed. Local supervisors and enumerators with the knowledge of local culture and languages were given preference. This provision, made for this census, was considered a positive change by most stakeholders.⁴

The CBS organized trainings at the federal, provincial, and local levels for the human resources involved in the census. National-level trainers were prepared from the federal-level trainings. They, in turn, trained the chief-trainers at the federal level who included teachers and professors at local schools and colleges, federal and provincial civil service employees working at the local level, employees of local governments, and local census officers. They, in their turn, trained supervisors and enumerators at the district and local census offices.

Supervisor training

District census offices selected supervisors in March 2021, and began training them on April 29, 2021. However, because of the nationwide lockdown announced at the same time due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the week-long trainings had to be stopped after the fourth day. A decision by a meeting of the Council of Ministers on May 2, 2021 halted all census-

⁴ Democracy Resource Center Nepal (DRCN). 2021. *National Census Preparation and Contentious Issues*. Lalitpur: DRCN. Available at www.democracyresource.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/FINAL-Nepal-National-Census-2078-v.s.-13July2021.pdf; accessed on February 14, 2022.

related activities.⁵ On September 6, 2021, as the COVID-19 situation gradually improved, the Council of Ministers accepted a revised schedule presented by the CBS.⁶ Thereafter, census-related activities regained their pace.

Some supervisors who had received training in April-May were not available in September, so new candidates were chosen from the list of alternative candidates. When even the alternative list failed to provide the necessary number of supervisors, local and district-level census offices coordinated with the CBS to select new supervisors. These new candidates were trained together between September 12 and 13, 2021, along with those who had previously received the partial training. Supervisors who had received four days of training in April-May reported that the new two-day training helped them refresh their understanding of the material while the newly inducted supervisors reported that the two-day of training was inadequate for them to understand the training material. A supervisor from Hetauda Sub-Metropolitan City in Makwanpur, who had received only a two-day training, said that the training was inadequate for supervisors like him. He stated, “There was a rush to complete the training. Many topics remained not understood. It was difficult initially for us to work. We carried our functions after consulting colleagues who had been trained previously, and our superiors.”

Enumerator training

The CBS published the shortlist of enumerators in September 2021, from which district and local census offices selected enumerators. Some 40,000 enumerators were selected in the process. They received a four-day training between October 30 and November 2, 2021. The training was supposed to be six days long before the COVID-19 pandemic affected the census.

Census officials said that enumerators were adequately supplied with necessary census material. But, in some instances, enumerators failed to receive adequate census material. It seems that this situation was a result

⁵ Decision available at www.opmcm.gov.np/download/संति-२०७८-साल-शैशि-मवहन/?wpdmdl=7277; accessed on February 14, 2022.

⁶ Decision available at www.opmcm.gov.np/download/संति-२०७८-साल-भाद्-मवहन/?wpdmdl=7472; accessed on February 14, 2022.

of the fact that new enumerators were added to previous estimates. New enumerators were required because a lot more households were added in reality in comparison to the initial estimate of houses and families.

Chief trainers who had participated in province-level trainings trained enumerators. Community school teachers teaching at secondary or higher levels, federal or local civil service employees working at the local level, and census officials appointed by provincial or district census offices functioned as chief trainers. Enumerators were divided into groups of 20 to 30 and each group was trained separately. The CBS utilized various multimedia techniques to train enumerators through practical and theoretical methods. Where electricity, computers and projectors were available, PowerPoint slides and other audio-visual materials were used to train enumerators.

Most enumerators said that they had gained basic knowledge on the subject and the method for filling in the questionnaire from the training. In an attempt to make the training effective, audio-visual aid was utilized to examine each question in detail. Enumerators said that they received enough knowledge on potential challenges they might face conducting the census and ways to resolve them. However, some enumerators felt there was a greater focus on theoretical learning, and that they had not gathered enough practical experience. Enumerators complained that the training was limited to four days despite the fact that the questionnaire was quite elaborate and detailed. They said that the training period was insufficient for practical exercises.

An enumerator from Mechinagar Municipality said, “Training given to enumerators was just a formality. We, the enumerators, had hoped that the training would allow us to learn through examples and practical knowledge.” Census officials accepted that trainings did not provide adequate practical exercise. A census official in Ilam said, “Since the training period was so brief, it was not possible to provide enumerators with adequate practical training through an interactive style. Monotonous lectures from trainers made the training boring for enumerators.” Enumerators said that questions on economic activities, immigration, and child mortality rates were especially confusing. It was difficult for them to determine under which economic activity domestic work or work considered ‘normal’ fell. Some enumerators mentioned that sometimes

there were contradictions between what two different trainers were saying, and that there were conflicting suggestions on the same topic. Such confusions among trainers carried over to enumerators, and they participated in the census with such confusions intact.

In Jhapa, enumerators from rural and urban areas were trained separately to make the training more effective. It was reported that this segregation helped trainers teach enumerators about the difference in economic activities, occupations and professions between rural areas and urban areas. Similarly, a separate training was conducted between November 7 and 10, 2021 for those who had missed the initial training scheduled between October 30 and November 2, 2021. There were also examples of a one-day orientation provided to enumerators who had missed both of these trainings for some reason, and for enumerators recruited to fill positions vacated by previously trained enumerators. In a few places, supplementary enumerators were trained and retained just in case trained enumerators quit during the census process. A census office in Rolpa had resorted to keeping as collateral original copies of the enumerators' educational certificates in order to ensure they would not quit midway through the census.

3.3 Communication

By March 2021, the CBS had already made the necessary communication materials and budget available to district census offices. Census officials said that the materials received by district census offices comprised advertisements, posters, pamphlets, sample questionnaires, etc., to be disseminated over newspapers, television and FM radio. District census offices further distributed these materials to local census offices. Many such materials had specific dates mentioned in them. However, the dates for the census were postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic and consequent nationwide lockdown. According to census officials, only the material which did not mention specific dates could be utilized after the original schedule for the census was halted. Census officials said that although CBS later sent supplementary materials with updated information about census dates, such materials were inadequate.

Citizens received ample messages on the census through radio, television and newspapers. In places where these communication media were absent, the caller ring-back tones (CRB) played on phones proved more effective. However, in some rural areas without mobile phone network, this study found that information about the census was absent. According to an enumerator deployed to Suryodaya Municipality in Ilam, some areas of the municipality were outside the coverage area for Nepali telecom service providers. Since citizens there used Indian SIM cards to utilize telecommunication networks from across the border, they had not received information about the census.

Since information about the census was published and disseminated mostly in Nepali and other languages spoken by large populations, the information had not reached several minority communities.⁷ For instance, although the literate youth of the Rajbanshi community in Jhapa district received and understood census information disseminated in Nepali, the elderly and illiterate among the community had not understood it.

Citizens also received messages on the census through various campaigns run by different organizations. In Dhanusha district, an organization named Magahi Foundation organized a mass gathering on the day before the enumeration with the goal of getting the community to declare their mother language as Magahi, and local citizens were aware of this effort.

In many areas observed by this study, it was found that many citizens who had received messages about the census nonetheless remained unaware about when it was to be conducted. Some citizens had considered the first phase of the census—when houses and families were enlisted—to be the final census.

⁷ The Bureau had prepared and disseminated information material in languages most frequently spoken across Nepal (Nepali, Tamang, Limbu, Rana Tharu, Newari, Maithili, Gurung, Doteli, Bhojpuri, Himali, Awadhi, Eastern Tharu, Western Tharu, etc.).

4. Coordination and cooperation mechanism

The Central Bureau of Statistics envisioned various structures for conducting and managing the National Population Census 2021. The *National Census Operation and Management Order, 2076* (2020) and *Population Census Operation Manual, 2077* (2021) and other legal documents outline processes and mechanisms for cooperation and coordination to conduct the National Population Census. These documents provide the basis for coordination and cooperation between government and semi-government, national and international organizations. The CBS created the basis for coordination and cooperation between three levels of governments by building a multi-level mechanism for the operation and management of the census. It established a Directorate Committee at the federal level, and coordination committees at province, district and local levels. The Directorate Committee directs the census, forms necessary thematic and technical committees, manages the coordination and cooperation between various levels and entities, and initiate necessary collaboration with development partner entities.

Province census coordination committees were established under the coordination of the provincial chief secretary to direct, coordinate and facilitate at the provincial level. District census coordination committees were established at the district level under the coordination of the chief district officer. Similarly, at local levels, the chief administrative officer of the municipal unit where the census office was located, or an officer-level employee of their choice, functioned as the coordinator for local census coordination committees. District census coordination committees and local census coordination committees were found to have conducted at least one meeting. In some places, two such meetings were held. The stated function of such committees was to assist and coordinate with census offices established by the CBS, provide them with security, communicate about the census, and to observe and supervise census activities.

Just like these multi-level committees, multi-level census offices were established to conduct the census. At the federal level, the CBS played the leading role. Census offices across the seven provinces coordinated with the CBS. Census offices met with provincial census coordination committees at least once, and at most two times. It was reported that,

during these meetings, they discussed preparations and activities carried out by the offices. Provincial governments were found to not have been directly involved in conducting and managing the census. Provincial census officers accepted this fact. A census officer from Province 1 said, “We had one meeting with officials of the Provincial Census Coordination Committee. We informed them about our census preparations. Since this is a federal government program, the province has not created any program or allocated a budget for it. There is also no policy basis for the Provincial Census Coordination Committee to pass decisions. There is no need to rely upon the province for human resources either.” Additionally, representatives of provincial governments considered the census to be a federal government program.

District census offices were established to coordinate census efforts at the district level. They carried out functions like distributing material received from the CBS to local census offices; collecting completed census material from local census offices and returning them to the CBS; selecting enumerators and supervisors, conducting trainings for them, and deploying them to relevant local census offices; meeting with district census coordination committees to inform them on activities carried out by the office, etc. In the majority of districts included in this observation study, at least one meeting between district census offices and district census coordination committees had taken place before the April 2021 nationwide lockdown. In his capacity as the coordinator of the District Census Coordination Committee, the chief district officer of Makwanpur district said, “No meeting or coordination has taken place since the census was postponed due to the COVID. We met once before the lockdown.” District census officers said that it was possible for the District Census Coordination Committee to meet if the need arose, or to resolve possible issues. Some districts had assembled stakeholders to conduct census awareness workshops.

Local census offices coordinated and facilitated at the local level. Local census coordination committees were established under the initiative of the local census officers. Local census offices carried out functions like storing material received from district census offices; managing the distribution and safety of census material; deployment, observation and supervision of supervisors and enumerators; conducting enumerator

trainings; transporting census forms collected by enumerators and supervisors to the district census office, etc. Local census offices wrote to local municipal units asking for help in conducting and managing the census. A few municipal units provided the necessary managerial support to them. They provided census offices with furniture and printers, along with necessary human resources. Municipal units published messages on their notice boards and online portals requesting citizens to participate in the census. Many elected representatives at the local level reported that they had not received any circulars regarding the census or that they had received no information. A municipality official clarified that although the municipality had received circulars, they had not been discussed with elected representatives.

Municipal units were found to not have been very involved in collecting census data. Local level elected representatives also appeared to consider the census a federal government program. Some elected representatives were dissatisfied at not being directly involved in the census process. They claimed that if they had been directly involved in conducting the census and collecting data, the quality of data would have improved and everybody would have taken ownership of the data. A representative at Hetauda Sub-Metropolitan City said, “If neighborhood development organizations in the sub-metropolitan city could have been mobilized in coordination with enumerators and supervisors, then data accuracy and a complete census could have been ensured. We have heard of some enumerators being denied help by citizens, being shouted at. Our assistance would have helped reduced such problems.”

National census facilitating committees were also envisioned at the ward level, but this study did not find any ward level facilitating committees being formed. None of the ward level representatives met during this study mentioned such committees being formed. But a small number of ward chairpersons were aware of correspondences requesting coordination. Some ward chairpersons, on their own initiative, had shown interest in and concern about census activities in their constituency. They had carried out functions like familiarizing enumerators and supervisors with the local geography, providing them with contact numbers for neighborhood coordinators, etc. Some ward chairpersons had demanded official letters of appointment from enumerators and supervisors deployed to their wards.

A ward chairperson in Janakpur Sub-Metropolitan City asked a supervisor for an official letter when the supervisor arrived to fill in the community questionnaire. The ward chairperson said that they had cooperated with the supervisor only after receiving the letter.

5. Enlistment of house and family

During the first phase of the census, the CBS carried out the enlistment of houses and families between September 15 and October 4, 2021. The accompanying questionnaire collected data about the house, the number of family members most often living with the family, agricultural details of the family, and data regarding access to banks and financial services. The supervisor enlisted the house and family, filled the details in the House and Family Enlistment Questionnaire, and gave a copy of the form to enumerators. Enumerators then carried out the main census with the assistance of this form.

About 8,500 supervisors were deployed across the country to enlist houses and families. Depending upon the geography and settlement density, one or more than one supervisor was deployed per ward. In the mountain, one supervisor was deployed per ward, while in the Tarai and in urban areas more than one supervisor was deployed per ward. Most supervisors were from the local level or the ward, and therefore were familiar with the areas where they carried out enlistment. They managed to easily complete the enlistment of houses and families allocated under their responsibility.

Supervisors deployed to mountainous areas reported that it was difficult to carry out their duty due to difficult terrain and scattered settlements. In a rural municipality in Rolpa, one supervisor per ward was appointed. Since supervisors were tasked with enlisting all houses across geographically remote and large wards, they reported that it was difficult for them to carry out their work. A supervisor reported that they had to ask for overnight shelter from respondents since a lot of time would have otherwise been wasted in walking back and forth. The supervisor suggested that at least two supervisors should be appointed for especially large and remote wards, or that their deployment period should be increased.

In some urban areas and the Tarai, supervisors had to enlist a lot more houses than anticipated. Most supervisors reported that they completed the enlistment of houses and families in their allocated areas and wards even if it meant spending extra time on the work. A supervisor from Dang said, “Initially, we were told that we would enlist between 800 and 1,000 houses and families. But, as we carried out the enlistment, we had to enlist more than 2,000 families.” The supervisor had complained to the census officer that the work would not be completed in the stipulated time because more families had been found in the designated census area. When they were advised that they must complete the task, even if it meant seeking the assistance of a friend, the supervisor had done just that. But the supervisor said that the work had not been easy, since now they had to rely upon an untrained friend.

The *Population Census Operation Manual, 2021* states that supervisors and enumerators are obligated to use census area maps to familiarize themselves with the census area and learn about its boundaries. However, some supervisors complained that they could not utilize census maps because many cartographic legends were unclear and because maps contained multiple errors. Census officials accepted the fact that census area maps contained errors. There were examples of enumerators enumerating outside their census areas due to a lack of cartographic clarity.

Supervisors had received adequate assistance from citizens during the enlistment of houses and families. However, supervisors also shared incidents where respondents had not only been unhelpful, but outright insulted them. For example, a respondent in Mithila Municipality of Dhanusha accused the supervisor of working for a political agenda and had torn up the enlistment form. Some citizens responded with irritation when enumerators arrived to collect census data, because other surveys like information collection for national identification card, agricultural survey, municipal survey, etc., had already taken place. In rural areas in the Tarai, citizens who are socio-politically marginalized showed disinterest in the census and expressed disbelief that providing census information would benefit them in any way.

Enumeration of sexual minority

In the house and family enlistment questionnaire, along with questions on family details, questions about sexual minorities were included.⁸ The questionnaire provided three options: man, woman, and other. Gender and sexual minority advocates had accused the census of failing to differentiate between gender and sexual preference/orientation, and expressed dissatisfaction at being forced to identify as ‘other gender’.⁹

In some districts, sexual minority campaigners were included in supervisor trainings in order to facilitate identification and enumeration of sexual minorities. Census officials in Dang and Jhapa said that up to 15 minutes was made available for the training. In Sunsari, a sexual minority campaigner was reported to have provided trainings in nine sessions in two training centers. Sexual minority campaigners claimed to have trained supervisors to ask indirect and alternative questions since asking directly if someone identified as ‘other gender’ could confuse respondents.

However, according to an activist working with the gender and sexual minority organization Blue Diamond Society, supervisors tended to only ask whether someone was male or female, and avoid asking the ‘other gender’ question. She claimed that, as she with a friend waiting for the supervisor to ask the gender question, the supervisor did not ask anything but wrote ‘woman’ after a glance at the respondent. She claimed that the supervisor showed discomfort after she confronted them and asked why the gender question was not asked. “Our gender should be identified based upon our sexual orientation and not from our outward appearance, but

⁸ Details about sexual minorities were not included in the Main Questionnaire. According to the Central Bureau of Statistics, after consultation and agreement with sexual minority rights activists, this question was included in the House and Family Enlistment Questionnaire in order to obtain only the nationwide tally of individuals identifying as sexual minorities. CBA, 110 Years of Census (1911 to 2021), National Census 2021: *Laingik Samaanata tatha Samajik Samaveshi Sandarbh Pustika*. Kathmandu: Central Bureau of Statistics. Available <http://censusnepal.cbs.gov.np/Home/Details?tpid=9>; Accessed on February 16, 2022.

⁹ Khadgi, Ankit. 2020. A Group of Activists Strives to End Forced Imposition of the Third Gender Label. *The Kathmandu Post*, October 22. Available at <https://kathmandupost.com/art-culture/2020/10/22/a-group-of-activists-strives-to-end-forced-imposition-of-the-third-gender-label>; accessed on February 15, 2022.

the supervisor was ignorant of this,” she said. She complained that she had to identify as a woman in the main questionnaire because it lacked alternative answers.

6. Enumeration observation

Till now, the CBS has employed the traditional census method of complete enumeration.¹⁰ In this method, enumerators utilize questionnaires to meet respondents in their census area in person to collect details. About a month after the CBS completed the house and family enlistment in the first phase, it completed the main census in the second phase between November 11 and 25, 2021. For this, about 40,000 enumerators who had at the least completed their high school education were deployed across the country.

6.1 Supervisor – enumerator ratio

In the census areas observed by this study, on average, four enumerators were deployed under the supervision of a supervisor. However, this ratio varied according to the geographic terrain, and ease of access or remoteness. In Dang, supervisors had between two and seven enumerators allocated to them. In Baglung, between two and six enumerators were allocated to each supervisor. Supervisors were given the responsibility of creating daily schedules and supervising the census carried out by enumerators by testing the statistics for accuracy. In most of the areas observed, supervisors were providing supervision or facilitating the work of enumerators by either meeting them in person, or counseling them over telephone (for further elaboration, see Section 6.10 Monitoring of census activities).

¹⁰ In the National Census 2021, for the first time ever, the census utilized computer tablets in a few census areas to gather data, alongside the traditional paper questionnaires. DRCN did not observe the tablet-based census process.

6.2 Census material distribution

Enumerators were generally supplied with the necessary census material, like census books, questionnaires, the House and Family Enlistment Questionnaire filled by the supervisor, notebooks and pens, along with study material, bags, torch-lights, etc. Additionally, enumerators were deployed to their census areas with identification documents, and hats, bags and masks featuring the census logo. This helped easily identify enumerators while engaged in their work.

The *National Census Operation and Management Order, 2020* also included a census area map in the census material. However, enumerators were not provided such maps in any of the areas included in this study. Some enumerators in Makwanpur said that they had photographed census area maps in possession of their supervisors and kept them on their phones. According to enumerators, they were told that only the supervisor was required to use the map, and that enumerators need not use them. In several places, enumerators reported that the census material supplied to them was insufficient. An enumerator from Dhorpatan in Baglung district shared, “I ran out of space in the census book in the middle of recording details. I have called the supervisor and asked for another census book. Forms will arrive in a day or two. My census activities have been interrupted until the census materials arrive.”

Enumerators indicated that their work would have been easier if they had been provided with additional material like umbrellas, sleeping bags, gumboots, etc. They said that since heads of households were often absent from homes during the day, enumerators were forced to carry out census activities either in the morning, or in the evening. This meant that they often had to ask to be allowed to shelter for the night wherever they happened to be filling forms when night fell. Therefore, sleeping bags would have proved useful in such cases. In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, enumerators were provided with masks and sanitizer. Additionally, according to district and local census officers, arrangements were made by corresponding with nearby health institutions to make COVID-19 vaccines available for supervisors and enumerators.

6.3 Localness and inclusivity of supervisor and enumerator

When the CBS prepared the shortlist of supervisors and enumerators, nearly equal numbers of men and women were selected. The CBS specified standards for gender and localness – wherever possible, women had to be at least 50 percent. In the areas observed by this study, there was a significant presence of women enumerators and supervisors – in many places, they comprised more than 50 percent. Individuals living with disabilities were also actively involved in the enumeration. In Lamahi Municipality of Dang, there were seven men supervisors and seven women supervisors. Among its 61 enumerators, 30 were men while 31 were women. A local census officer explained the prevalence of women thus, “The initial schedule of the census was revised and postponed. Some of the men on the list provided to us by the CBS were no longer available. When we phoned them, we found out that they had left for studies or employment. But the women candidates were still available. Therefore, the number of women enumerators is high.”

Most enumerators were residents of the same ward or local level, while some enumerators were from neighboring municipal units. Most enumerators were proficient in the local language. For example, in Tharu-majority areas of Dang district, enumerators were from the Tharu community and spoke the Tharu language. In census areas of Rolpa, enumerators who spoke the Magar language, and specifically the Kham Magar language, were deployed. In Dhanusha, the enumerators met by this study spoke Maithili. The familiarity of enumerators with local geography, ethnicities, languages and cultures made it easier for them to ask respondents questions in local languages, to explain complex issues, and to record their responses in local languages. This reduced the possibility of statistical errors arising from enumerators failing to understand the respondents’ answers.

In municipal units where few local candidates had applied to become enumerators or where no applications were received, enumerators from neighboring municipal units or from elsewhere were deployed. Stakeholders reported that very few Tamang candidates applied for positions in Makwanpur, while in Dhanusha very few candidates from the Muslim community applied. In Makwanpur, a local citizen said, “There are

very few educated individuals in our Tamang community. Therefore, there are very few enumerators from our community. Some enumerators have come from elsewhere. They do not have knowledge of our language.” In the Muslim-majority areas of Inaruwa Municipality in Sunsari, non-Muslim enumerators from elsewhere were deployed. A local census officer from there said that many respondents were hesitant to reveal details about their family to people from other communities because of social and cultural reasons. “When male enumerators from other communities went door to door, Muslim women hesitated to step outside and provide details, and would often shut the door on enumerators, which made it difficult to collect census details.”

6.4 Enumerator’s knowledge on questionnaire and relevant issue

Enumerators were knowledgeable regarding the confidentiality of the census, the rules they needed to follow, and how to present themselves to respondents. They also possessed basic knowledge on the themes in the questionnaire. They said that the trainings had made it easier for them to work. Nearly every enumerator said that their responsibility was to precisely record the answers received from the respondents. However, many enumerators were confused about some of the themes and questions in the questionnaire. They were especially confused about questions regarding emigration, economic activities, child mortality, language, etc. Therefore, they repeatedly consulted with their supervisors and census officers while filling in data on these topics. Some enumerators said that they had filled the forms based on their own conscience.

Another confusion among enumerators was brought about by the notion that they were required to fill the main census form in the same order in which supervisors had previously filled in the House and Family Enlistment Questionnaire. Therefore, they left blank pages to accommodate such households where they failed to meet the head of the household during the first visit. Some enumerators were confused about what to do regarding the household serial number – if they should leave the page blank, or if they should serially count whichever household they managed to meet first. A supervisor in Bhimphedi Rural Municipality in Makwanpur had trained their enumerators to record details as per the order in the House

and Family Enlistment Questionnaire, and to leave a page blank if heads of households were not available, and move on to record the next house on the list. Enumerators said that they had followed these instructions. Some enumerators had thus left blank pages in the census book, completed recording details of other households, and returned to the houses where they had not been able to meet the heads of the households. Where enumerators left blank pages, they reported difficulty in recording all the necessary details because of large family sizes. However, local census officers had instructed enumerators that it was not necessary to strictly follow the serial order from the House and Family Enlistment Questionnaire, and that there was no need to leave blank pages. In some places, local census officers and supervisors had clarified this issue well in time, but in some places enumerators were still confused about it a week into conducting the census. However, this confusion did not appear to have any effect upon the census data.

Some enumerators failed to be attentive to which question to go to contingent upon the respondent's answers. A census officer in Baglung said, "Some enumerators seem to have paid no attention to which next answer to jump to or which question to ask next. For example, the questionnaire contains sections to be asked only to families with married women between the ages of 14 and 49, or to families with children under 18 years of age, etc., but enumerators have been asking all the questions serially to all respondents." When census officers met enumerators during field observations, they gave them suggestions.

6.5 Census area, census period, and number of household to be counted

The CBS delineated census areas by determining an average number of households to be counted over a period of 15 days. This figure was calculated based on the estimated number of households in 2021. On average, per census area, the number of households allocated per enumerator in the Himalayan region was between 130 and 150, in the hill region between 160 and 190, and in the Tarai between 200 and 250. In most census areas, these estimates matched how many households enumerators had to count. But, in some areas of the Tarai, there were more than 500

households per census area. According to census officials, this occurred because census areas and household details had not been updated. In some areas where enumerators were in short supply, additional enumerators were deployed in coordination with local census offices. An enumerator in Mithila Municipality of Dhanusha district said that she was told to fill in the details for 20 households per day. She had felt pressured into finishing the task quickly and worried that she may fail to complete her task if the census was delayed for some reasons. In some census areas in the hills as well enumerators had to count more families than those allocated to them by the CBS. An enumerator deployed to remote areas in Nishikholi Rural Municipality had to collect details from 225 households. She reported that she completed her task even if it meant spending extra time on it each day.

Most enumerators in the areas observed by this study said that they completed their census duties on time. They employed various tactics to complete their tasks on time. Some started early in the morning and continued late into the evening, while some others spent nights in villages where they happened to be working since it was difficult to commute between their homes and the census areas. A woman enumerator in Babai Rural Municipality of Dang had to walk for an entire day from her home to reach her census area in Ward 1, which is a remote area. She was carrying a large bag with census material and clothes enough for two weeks as she traveled door-to-door to conduct the census. “I have been asking for shelter wherever I am conducting the enumeration when night comes. There is no telephone or internet connection here if I need to contact anyone,” she said. Some enumerators in Thaha Municipality in Makwanpur district had similarly asked for shelter in villages, seeing that it was not feasible to commute from their home every day. Some enumerators complained about the lack of a separate per diem and stipend for food and transportation when they were forced to stay away from home.

6.6 Community questionnaire

For the first time, the CBS arranged for a community questionnaire to collect ward-level details. It hoped to collect information on agricultural and non-agricultural details, ethnic settlements, linguistic details, information on the status of and access to health, education and other

economic infrastructure, etc. Supervisors were given the responsibility of seeking the assistance of either the local ward chairperson or ward secretary, or both, to fill in the details. Most supervisors interviewed for this study planned to fill in the community questionnaire on the final day of the census. Therefore, many ward chairpersons and other ward representatives remained uninformed about the questionnaire even on the final day. Census officials said that during the analysis of the data, the information from the community questionnaire would aid in cross-checking details in the main questionnaire regarding the size and diversity of ethnic groups at the ward and municipal level.

6.7 Census of caste and ethnic group, religion, and language

In the areas observed for this study, enumerators reported that they filled in questions regarding social diversity by asking respondents to answer. Enumerators reported that they asked respondents if their family contained members who were from different castes and ethnicities, followed different religions, and spoke different languages. When asked thus, ethnic, religious and linguistic diversity were found between members of the same families. Enumerators in Babai Rural Municipality of Dang found religious diversity within some families. According to the enumerator, respondents from families with inter-caste marriages mentioned that they spoke different languages and were of different ethnicities. A woman from Thabang Rural Municipality in Rolpa said that she responded by saying that among her family members, her parents followed one religion while she followed a different religion. Some enumerators reported that if they felt that the details they had gathered in the absence of the head of a household seemed inadequate, they returned later to gather further details. In the interviews conducted during this observation, most citizens said that enumerators wrote down the same response that they provided.

However, some citizens complained that enumerators only asked one member of the family on the the ethnic identity, language and religion of other people in the family. Citizens complained that enumerators often asked leading questions. Some respondents said that enumerators asked, ‘You must be ... caste?’, ‘Your mother language must be ... ?’, ‘You surely speak ... language?’, ‘Your religion must be ...?’, and ‘Your occupation

must be agriculture?’, etc. This increased the probability of an affirmative response, especially by less educated and elderly respondents. When enumerators assumed the answer or asked leading question, it increased the possibility of affecting answers given by respondents.

6.8 Census of person with disability

Enumerators said that they asked questions related to disability to every family without any omission. However, some stakeholders said that respondents tended not to provide details regarding disabilities, and that enumerators possessed a weak understanding on disability. Some enumerators said that they faced difficulty distinguishing between the many different categories of disability. However, in some districts, disability rights advocates were invited to enumerator trainings to assist in collecting disability statistics. A rights advocate who trained enumerators in Dang on disability issues said, “I was only given 15 minutes. This was not enough time to explain the 12 separate disability-related questions in the questionnaire.” Rights advocate said that family members hesitated to reveal disability in the family because of prevalent social attitudes which look down upon individuals with disability. Respondents tended to reveal only physical disabilities while discussing disability. Some enumerators also reported facing difficulty in collecting information on non-physical disabilities, like intellectual, psychological, psychosocial, poor or partial eyesight, autism, speech and vocal impediments, etc. Census officials accepted that collecting disability information was difficult because citizens lacked an understanding of disability beyond physical disability.

Some disability rights advocates claimed that enumerators omitted questions about disability in some instances. A representative from the National Federation Disabled – Nepal said, “I was listening from my room inside the house as the enumerator collected census details. The enumerator did not inquire if anybody in my family was disabled. I came outside to tell them that I am a disabled person. The representative said that they had learned of a few other families where enumerators had not inquired on disability.”

In some places observed for this study, persons with disability were deployed as supervisors and enumerators. In Dang, a female supervisor

carried out her duties in a wheelchair. An enumerator in Thawang Rural Municipality, who has vocal and speech impediment, said that they found persons with similar disability in a respondent family. When asked questions about disability, the family said that nobody in their family had disability. But, seeing that the respondent had answered with much difficulty, the enumerator made further inquiries and found that the respondent's condition was congenital. Since the enumerator recognized their own condition in that of the respondent, they informed the respondent about it and recorded details on their disability.

6.9 Problem faced by enumerator

Problem with questionnaire

Enumerators said that they understood most questions in the questionnaire. They indicated that there were not any significant difficulties in filling in the details provided by respondents. However, they experienced some difficulty in recording or entering the details provided by respondents to a few specific questions. Such questions mostly pertained to economic activities, life-event dates, and birth, death and migration registration.

Questions pertaining to economic activities applied to every individual above the age of 10 years. One a question asked about the 'main occupation, goods or services'. Nearly all enumerators said that respondents had found it difficult to answer this question and they found it difficult to record their responses. Enumerators were confused on how to record the economic activity mentioned by a respondent if the answer did not match any category in the code-book. Some enumerators mentioned that most options in the code-book for economic activities matched those prevalent in urban areas whereas the options for rural areas were scant. Consequently, enumerators experienced difficulty in matching respondents' answers with options available in the questionnaire. In such cases, enumerators either tried to decide upon the closest match for the response, or consulted their supervisors. An enumerator in Mechinagar Municipality in Jhapa said that when they encountered such a dilemma, they made a note on the type of the economic activity and filled in the details and code after consulting their supervisor.

Respondents had trouble providing details about the birth, deaths and marriages of family members. Many respondents resorted to showing enumerators documents like citizenship certificates, etc., which mentioned such dates. An enumerator in Nisikhola Rural Municipality said, “Most people did not remember their age of marriage, date of birth, etc. If respondents had citizenship certificate or birth or marriage registration document, we asked them for it and calculated the dates ourselves. Many respondents did not even have those documents. In such cases, we asked them to recall other contexts to estimate the dates.”

Enumerators said that when some respondents were asked if an infant was stillborn or died after birth, respondents counter-questioned why the census needed details about the deceased. Enumerators were confused regarding questions on migration. An enumerator from Kachankawal Rural Municipality in Jhapa said, “A family from the hills had migrated to India for employment, but migrated as a family to Jhapa after living in India for a few months. In this case, the confusion was about whether they should be recorded as having migrated from India, or from their place in the hills. I consulted the supervisor when I faced this dilemma.” In the case of urban residents who moved frequently between rented accommodations, what would or would not be categorized as migration was likely to depend upon the enumerator.

Problem in meeting head of household

The most frequent problem enumerators faced was that of not meeting heads of households. Citizens were often busy with work. Often, citizens could not be met during the day because they would be out and about for employment or farming. While landlords would not supply details about their tenants. If the head of a household was not met in the first instance, enumerators returned a second or third time to complete the census. Some enumerators talked with other members of the family if they failed to meet the head of the household. Some enumerators said that if obtaining all the necessary details from other members of the household proved difficult, they contacted the head of the household over telephone and collected the necessary details at a time convenient for both parties.

Enumerators had more difficulty conducting the census in urban areas in contrast with rural areas. Some heads of households in urban areas gave enumerators very little time, saying that they were busy. Similarly, in urban areas, enumerators said that respondents asked many direct or indirect questions about the census, were hesitant to, or refused to, share details about families or persons renting rooms in their house. An enumerator deployed in Hetauda Sub-Metropolitan City of Makwanpur said, “Educated respondents in urban areas asked many questions and counter-questions. They asked – How much do you earn from this? How do I benefit from giving these details? And they claimed to be busy and were irritated.” However, some families who lived in rented accommodations sought out enumerators to provide information, saying that nobody had asked them for census details.

Problem with language

In most census areas, enumerators from the local ward were deployed. Since they possessed knowledge of the local language, conducting the census was easy for them. However, in areas where too few or no applications had been received, non-local enumerators were deployed. Some such non-local enumerators faced difficulty in obtaining details from respondents because of language problem. A Nepali-speaking enumerator deployed to a Muslim-majority area in Inaruwa Municipality in Sunsari could not conduct the census because they did not understand the local language. A local census officer said that the census had gone forward after arranging for a Maithali-speaking enumerator from a nearby census area. An enumerator in Thabang Rural Municipality in Rolpa, who did not speak or understand the Kham Magar language, had relied upon their supervisor who interpreted for them over the telephone to collect details from households where respondents only spoke the Kham Magar language.

Other problem faced by enumerator

In some areas, enumerators were pressured by various ethnic activists to record specific answers for questions on language and religion. In Nisikhola Rural Municipality, activists from the Magar community instructed

enumerators to record Nature Worshipper as the religion for all respondents in their community. Enumerators reported that activists tried to look at the responses given by citizens, but enumerators had resisted this, telling the activists that it would violate the confidentiality of census responses. In Mithila Municipality of Dhanusha, an unidentified person had repeatedly called the enumerator, claiming to be an employee of the CBS, to put pressure on the enumerator to input specific answers. The enumerator elaborated, “Immediately after I finished the enumerator training, I received a phone call. The person said – I am a CBS employee. Nepali-speaking people live in the ward where you are being deployed. Record their second language as Magahi.” According to the enumerator, when she responded by saying that they had been trained to record whatever answer a respondent gave, she was instructed to still record Magahi as the second language. The enumerator filled in the forms accordingly, and when she consulted her supervisor, she was told to leave it blank. Some enumerators said that as they interviewed heads of households on questions related to ethnicity, language or religion, neighbors and friends tried to influence respondents to record specific answers.

6.10 Monitoring of enumeration activity

District census officers, local census officers and supervisors monitored and supervised the census. Supervisors informed the enumerators allocated to them about their respective census areas, debriefed them about each day’s work, and resolved their problems. District census offices were responsible for monitoring all municipalities in the district, while local census offices were responsible for monitoring two to three municipalities. In the areas observed by this study, local census officials were meeting between two and four enumerators, looking at their census forms, and giving them suggestions. Enumerators also asked supervisors and census officers for help with problems and confusions encountered during their work. In places where their physical presence was not feasible, monitoring and supervision were carried out through telephone and the internet.

Some supervisors had shown their enumerators the geography and households in their census area days before the census began. When the census began, supervisors were present in the field alongside enumerators.

In urban areas and the Tarai, supervisors and enumerators met easily in person. A supervisor in Lamahi Municipality of Dang said that since they had their own motorbike, they could easily meet with the five enumerators wherever they were deployed on that day. However, supervisors in Baglung and Rolpa said that difficult physical terrain made it difficult for supervisors and enumerators to meet directly. A supervisor in Thabang Rural Municipality in Rolpa said that since they could not meet enumerators directly, they consulted on difficulties encountered over the phone.

In areas with access to the internet, social media proved useful in resolving problems and confusions encountered by enumerators. Enumerators and supervisors created separate online groups as per their needs. In some areas, census officers were also included in such groups. In Jhapa, a Facebook messenger group was created with employees of the census office, census officers, supervisors and enumerators. An assistant district census officer was then given the special responsibility of addressing questions and inquiries from enumerators in the group. Enumerators and supervisors deployed at the ward level formed their own groups. The use of social media and certain apps assisted enumerators to immediately resolve problems and fill in the correct data. In Baglung, district census officers and local census officers said that, for remote and mountainous areas where they could not reach immediately, they had asked enumerators to take photographs of the forms which they had filled and send them over Viber, Whatsapp and Facebook Messenger. They then examined the forms and, if necessary, advised enumerators on how to correctly fill them in. But the monitoring of enumerators proved difficult in remote areas lacking telephone or internet access. If enumerators encountered problems, they could not immediately contact supervisors to seek solutions. Census officers said that most enumerators could not be monitored because each local census office had to supervise between two and three local municipal units, and because with between three and four employees each, they had limited human resources available to them. The monitoring of census activities was made more difficult by a scarcity of resources available for census officers.

Many local government employees, mobilized at the local census offices, were deployed by municipalities in executive positions. This meant that they bore dual pressures of the census and the business of local

government. A rural municipality in Rolpa deployed an employee as the local census officer, but during the period of the census, the officer traveled to Dang to attend a rural municipalities' training. Census officers accepted the fact that census activities were affected because employees had to carry out dual functions related to the census office and the municipal office. A census officer in Madhesh Province said, "Employees at the local census office are under tremendous work pressure. They have to distribute and collect census material, make field visits. Enumerators keep bringing up problems, which must be resolved. One employee must remain at the office at all times – telephone calls arrive at all hours." According to them, the direct supervision of the census was affected because of the increased work-pressure. A local census officer in Baglung said, "We were advised to monitor as many enumerators and supervisors as possible throughout the census period, and to provide them with suggestions and counsel. But because we were responsible for overseeing the census process in three municipal units, we could not meet most of the enumerators in person over the 15 day period."

7. Institutional campaign by various communities and their effect on the census

Various ethnic, linguistic, religious, sexual minority, and people with disability, etc., communities expressed concerns on the possibility of their communities getting undercounted in the census. Many stakeholders were worried that enumerators would associate the *thar* surnames of individuals with their caste or ethnicity and thus record false details based on speculation. These stakeholders were worried that inaccurate data could be recorded because some surnames are common across many different castes and ethnicities. Therefore, activists from different communities campaigned to encourage citizens to answer specific questions with specific answers that would clearly identify their communities.

7.1 Community campaign

Organizations from Janajati ethnicities, Madheshi and Muslim communities were the most active in conducting advocacy campaigns at the community

level. These groups raised questions regarding the census questionnaire and procedures adopted by the National Census 2021.¹¹ Campaigners from these communities utilized posters and pamphlets, telephone contacts, online meetings and social media to inform citizens in their communities regarding the desired responses to questions pertaining to caste, ethnicity, religion, and language. Some representatives of such organizations met with officials at census offices to request that ‘special attention’ be paid during the enumeration of their communities. For example, in Dang, Hindu and Christian religious activists separately visited the district census office and requested special attention while enumerating their communities. Similarly, a local citizen from Mechinagar Municipality in Jhapa said that a priest reciting Purana scriptures at a religious function organized in the town requested their audience to record their religion as Hindu during the census. Campaigns conducted institutionally at the community level were as follow:

Ethnic group’s campaign

The Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities (NEFIN) and various ethnic groups affiliated with it had carried out separate and well organized campaigns. These communities distributed pamphlets mentioning what to record as the ethnicity, language, and religion. They had also carried these messages to citizens through social media. They had especially appealed to citizens to record options like Nature Worshipper, Buddhist, Kirat, etc., under religion; the community’s language as the mother language and ancestral language under language; the language of neighboring indigenous ethnicities as the second language; and their relevant caste and ethnicity under ethnicity. The Central Committee of the Nepal Magar Federation distributed pamphlets titled ‘National Census 2021, National Campaign for Magar Awareness’. The pamphlet contained information about what response and codes to give for the questions on ethnicity, ancestral language, mother language, and religion.

¹¹ Report available at <https://www.democracyresource.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/FINAL-Nepal-National-Census-2078-v.s.-13July2021-1.pdf>; accessed on February 16, 2022.

Rauniyar Samaj campaign

Activists from the Rauniyar Samaj conducted a campaign in Dhanusha to record Rauniyar as the surname and ethnicity, claiming that their community lacked recognition. The Rauniyar Samaj organized meetings in the community and initiated a census-oriented campaign among Rauniyar households to record Rauniyar as the caste and ethnicity. Rauniyar Samaj activists expressed concern that Rauniyars would be listed under other ethnicities because they shared common surnames with various other ethnicities.

Kayat Ekata Samaj campaign

In Dhorpatan Municipality of Baglung, the Kayat Ekata Samaj declared that their community would participate in the census only if they received the guarantee that they would be recorded under separate surnames and ethnicity. The community, comprising 70 to 80 households across the municipality, claimed that they were the indigenous inhabitants of the area. A Kayat ethnic activist said that the Kayat ethnicity had been struggling to become listed as an indigenous community for nearly two decades, but their issues had not been addressed by anybody. The activist complained that although the community claimed its ethnicity as Kayat during the 2011 census, it had not been recorded anywhere. Therefore, they had decided not to participate in the census out of the apprehension that they would be included among other ethnicities. After 12 days of boycotting the census, the community met with the district and local census officers on the 13th day. Census officers assured the community that they would recommend a separate census code for the Kayat ethnicity, and that they would facilitate enlisting with the CBS. Following these reassurances, the community participated in the census. Enumerators completed their census in the last two days of the census period.

Dalit campaign

Dalit community activists expressed doubts that correct data on their community would be obtained. Activists said that many Dalit surnames

match non-Dalit surnames, and in recent years, Dalits were presenting themselves as non-Dalits, therefore they could end up being counted as non-Dalits. A Dalit activist and legal professional in Dang said, “In the past year, I assisted between 35 and 40 Dalits who registered themselves as non-Dalits to go through the court process to revert back to their Dalit names and obtain new citizenship certificates. There are still a lot of Dalits who have not been able to correct their surnames. There is a high probability that they will be counted among non-Dalits.” An activist affiliated with an organization working on Dalit issues in Dang said that nearly 20 groups were mobilized at the community-level to conduct an information campaign regarding the census.

Magahi Foundation campaign

In Dhanusha, an organization named Magahi Foundation conducted a campaign at the community level to get Magahi recorded as a language. Activists affiliated with Magahi Foundation said that they organized various awareness campaigns alongside the enumerator trainings in order to get the Magahi language recorded in the census. Magahi activists requested for time during the enumerator trainings taking place at the local census office in Sunsari. But the local census officer reported requesting activists to not put pressure upon the enumerators to write specific answers since enumerators were tasked with recording answers provided by respondents. The campaign to record Magahi in the census was considered by some local citizens as a reaction against the Maithili language. A journalist in Dhanusha said, “The so-called upper castes of the Tarai, like Brahmins and Kayasths, consider their Maithili language to be pure. They look down upon other castes and say they do not know how to speak Maithili. Such an attitude has alienated groups like Mahato and Kushwaha of Maithili speaking regions from the Maithili language. Therefore, they conducted the campaign to record the Magahi language instead of Maithili.”

Muslim community campaign

In Muslim-majority areas of Sunsari, a campaign was conducted to record Urdu as their ancestral language and mother language. Muslim

clerics and organizations were mobilized in this effort. According to a representative of Minjanib Islamic Sanskriti Kendra in Dhanusha, since messages disseminated by religious clerics were more effective, clerics played central roles in the campaigns. “In our community, there are many clerics – *Maulavis* and *Maulanas*. Everybody follows what the clerics say. This would facilitate taking messages about the census to the community. Pamphlets were distributed in the mosque to teach people what to record for ethnicity, religion, and language,” the representative said. An activist from the Muslim community said that since Muslims in the Mithila area also spoke Maithili, there was a possibility that citizens would record Maithili as their language. Therefore, the campaign was conducted to ask citizens to record Urdu to promote their linguistic identity.

Gangai community campaign

The Gangai community conducted a campaign related to mother language and ancestral language under questions about language. Nepal Gangai Kalyan Parishad passed an institutional decision for the Gangai community settled in Jhapa and eastern Morang to record Surajapuri and for those settled in western Morang to record Angika as their mother language and ancestral language. Similarly, the organization passed another decision for the Gangai community settled in Jhapa and eastern Morang to record Angika as their second language and for those settled in western Morang to record Surajapuri as their second language. An activist from the Gangai community said that even though the community had recorded Angika and Surajapuri in the 2011 census, the languages had not been enlisted.

Marwadi community campaign

The Marwadi community conducted a campaign claiming that the language spoken in their community was not being recognized. An activist said that they had gone to the CBS well before the census began to formally request that the Marwadi language be enlisted. According to the activist, even though the Bureau gave reassurance to enlist the language, it did not happen.

Campaign to record the Kabir Panth religion

In Dhanusha, followers of the Kabir Panth religion conducted a campaign to ensure recognition of their religion. A guru from their religious community said that the community was large in size, and therefore, the campaign was conducted to establish a separate religious identity in the census.

Campaign to record Nature Worshipper religion

Some indigenous ethnic communities conducted campaigns to record Nature Worshipper as their religion. The Magar community conducted campaigns in Rupandehi, Dang, Rolpa and Baglung to record Nature Worshipper or Buddhism as their religion. However, there was no consensus among some ethnicities regarding what to record as their religion. Among the Rajbanshi community, opinion was divided between recording Hindu and Nature Worshipper (Sanatana). The Rajbanshi Samaj Vikas Samiti had requested members of its community to record Nature Worshipper (Sanatana) as the religion. Officials of the Nepal Gangai Kalyan Parishad said that the option to write Hindu or Nature Worshipper had been left up to the individual.

7.2 Effect of campaign upon the census

Census activities in various places were affected by the various institutional campaigns conducted by different communities. In some cases, campaigners took control of the census questionnaires, while others organized boycotts of the census. In some places, campaigners were found to have put pressure on enumerators to record specific answers. A local census officer said that in a Ghale Gurung settlement in Rong Rural Municipality of Ilam, enumerators were pressured to record the Rai language as the second language even though the Ghale Gurungs do not speak the Rai language. Such pressure tactics could result in languages not spoken in a community being counted as being prevalent there. In the same municipal unit, campaigners took census questionnaires into their control after alleging the enumerator deployed in the Rai community had recorded Nepali language as the second language for the local Rais. Later,

a dialogue between census officers and campaigners reached the agreement that activists would not put such pressures, and that enumerators would only record responses provided by respondents.

Activists said that when an enumerator recorded Nepali as the second language without asking the respondent at a Rai household in Belbari Municipality of Morang, representatives of the Kirat Rai Yayokhkha stopped enumeration in their census area for two days. In Duhabi Municipality of Sunsari, protests erupted when it became known that the Rauniyar surname was not included among the census codes. This had affected enumeration for a day. The campaign by the Kayat community living in Dhorpatan Municipality of Baglung to get their surname and ethnicity recognized affected census activities for 12 days.

Institutional campaigns by various communities did not succeed in reaching all the citizens for whom campaigns were aimed. An activist engaged in campaigning with the Tajpuria community in Jhapa said, “We started our campaign late. Many colleagues in the campaign are also affiliated with various political parties. They were all busy with their party conventions. Therefore, our census campaign was obscured. We failed to effectively communicate our agenda to the community.”

8. Conclusion

The enumeration of the Nepal National Population Census 2021, the first census since Nepal adopted the federal structure, was completed. It would generate important new statistics on demographic, social and economic activities under the federal structure. The COVID-19 pandemic affected the initially announced schedule for the census. This resulted in the halting of regular activities like establishing census offices at the local level, managing necessary employees and human resources, and recruiting and training enumerators and supervisors. Constraints in time and resources in the revised schedule for the census limited the training period of enumerators and supervisors, due to which they did not receive adequate practical exercises. Although enumerators were clear about most thematic issues included in the questionnaire, they were deployed before gaining adequate clarity on questions about economic activities, migration,

maternal and child mortality, etc. Such a lack of clarity forced enumerators to rely upon their own conscience while recording responses, or to consult local census officers and supervisors.

As much as possible, local residents were selected as enumerators and supervisors for the census. They possessed adequate knowledge of local languages, cultures, and geography. This assisted them in conducting census activities. Enumerators were keenly aware about counting regions, groups, religions, ethnicities, etc. However, in some places, community activists expressed doubts on whether correct details on the ethnicity, language, and religion of their communities would be recorded. Various ethnic, religious and linguistic groups conducted campaigns in their communities. Some of these campaigns affected census activities for some time.

Despite limited resources, census officers actively carried out regular monitoring of the enumeration. This helped reduce errors in the enumeration. When problems arose during the enumeration, district and local census officers even traveled to remote census areas to resolve these problems. In some local census offices, employees provided by local governments faced increased work pressure because they were undertaking additional functions of the enumeration alongside their regular roles in their municipalities.

The Central Bureau of Statistics established census offices at the provincial, district and local levels to conduct the census under the federal structure. However, provincial and local governments did not have important responsibilities related to the census. Therefore, stakeholders and representatives at provincial and local levels took the census as a federal undertaking. Clear definition of responsibilities and better coordination between various levels of census offices and provincial and local governments could have improved the management of the census.

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