



Quebec City Declaration Regarding the Recognition, Protection and Development of African Censuses



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Most African countries have conducted at least two national population censuses over the past 40 years. These censuses have allowed us to enrich our knowledge of African societies. They alone provide the most geographically detailed and exhaustive nominal data on the population. As such, they constitute the cornerstone of an integrated system of demographic and socio-economic information, and represent a unique legacy in the demographic study of Africa's populations. In contrast to the attention devoted to permanently preserving designated historical documents in archival centres, the comprehensive archiving of census documents and data has been neglected. This data heritage is thereby at risk of destruction, despite its critical value in the production of knowledge on African societies and the monitoring of development policies and programs.

Faced with this situation, various organizations have mobilized to recognize, preserve and develop this legacy. ACAP (the African Census Analysis Project at the University of Pennsylvania) has played a pioneering role in preserving documents. It is also heartening to see the initiatives of CERPOD, IPUMS-International, and CEPED, as well as those developed by the United Nations system, particularly UNFPA and PARIS21, to establish integrated database systems.

Since urgent action is required, we, researchers, educator researchers, and other specialized producers and users of population data, gathered together for the 7es Journées scientifiques du Réseau Démographie de l'Agence universitaire de la Francophonie (AUF), in Quebec City from June 19 to 22, 2007, call upon governments, national and international institutions, and the scientific community to ensure that this legacy is protected by taking urgent action to:

1. Establish the infrastructure needed for archiving completed questionnaires, cartography, methodological and technical documents, printed reports, computer files, and any other kind of census-related record;
2. Establish a system to facilitate access to data in order to develop research that will promote African expertise, inter/pluridisciplinary approaches, and international comparisons;
3. Develop an inter-institutional partnership based on the use of open protocols and standards that ensure the integration of various resources and their dissemination, taking heritage and copyright considerations into account, and making provision for any required legal protection.

Declaration made in Quebec City on June 22, 2007

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