

Participants to a technical training conducted by the project team in Saly, Senegal. November, 2017



BRAZIL: CABO VERDE, SENEGAL

Electronic Data Collection in Africa

This case highlights progress that have been made by the partners involved in advancing censuses through this South-South cooperation (SSC). These partners are the Brazilian Cooperation Agency (ABC), the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), the National Institute of Statistics – Cabo Verde (INECV), the National Agency of Statistics and Demography – Senegal (ANSD) and UNFPA.

CONTEXT

Censuses are considered key to informing public policies and decision-making processes. The African Union 2063 Agenda has identified the availability and use of quality data as key inputs to the elaboration of effective national policies and as a basis for budget allocations and political representation.

The focus on new technologies, particularly electronic data collection, can significantly impact the quality and timeliness of censuses. The Brazil Reference Centers Project has concentrated its efforts to solving three main issues related to data collection: first, the time required to undertake a census including the preparation of national teams and put in place the technological resources needed; second, the process to complete and disseminate the data; and third, the quality improvement of the information produced. Fragmented processes and lack of resources can impact decisively on census processes and outcomes.

It is in this context, that this SSC embarked on this initiative to strengthen the National Statistical Offices (NSOs) of partner countries in Africa. This joint effort focuses on enhancing technical and institutional capacities of NSOs through a network called Reference Centers. In this project, the use of state-of-the-art technology and methodological tools can help countries in Africa and elsewhere take censuses to the next level in terms of data quality and availability.

PROGRAMME APPROACH

Although the concept and methodology of Reference Centers has been reported earlier, the emphasis on innovation and collaboration especially with Portuguese speaking countries in Africa, presents another promising SSC scenario. The Reference Centers consider these three main dimensions: the first is about using technical knowledge and best practices identified by Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics to adapt training materials and ensure knowledge sharing for data collection that address

local specificities; the second dimension is about participative governance, referring to the role of the Steering Committee, the Technical Committee and the dedicated workforce to monitor the project; finally, the replicability and sustainability dimension which seeks to build institutional capacity of the NSOs through a knowledge network with a group of professionals that can advance the census process as well as improve cooperation and leadership the African countries themselves.

The most innovative character of the project is its vision to create a *cascading effect*, centered on the knowledge multiplier principle. Unlike traditional SSC modalities in which countries share knowledge to meet their respective technical needs, the Reference Centers aims to create a replicable knowledge network that partner countries use to extend and further share their know-how further with other countries.

Earlier efforts have tried to expand the reach of Brazil's knowledge network to both English-speaking and Arab-speaking countries in Africa. Since 2019, the project has engaged with Egypt's Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics (CAPMAS). CAPMAS has been continuously developing and sharing its technologies in electronic data collection and, in this way, adds important knowledge and experiences to the project. It is expected that the partnership will also create a multiplier effect on census capacity building in some countries of the Arab region.

In the past 4 years of the project, the following outputs have been achieved so far. More than 50 professionals from INECV and ANSD have been trained, with participation of different professionals from IBGE sectors. These professionals have the important role of sharing these technologies with other national statistics offices in the region. All training materials have been developed collaboratively with partners. A dedicated [website](#) has been set up containing all project information and relevant reference materials for engaging in this SSC. The project has also been taken as a model to design new SSC partnerships and solutions through its "reference center" model, considered as an innovative platform for organizing multiple demands beyond data collection. These reference centers have served as knowledge sharing hubs for African countries,



Reference Centres steering committee meeting held in Praia, Cabo Verde. February, 2018

thus contributing to national capacity building for censuses in the continent.

Another promising scenario with this SSC is the partnership with the Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries (CPLP). This shared language and culture present enormous opportunities for Brazil to have meaningful and sustainable partnerships with the counties in CPLP. Although the focus of this SSC is the conduct of electronic censuses and utilizing demographic data for policy-making and development planning, it could very well move into other relevant national priorities of partner institutions.

As mentioned before, sustainability is a core element of the Reference Centers project. All knowledge produced is adapted and appropriated by the partners, from the strategic vision to its operational activities. The governance modality also includes an integral monitoring strategy to guide the replication of the initiative in multiple contexts. The partner institutions, notably ABC and the UNFPA COs are working closely to ensure that accountability and sustainability measures are also built into this mode of engagement.

Submitting country office:

UNFPA Brazil
Vinicius Monteiro, Programme Officer
vmonteiro@unfpa.org