Abstract

In 2014 the Republic of the Union of Myanmar (formerly known as Burma) conducted its first population and housing census in over 30 years. Encouraged to do so by the United Nations, and to a large extent supported and funded by a wide range of donors including the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), the World Bank, the European Union, the UK, and other international agencies, the Government of Myanmar designed the census to conform, as far as was possible, with the UN’s Recommendations on Population and Housing Censuses. A prime aim was to collect information on a range of topics that would not only meet the needs of national users but would also provide information to help the Myanmar Government to fulfil its commitment, initially, to the Millennium Development Goals and, subsequently, to the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals.

This paper reports on the extent to which data collected in the Myanmar census has enabled the Government to inform its progress towards fulfilling this commitment for a selection of topics, and, comments, more generally, on the success of the 2014 Census itself.

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I. Geographic and demographic background

1. At 676,577 square kilometres, Myanmar is the 39th largest country in the world, and the 11th largest in Asia (UN DESA, 2014). On the world chart, Myanmar is slightly smaller than Chile and Zambia, and slightly larger than Afghanistan and Ukraine.

2. Myanmar has approximately 1,930 km of coastline on the Bay of Bengal and Andaman Sea (see Figure 1). Elsewhere it shares approximately 6,500 km (4,000 miles) of land borders with five neighbouring countries: Bangladesh to the west; India to the north-west; China to the north and north-east; Laos to the east; and Thailand to the east and south-east. Based on geographic variations in relief, soils, drainage patterns and climate, Myanmar can be divided into five distinct physiographic regions: the northern mountains, the western ranges, the eastern plateau, the central basin and lowlands, and the coastal plains and deltas.

3. Population distribution is strongly influenced by the physical characteristics of a territory (see Figure 2). The people of Myanmar show how populations are extremely adaptable and can thrive in a wide range of natural environments. Generally, upland areas are much less densely populated than the lowlands of the central basin and coastal plains. However, people do live in some hilly and mountainous areas, where job opportunities provided by rich mineral and forest resources encourage large numbers of young, mostly male, people to live in remote areas under harsh conditions.

4. The 2014 Census was the first in Myanmar for over 30 years (the previous one was in 1983), and was conducted, like its predecessors, on a de facto basis. During the period 1-12 April 2014, teams of enumerators carried out door-step
interviews using a paper questionnaire containing over 40 questions. On Census night between 29 and 30 March 2014, the Census estimated the total population of the country at 51,486,253. This figure included 50,279,900 people enumerated through the field operation, and an additional estimated 1,206,353 people, based on data obtained from the pre-census address listing, who were not counted. This estimate included 1,090,000 people in Rakhine State, 69,753 people in Kayin State, and 46,600 people in Kachin State (Department of Population, 2015).

5. The population of Myanmar is most heavily concentrated in the central part of the country, along a corridor connecting the cities of Yangon, Nay Pyi Taw and Mandalay. Geographical information system (GIS) analysis shows that approximately 50 per cent of the total population lives within 100 kilometres of these three urban centres. The other half of the population is distributed relatively sparsely in largely rural areas to the north, south, east and west, though there are smaller urban concentrations in all of these regions.

6. Between the 1983 and 2014 censuses, Myanmar’s population increased by almost 16.2 million people (46 per cent). The average annual growth rate during this period was 0.9 per cent, making Myanmar one of the slowest growing countries in Southeast Asia. The most striking features of the age distribution, shown in the population pyramid at Figure 3, are that Myanmar is a relatively young country (in terms of its age profile), with more than half the population younger than 30. There are fewer young children (0-9 years old) than adolescents (10-19 years old) and the proportion of elderly people (those older than 64) at just less than 6 per cent is around the regional average. This profile is the result of declining mortality and fertility rates since World War II, both of which have accelerated markedly in the last 20 years. The ‘youth bulge’, showing clear evidence that more children were born between 1995 and 2004 than were born in the subsequent decade, is the clearest indication that fertility rates are dropping. It does not appear in either of the population pyramids from the 1973 and 1983 censuses. However, although still a relatively young country, Myanmar is ageing quite quickly, and it already has a larger proportion of elderly persons than many of its neighbours in Southeast Asia.
II. Mortality

A. Under-five mortality

7. Under-five mortality rates are a leading indicator of the level of child health and overall development in countries. Worldwide, child deaths are falling, but not quickly enough. The global under-five mortality rate has declined by a little more than half, dropping from 91 to 43 deaths per 1,000 live births between 1990 and 2015. However, the current rate of progress was well short of the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) target of a two thirds reduction by 2015. Under-five mortality remains the focus of the post-2015 MDG agenda, particularly in the newly adopted Sustainable Development Goals. In Myanmar, between 1981 and 2012, under-five mortality declined by 41 per cent.

8. The most recent estimate of under-five mortality (71.8 deaths per 1,000 births) corresponds to the year 2012. As is the case globally, in recent years early-age mortality has experienced a decline in Myanmar. Table 1 shows that infant mortality declined 36.0 per cent between 1999 and 2012 from 96.6 to 61.8 deaths per 1,000 live births; child mortality declined 54.1 per cent from 23.3 to 10.7 deaths per 1,000 children surviving at age 1; and under-five mortality declined 38.9 per cent from 117.6 to 71.8 deaths per 1,000 live births in the same period (Department of Population, 2016a). If the SDG target of “reducing under-five mortality to at least as low as 25 per 1,000 live births” is to be met, these figures suggests that child survival should receive substantial attention in future health and social policies, and programmes in Myanmar.
Table 1  
Infant, child, and under-five mortality rates, 2014 Census

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Infant</th>
<th>Child</th>
<th>Under-five</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January 2012</td>
<td>61.8</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>71.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 2010</td>
<td>65.6</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>76.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 2008</td>
<td>72.7</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>85.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 2006</td>
<td>80.6</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>96.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 2003</td>
<td>89.4</td>
<td>18.6</td>
<td>108.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 1999</td>
<td>96.6</td>
<td>21.0</td>
<td>117.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

B. Maternal mortality

9. One of original MDGs, the fifth, was to improve maternal health, the target for which was to reduce the maternal mortality ratio by three quarters from its level in 1990 by 2015. This has now been superseded by the specific SDG target of “reducing the maternal mortality ratio to less than 70 per 100,000 live births”.

10. Substantial progress was made, globally on achieving the MDGs. For example, maternal mortality fell by almost 44 per cent worldwide, from 385 deaths to 216 deaths per 100,000 live births over the period 1990 to 2015 (WHO et al, 2015). The Government of Myanmar made a strong commitment to achieve the MDGs, and is committed to the SDGs and other international development goals and targets. In order to do so, the Myanmar 2014 Census collected information required to measure maternal mortality. A question on deaths in households during the 12 months prior to the census were included in the questionnaire, which contained elements specific to deaths to women aged 15-49 related to pregnancy, delivery and post-delivery in order to provide the requisite indicators of maternal mortality.

11. The Census reported a maternal mortality ratio of 282 per 100,000 live births; this compares with levels of 140 in the Southeast Asian region, 230 for developing countries and (as noted above) 216 worldwide, and contrasts with a figure of just 16 for developed countries, suggesting that some improvement is needs in maternal heath to meet the SDG target. Maternal mortality differences between countries are a clear reminder that economic, social and cultural features of societies have a major effect on human well-being.

12. But the most striking feature shown in Table 2 is the ratio for the age group 45-49 years; some 1,132.4 deaths per 100,000 live births (Department of Population, 2016b). This level is about four times higher than the overall ratio and results from the fact that women in this age group have the greatest obstetric risk. In general, it is expected that as age increases after age 30 maternal mortality also increases; however, the jump from age 40-44 to 45-49 is substantial, almost double. It is likely that age is not the only factor that is contributing to the high obstetric risk of women aged 45-49 years. Having children at this advanced age may be the result of a position of social and economic disadvantage that limits women’s access to contraception and reproductive health information. This vulnerable position, combined with their advanced age, significantly increases the risks associated with each of their pregnancies.
III. Education

13. The progress of any country is heavily dependent on its education system. Education has to reach all groups within society and has to be of a high quality to be able to meet the demands of an expanding labour market. At a critical time in the development of the education system in Myanmar, the data collected in the 2014 Census will assist the Government in its effort towards meeting the Sustainable Development Goal of “ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and the promotion of lifelong learning opportunities for all”.

A. Literacy

14. SDG target 4.6 specifically seeks to ensure that “by 2030 all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy”. The 2014 Census reported that the number of illiterate persons had decreased from 4.5 million in 1983 to 3.6 million in 2014 and that the adult literacy rate (for those aged 15 and over) was almost 90 per cent (around the average for countries in the Southeast Asian region) with higher rates reported for males (93 per cent) than for females (87 per cent). There has been greater improvement among females since the 1983 census (Department of Population, 2017a). Figure 4 shows that gender differences in literacy are relatively small up to around aged 50 after which males are more literate than females, and these differences increase with age. This reflects the gender differences in school attendance in earlier years.

B. School attendance and educational attainment

15. SDG Target 4.1 seek to “ensure that by 2030 all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education”, and Target 4.5 to “eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education”. The 2014 Census showed that school attendance rates differed by age, peaking at age 9 at 85 per cent attending. The gender differences in school
attendance rates were small. However, males reported slightly higher school attendance rates at secondary school age, while females have higher attendance rates at primary school and above university. The Census reported that just under half a million children aged 7-15 years had never attended school, with large differences between in urban areas, where the proportion of non-attenders in urban areas was just 2 per cent, and rural areas where the non-attendance rate was three times higher (at 6 per cent) in rural areas (Department of Population, 2017a). The several reasons for children not attending school could not be investigated directly though the Census, but from other information collected and from which a household-based wealth index was derived, there was some indication that affordability was one of the main reasons.

Figure 4
Literacy rates by sex by age, 2014 Census, Myanmar
16. Educational attainment is, generally, still quite low in Myanmar and very much short of the targets set by the SDGs. About 16 per cent of the population aged 25 years and over reported having no schooling. This proportion was higher for females (19 per cent) than for males (13 per cent) and this was the case generally in all age groups, with the proportion increasing with age such that more than half of women aged 80 and over had no schooling. Only a relatively small proportion (7.3 per cent, about 2 million) of the population aged 25 and over had graduated from university or a higher level of education. Interestingly, a striking feature of Myanmar's educational attainment profile is the higher performance of women compared with men at higher educational levels (as shown in Figure 5). Out of almost 1.9 million people aged 25 and over who had graduated from university, 1.1 million – more than half - were women, and of the 116,000 persons with a postgraduate qualification, almost two thirds were women.

IV. Gender equality

17. Notwithstanding the higher proportions of women than men completing higher levels of education that were discussed above, according to an Oxfam research report by (Oxfam et al, 2013), women in Myanmar are under-represented in most areas of political and public life and therefore few involved in senior decision-making roles across various sectors. Table 3 shows, for example, the level of representation of women in Myanmar’s Parliament in 2016. The
comparison with some Southeast Asian countries shows that Myanmar has one of the lowest participation rates.

Table 3
Proportion of seats in Parliament held by women in selected ASEAN countries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country and year of election</th>
<th>Lower House</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Upper House/ Senate</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Females</td>
<td>% female</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Females</td>
<td>% female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Myanmar (2015)</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>433</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>10.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cambodia (2013)</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>20.3</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>16.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia (2014)</td>
<td>555</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>17.1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia (2013)</td>
<td>222</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>21.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philippines (2016)</td>
<td>292</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>29.8</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>25.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore (2015)</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>23.8</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thailand (2014)</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6.10</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnam (2016)</td>
<td>494</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>26.7</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laos</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>27.5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: IPU, 2016.

18. More generally, the Census has shown that there are more women than men in the country’s working-age population: 52 per cent women, 48 per cent men. However, over 80 per cent of the male population aged 15-64 are employed, compared to less than half of the females (48 per cent) (Department of Population, 2017b). This further underpins the issue of inequality in access to employment by men and women in Myanmar as it strives to meet the SDG Equality Target 5.5 to “ensure women’s full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life”. Only 15 per cent of the men aged 15-64 are economically inactive, compared to a half the women.

19. Figure 6 shows that men are proportionately more economically active than women at all ages. It is likely that the influence of cultural and religious norms that entrench traditional gender roles (of women’s work being limited to the home) are influential in determining levels of labour force participation of women in Myanmar society, more so in rural areas, thus increasing inequalities to the disadvantage of women. Many of the activities that economically inactive persons are involved in, including child care, take place within the household environment, and hence it is no surprise that the Census should reveal that over three quarters of the economically inactive women (79 per cent) are engaged in domestic work, compared with less than 10 per cent of inactive men, the majority of whom were either full time students (36 per cent) or engaged in other unspecified activities (a further 36 per cent) (Department of Population, 2017c).
20. The largest proportions of employed people aged 15-64 were own account workers (39 per cent) or employees working in private sector/organizations (33 per cent). The Census recorded that women dominated only in the category of ‘contributing household worker’ and that there were proportionately more men in all other categories.

Figure 6
Age-specific labour force participation rates by sex, 2014 Census

Figure 7
Sex ratios (males per 100 females) for employed persons by major occupational categories, 2014 Census
21. Of particular note is that women made up only a quarter of the total number of ‘employers’, showing that relatively few women manage enterprises or organizations that create employment for others – a significant statistic in the light of the SDG gender equality indicator 5.5.2, “the proportion of women in managerial positions”. This is confirmed by looking at the sex ratio for each of the main occupational groups at Figure 7, which shows that for ‘Managers’ the ratio 198 per 100 women. Indeed, women’s share of the employed population was greater than the men’s only in the group of ‘Professionals’ (among whom the ratio was just 38.7 per 100 women) and ‘Service and sales workers’ (74.4) (Department of Population, 2017c).

V. Safe drinking water and sanitation

22. SDG 6 aims to “ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all” and, more specifically, Target 6.1 seeks to “achieve, by 2030, universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all”, while Target 6.2 aims to “achieve access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all” by the same end date. Thus, a key component of Myanmar’s 2014 Census was the enquiry into the main source of drinking water and type of toilet.

23. The 2014 Census reported that more than two thirds (69.5 per cent) of households at the national level had access to improved sources drinking water sources. The rate was significantly higher in urban areas (86.7 per cent of the households) compared to just 62.7 per cent in rural areas (Department of Population, 2017c).

24. These results indicate that the original millennium development goal of achieving 90 per cent access to improved drinking water sources by 2015 proved to be elusive. But comparing these results with the situation elsewhere in the Southeast Asia region, it seems that Myanmar is making some progress towards the SDG of achieving universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water by 2030. According to WHO/UNICEF (2015) the Southeast Asian region had attained 33 per cent access to piped water and 57 per cent access to other improved sources of drinking water giving an aggregate access to improved drinking water sources for the region at 90 per cent. The respective access rates for Myanmar as reported in the 2014 Census were 9.0 per cent and 60.5 per cent giving a corresponding aggregate access level of only 69.5 per cent. This reveals that although the proportion that have access to piped water in Myanmar lags far behind the regional average, access to other improved sources of drinking water is on a par within the region (Department of Population, 2017d).

25. At the same time, the Census showed that three quarters (74.3 per cent) of households had access to improved sanitation. In urban areas, this proportion was again much higher (92.3 per cent) while in rural areas only two thirds of households (67.3 per cent) had such access. These results indicate that Myanmar’s performance is slightly above the Southeast Asian regional average, which had, by 2015 attained a level of 72 per cent (WHO/UNICEF, 2015), and suggest very good progress towards attaining national and international goals of access to improved sanitation.
VI. Sources of household energy

26. The key determinants of energy consumption in households are the needs for cooling, heating, hot-water supply, lighting and use of electric appliances. Of these, the energy consumption of lighting and electric appliances has shown the biggest increase in recent years mainly due to changes in lifestyle, and the availability of, and access to, modern domestic appliances and equipment. The increase in household energy consumption depends largely on how residents use lighting and electric appliances such as televisions and cooling equipment (such as air conditioners and refrigerators).

27. In the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, SDG 7 aims to ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all. Of these four elements of this goal, only two – sustainable and modern – could be measured from the data collected in 2014 Census data which ranked energy sources as:

1. Modern and sustainable (such as electricity, liquified petroleum gas, solar power)
2. Traditional and sustainable (coal, biogas, water mill)
3. Modern and unsustainable (candle, battery, generator, kerosene)
4. Traditional and unsustainable (firewood, charcoal, straw/grass)

where 1 is deemed to be the best and 4 the worst.

28. Only 16.8 per cent of households in Myanmar reported using modern and sustainable energy sources for their cooking while more than four fifths (81.1 per cent) used traditional and unsustainable sources. These results suggest a big challenge to the Myanmar government in its attainment of the national and international goals on access to modern and sustainable energy, particularly so since even in urban areas, more than half of all households (52.2 per cent) use traditional and unsustainable energy sources while more than nine-in-ten rural household (92.3 per cent) do so (Department of Population, 2017d).

VII. Economic activity

A. Unemployment

29. SDG 8 seeks to “promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all” with the specific Target 8.5 of seeking to “achieve by 2030 full and productive employment and decent work for all men and women”. Using the SDG indicator 8.5.2 (the unemployment rate by sex and age) as a measurement of achievement, Myanmar can be seen as making good progress. The unemployment rate stood at 3.8 per cent for the national population aged 15 and over, and 3.9 per cent for the population in the active age-group 15-64. Although the actual number of unemployed males is higher than the number of unemployed females, the unemployment rate for females is higher than for males: 4.0 per cent compared with 3.7 per cent, due to the much higher absolute number of males in the labour force. Figure 8 shows, however, that there was very little gender difference in the age-specific unemployment rates.
30. Rates were generally high at ages below 25 and thereafter dropped to very low levels for persons aged 30 and over. It is surprising that unemployment was highest among children aged 10-14: 14.0 per cent of young boys and 10.5 per cent of young girls reported that for most of the time during the 12 months prior to the Census they were looking for work. It should be noted here that Myanmar adopted the usual activity status concept in measuring economic activity (where the reference period was 12 months before then Census) rather than the current activity status approach (where the reference period is usually taken as the week before then census.) This enabled seasonal employment, particularly prevalent in the agricultural sector, to be recognised as economic activity.

B. Youth not in employment, education and training

31. In seeking to monitor Myanmar’s progress towards “substantially reducing, by 2020, the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training” (SDG Target 8.6) the Census reported that this ‘NEET’ percentage stood at 25.6 per cent, and was considerably higher for women (34.9) than for men (15.8). Moreover, Figure 9 shows the age profile shows a completely different pattern for female youth than for male youth; while the percentage of NEET for men between the ages of 15 and 24 declines gradually with age, it increases for women, mainly due to those who leave secondary level education to become unpaid household workers in their own family (Department of Employment, 2017c).
C. Child Labour

32. Child labour is widely accepted as a clear violation of human rights and should be abolished in all its forms. It prevents children from reaching their full potential and can lead to lifelong health problems and psychological issues. Ending child labour is not only a moral, but also an economic necessity. The Sustainable Development Goals have pronounced that by 2025 child labour should be a thing of the past. Target 8.7 states: “Take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025 end child labour in all its forms”.

33. The notion of child labour is hard to operationalize. The difficulty with defining it is that child ‘work’ is not necessary child ‘labour’. Some work that children do cannot be considered as child labour, such as in the many cases where children or adolescents do some work at home, on the family farm, in a family business, or to earn some pocket money. As long as the work does not hamper their education, health or personal development, it could be positive and can even contribute to their social development. However, child work becomes child labour the moment it involves activities that, “deprive children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity, and that is harmful to physical and mental development” (ILO, undated).

34. It was impossible, however, for the 2014 Myanmar Census to make a distinction between ‘child work’ and ‘child labour’. To determine child labour, additional questions on hours worked and the hazardous nature of work would have needed to be asked. Nevertheless, Figure 10 shows that at age 10, 3.8 per cent of boys and 3.6 per cent of girls were already working. Unfortunately, no data are available in respect of any children younger than 10 that may have been working. At the youngest ages, the percentages of children working, inactive and looking for
work were similar for boys and girls. After age 12, clear gender differences emerge, with more boys entering the labour market than girls. At age 16, 46.6 per cent of boys were working compared with 35.6 per cent of girls. By age 17, this gender differential was even larger, with 55.3 per cent of boys and 41.2 per cent of girls working.

35. Figure 11 shows that children were, with a few exceptions, found in four major occupational categories, the largest being ‘Skilled agricultural, forestry and fishery workers’ (47.2 per cent of boys and 44.9 per cent of girls), followed by ‘Elementary occupations’ (26.7 per cent of boys and 27.2 per cent of girls), ‘Craft and related trade workers’ (15.8 and 15.5 per cent respectively) and ‘Services and sales workers’ (7.3 and 10.5 per cent). Numbers in the other ISCO-categories were insignificant. (Note that these figures refer only to children in conventional households).

36. Though these figures may not accurately measures the extent of ‘child labour’ as opposed to ‘child work’, the results from the Census indicate that the target of total eradication of child labour by the year 2025 may be a challenge for Myanmar to achieve.

Figure 10
**Percentage of all children aged 10-17 by employment status, by sex, 2014 Census**

![Percentage of all children aged 10-17 by employment status, by sex, 2014 Census](image-url)
D. Disabled persons

37. None of the United Nations SDGs are directly aimed at improving the lives of persons living with a disability. However, several targets are specifically geared towards persons living with a disability, proposing actions to reduce inequality and protect disabled people. SDG Target 8.5 is directed towards decent work for all, but places emphasis on the position of disabled persons: “By 2030, achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value”. In Myanmar, the government has taken various measures to improve the life of persons with disabilities. These measures are laid down in the 2014 Myanmar National Social Protection Strategic Plan (Government of Myanmar, 2014), which stipulates that job facilities will be established for disabled people who complete vocational training and are capable to work.

38. The Census showed that males and females with a disability were less likely to be participating in the labour force compared to those without a disability. Those who had a mild disability were, however, more likely to be in the labour force than those with a moderate or severe disability. Figure 12 shows that the differential in labour force participation was much greater between people with a moderate/severe disability and a mild disability, than between those with a mild disability and no disability. This holds true for all the four functional domains reported in the Census. Individuals with a moderate/severe disability in terms of walking and remembering were the least likely to participate in the labour market. Among those with a moderate/severe walking disability, only 22.9 per cent were reported as working. At 28.8 per cent, males were more likely to do so than females, of whom
only 15.1 per cent participated. For those with moderate/severe disabilities related to remembering, only 25.5 per cent participated in the labor force. For males, the rate was 29.8 per cent and for females 20.7 per cent.

Figure 12
Labour force participation rates for persons aged 15 – 64 by domain of disability by degree of disability by sex, 2014 Census

VIII. Access to mobile phones and the Internet

39. The 2014 Census results reveal that at the Union level almost half of the households (49.5 per cent) owned a television. In urban areas, a little over three
quarters (75.8 per cent) did so. Figure 13 shows that the ownership of radios is higher (35.5 per cent) than that of mobile phones (32.9 per cent) but that the position is reversed for urban households among whom almost two thirds (63.5 per cent) own mobile phones while only 27.2 per cent own radios. However, this result should be understood in the light of the fact that most modern mobile phones have a radio function as standard feature. The Figure also clearly shows the far greater prevalence of mobile phones over landline phones - a phenomenon which is now common in developing countries, and an encouraging indicator that Myanmar is making good progress towards meeting one part of the SDG Target 9c of “significantly increasing access to information and communications technology……”.

40. However, the Census results suggest that fully achieving the rest of this Target “… to provide universal and affordable access to the Internet in the least developed countries by 2020” is still some way off. Figure 13 also shows that only 6.2 per cent of households had access to the Internet and that even fewer household (3.5 per cent) owned a computer. However, it is worth noting that most of the 3.5 per cent who owned a computer are likely to have been a subset of the 6.2 per cent who reported having access to the Internet, implying that at least as many people had access to the Internet without owning a computer as did those that owned a computer.

Figure 13
Percentage of households owning selected ITC devices, 2014 Census
V. Conclusions and an overview of the 2014 Census

41. The fact that Myanmar (like many of its Southeast Asian neighbours) will find meeting many of the SDGs a major challenge in the coming years should not detract from the success and value of the 2014 Census. Indeed, it is only because of the rich wealth of data obtained from the Census that the Myanmar Government is now in a position to be able to assess more precisely the position of the country in meetings the several SDG targets discussed in this paper.

42. Having not undertaken a census in more than 30 years it is perhaps not surprising that the Myanmar Government found the whole operation a major challenge, despite the support, in terms of both funding and technical expertise, provided by a number of international bodies. There were some failures and shortcomings – only to be expected perhaps. The most serious of these was the extent of non-enumeration of those people who wished to record their ethnic group as ‘Rohingya’ - a term not recognized by the Government who took the decision not to enumerate them in the interests of national security. Although, as already noted at the start of this paper, estimates were made of the missing numbers, no account could be taken of the demographic characteristics of the non-enumerated population (other than their religion). While this perhaps made little differences to national profiles, the effect on the statistics for some areas, and for Rakhine State in particular, was to under-estimate the extent of some characteristics such as, levels of illiteracy, non-attendance at school, unemployment, disability, ethnicity, poor quality housing, and lack of household amenities and services. Of these, the data collected on disability more widely is also likely to have been affected by shortcomings in the way that some enumerators collected and recorded the information on this particularly sensitive topic. Also, although the census was intended to be a de facto count – enumerating people where they were present on Census night – there was some evidence from the official Observation Mission, that respondents tended to include absent usual residents on the questionnaire, particularly when these were the household heads.

43. On the other hand, there were some remarkable successes, not least the adoption of an ambitious programme of outputs encompassing: the early release of provisional data; a set of 16 summary reports at national and State/Regional level; a set of over 400 reports presenting a set of key statistics for each Township; a series of 13 detailed national thematic reports; an innovative Census Atlas; a package of microdata; and a data quality evaluation report.

References


(http://kilm.ilo.org/2011/download/kilm02EN.pdf)


