

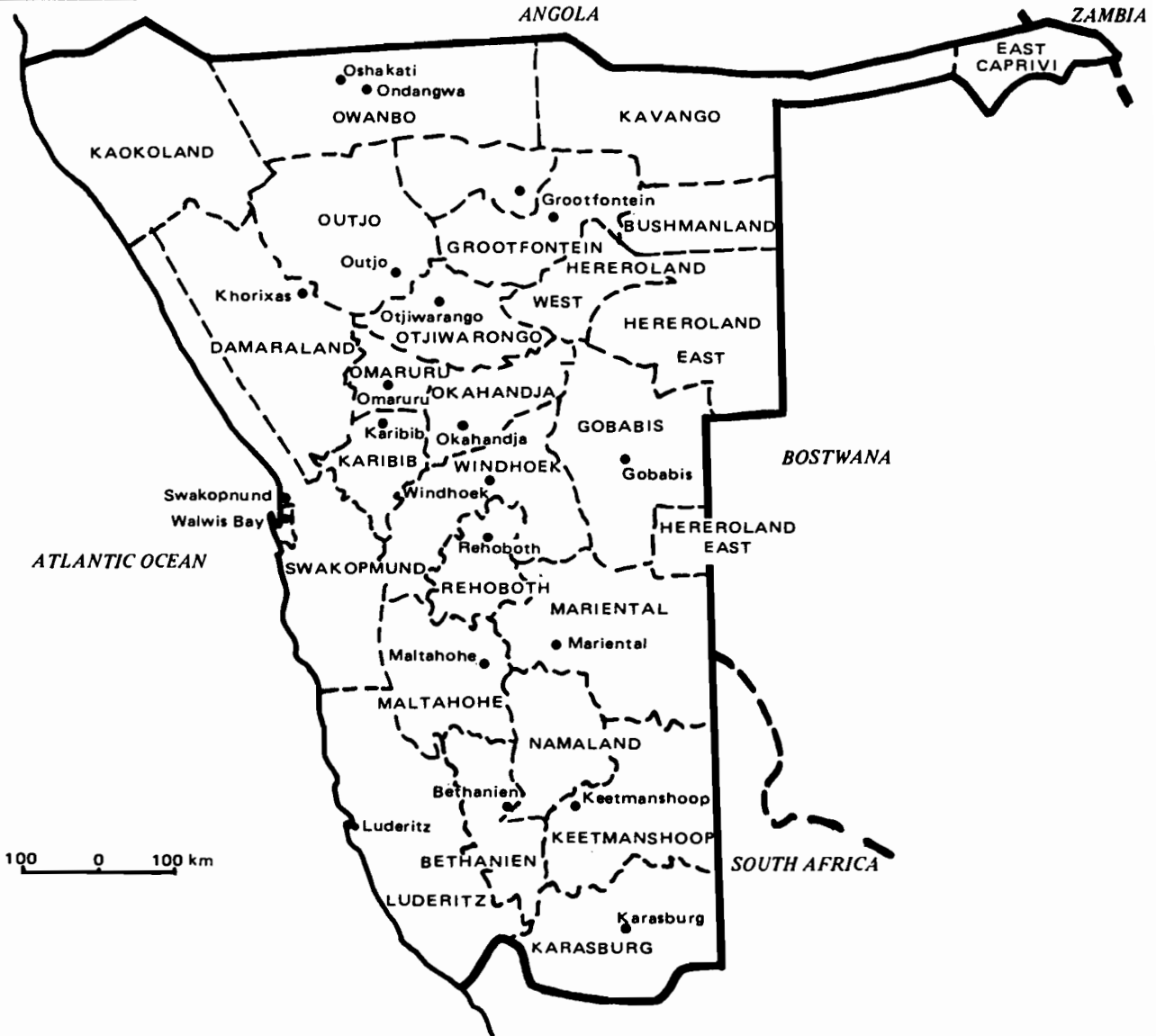
# NAMIBIA

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JULY 1979



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## N A M I B I A

I. DATA SOURCES1) Total population

During 1921 (3 May 1921) the first official population census of South West Africa was conducted. Prior to that date partial censuses had been conducted, e.g. a census of the white population taken in 1903, when a total of 4 640 individuals were counted, but the accuracy of these earlier counts can only be a matter of conjecture.

It is generally accepted that the Bushmen were the first inhabitants of the territory, followed by the Hottentots and the Damaras. Before 1880, very few whites had visited the territory, these being mainly missionaries, hunters and merchants. Shortly after that year a German Merchant named Luderitz purchased a strip of land along the coast and placed this acquisition under the protection of the German Empire. Thereafter German control was extended gradually but never reached beyond the southern and central portions of the territory. Since the First World War the administration of the territory has been in the hands of the South African Government. The discovery of diamonds in 1908 led to the immigration of an unknown but considerable number of whites and also provided employment opportunities for the already-resident population.

To date six censuses of South West Africa as a whole have been conducted by the South African Government. Particulars of these censuses are as follows:

Table 65

NAMIBIA - POPULATION EVOLUTION ACCORDING TO CENSUSES

Date	Population	Annual inter-censal growth percentage
3 May 1921*	228 916	2.30%
5 May 1936*	320 457	1.23%
7 May 1946*	362 464	3.68%
8 May 1951*	434 081	} 2.01%
6 September 1960	526 004	
6 May 1970	761 562	3.89%

See paragraph II.1

The accuracy of these figures will be discussed later. Apart from these censuses no other surveys which give an indication of population size have been conducted.

## 2) Births and deaths

Despite serious efforts on the part of the registering authorities to improve registration coverage, a large proportion of births and deaths are never registered. The result is that current birth and death statistics are not available. Furthermore, no sample surveys which could give an indication of fertility and mortality have been conducted in the territory.

## 3) Migration

Over the years migration between the Republic of South Africa and South West Africa has not been subject to any form of frontier control. Hence no South West African migration statistics are available.

# II. CRITICAL STUDY OF CENSUS RESULTS

## 1) General

At the outset it should be mentioned that at the 1951 and earlier censuses, the population of the northern sector of South West Africa (i.e. the districts of Eastern Caprivi, Kaokoveld, Kavango and Ovambo) was, for various practical reasons such as scattered population, difficult terrain, lack of transport, etc., not enumerated, but was estimated as accurately as possible by the Native Commissioners. At the 1960 census the population of this sector accounted for 49 per cent of the total population. As will be noticed from the figures furnished in paragraph I.1 the average annual population growth rate between the 1936 and 1946 counts (1.23 per cent) and the 1946 and 1951 counts (3.68 per cent) appear to be incorrect. This can be explained by the fact that there very obviously was a serious underestimation of the population of the northern sector at the 1946 count. When the average annual growth percentage is calculated between 1936 and 1951 (i.e. 1946 is ignored), a figure of 2.01 per cent is obtained which accords with the 1921-1936 and 1951-1960 percentages of 2.30 and 1.07 respectively.

The 1970 census, on the other hand, appears to be the most complete of the six censuses as the growth rate between 1960 and 1970 was 3.89 per cent while fertility, mortality and net migration gain were at normal levels.

## 2) Reference population

The six censuses referred to above all related to the de facto population of South West Africa, foreign visitors included. At the 1970 census, residents who were abroad on census day were enumerated on their return, if such return was within three months of census day. At all previous censuses such persons were not enumerated at all.

## 3) Geographical coverage

### a) General

As has been mentioned, the 1960 and 1970 censuses covered the whole of South West Africa, whereas at earlier censuses the population of the northern sector was estimated. Walvis Bay, which is territory of the Republic of South Africa, was included in the population figures for South West Africa for administrative purposes at all past censuses. During 1977, however, Walvis Bay was again placed under direct South African administration.

### b) Definitions of "urban" and "rural"

For purposes of the 1970 census, "urban" was described as follows:

- all cities and towns with some form of local government,
- all areas of an urban nature, i.e. areas with urban amenities (water electricity, etc.) but without local government. This group mainly comprises mine townships such as Oranjemund and Rosh Pinah in the Luderitz district.

All other areas were regarded as rural. Approximately the same urban/rural definitions were used at earlier censuses.

### c) Nomads

The most nomadic people in South West Africa are the Bushmen. At the 1970 census, this population group only accounted for 3 per cent of the total population and no particular enumeration problems were noted.

## 4) Factors which may have influenced the quality of the data

As has already been mentioned, the fact that the figures for the northern sector were estimated at earlier censuses would have affected the quality of the results. Apart from the normal factors which influence the quality of census data in any country (e.g. under-enumeration of infants, a measure of distrust regarding the objects of the census and the confidentiality of information furnished) no other specific detrimental factors were encountered at South West African cen-

suses. No post-censal surveys which could substantiate census results have been undertaken and partly as a result of the under-registration of vital events very little could be done in the way of tests on coherence between various sources.

### III. POST-1970 CENSAL DATA

It is estimated that on 1 January 1975 the population of South West Africa numbered 863 000. This number is comprised of 12 different population groups, each with its own distinct customs, mode of life and language. These groups are listed below and the percentages in brackets reflect the proportion of each group to the total population of 863 000:

Table 66

NAMIBIA - BREAKDOWN OF POPULATION BY ETHNIC GROUP  
AT 1ST JANUARY 1975

ETHNIC GROUP	PERCENTAGE
Ovambos	46.6
Whites	11.3
Damaras	8.8
Hereros	6.6
Kavangos	6.5
Namas	4.4
Coloureds	3.8
East-Caprivians	3.4
Bushmen	3.0
Rehoboth Basters	2.2
Kaokovelders	0.9
Tswanas	0.5
TOTAL	100.0

A further 2.0% of the population belongs to population groups other than those listed above.

In view of the impending independence of South West Africa, the Department of Statistics in Pretoria will shortly no longer be responsible for the statistics of that country. It is therefore idle to discuss improvements in the field of demographic data collection.

**Groupe de Démographie Africaine**

IDP\_INED\_INSEE\_MINCOOP\_ORSTOM

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

Volume I

Paris  
1986



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### **PUBLICATIONS DU GROUPE**

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  - n° 0 2<sup>ème</sup> trimestre 1971 à n° 28 septembre-décembre 1978 (poursuite de cette publication à Yaoundé - IFORD)
  - numéros spéciaux 1 à 13.
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  - 2<sup>ème</sup> partie : Ajustement de données imparfaites
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