

# CENSUS: ALL SETS

## Everybody will be counted-statistician

The government statistician, Dr Grace Bediako, says the National Census Secretariat is determined to ensure that everybody living in the country is counted during the 2010 Population and Housing Census.

She therefore urged anyone who not reached by enumerators at the end of the exercise on October 10, 2010, to report to the secretariat for prompt response.

In an interview with the Daily Graphic last Thursday, Dr Bediako indicated that all logistics and census materials were ready for the smooth conduct of the exercise scheduled to begin at midnight of September 26, 2010.

After the last census in 2000, many people complained that they were not counted because no census enumerator visited their households.

This time, however, the government statistician is giving firm assurance that every effort will be made to count every person and structure in the country in order to enhance national development planning

She, therefore, asked residents in the country to provide accurate information to enumerators and remain vigilant in order to ensure a complete census.

“We will call on everyone to support this exercise and have patience to go through the questionnaires with enumerators to help the government plan its development programs,” she appealed to them through the *Daily Graphic*.

Dr. Bediako urged residents to be vigilant and report enumerators who might engage in negative practices, such as filling questionnaires on their own or not going to the field to administer the questionnaires as required of them.

She said with the support of the UNFPA, the National Census Secretariat had trained people to monitor the exercise throughout the country with the view to ensuring that census officials discharge their duties diligently in order to enhance the success of the exercise.

As the clock ticks to the occasions barely 36 hours from now, an explosion of fireworks and bonfires, as well as blowing of sirens and ringing of church bells, will usher residents of Ghana into such an important national exercise.

The spontaneous funfair is expected to rock every corner of the country on the midnight of Sunday, September 26, 2010 at which time a hypothetical snapshot will be taken of Ghana to determine the country's current population.

That means any person who steps into the geographical boundary of Ghana or dies, even one second after that midnight will be seen in the photograph as captured in the hypothetical snapshot and, thus will be counted as part of the population.

This underlines the significance of the midnight of Sunday, September 26, 2010, which is described as the census night and the reference point around which the entire census revolves.

Therefore, everyone is enjoined to take note of where he or she spends tomorrow (Sunday) night.

That may explain why president J.E.A Mills had to fly more than 10000 miles back home from China just to spend Sunday night, otherwise known as census night, in Ghana, and soon after fly almost the same distance to India to continue his Asian tour.

Giving further explanation to the concept of census night, the government statistician said it did not mean everybody would be counted on Sunday-night.

She said the enumeration exercise would begin from Monday, September 27, 2010, but then enumerators would have to know from residents where they spent the Census night adding that every question would be referenced to the census night.

That was why it was important for all to keep the date of the Census Night in mind.

Dr. Bediako indicated that only the floating population, including guests of hotels, passengers in transit and the homeless, would be enumerated on Census Night, while the rest of the population were enumerated over a two-week period, beginning Monday, September 27, 2010.

Census officials are, therefore advising the general public to take detailed particulars of relatives, friends and guests who might spend Sunday night in their household.

The information required is age, sex, education, marital status, literacy, educational attainment, occupation, and economic activity.

Others relate to where people reside in terms of permanent and temporary residential structures as well as the availability of vital social services like water, health, education, and housing.

Residents are also advised to leave their own particulars behind whenever they leave home so that even in their absence, enumerators will still have access to their particulars.

The public has been assured that any information they give in respect of the census will be treated as confidential because enumerators are under oath not to divulge such information to anybody. Indeed, officials of the Ghana Statistical Service and the National Census Secretariat are equally prohibited from disclosing such information to anybody.

The last census held in 2000 pegged Ghana's population at approximately 20 million and this year's enumeration exercise will deliver the country's current population from projections, which are estimated at 25 million.

Dr. Bediako said everything was set for the smooth conduct of the exercise pointing out that the only hitch was the yet –to-arrive imported census bags for the enumerators.

She said the National Census Secretariat had improvised with the supply of old census bags and plastic bags to the enumerators for which reason she dismissed suggestions that the hitch might undermine the success of the census.

She underlined the need to count persons with disability, especially those who were normally kept indoors, in order to ensure complete enumeration and also reflect the slogan of the exercise, “You count so be counted”.

On the issue of security, Dr. Bediako took solace in assurance given by the police and other security agencies to provide adequate security for census officials anytime it was needed.

After completing their training last Monday, about 50,000 census enumerators have been assigned their respective enumerations (EA), comprising 150 household each.

At the moment, the enumerators are engaged in the feedback from the field, according to the Government Statistician, had been very positive.

She said in some instance, residents had demanded to see the ID cards and T-shirts of census officials, meaning they were very conscious about the exercise.

Asked how the secretariat was sorting out the remuneration of census officials, Dr. Bediako said approval had been given for the release of funds to pay the first installment of enumerator’s allowances, adding that the remaining installment would be paid at the end of the exercise when their work had been certified as satisfactory.

The conduct of the decennial enumeration exercise is in accordance with United Nations recommendations and the Statistician to conduct any statistical enquiry in the country.

According to census officials, data collected in the enumeration exercise, together with macro data from other sources like the Ghana living standards survey (GLSS), the Core Welfare Indicator Questionnaires Survey (CWIQ) and the Ghana Demographic and Health survey (GDHS), would constitute in enormous data to enhance national development planning of all the economic sectors.

Furthermore, the data will help the electoral commission, for instance, to revise electoral areas and constituencies, as well as help the government track the progress of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

For the first time in the country’s census history, this year’s enumeration exercise puts special emphasis on collection of data on people with disability, and the essence is to help address some of the socio-economic, employment and access to other social services.

In that respect, Dr. Bediako has urged the public to disregard religious and cultural disposition that make some people hide their relatives who are physically-challenge from public view, and instead, make such persons available for enumeration.

She said it was the responsibility of all irrespective of one's beliefs and values, to help accomplish the objectives of the census.

**Source: Daily Graphic Saturday, September 25, 2010**