

Lessons learned from supporting sustainable civil registration systems

Cases of Swaziland and Zambia



Lessons learned from local initiatives supporting sustainable CRVS systems in Africa

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Background

- Currently the Civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) systems in Swaziland and Zambia fall short of the minimum standard set by the United Nations
- CRVS systems in both countries face a combination of supply and demand challenges

Current status of Civil Registration

A. Swaziland

- ▶ Registration coverage of births and deaths is debatable some argue it is slightly over 50%
- ▶ **Birth certificates**
- ▶ Birth certificates are issued upon request

Marriage Certificates

- ▶ Persons who were married in Swaziland and whose marriages were registered in Swaziland may apply for marriage certificates.

Death Certificates

- i. *Death occurring in a medical facility:* The medical staff record the death in their registers and use that to have a death certificate.
- ii. *Death occurring outside a medical facility:* Cause of death in most cases is unreported and may be a subject of much speculation. Stillborn children in most cases are unreported.

Divorce

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- The flow of information on divorces from the courts to the Registrar General is not regular and such information does not even reach the Central Statistical Office (CSO) for possible processing

B. Zambia

Birth Registration

- ▶ Zambia Demographic and Health Survey 2013/14, coverage of birth registration at national levels is about 14 percent.
- ▶ Only 9 percent of rural children are registered compared to 28 percent in urban areas.

Challenges to the CRVS registration system

Supply side:

- Zambia has a sparse population having only one registration center per district is inadequate
- Certification of registered births is centralized at the Department of National Registration Headquarters
- Inadequate staffing and low skills levels of staff

Demand side challenges:

- The majority of the public do not understand the importance and benefits of birth registration
- Long Distance to Registration Centres is a constraint
- Acceptance of User alternative Documents in lieu to birth certificates is an impediment to registration of vital events



Challenges relating to death registration

- ▶ Results from a 2010 pilot Sample Vital Registration with Verbal Autopsy from four provinces show that 49 percent of deaths occurred in homes and most then are not registered

Marriage

- ▶ Only statutory marriages are regulated under the Marriages Act and accordingly registered with the office of the Registrar General

- ▶ Customary Marriages are not regulated under the Marriages Act and not registered with the Office of the Registrar General

In-depths Assessment of the Civil Registration systems

A. Swaziland

- Four thematic teams were formed to carry out the assessment.
 - (i) Policy and Legal Framework
 - (ii) Births, Deaths marriages registration;
 - (iii) Causes of death,
 - (iv) Management and organization of the CRVS system

- The assessment methodology included desk review involving literature review on each thematic area and field visits to the four regions of the country



B. Zambia

- Seven assessment thematic Task Teams were formed:
 - (i) Policy and Legal Framework for Registration of Vital events
 - (ii) Deaths Registration and Causes of Deaths
 - (iii) Advocacy and Communication
 - (iv) Information and Communication Technology
 - (v) Management and Organization of CRVS,
 - (vi) Refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs)
 - (vii) Vital Statistics from Civil Registration


Assessment methodology was similar to that of Swaziland


Findings of the assessments

A. Swaziland

Policy and Legal Framework for Registration of events

- ▶ It was observed that the legal framework for civil registration was governed by a specific set of legislation, including statutes, and subsidiary regulations.
 - (i) The current body of laws on CRVS do not fully reflect regional and international standards;
 - (ii) There is no explicit guidance on the process of registration;

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- (iii) BMD Act does not give guidance on the collection, and transmission of vital events information;
 - (iv) The BMD Act does not specify qualifications and number of staff to be involved in registration;
 - (v) The extent and definitions of vital events are not comprehensive and harmonized;
 - (vi) The Act provides for penalties for non-compliance, however penalties are outdated;



(vii) The law provides for the number of days from registration of different events but does not make a distinction between **delayed** and **late registration** and no cut off time for late registration.

(viii) The law provides for certification and cause of death but only by a medical doctor; for death occurring at home in the rural areas, a letter from headman/chief is issued.

(ix) Fees for vital event registration are stipulated in the legislation.

Management and organization

- ▶ The findings highlighted the limitations in the Office of the Registrar General to support a viable civil registration and vital statistics system
- ▶ The registration is centralized; there is no coordination committee to coordinate CRVS processes
- ▶ Divorce information does not reach the Registrar's Office

Advocacy and Communication

- ▶ Advocacy for civil registration to stakeholders is at best non existence
- ▶ Negative perceptions on registration and registration products by the public is still inheent

Vital Statistics

Vital statistics are, currently, not processed, therefore not analyzed.
Constraints include:

- (i) Lack of coordination among the institutions that collect the data and the Central Statistical Office (CSO) that is supposed to , process and analyze vital statistics

- (iii) The vital events are not recorded unless the individual goes to the institution responsible for registering the events;

Deficiencies in Death Certification

- (i) Deaths at home and in the community are usually assigned a cause of death from the relatives;
- (ii) In rural areas deaths occurring outside a health facility, in most cases, go unreported;
- (iii) Deaths of newborns are often unreported;
- (iv) Certification of deaths confined to medical doctors;
- (v) Verbal autopsy procedures are not yet adopted;

Information and communication technology (ICT)

- Data collected through registers in CRVS institutions are not linked;
- Data retrieval and storage of records are a challenge;
- Existence of incompatible database dictionaries within and among the CRVS institutions;
- There are no specialized staff for ICT in the organizational structure of the CRVS Institution/agencies.

Zambia

Legal and Policy Framework

- ▶ Statutes reviewed included the National Registration Act, Births and Deaths Registration, and Marriage Act.
 - (i) The current body of laws pertaining to CRVS was not reflective of regional and international standards;
 - (ii) Concepts and definitions of vital events and CRVS were not harmonized;
 - (iii) There are alternatives to use of civil registration documents implying birth registration was not cardinal to easy enrolment in schools and acquisition of national identity documents,




(iv) Statutes stipulate offences and penalties for noncompliance but are silent with regard to enforcement;

(v) The law is silent on the use of ICT in civil registration;


(vi) The Births and Deaths Registration Act has provisions for the collection of vital statistics but has no provision for transmission and publication of the information;

(vii) The contents of forms for collecting data on vital events do not meet local needs or international standards;



(ix) The law provides for certification for registration of death and cause of death for death occurring in a health institution.

Deaths occurring outside the medical institution have provision for notification of death but do not demand details on cause of death.



(x) There was no guiding tool on how Verbal Autopsy should be administered;

(xi) There was no specific statute establishing the Department of National Registration, Passport and citizenship (DNRPC);

(xii) Objectives and rationale set out in the preambles or explanatory notes pertaining to civil registration and vital Statistics were not adequate as per legal standards.

Management and Organization

- ▶ The Zambian civil registration structure permits a decentralized registration but certification is centralised;
- ▶ the Steering Committee tasked with coordinating civil registration and vital statistics activities is not functional;
- ▶ DNRPC has no strategic plan there is an approved structure for the establishment at DNRPC but has not been operationalized therefore a number of staff at registration centres was inadequate;

Advocacy

- ▶ No advocacy activities aimed at policy makers and the community leaders who would take centre stage in promoting civil registration and vital statistics ;
- ▶ There is lack of knowledge about the significance of CRVS

Vital Statistics

- Statistics collected by the DNRPC but not compiled, processed, analyzed and disseminated;
- No linkages among institutions that collect information on vital events and the CSO mandated to vital statistics;
- Forms recording vital events need reviewing
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Information and Communication Technology

- Most CRVS processes are not computerized and Information generated from registers in CRVS agencies are not linked;
- There are no ICT specialists in the organization structure of CRVS agencies;



Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons

- Only birth registration takes place;
- for deaths there are no medical doctors, in the camps, to certify deaths;
- Registration of marriages in the refugee camps is done by mobile local courts;
- There are no records of persons who have officially been identified and registered as IDPs;
- need for refugees to have easy access to registration centres and information on the merits of registering vital events.

Recommended Priorities for both countries

- Employ and assign registration staff for mobile registration of vital events in remote parts of the countries;
- Decentralize issuance of birth certificates and other documents to regions (Swaziland) and Provinces (Zambia);
- Install electronic systems of capturing and transferring data to expedite the timely certification and analysis of vital statistics;
- Effective advocacy would stimulate demand for registering. Need to allow other health staff to certify deaths in order to improve coverage of registration of deaths and causes.
- Establish mechanisms of close collaboration with other relevant ministries/departments.
- Need to train staff in the management of the revamped CRVS system.



Recommended Priorities for both countries cont'd

- Review CRVS legislation and policies and align to international standards
- Advocacy and communication to improve CRVS programmes
- Generate reliable vital statistics
- Improve the collection and analysis of deaths and cause of death statistics.
- Using ICD codes for the classification of causes of death
- Establishment of vital events registration centres for refugees



▶ THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION