

Groupe de Démographie Africaine

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**POPULATION SIZE
IN AFRICAN COUNTRIES :
AN EVALUATION**

Volume I

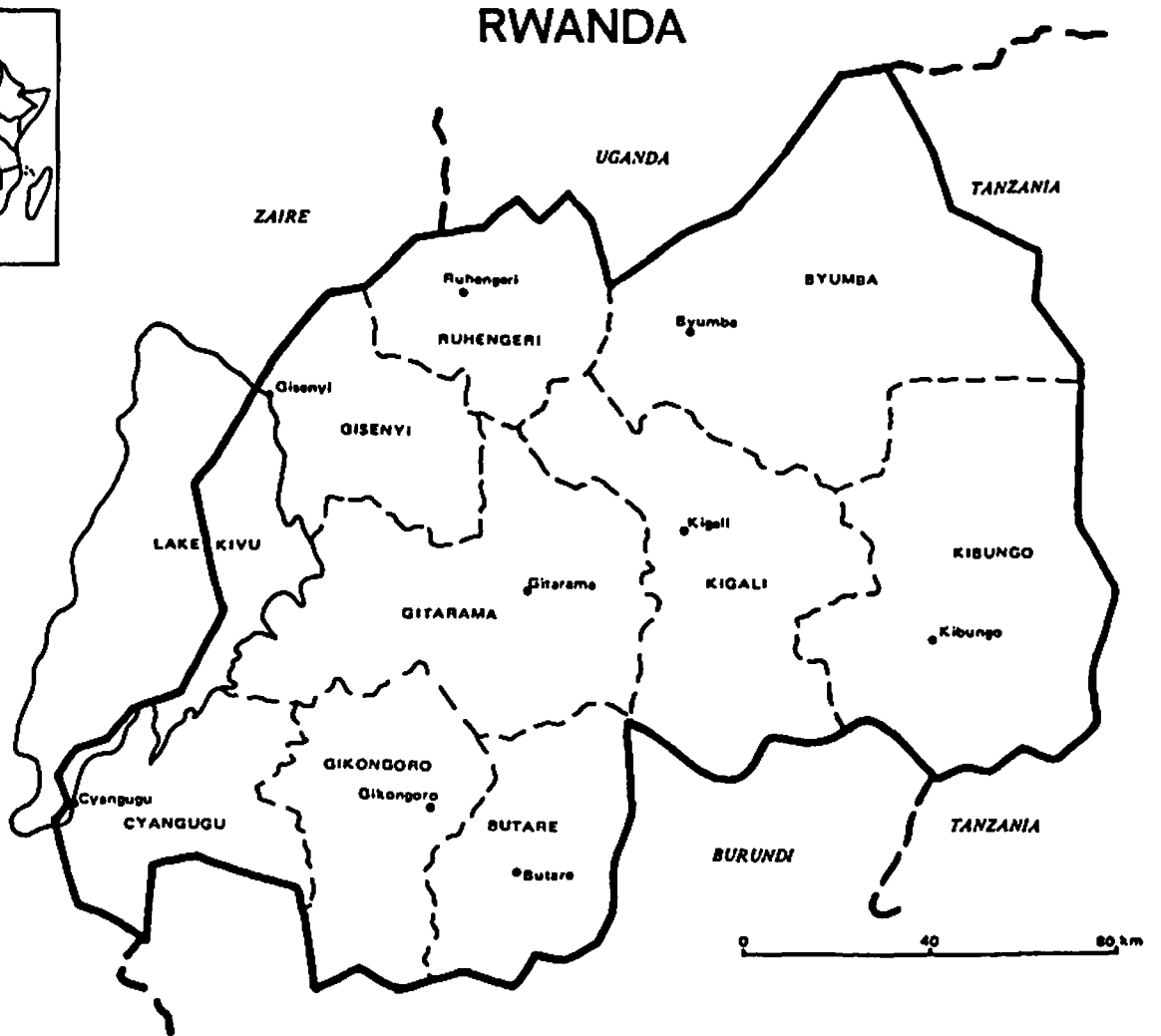
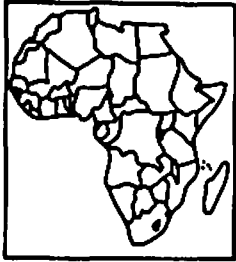
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RWANDA
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R W A N D A

I. HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Very little is known about the population of Rwanda before the first respectable estimate dating from 1936. What is known is that this country in Eastern Africa, after having successfully resisted several attempts of penetration by European colonisers, traders and missionaries, was effectively occupied for the first time in 1892 (date of entry of the first European in Rwanda) by German colonisers and missionaries. Later on the country was to be incorporated in the German Empire of East Africa "Deutsch Ostafrika" comprising Tanganyika, Burundi and Rwanda. The population estimates for this country at this period (beginning of the century) are crude and only stem from vague impressions; indeed the population density, the vitality of the people and of the livestock up till then being unknown over the whole area, could give rise to overestimation of the population. Thus the German Captain Bette put forward the figure of 2 000 000 for 1898, followed in this by other observers (Czekanowski and Kandt give 1 700 000 in 1907). Discussion about this figure is not in itself important as it is impossible to know whether it is above or below reality; what is important are other considerations such as: a relatively healthy environment which favoured an abundance of births permitting a significant increase in population despite high mortality (due mainly to food shortages and famines); the decision of the German authorities to turn Rwanda into a major reserve army of labour in East Africa in order to solve the apparent overpopulation there and labour shortage in the rest of the area. Therefore without putting forward a precise figure, it can be supposed that Rwanda before the First World War (with a surface area of 130% more than at present) was "highly populated" for the time. Under Belgian rule, which was set up at the end of the hostilities, demographic knowledge was not extended significantly before 1936, date of the first estimate. There followed the setting up of a modern administrative system and civil registration. This period was also characterised by the feeling that the territory was "over-populated" and that it was necessary to relieve the situation by encouraging emigration not only towards East Africa (Uganda, Tanganyika) but also towards the Congo. After 1936, estimates of the population of Rwanda were made regularly on the basis of "administrative censuses" founded on the notion of the "valid adult man" (H.A.V.) able to pay taxes; they were also based on civil registration entries as well as reports from missionaries and health authorities.

After the end of the Second World War, the effects of which were disastrous in Rwanda from a demographic point of view (famines, food shortages, emigrations), it was decided, under pressure from the United Nations, to undertake for the first time a census of the population of the country. The 1949 census gave 1 899 800 inhabitants for the present day territory. As this result was considered to be far removed from reality, it was decided to carry out sample surveys whose effectiveness had been demonstrated in the British territories of Eastern and Western Africa. Sample survey operations were carried out diligently and in 1952 the first realistic figures of the population of Rwanda were obtained concerning its size, its fertility and mortality characteristics, migration, foreign population, etc. Subsequently, population figures were obtained by means of annual evaluations based on civil registration which was being constantly improved, permitting periodical compilations ("Administrative Censuses of 1962 and 1964").

In 1970, the demographic sample survey carried out jointly by INSEE and ORSTOM showed a population figure of 3 757 000 inhabitants. Finally the "General Census of Population and Housing" of 15th August 1978 carried out in conjunction with the United Nations (UNFAP) gave a population figure of 4 820 000. Table 83 lists the population figures from 1936 onwards and gives an idea of the growth of the population (see also Chart 10).

Table 83

RWANDA - EVOLUTION OF THE POPULATION FROM 1936 TO 1978

YEAR	POPULATION	ANNUAL INCREASE RATE (%)
1936	1 762 000 (E)	-
1941	1 920 000 (E)	1,7
1946	1 686 000 (E)	-2,6
1952	2 104 000 (R)	3,8
1957	2 551 000 (E)	3,9
1962	2 974 000 (E)	3,1
1967	3 575 000 (E)	3,8
1970	3 757 000 (R)	1,7
1971	3 642 000 (E)	2,3
1972	3 531 000 (E)	2,3
1973	4 033 000 (E)	3,1
1974	4 144 000 (E)	2,2
1975	4 234 000 (E)	2,2
1976	4 300 000 (E)	1,6
1977	4 425 000 (E)	2,9
1978	4 820 000 (R)	8,9 (a)

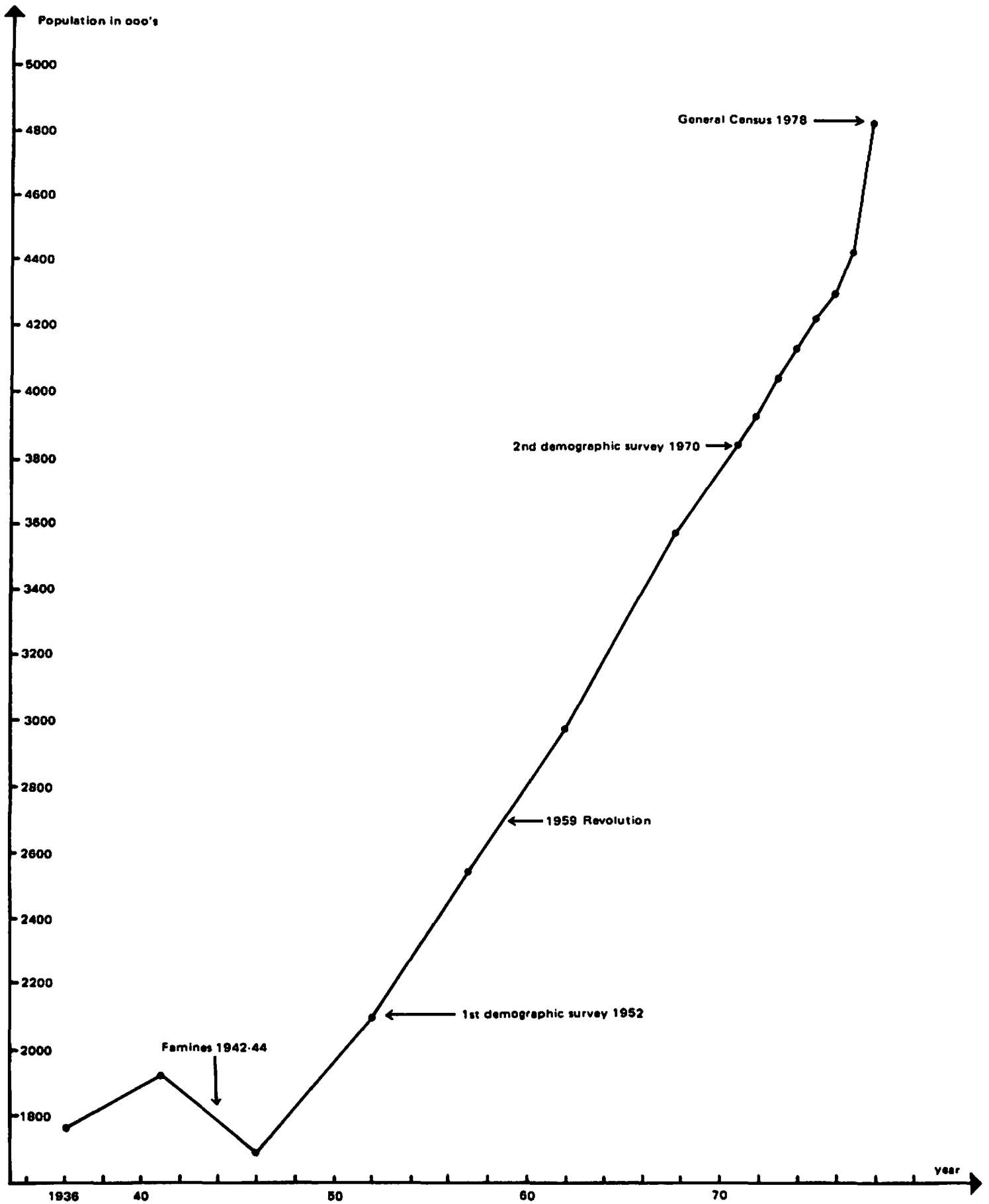
(E) Estimate

(R) Census or sample survey

(a) discrepancy between the estimate and the census

Source: Ministry of the Plan, Direction Générale de la Statistique and National Census Bureau

CHART 10
RWANDA — GROWTH OF THE POPULATION SINCE 1936



It can be seen that population growth displays two distinct periods: before and after 1950, which confirms what was said before concerning the general evolution of the population. After 1950, the mean increase rate fluctuates between 3 and 4% per annum, thus corresponding to a doubling of the population in a little less than 25 years. If this trend were to continue (as is probable) at the present fertility rate and with a decrease in mortality, the following figures will result: 5 400 000 inhabitants in 1981, 6 450 000 inhabitants in 1986, 7 740 000 inhabitants in 1991, 9 288 000 inhabitants in 1996 and 11 145 000 inhabitants in 2001.

II. SOME CHARACTERISTICS OF THE POPULATION

1) Birth rate

The birth-rate is 52 births per 1 000 inhabitants with slight variations in place and time. Prospects of a decrease in this high rate are only slight given the delay in the implementation of birth control programmes and in the light of the attitude towards fertility in this country and the young age structure of the population.

2) Death rate

The most recent data shows a substantial decrease of general mortality (less than 15 deaths per 1 000 inhabitants in 1978 compared with 20% in 1969), of child mortality (less than 80 deaths for children under one year of age per 1 000 births compared with 110% in 1969). Life expectancy at birth is above 50 years. In general, the socio-sanitary situation has considerably improved over the past few years. This is the consequence of the proliferation of rural dispensaries and medical centres, of hospitals, but above all, of the greater number of doctors and auxiliary staff (in 1966, there was 1 doctor for 120 000 inhabitants, in 1978: 1 doctor for fewer than 35 000 inhabitants; the situation being even more favourable if the number of medical assistants and nursing staff is taken into account).

3) Age structure

55% of the population is less than 20 years old, 41% between 20 and 65 years old and 4% over 65 years old. The extremely young age of the population is the consequence of the high fertility which characterises the population of Rwanda and gives rise to numerous problems. The same situation can be observed in most developing countries with high demographic growth.

4) Density

Rwanda had the highest gross population density in the whole of continental Africa with 183 inhabitants per km² in 1978. Despite the smallness of the territory and the infertility of the land in places, the physiological density reaches 1 000 inhabitants per km² in certain regions (South and North) of the country. It was mentioned above that these high densities always struck explorers of the country as early as the beginning of the century. With the increase of population in the course of time, the problems linked with a very high density of population are numerous: lack of arable land, decrease in yield, quarrels over land, etc.

5) Distribution of the population

Except for a few cases of "over-population" in many of the communes in the North and South of the country (Butare and Ruhengeri) and a certain "under-population" in the east part of the country (Kibungo), the population of Rwanda is fairly well distributed over the country. The table below shows the distribution of population by Prefecture at 15th August, 1978.

Table 84

RWANDA - POPULATION BY PREFECTURE AT 15TH AUGUST, 1978

PREFECTURE	POPULATION	DENSITY (not including parks and lakes)
Butare	601 000	323.2
Byumba	520 000	156.8
Cyangugu	331 000	162.1
Gikongoro	370 000	168.7
Gisenyi	469 000	253.7
Gitarama	603 000	268.1
Kibungo	361 000	119.3
Kibuye	338 000	336.2
Kigali	698 000	211.4
Ruhengeri	528 000	300.0
RWANDA	4 820 000	213.5

However, there is evidence of population movements (internal migration) from very densely populated regions towards those which are less populated; this is the case with migration from Butare and Ruhengeri and to a lesser extent from Gitarama and Kibuye towards the eastern Prefectures of Kigali, Kibungo and Byumba.

As for the town-country distribution, it can be stated that it is very uneven, Rwanda being an essentially agricultural country with very recent urbanisation. Indeed in 1978, only 5% of the population lived in urban centres against 95% in the countryside. Kigali, the capital, had about 120 000 inhabitants at the time compared with only 5 000 inhabitants at the time of Independence (1962). The other towns are: Butare (25 000 inhabitants), Ruhengeri (18 000 inhabitants), Gisenyi (13 000 inhabitants) and Nyanza (10 000 inhabitants).

The settlement pattern in the countryside is typical of the human geography of East Africa; a total absence of villages and the dispersal of settlements on hills with family farming around the dwelling unit (urugo).

6) Migration

Emigration has always taken place from the territory of Rwanda and the authorities have always encouraged these movements. It was stated previously that the high population densities always struck observers. These migrations which concerned mainly manual labourers took place most of the time between Rwanda and Uganda, Rwanda and Zaire, and to a lesser extent, between Rwanda and Tanzania, and Rwanda and Burundi.

Emigration was so important in the past that it was estimated that the number of natives of Rwanda, or the number of people speaking Kinyarwanda, living outside the country could equal that of natives of Rwanda living in the country.

Immigration has always been low; the number of foreigners does not even represent 3% of the total population.

III. SOURCES AND THEIR RELIABILITY

As in any developing country the available data originate from three sources: censuses, civil registration and demographic surveys.

1) Censuses

It is well known that these are very costly processes and that they require considerable financial, material and human resources, which most governments of the Third World are unlikely to be able to afford, in the absence of outside intervention.

In the case of Rwanda, no exhaustive census corresponding to the modern definition had ever been carried out before that of 15th August 1978. Thanks to the help of UNFAP, a census was carried out on that date under excellent conditions. It included a sufficient preparation period, and very competent personnel, both nationals and expatriates. In all, 36 questions were asked on residence, place of birth, ethnic group, marital status, religion, education, employment or profession, natality/fertility, general infant mortality, dwelling, etc. The processing and analysis of this data is in progress and should be completed at the latest in 1981. At the moment, only data on the total population by sex and administrative units within the country are available (see above).

The data published up to 1977 come from compilations made by the Ministry of the Interior and Planning based on civil registration data; it is for this reason that the compilations were called "administrative census".

2) Civil Registration

It was under the Belgian that civil registration was instituted at first tentatively before 1949, then in earnest after that date.

Before independence and afterwards, the system functioned well, thanks to the vigilance of the chiefs and heads of communes and the effectiveness of the clerks placed at their disposal. Declarations on births, marriages, deaths and migration were obligatory and it was necessary to observe the time limits imposed by law. The annual compilations drawn from these registers produced estimates generally close to reality. The reform of 1971 much improved the system because each head of household as well as all persons aged 18 or over had to have a record card at the Commune (basic administrative unit) on which, apart from the usual information, was noted all the socio-economic details (profession, religion, education, etc.). It is considered that in general, civil registration in Rwanda is among the most effective on the continent [1] for practically all births are recorded and more than 70% of deaths.

Another even more important reform is in course of preparation and should permanently improve the quality of civil registration in Rwanda based on authentic national legislation and judicious administrative organisation.

3) Demographic surveys

The demographic sample survey is the most important source of demographic data in Rwanda. It has already been pointed out that in 1952 the first survey took place following the generalisation of the practice among the British colonies in Africa. This was a case of a systematic survey providing, within reasonable confidence limits, demographic data relating to the total population, birth rate, death rate, population by sex, ethnic group and territory, etc.

In general, the survey which lasted all through June and July 1952, and was directed by Mr. A. d'Arian [7], took place under favourable conditions and produced remarkable results, to the extent that the procedure was recommended for use every five years with a view to gathering quality data.

The demographic survey of 1970 was carried out by the Direction Générale de la Statistique in collaboration with INSEE and ORSTOM (of France). This was also a sample survey, but this time the process and its methodology were enriched with recent experience in the field, and in french-speaking Africa in particular. In fact, each country had carried out a demographic sample survey at the beginning of the 1960's. In this way, the work carried out in Rwanda provided it with complete statistics, reliable and comparable with others in Africa.

The data gathered contain unpublished information on the size of the population, the components of its growth, the structure by age and sex, socio-economic characteristics (dwelling, religion, ethnic groups, profession, education, residence, etc.). The results of this survey served as a basis for the preparation of the Second Development Plan as well as the General Census of Population and Housing initially planned for 1976 with the collaboration of the United Nations Fund for Activities concerning Population (UNFAP).

IV. CONCLUSIONS

1) Future Projects

Projects have been planned to improve the knowledge of demographic factors; there will be a post-censal survey intended to verify the results of the census and a fertility survey which will enable the study of the impact of high fertility on the growth of the population. In addition, budget-consumption and agricultural surveys will soon be undertaken, with the purpose of assessing the standard of living of the populations. Finally, a project to reform the civil registration system is in preparation: this is aimed at adapting the present system in order to be able to capture all the data on population movements.

2) Estimate of Population on 1 January 1975

The figure published by the Ministry of the Interior and the Direction Générale de la Statistique is 4.2 million. This derives directly from civil registration operations. To check the accuracy of this figure, it is sufficient to interpolate from the figure given for 15 August 1978 (4.82 million) based on an annual growth rate of 3.5%. A figure of 4.2 million is indeed obtained for the population of Rwanda on 1 January 1975. Moreover, this constitutes an indication of the effectiveness of the civil registration system in Rwanda the improvement of which will represent undeniable progress in the provision of reliable sources of data.

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