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IUSSP side meeting: Lessons learned from local initiatives supporting CRVS in Africa*

## Vital registration systems in sub-Saharan Africa: History of a misconception and hope for the future

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# Aims of the presentation

- Long history of Pierre Cantrelle's involvement in vital registration in Africa
- Experiences since 1954 in Senegal, Guinea, West-Africa, Madagascar
- Administrative issues / setting up VRS in various places
- Scientific issues: analysis of VRS for demographic research (fertility, mortality, nuptiality)
- What are the lessons learned? What worked? what did not? What is the use of VRS data for demographic research?

# Vital registration in France and Europe

some key dates:

- Middle-Ages : parish registers
- 1542: Council of Trent (Catholic Church)
- 1539: *Edit de Villers-Cotterêts*
- 1667: *Code Louis*
- 1792: Vital registration transferred to counties (*Communes*)
- Registration become generalized since the 16th century in Europe
- Registration close to complete since the mid-18th century in most Western European countries = about 2 centuries
- United States : 1776 à 1931 = 1½ century

# Vital registration in pre-colonial Africa (francophone & other)

- 18<sup>th</sup> century: parish registers in selected trading posts and missions: e.g. Gorée. Saint-Louis in Senegal
- 1776: France: Royal decree concerning « archiving the public documents in the colonies »
- 19<sup>th</sup> century : parish registers. along the Atlantic coast: Senegambia, Dakar, Joal, Fadiouth, Bathurst, Casamance...
- 1878: Madagascar: decree of Queen Ranavalona II
- Initiatives in Kaduna sultanate, Haoussa country (Nigeria) since the 19<sup>th</sup> century

# Vital registration in colonial Africa: francophone countries

- 1916: (Senegal) decree of 29 September (Blaise Diagne): compulsory registration of births and deaths in the 4 main urban centers under French rule : Dakar, Gorée, Rufisque, Saint-Louis
- 1933: compulsory registration extended to other urban centers (*chefs-lieux d'arrondissement*)
- 1950: compulsory registration extended to people living within a 10 km radius around a Vital Registration Center
- However, limited implementation, depending on the zeal of local colonial administrators
- Colonial statistics : in Senegal, publications since 1945 of births and deaths statistics in Dakar

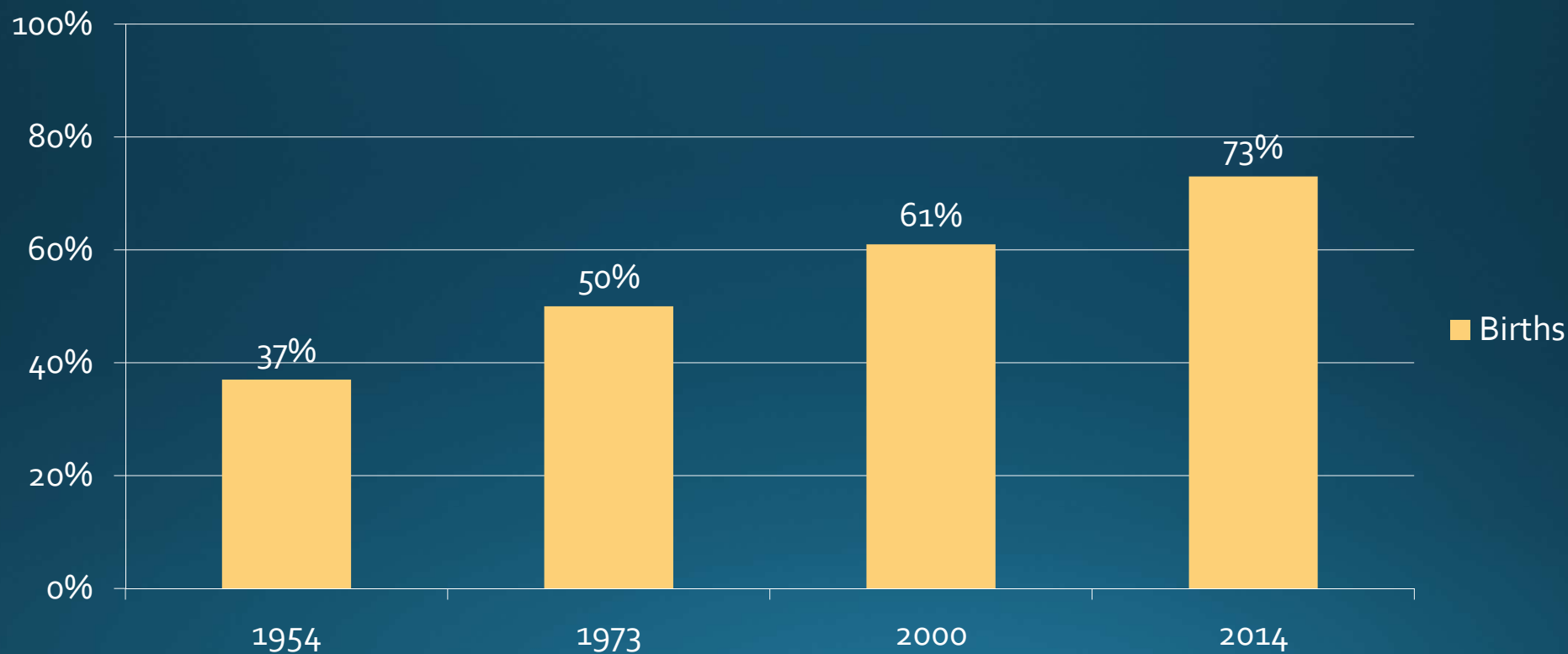
# Vital registration in post-colonial Africa the case of Senegal

- 1961: Decree aiming at creating a unique vital registration for all, with its rules
- Improving the VRS becomes one of the objectives of the first 4-year plan of development (1961-1964)
- First essay for validation: Sine-Saloum demographic survey (1963-1965): direct comparison in of VRS and DSS in remote rural areas
- First results were disappointing: low coverage of birth and death registration
- Attempt to use village registers: however. difficult to maintain the momentum
- Many problems: missing registers / agents were absent / corruption / lack of supervision, etc.

# Senegal after 1970

- 1972 : Family Code / New organization for Vital Registration:
  - However. little effect in practice / same management problems
- 1985 : UNFPA & *Coopération française*:
  - « *Projet d'appui à la Décentralisation et au Développement Urbain au Sénégal* »
  - This project aimed at improving vital registration and the use of vital statistics
- 1994 : First attempt to computerize Vital Registration in Dakar
  - 2 competing projects (Canadian & French...)

# Completeness of birth registration. Senegal 1954-2014





# Lessons learned from the VRS experience in Senegal

- Definite improvements, but slow for births, deaths, marriages, etc.
- Role of the three main partners of the VRS:
- Justice: laws were appropriate, but sanctions were insufficient / lack of incentives
- Local administration : severe problems of management and organization: improper functioning, poor recording and archiving, low economic incentives for the agents
- Demographic statistics : some analysis and publications (doctoral theses) / depends on local data (Dakar, Saint-Louis)

# Examples of VRS in Africa

- Great diversity of situations in sub-Saharan Africa
- Some complete series in the UN Demographic Yearbook:
  - Islands : Saint-Helen, Mauritius, Reunion, Seychelles
- Selected long term series in urban areas:
  - Dakar, Brazzaville, Antananarivo
- Recent series :
  - South Africa, since 1994 (Black/African population)
  - Close to completeness since 2005
  - Deaths data now in open access since 2005

# Data on completeness < 1960

Country	Year	% births	% deaths
Benin	1954	42	
Central- African Republic	1953	20	
Congo. Kinshasa (RDC)	1956	83	
Madagascar	1955	78	
Mali	1954	15	
Niger	1954	8	
Senegal	1954	37	
Togo	1955	64	

# Data on completeness, 1960's

Country	Year	% births	% deaths
Cameroun, Adamaoua	1965	20	10
Cameroun, Yaounde	1973	94	36
Congo, Brazzaville	1969	76	29
Gabon	1970	78	19
Kenya	1970	68	34
Madagascar	1970	77	51
Rwanda	1973	82	65
Senegal	1973	50	23

# Data on completeness, MICS (% births)

Country (around 2000)	Total	Urban	Rural
Angola	29.4	33.8	19.4
Botswana	59.2	65.1	52.4
Burundi	74.9	71.2	75.2
Cameroon	79.1	94.0	72.9
Central African Republic	72.5	87.5	63.0
Comoro Islands	83.4	86.9	82.5
Congo (RDC)	34.0	29.5	36.1
Cote d'Ivoire	71.8	87.8	59.9
Gambia	32.2	36.9	29.3
Kenya	62.8	81.6	56.1
Lesotho	50.6	40.7	53.0

# Data on completeness, MICS (% births)

Country (around 2000)	Total	Urban	Rural
Madagascar	74.7	84.4	72.3
Niger	45.4	84.6	39.6
Rwanda	66.3	60.6	66.6
Sao Tome & Principe	69.7	72.7	67.1
Senegal	60.9	79.6	46.4
Sierra Leone	46.8	66.0	40.3
Somalia	1.8	3.0	1.1
Sudan. North	63.9	82.2	46.2
Swaziland	53.5	69.8	49.8
Chad	24.9	52.6	17.5
Togo	82.1	93.1	78.0
Zambia	9.6	15.5	6.4

# The case of Madagascar

Poor country, landlocked

Long tradition of vital registration (1880)

High completeness of birth registration for a long time, even in the provinces

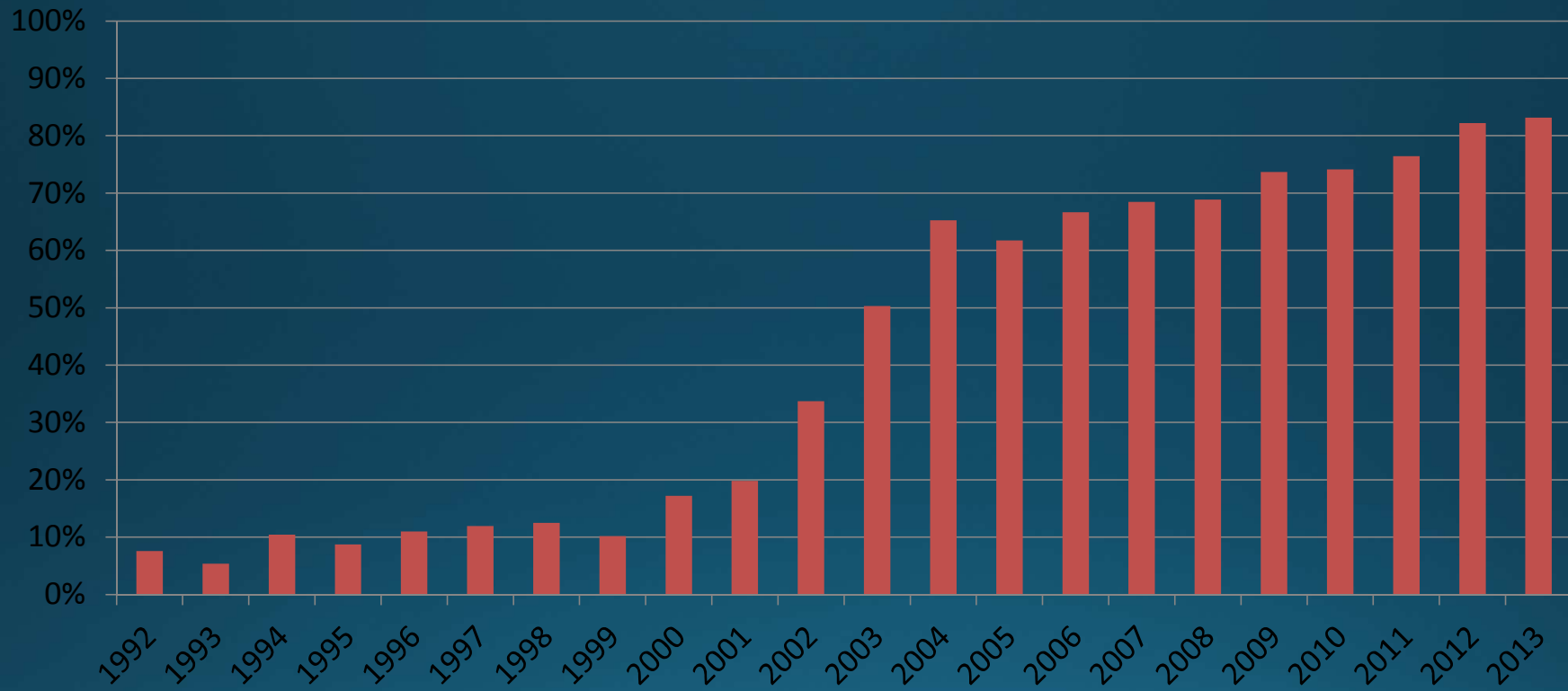
High completeness of death registration in cities for a long time

Over the years, the VRS system maintained its quality in urban and improved in rural areas

Numerous projects pour pursue the work (UNICEF, Coopération française, etc.)

Province	Completeness (2005)
Antanarivo	89.1
Antsiranana	84.6
Fianarantsoa	76.1
Toamasina	69.4
Toliara	61.5
Mahajanga	60.4

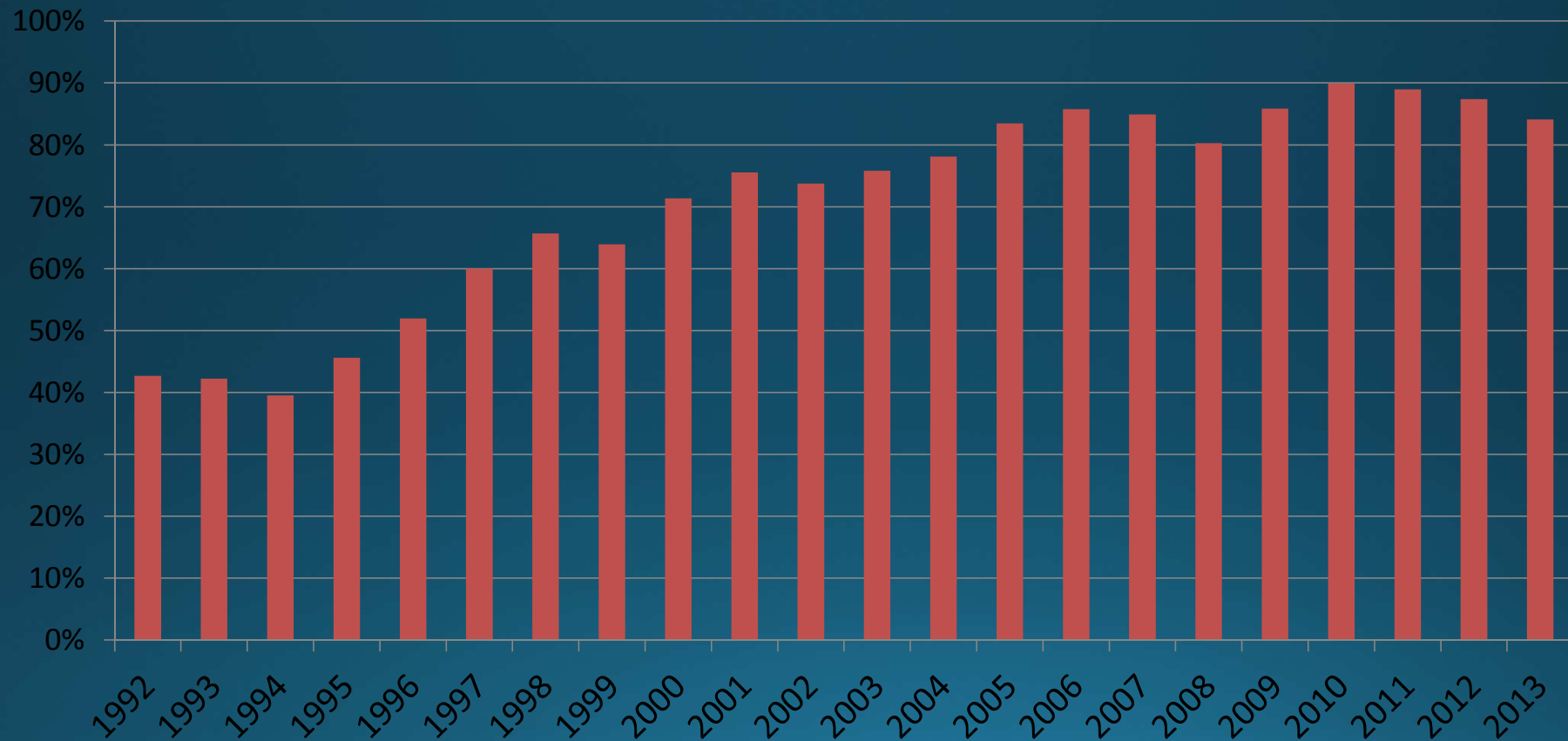
### Percent of births registered by age 1year, Agincourt HDSS



Source: Mark Collison et al, 2015



## % deaths registered, Agincourt, South Africa



Source: Mark Collinson et al. 2015

# Institutions aiming at improving Vital Registration:

- Many actors / many projects since 1960 / numerous meeting and conferences
- United Nations and its agencies / UNICEF / WHO / UNFPA
- IIVRS: 1979-1998 (?) International Institute for Vital Registration and Statistics / NIH
- CDC : Global Program for Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS)
- CEA: 1963. 1964.1986. etc.
- OCAM: 1974. 1976.1979. etc.
- UDEAC: 1979.
- CERPOD:
- IUSSP: ...
- UAPS: ... 2007. 2011. 2015
- Bilateral Aid Agencies (France, USA, European countries, etc.)

# New initiatives :

- Intervention of local authorities, and civil society (NGO's)
- Example: International Association of Francophones Mayors (AIMF)
- Meetings in 2004. 2005. 2006. etc..
- Local and focused interventions
- Training for city personnel
- Modernization of services
- Computerization of VRS

# Rights of Children

- International Convention on Children's Rights (ICCR)
- Adopted by the United Nations General Assembly, in November 1989
- Article 7 :
  - 1. The child shall be registered immediately after birth and shall have the right from birth to a name, the right to acquire a nationality and, as far as possible, the right to know and be cared for by his or her parents.
  - 2. States Parties shall ensure the implementation of these rights in accordance with their national law and their obligations under the relevant international instruments in this field, in particular where the child would otherwise be stateless.

# Using Vital Registration Statistics for demographic research

- Numerous examples, some very ancient: since the 18<sup>th</sup> century in Europe
- Fertility, Mortality, Nuptiality, Sex ratios, etc.
- Numerous analyses of parish registers in Africa since 1960: demographers at ORSTOM working in francophone Africa (Senegal, Mali, Togo, Burkina (Upper-Volta), Cote d'Ivoire, Cameroon, Gabon, Congo, Rwanda, Burundi, etc.)
- Anglophone Africa and other : Namibia, Kenya, Erytrea, etc.
- Recent studies in Madagascar (1986 famine)

# Conclusions

- Much progress since 1960 (independence)
- Great diversity of situations in Africa
- Much remains to be done to ensure high completeness of registration of births, deaths, marriages, etc., especially in rural areas
- Increasing needs of registration for legal and civil purposes (health booklets, school registration, insurance, inheritance of properties, etc.)
- Increasing needs of long term and timely time series. Analysis of VRS data should develop.
- Computarization should greatly facilitate registration, archiving and analysis of vital registration events.
- The more developed the analysis of VRS, the greater will be the need for accurate data