

Rohingya still missing in latest Myanmar census

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By dpa

Myanmar today released detailed results of its first nationwide census in three decades, but the country's Rohingya minority were still unaccounted for, even as a regional conference took place to discuss their plight.

Over 1 million people in the country's western Rakhine state, where most of the Rohingya live, did not take part because of what the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) described as "ongoing communal tensions and the demand of many to self-identify as Rohingya."

The census, early results of which were released last year, put Myanmar's total population at 51.5 million, including an estimated 1.2 million people who did not formally register in Rakhine, Kachin, and Kayin states.

Myanmar did not allow Rakhine's Muslim minority - which it regards as illegal immigrants from Bangladesh - to register as Rohingya for the census, but only as Bengali, with the result that most did not take part.

Myanmar, a predominantly Buddhist country, only recently emerged from a half century of military rule.

It held its last count in 1983 and experts say the information gathered from 30 March to 10 April last year is crucial for national development and planning.

The main results do not yet include data on controversial issues such as ethnicity, religion, occupation, and maternal mortality, which are scheduled for release next year.

The fertility rate in Myanmar has halved from 4.7 in 1993 to 2.3 in 2014, the census said.

Infant and under-5 mortality rates are high nationwide (62 and 72 per 100,000 live births, respectively), although nearly twice as high in some states as in others.

The census results show only a third of households across the country have electric lights but half have televisions.

A third of the population have mobile phones according to the survey, although mobile phone operators claim about 30 million SIM cards are in use by more than half the population.

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