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SOCIAL AND DEMOGRAPHIC STATISTICS: CIVIL REGISTRATION  
AND VITAL STATISTICS

Progress report on civil registration and vital statistics

Report of the Secretary-General

SUMMARY

The present document responds to a request made by the Statistical Commission at its twentieth session for a progress report on civil registration and vital statistics which it would consider at its next session. The present report covers work at the national and international levels in this field under the World Programme for the Improvement of Vital Statistics, approved by the Economic and Social Council in its resolution 1307 (XLIV) of 1968. The report also outlines actions proposed for the further improvement of civil registration systems, particularly in the developing countries. Points for discussion by the Commission are given in paragraph 77.

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## INTRODUCTION

1. At its fifteenth session, in 1968, the Statistical Commission, to further strengthen the work of improving vital statistics, adopted resolution 10 (XV), requesting the Economic and Social Council to approve a World Programme for the Improvement of Vital Statistics. <sup>1/</sup> The Programme was approved by the Council in its resolution 1307 (XLIV), of 31 May 1968.
2. The goal of the Programme was the establishment in every country of the world during the Second United Nations Development Decade, of a system of vital records and statistics, or the improvement of the existing system to a level at which it would yield reliable statistics of birth, death, marriage and divorce adequate to meet the needs of economic and social development planning. The development of reliable civil registers of vital events was felt to be urgent not only for statistical use of the records but, perhaps more importantly because such registers serve as legal instruments for proof of nationality, proof of marriage, proof of divorce etc., without which modern States find it difficult to function in the field of human rights.
3. Although in 1968 the next development decade was set, in principle, as the period within which the Programme should attain its purposes, it was recognized by the Commission that accomplishment of the objectives might take longer in developing countries.
4. The World Programme for the Improvement of Vital Statistics consisted of seven major components, namely, preparation of standards or recommendations; provision of detailed guide-lines or a handbook for implementing the standards; organization of seminars and working groups for the exchange of experience among higher-level national officials; promotion of training for middle- and lower-level national personnel; provision of fellowships for training nationals abroad; provision of technical experts, on request; and wide dissemination of the improved statistics, with indications of how they might be used. The present report focuses on these seven components of the World Programme.

### I. PREPARATION OF STANDARDS OR RECOMMENDATIONS

5. Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System were adopted by the Commission at its sixteenth session, in 1970, <sup>2/</sup> and were published

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<sup>1/</sup> Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, Forty-fourth Session, Supplement No. 10 (E/4471), para. 134 and chap. XV.

<sup>2/</sup> Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, Fiftieth Session, Supplement No. 2 (E/4938), paras. 100-106.

in 1973. <sup>3/</sup> They attempted to reflect the needs and resources of countries at different stages of development and to outline an integrated system of vital statistics conceptually centred on - though not restricted to - a comprehensive system of civil registration.

6. The earlier Principles for a Vital Statistics System, <sup>4/</sup> (approved by the Commission in 1953), <sup>5/</sup> were conceived as particularly applicable as guides to countries in which vital statistics were either already produced by a registration system of the conventional type or which, in developing vital statistics, contemplated the adoption of the traditional system. This nominal restriction of the principles was in recognition of the fact that the conventional method of obtaining vital statistics from registration records is of limited applicability to statistically developing areas, and that, for those areas, alternative methods might have to be considered for use during a transitional or interim period.

7. In the period between the approval of the first set of principles by the Economic and Social Council in 1953 (resolution 469 D (XV)) and the publication of the revised set in 1973, a large number of colonial dependencies emerged as independent nations. This created a situation calling for the adoption of ad hoc measures if those countries were to acquire with the requisite speed statistical data adequately describing the levels and trends of mortality and fertility and the relationships among various demographic, economic and social conditions.

8. The revised Recommendations therefore outlined a system which included not only the technique of the conventional civil registration system but also described the use of sample registration systems and surveys, along with analytical methods for estimating vital rates, as a supplement or complement to a comprehensive system of civil registration. Although international organizations and individual countries, whether in the developed or developing areas of the world, fully recognize the need for a system of civil registration for both administrative and statistical purposes in the long run, they also recognize that there is considerable variation among developing countries in the pace at which they can develop their civil registration systems so that those systems can provide comprehensive, reliable and timely vital statistics. In countries where the civil registration system is insufficiently developed to provide the needed vital statistics for all - or a well-defined portion - of the country, sample registration systems and surveys, along with analytical methods, must be used to estimate needed vital rates. Moreover, sample registration, sample surveys, dual-collection procedures and analytical approaches may be used to assess the success of efforts aimed at the improvement of the civil registration system.

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<sup>3/</sup> Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.73.XVII.9). Henceforth this title will be abbreviated in the text as Recommendations.

<sup>4/</sup> United Nations publication, Sales No. 53.XVII.8.

<sup>5/</sup> Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, Fifteenth Session, Supplement No. 5 (E/2365), paras. 79-88.

9. Sample surveys also serve a complementary function to civil registration for countries at all levels of statistical development. They permit countries to investigate social, economic and other variables and their relationship to fertility, mortality and nuptiality in far greater detail than is possible in a civil registration system. These supplementary and complementary methods are described in chapters VI and VII of the Recommendations, especially with regard to the role of surveys in meeting some of these needs in developed countries.

10. Recommendations consists of seven chapters: I. Uses of vital records and vital statistics; II. The characteristics of a vital statistics system; III. Topics to be investigated in a vital statistics system, their definition and specification; IV. The tabulation programme; V. The civil registration method as a source of data on vital statistics; VI. The role of sampling in collecting and processing of data for vital statistics; and VII. Evaluating a vital statistics system.

11. At its sixteenth session, the Commission, in approving the principles and recommendations, "emphasized the importance of collecting accurate, comprehensive vital statistics and noted the need to improve such statistics in both developed and developing countries. Accordingly, it welcomed the presentation of the "Principles and recommendations for a vital statistics system" as an important step in the effort to develop adequate vital statistics throughout the world". 6/

## II. PROVISION OF DETAILED GUIDE-LINES OR HANDBOOK FOR IMPLEMENTING THE STANDARDS

12. A study of national practices was undertaken in 1976 when a questionnaire was circulated to over 190 countries. The purpose of the study was to obtain up-to-date information on vital statistics methods in as many countries as possible for use by the Statistics Office in the revision of Handbook of Vital Statistics Methods. 7/

13. Results from the study of national practices have assisted in the identification and definition of the problems encountered in improving civil registration and vital statistics in individual countries and aided in the interpretation and evaluation of project proposals for technical co-operation in the improvement of national vital statistics systems.

14. The questionnaire used in the study was composed of four sections. Section I was designed to obtain conveniently summarized information on the different methods of collecting vital statistics in each country. Three broad sources of basic vital statistics were recognized in this section: the civil registration system; the sample registration area scheme; and the demographic sample survey. Section I also

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6/ Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, Fiftieth Session, Supplement No. 2 (E/4938), para. 101.

7/ United Nations publication, Sales No. 55.XVII.1.

asked for information on the different types of collecting systems used, the date of introduction or the duration of the system, the type of vital events collected, the geographical or population coverage, and for an indication of whether statistical data were compiled and published and the sources of the bases for computing vital rates. Section II contained detailed questions on the civil registration system. It was organized so as to provide information on the history, legal basis and administrative organization of the registration system as well as on the registration process, the compilation of data (statistical processing), evaluation methods and the budget (personnel and cost).

15. Section III asked for information on any sample registration area scheme operative in the country. It sought detailed information on the objectives, administrative organization and collection and processing procedures used in the scheme as well as information on the compilation, evaluation, publication and budget procedures. Section IV covered data obtained from demographic sample surveys and sought the same kind of detailed information.

16. The over-all response to the questionnaire (see table 1) was 58 per cent. Among the developing regions, the response rate ranged from 40 per cent for countries in the African region to 77 per cent for countries in the South American region. An illustration of the kind of information obtained in this study of national practices is provided in annex I to the present report. Only limited conclusions can be drawn from the single table presented in annex I, because it does not give any indication of the completeness of civil registration in each country. In many countries, particularly in the African, Asian and Latin American regions, civil registration and vital statistics systems are still unsatisfactory. Thus, the mere fact that a compulsory registration system exists cannot be taken to mean that substantial improvements are not necessary. However, with the continued and increased attention given to civil registration by many countries in those regions, some of them have been able to improve and expand on the quality and completeness of their civil registration systems.

Table 1. Response to the 1976 United Nations Statistical Office questionnaire on national practices on civil registration and vital statistics

Continent	Number of countries or areas to which questionnaires were sent	Number of countries or areas responding	Percentage responding
Total	<u>193</u>	<u>112</u>	<u>58</u>
Africa	53	21	40
America, North	31	17	55
America, South	13	10	77
Asia	40	20	50
Europe	38	32	84
Oceania	16	10	63
USSR <u>a/</u>	2	2	100

a/ USSR and Ukrainian SSR.

17. Work on the revision of Handbook of Vital Statistics Methods has been delayed for a number of years, primarily because of the shortage of appropriately qualified personnel in the Statistical Office who could work on it on a full-time basis. Work on the revision had to await the completion of the study of national practices, which in turn was delayed because substantive backstopping of technical co-operation activities in civil registration and vital statistics unavoidably claimed priority.

18. It has now been decided to issue the revised Handbook in two parts. Part I will discuss the implementation of Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System, drawing on country experience and examples and on the study of national practices. It will cover the basic legal, administrative and statistical issues involved in establishing, improving and maintaining a national civil registration system and will describe various complementary and supplementary activities, such as planning registration improvement drives, the evaluation of vital statistics data, the role of sample surveys etc.

19. Part II will present the results of the study of national practices. It will consist of an introductory text, 9 summary tables and 17 detailed tables. The summary tables will provide information on the world and seven major regions, and the detailed tables will provide data on each country.

### III. ORGANIZATION OF SEMINARS AND WORKING GROUPS

20. Over the past decade, a number of regional seminars and working group meetings relating to civil registration and vital statistics were held. The seminars and working groups primarily served one or more of three related functions: the exchange of experiences among national, regional and international personnel and agencies concerned with the improvement of civil registration and vital statistics; training; or the development of national and regional strategies and programmes for the improvement of civil registration and vital statistics.

#### A. Latin American region

21. The situation concerning civil registration in the region of the Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLA) is fairly advanced. There are already nation-wide registration systems in operation in most of the countries, although the inadequacies of many of those systems have been long recognized. <sup>8/</sup> In order to strengthen the efforts aimed at the improvement of national vital statistics in the region, a meeting of the Expert Committee for the Improvement of Sources of Demographic Statistics was organized by ECLA, with support from the United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA), and held at Buenos Aires in March 1974. It was attended by participants from six countries in the region, representatives of

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<sup>8/</sup> See the reports of the First (Santiago, Chile, 1954) and the Second (Lima, Peru, 1964) Inter-American Seminars on Civil Registration (United Nations publications, Sales Nos. 55.VII.7 and 65.XVII.4, respectively).



the sponsoring organizations and the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), the Inter-American Statistical Institute (IASI), the Inter-American Children's Institute (IACI), the International Programme for Population Laboratories of the University of North Carolina, the Population Council, and the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat. The different methods and procedures employed to obtain demographic data were discussed, analysed and evaluated in terms of their applicability to Latin American countries. Although extensive use has been made in a number of countries of methods of indirect estimation of fertility and mortality, based on information obtained in censuses and sample surveys, it was agreed that the benefits obtainable from a well-functioning civil registration system were great. Accordingly, the meeting emphasized the complementary role of sample surveys and civil registration systems, the need for a country-by-country approach to the problem of improving registration and the need for further regional and international support for these activities.

22. A Meeting on Strategies for Improving Civil Registration was held at Montevideo in November 1977 under the sponsorship of IACI, PAHO, the United States National Centre for Health Statistics (USNCHS), the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat. The meeting was attended by participants from 15 Latin American countries, representatives from the sponsoring organizations and other regional and international organizations. A basic objective of the meeting was to plan strategies and subsequent actions to foster an awareness of the need for, and a commitment to, the improvement of civil registration systems by appropriate senior officials of the Governments of the region and to acquaint those officials with the most crucial problems affecting civil registration in the American countries as well as with possible solutions. Annex II of the present report reproduces the conclusions of the meeting.

23. As a follow-up to these meetings, and reflecting the heightened interest among Governments in the region in the improvement of national systems of civil registration and possible support for these efforts by various bilateral, regional and international organizations, an ad hoc group to co-ordinate programme efforts was established. The group which met for the first time at Montevideo in 1979, includes the International Institute for Vital Registration and Statistics (IIVRS), IACI, PAHO, UNFPA and the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat. Among the items discussed were the pooling of information to develop an inventory of vital registration practices in the region, the establishment of a division of labour for training courses and workshops and a review of ongoing and proposed projects.

#### B. African region

24. United Nations support has been provided to the regional technical bureau of the secretariat of the Union duanière et économique de l'Afrique centrale (UDEAC). The improvement of vital statistics has been actively promoted by the bureau. One of the tasks undertaken was to organize a meeting of statisticians and officers in charge of civil registration from the countries of the region. That meeting, which was held at Libreville, Gabon, from 13 to 18 December 1974, had as its main

objective the evaluation of the results of a pilot project on the system of permanent observation conducted in selected pilot zones in Gabon, the Central African Republic, the Congo and the United Republic of Cameroon during the period 1971-1973. The meeting also discussed ways and means by which the civil registration system in the subregion could be improved. Two project proposals, one from the United Republic of Cameroon, for the setting up of a civil registration system, and the other from Gabon, for a continuous monitoring of demographic statistics, were presented and discussed at the meeting.

25. Subsequently, UDEAC convened two other meetings dealing with civil registration. In 1978 it convened a meeting at Libreville from 10 to 13 May. At that meeting, attended by experts on civil registration from member countries of UDEAC, a model setting out the strategies for vital statistics, prepared by the Centre régional d'études de population (CREP) was discussed. The other topics discussed included methods of financing civil registration systems, national projects on civil registration and needed documentation. In 1979, UDEAC convened a seminar at Yaoundé from 29 October to 3 November. It was attended by experts from UDEAC, the Organisation commune africaine et mauricienne (OCAM), the Institut national d'études démographiques (INED), the Vital Statistics Improvement (VISTIM) project of USNCHS and the United Nations. The topics that formed part of the deliberation of the meeting were: reflections on some of the important strategies for the improvement of civil registration; evaluation of civil registration systems; the civil registration system in urban areas; and training and supervision.

26. Several meetings dealing with civil registration were also organized by OCAM. In 1976 it convened a meeting at Lomé, Togo from 25 February to 3 March. The meeting was attended by participants from OCAM countries, the United Nations, Institut de formation et de recherche démographique (IFORD), INED and Office de la recherche scientifique dans les territoires d'outre-mer (ORSTOM). The topics of discussion included the following: promotion and evaluation of civil registration; uses of the data; formation of a professional association of registrars; and country case studies of civil registration. In 1979 OCAM organized a seminar on the reform of civil registration, held in Mauritius from 21 to 29 May, with the participation of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and the VISTIM project and with the financial support of the VISTIM project and UNFPA. Several international organizations participated in the seminar, along with the following countries: Benin, the Central African Republic, the Ivory Coast, Mauritius, the Niger, Rwanda, Senegal, Togo and the Upper Volta. There was a consensus that the current status of civil registration in French-speaking Africa was well below the desired level, and among the recommendations agreed upon were the following: (a) revision of laws to ensure proper functioning of civil registration systems, with particular attention to problems of rural communities; (b) development of programmes to train personnel; and (c) development of public information programmes to motivate and sensitize the population. 9/

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9/ Organisation commune africaine et mauricienne, "Report on the Seminar on the Reform of Civil Registration, Mauritius, 21-29 May 1979".

27. In addition, ECA plans to organize an expert group meeting on civil registration and vital statistics at Addis Abbaba in mid 1980.

### C. Asian and Pacific region

28. In August 1968, as one of the first activities formally carried out as part of the World Programme for the Improvement of Vital Statistics, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) - then known as the Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East (ECAFE) - organized jointly with the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat, and the Government of Denmark, in co-operation with the then Office for Technical Co-operation of the United Nations Secretariat, the Seminar on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics, held at Copenhagen, from 22 July to 10 August 1968. The participants came from 19 member countries and associated member countries of ECAFE; a representative of the World Health Organization (WHO) and observers from USAID and the Population Council also attended. The participants discussed methods, devices and procedures for establishing, extending and improving civil registration and vital statistics and the uses of interim measures for obtaining vital statistics, pending the achievement of comprehensive registration. In order to take stock of the developments in the region since 1968 and to focus attention on the further work to be done, attempts are being made by ESCAP to organize a second seminar on civil registration and vital statistics practices in Asia and the Pacific in the latter part of 1981.

29. The problems of implementing the principles and recommendations for a vital statistics system outlined by the Statistical Office were considered at a meeting of the Working Group on Current Demographic Statistics, organized by ESCAP at Bangkok, from 9 to 14 June 1975. It was noted that the publication entitled Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System 10/ was comprehensive and set forth in detail the essential features for a good civil registration system and that it had a world perspective catering to countries with or without a good statistical base. It was, however, stated that for countries of the ESCAP region, which were mostly without a good statistical base, emphasis must continue to be placed on devising ways and means of achieving a good count of the events rather than on a sophisticated description of them.

30. The Group recognized that the development of a good civil registration system was a long drawn-out process calling for sustained effort, adequate resources and dedicated work. Nevertheless, it was felt that even though the civil registration system would not always be able to provide the much-needed statistical indicators in the short run, its function as a source of legal evidence to individuals (apart from its role as one of the major sources of statistics) justified promoting it nationally. Annex III of the present report reproduces the minimum programme of action recommended by the Working Group.

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10/ United Nations publication, Sales No. E.73.XVII.9.

31. Some 50 government officials and researchers from 12 countries and several international organizations participated in the Conference on Vital Statistics Practices in Asia, held at Manila from 9 to 13 May 1977. The Conference was organized as part of the USNCHS-VISTIM project and was co-sponsored by the East-West population Institute (Hawaii) and the National Census and Statistics Office of the Philippines. Eleven country reports - four from countries with relatively complete vital registration data, five from countries with deficient vital registration data and two from countries with no current national vital registration system - along with expert papers dealing with several aspects of civil registration and vital statistics were discussed at the Conference, which had as its main objective the promotion of the exchange of experiences on recent developments affecting vital registration systems and vital statistics practices and the stimulation of professional exchanges among officials.

#### D. Other conferences and meetings

32. The importance of improving civil registration systems in developing countries and some of the issues involved in achieving those improvements have been considered at a number of other technical and policy-oriented conferences and meetings over the past decade. These included:

(a) United Nations Interregional Seminar on the Application of Demographic Data and Studies to Development Planning, Kiev, 15-26 September 1969;

(b) WHO Second International Conference of National Committees on Vital and Health Statistics, Copenhagen, 1-5 October 1973;

(c) World Population Conference, Bucharest, 19-30 August 1974;

(d) Sixth International POPLAB Conference: Civil Registration and Vital Statistics, The Hague, 21-24 June 1976;

(e) Twentieth session of the Population Commission, United Nations Headquarters, 29 January-9 February 1979.

33. At the World Population Conference, at Bucharest, Romania, 11/ countries were "encouraged to establish or improve their vital registration system, as a long-term objective, and to enact laws relevant to the improvement of vital registration" 12/ in line with the objectives of the World Programme for the Improvement of Vital Statistics. This was included in the World Population Plan of Action, adopted at the Conference by 136 countries.

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11/ Report of the United Nations World Population Conference, 1974; Bucharest, 19-30 August 1974 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.75.XIII.3).

12/ Ibid., chap. I, para. 75.

34. In 1978, in order to review and appraise the progress made towards achieving the goals and recommendations of the World Population Plan of Action during the period from September 1974 to the third quarter of 1978, the Population Division, United Nations Secretariat, conducted its "Fourth United Nations Population Growth Inquiry". A section of the questionnaire requested Governments to provide information pertaining to efforts undertaken or planned to improve the availability, quality or timeliness of demographic and related statistics by improving the civil registration system of the country. Of the 78 Governments responding to the inquiry, 31 stated that actions had been undertaken or planned to improve their civil registration systems. Among the 31, the following breakdown emerged: 8 13/ of the 23 African countries responding; 13 14/ of the 23 Asian countries; 2 15/ of the 11 Latin American countries; 1 16/ of the 2 North American countries; and 5 17/ of the 17 European countries; plus the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic. In many of these countries from the developing regions, the improvements were undertaken with the assistance of technical co-operation projects of the United Nations and other international agencies working on civil registration and vital statistics.

35. Another indication of the growing interest in civil registration and vital statistics is the establishment of a new non-governmental organization, IIVRS. The members are government officials responsible for civil registration and vital statistics in over 100 countries. The Institute was established in 1974 with headquarters in Maryland, United States of America. It has consultative status with the Economic and Social Council. Its principal purpose is to make possible the exchange of information on civil registration by means of newsletters and technical publications and to facilitate the work of others in this field. At present, the Institute is carrying out a three-year global project entitled "Improvement of civil registration", which began in January 1979 with financial support from UNFPA and in close co-operation with the Statistical Office.

#### IV. TECHNICAL CO-OPERATION ACTIVITIES

##### A. Types and levels of activity

36. United Nations activities aimed at assisting interested developing countries in improving their civil registration systems and vital statistics take a number of

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13/ Botswana, Burundi, Egypt, the Ivory Coast, Kenya, Mali, Nigeria and Rwanda.

14/ Australia, Cyprus, India, Iran, Japan, Jordan, Malaysia, Nepal, New Zealand, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Thailand and Turkey.

15/ Ecuador and Mexico.

16/ United States of America.

17/ German Democratic Republic, Germany, Federal Republic of, Netherlands, Romania and Sweden.

forms in addition to the types of activity already described. They include the provision of technical advisory services through country, regional or interregional experts, training through fellowships and study tours, funds for the purchase of equipment and funds to cover selected items of local costs.

37. There has been a marked increase since 1968 in the provision by the United Nations of technical advisory services in civil registration and vital statistics at both the regional and country levels (see table 2). Country experts increased from 8, providing 163 months of service during the early period (1968-1973), to 17, providing 303 months of service during the more recent period (1974-1979). The increase in expert services to African and Asian countries was responsible for this over-all increase: among the African countries there were no experts during the period 1968-1973, while 6 experts provided 131 months of service during the period 1974-1979; experts assigned to Asian countries increased from 4, providing 33 months of service during 1968-1973, to 9, providing 155 months of service during 1974-1979. On the other hand, the countries in the Americas experienced a decrease, from 4 experts who provided 130 months of service during 1968-1973 to 2 experts who provided 17 months of service during 1974-1979. This situation may, in part, reflect the extensive reliance placed on methods of indirect estimation in the region during the more recent period. Over all, regional experts increased from 2, providing 19 months of service during the early period (1968-1973), to 4, providing 81 months of service during the recent period (1974-1979). It should be noted that these comparisons refer only to experts who specialized in civil registration and vital statistics assignments. A number of other experts who had general responsibilities in demographic statistics also spent varying proportions of their time on activities related to the improvement of civil registration and vital statistics.

Table 2. United Nations technical advisory services in civil registration and vital statistics, by level of expert, continent and period, 1968-1979

Continent and level of expert	Early period (1968-1973)	Recent period (1974-1979)	Full period (1968-1979) <u>a/</u>
<b><u>Africa</u></b>			
Regional:			
Number of experts	-	1	1
Expert-months	-	11	11
Country:			
Number of experts	-	6	6
Expert-months	-	131	131
<b><u>Asia</u></b>			
Regional:			
Number of experts	-	1	1
Expert-months	-	37	37
Country:			
Number of experts	4	9	11
Expert-months	33	155	188
<b><u>Americas</u></b>			
Regional:			
Number of experts	2	2	3
Expert-months	19	33	51
Country:			
Number of experts	4	2	5
Expert-months	130	17	147
<b><u>All continents</u></b>			
Regional:			
Number of experts	2	4	5
Expert-months	19	81	99
Country:			
Number of experts	8	17	22
Expert-months	163	303	466

a/ The number of experts shown for the early period plus the number shown for the recent period do not always equal the number of experts shown for the full period, because, in some cases, assignments began in 1968-1973 and continued into 1974-1979.

38. These forms of direct technical co-operation are supported by UNFPA and within the United Nations are executed by the Department of Technical Co-operation for Development, with substantive support from the Statistical Office. This substantive support has in recent years been carried out on a shared basis by the technical and interregional advisers and regular programme staff working in the Demographic and Social Statistics Branch of the Statistical Office. However, beginning in 1980 and reflecting the increased interest by countries in this field, UNFPA has approved funds for a technical advisory post in the Statistical Office for civil registration methods. Also supporting the work in the countries are the advisers in civil registration and vital statistics supported by UNFPA and attached to the regional commissions or other regional institutions. These regional advisers have played an important role in promoting the improvement of civil registration and vital statistics within their respective regions. As of the beginning of 1980, UNFPA is supporting two regional advisory posts in civil registration in the ECA region, one in the ESCAP region and one in the ECLA region. The latter adviser is actually working out of IACI, Montevideo.

39. At the country level, as of the beginning of 1980, there are five full-time United Nations experts and one associate expert working on civil registration projects. In addition, in two countries assistance is being provided by senior consultants through yearly visits of from one to three months' duration. Experts are currently under recruitment for civil registration projects in five additional countries. As mentioned in paragraph 37 above, the assistance provided and the interest in receiving assistance are greater than these numbers indicate, since only those posts that were approved by UNFPA and in which an expert had full-time responsibility for civil registration were counted. A number of other countries have submitted or are developing requests for assistance in this field.

40. Among other organizations interested in improving civil registration and vital statistics, WHO has carried out a comparative study of vital registration in Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, the Philippines and Thailand <sup>18/</sup> in co-operation with the VISTIM project of USNCHS. The study provides a comparison of the results of analyses of civil registration and vital statistics systems on the basis of surveys conducted in the five countries, and reveals the crucial role that numerous national health services played in improving civil registration, particularly with respect to births and deaths.

41. Although the World Programme for the Improvement of Vital Statistics placed special emphasis on training, it is difficult to evaluate the United Nations fellowship programme as a tool for improvement of civil registration and vital statistics, since there are few training courses aimed at participants from civil registration offices. The United Nations has certainly encouraged the inclusion of materials on civil registration methods in the statistical training programmes organized by bilateral and multilateral agencies. Unfortunately, USNCHS, which once

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<sup>18/</sup> Bernard Benjamin, Vital Registration in Honduras, Mexico, Philippines, Thailand and Jamaica: A Comparative Study (Geneva, World Health Organization, 1977).



had a training programme entitled "Vital statistics and measurement of population", devoted to the needs of registration personnel, was forced to discontinue it some years ago. Nevertheless, some materials of general relevance to civil registration and vital statistics are included in the curriculum of most multilateral and bilateral training programmes covering demographic statistics.

42. The World Programme also called for the promotion of training of middle- and lower-level national personnel engaged in civil registration and vital statistics. For the most part, such training appears to have been carried out, if at all, mainly within the context of individual country civil registration projects. A few exceptions may be noted. In the ESCAP region, the South Pacific Commission conducted two training courses on vital statistics, in 1971 and 1973. The courses, co-sponsored by the East-West Centre, were concerned with the training of middle-level national staff in methods of registration of vital events and in the collection processing, analysis and application of vital statistics. A similar course will be conducted in June 1980 at Niue with UNFPA assistance. Under a programme of support for regional and subregional training programmes, ways and means of organizing two regional training courses in vital registration and statistics methods in India during 1982 and 1983 are being explored. In the ECA region, some of the activities carried out under the UDEAC programme (see paras. 24-25 above) were directed towards the training of middle-level personnel.

#### B. Four examples

43. In recent years more countries have received United Nations assistance for the improvement or establishment of their vital statistics systems. Four selected projects are discussed below to illustrate the type and scope of assistance provided under United Nations technical co-operation projects and the nature of the improvements sought.

##### 1. Panama: civil registration project

44. A civil registration system has been in existence in Panama since 1914 and has generated vital statistics. However, the resulting data were markedly deficient, with the exception of birth statistics. The reason for this deficiency was due to short-comings in the operational, administrative and legislative functions of the system.

45. The first attempt of the Government to improve the system was to draft a revision of the existing civil registration laws. At the request of the Government, the United Nations provided the services of an adviser on civil registration in 1966/67 to assist in drafting the revision. The draft bill was enacted in February 1975. By taking into account the provisions of the new law, a plan was formulated and designed to reorganize the civil registration system in order to bring it up to date with modern equipment and keep it in line with the advancement experienced by the country in public administration. The main features of the plan were as follows:

(a) Decentralization of the registration function by setting up civil registry offices in each of the nine provincial capitals; the registry offices were

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to be responsible for the supervision of the local offices under their jurisdiction, for maintenance of the vital records and for issuance of certificates;

(b) Elimination of the provisional recording of vital events and, under the new system, recording in final form by the local registrars;

(c) Use of modern mechanical equipment - e.g., teleproceso, for making duplicate copies of vital events certificates, which - under the new law - is valid;

(d) Use of microfilm for the archives.

46. The launching of this programme required substantial financial resources and the Government was not able to bear the initial cost. It therefore requested and received UNFPA assistance in the form of an expert, incentive payments to local staff, training, office equipment and supplies. The programme got under way in 1975 and was satisfactorily completed in 1976; since then, the Government of Panama has maintained the system.

2. Iraq: improvement of civil registration and collection of vital statistics by sampling method

47. Iraq has had the administrative machinery needed for the registration of vital events, principally births and deaths, since 1947. In order to meet the needs for current data, Law No. 148 was enacted in 1971. The implementation of the law was beset by organizational and operational problems. The deficiencies in the civil registration system relating to coverage, content and timeliness continued to exist. The national authorities, especially those connected with health-programme and socio-economic planning, were eager to obtain information on births and deaths, in order to have a meaningful basis for the formulation, implementation and evaluation of national development plans.

48. The Government, therefore, put forward a project for the improvement of civil registration and the collection of vital statistics by the sampling method. The major goal of the project was the improvement of the civil registration system. However, it was considered that such efforts were essentially of a long-term nature, and priority was given to the development of a system for the collection of vital statistics by the application of sampling techniques. For this purpose, a sample registration system was established. The system utilizes a dual-record concept, under which vital events are recorded by two independent sources: the Ministry of Health used locally resident recorders to record continuously the births and deaths occurring in the sample units, and the Central Statistical Organization conducted a periodic retrospective survey. Field matching of vital events records from the two systems was to be undertaken after each round of the semi-annual survey.

49. There was a systematic sample of 60 units from a coded list of 4,062 mukatas, the average size of the sample unit being 1,000 persons. In the sample area selected, the Ministry of Health designated para-medical personnel as recorders for each area and a supervisor for each muhafadha (Governorate). In all, 120 recorders

and 30 supervisors were assembled for training at Baghdad in June 1973. The project began operation on 1 July 1973. Three survey rounds were carried out: in July 1973, January 1974 and July 1974.

50. Funds were contributed by UNFPA for a senior adviser in civil registration and vital statistics, from December 1972 to May 1975, two fellowships for training in sample registration schemes in India, and vehicles. The United Nations adviser was apparently able to transfer the expertise to a level where the national staff could carry on the project independently. The national staff who directly benefited were the adviser's counterpart, the two nationals sent to India for training and the 120 recorders and 30 supervisors who received training locally. The establishment of the sample registration system laid the foundation for a potential source of a wide range of demographic data for socio-economic as well as health planning and could play a vital role in the improvement of the civil registration system.

### 3. Indonesia: sample vital registration project

51. Efforts to develop a vital registration system in Indonesia started in 1815 when village registers were initiated by the Minister of the Interior of the Dutch Colonial Government. The system was designed primarily to record changes in the village's population through births, deaths and migration. However, the system was not maintained. Although some kind of registration existed in Java, it suffered from severe under-registration.

52. The need to improve the vital registration system, and especially to improve current estimates of vital rates, had long been felt. This led, during 1972 and early 1973, to the development of a proposal to carry out a sample vital registration project (SVRP) in Indonesia. Under the auspices of the National Family Planning Co-ordination Board and the Central Bureau of Statistics, and with technical advice from the United Nations, the World Bank and a number of agencies concerned with the collection processing and analysis of vital statistics, a final project proposal was drawn up and approved in July 1973. The project was financed with UNFPA funds, which were channelled through the National Family Planning Co-ordination Board.

53. The primary goals of the project were: to measure the completeness of the existing civil registration, try to gain some insight into factors leading to non-registration of vital events and develop improved methods of vital registration; and to obtain, in so far as the sample would permit, reliable current estimates of fertility, mortality and population growth. It was hoped that knowledge and experience gained from SVRP would assist in the gradual expansion of vital registration and, ultimately, in the establishment of a national civil registration system.

54. The project uses a dual-system approach in which vital events are recorded by two independent sources: continuous vital registration carried out by the headmen of the villages selected for the project sample; and a retrospective semi-annual survey conducted by the Central Bureau of Statistics field offices at the regency (kabupaten) level. Field matching of records of vital events from these two systems is done after the follow-up rounds of the semi-annual survey. From the

results of the matching operation, estimates of the completeness of the registration or of the semi-annual survey can be made, using either the complete Chandra-Deming method, which includes an estimate of events missed by both systems, or a more conservative method that does not include the missed events. The Central Bureau of Statistics formed a Sample Vital Registration Technical Team, which was assisted, from February 1974, by a United Nations expert who made the detailed preparations for the implementation of the project.

55. The field operations began in July 1974. The project was carried out in 10 areas, 5 of them in Java, 1 each in Sumatra, Sulawesi, Kalimantan and Bali, and 1 in the West Nusatenggara island group. Except in Jakarta, each project area covered one entire kecamatan (subdistrict). Project areas varied considerably in size, ranging from one with a population of about 5,000 persons (Kalimantan) to another with about 45,000 persons (East Java). The total sample in all 10 areas was approximately 250,000 persons.

56. Activities in each project area were controlled through a project centre, generally located in the regency-level field office of the Central Bureau of Statistics. The chief of each centre had general responsibility for recruitment and training of interviewers and supervisors for the semi-annual survey and annual check survey, for receipt and temporary storage of records from the continuous vital registration, and completed questionnaires from the surveys and for recruitment and training of persons to carry out the field matching operations. Field staffs for the different operations of the project were organizationally separate, and responsibility for over-all co-ordination rested at the top level, i.e., with the chief of centre of each project area.

57. Preliminary analysis of the nature of the deficiencies and problems of vital registration and the possible reasons for non-registration of vital events was made, based on a comparison of data from the vital registration system and the semi-annual survey and on the results of a small-scale special survey undertaken in each project area in January 1976. Data from the special survey suggested that lack of knowledge of the project itself among the general population, perhaps indicating problems of communication with village officials responsible for registration, was more of a problem in the areas in which the quality of registration was worst.

58. One important goal of SVRP is to obtain more information on the social and cultural conditions that may affect vital registration. Therefore, a further study of knowledge, attitudes and practice of vital registration is being contemplated to supplement and further clarify the results of the special survey.

59. It is perhaps worth noting that SVRP has already had a positive effect on further development of the civil registration system. East Java, the most heavily populated province in Indonesia, with over 25 million people, has already initiated plans to expand registration to the entire province, following the basic procedures established under SVRP.

#### 4. Gabon: observation permanente des faits démographiques

60. Gabon has a relatively new registration law, promulgated in 1972, and an administrative infrastructure. There is a civil registry centre in each of the 34 districts. However, registration of births and deaths was relatively satisfactory only in Libreville. In the rest of the country, the coverage was markedly deficient, with registration estimated to be less than 30 per cent. Since civil registration was unable to provide the much needed vital statistics, it was felt that a medium plan should be designed to meet the requirements for information and at the same time influence the improvement of the civil registration system.

61. Under those circumstances, the Government considered a demographic survey of the multiround type as the appropriate scheme. The proposal comprised two phases: the multiround survey (phase I); and extension of the permanent operation towards activities tending to improve the civil registration system (phase II).

62. The general plans of the demographic multiround survey (phase I) were:

(a) The survey was to be carried out in two years, with three rounds at six-month intervals.

(b) A sample of around 75,000 persons was to be drawn, 15,000 at Libreville and 60,000 in the rest of the country. Within the rural zones, clusters of around 200 persons were to be selected; and the geographical units for stratification were region, canton etc. Within the urban zones, blocks of houses were to be selected, and the units to be used in the stratification were quartiers etc.

(c) The first round was to be the base-line survey, that is, complete enumeration of the population within the selected areas. At that time, the interviewer had to give to the village chief a register book in which to record vital events as they occurred.

(d) In the second round, six months after the first, the interviewer was to visit the same households and record the changes that had taken place in the intervening period. At that stage, the vital events registered in the village registry were to be compared with those recorded by the interviewers.

(e) The third round was to follow the same procedure as the second round.

(f) The registration of births and deaths in the civil registry was to be checked at the second and third rounds and, for each vital event recorded in the survey documents, the family concerned was to be asked to produce the appropriate certificate. A declaration form was to be given to the appropriate person within the household, with a request that the form be taken to the civil registry office. The chief of civil registry was then to follow up on those who did not come to the registry.

63. The project has been under way since November 1975 and, although beset by problems of personnel, the field work and the data processing of the multiround survey (phase I) have been completed. The Government of Gabon will decide whether additional United Nations assistance is needed to analyse and publish the results.

64. Phase II of the project is directed towards more extensive improvements of the civil registry. This involves the extension of the geographical coverage of the civil registration system, which is to be undertaken progressively, and a new project was formulated and submitted to the United Nations in February 1980. The new project is expected to last three years, during which time a new civil registration system is to be introduced in four regions, - at first with the objective of registering fully all births and deaths in those regions.

#### V. DISSEMINATION AND USE OF DATA

65. Demographic Yearbook, published by the Demographic and Social Statistics Branch of the Statistical Office, continues to be the major vehicle for disseminating international demographic statistics, including those obtained from national civil registration systems. It is a comprehensive compilation, including for over 200 countries or areas of the world data on natality, mortality, nuptiality and divorce. Featured as special topics in recent Demographic Yearbooks were mortality (1974), natality (1975) and nuptiality and divorce (1976).

66. Population and Vital Statistics Report (Statistical Papers, Series A), which is published quarterly, in addition to providing a medium for disseminating the results of population censuses for over 200 countries or areas of the world, also provides a means of publishing the most recent official estimates of vital statistics rates for each country or area as well as an official or United Nations estimate for the year prior to the current one.

67. Vital statistics continue to be disseminated through Monthly Bulletin of Statistics. This publication, limited to a 10-year trend of population estimates together with quarterly rates of birth, death and marriage, serves as a source of data, often provisional, required on a strictly current basis.

68. Each of the regional commissions utilizes the vital statistics collected by the Statistical Office in various regional compendiums and analyses. Naturally, over and above these primary forms of dissemination, vital statistics are used extensively in analytical demographic research, including the preparation of population projections, and in the development of statistical indicators for the appraisal of development.

#### VI. FUTURE PLANS AND OBJECTIVES

69. Improvement in national civil registration systems requires the co-ordination of efforts by various national authorities (judicial, statistical, health and administrative). Furthermore, considerable time may be required in order to achieve a substantially complete and reliable statistical reporting system based on the civil registration system. Nevertheless, past experience demonstrates that in many countries marked improvements in civil registration systems can be achieved, but that national efforts in this complex field may require considerable stimulation in the form of training and regional advisory assistance from international sources.

70. To fill the gap caused by a poorly functioning or non-existent civil registration system, sampling methods of one sort or another have been widely used in many developing countries. Thus far, experience has shown that sample surveys are best suited to providing data needed to estimate the approximate level of the vital rates for a country as a whole. Such surveys are much less well suited than a civil registration system to producing trend data or data for subnational areas. However, considerable interest in further exploring the problems associated with the use of sampling is being shown by the regional commissions, the United Nations and other international and national agencies.

71. A major factor favourable to the improvement of vital statistics is the existence of an interrelated system of organizations concerned with, and actively participating in, the many-sided tasks of promoting the development and improvement of vital statistics. These organizations range from small local or municipal offices to regional and international organizations. They include official agencies, professional societies, research foundations, university departments and public health workers and statisticians all of whom combine their efforts towards the ultimate goal, that of extending the use and improving the production of statistics.

72. At its seventeenth session, the Statistical Commission "stressed that, in improving and expanding statistics, statisticians in developing countries (and indeed in all countries) should devote attention to utilizing data which might be derived from administrative records. Such records could often provide effective sources of information. It was also important that the attention of policy-makers and administrators in developing countries should be drawn to the important statistical by-products that administrative records could yield and indeed that, in developing such records, account should be taken of their potential statistical uses." 19/

73. The Statistical Office proposes to continue promoting the improvement of civil registration and vital statistics systems throughout the world by:

(a) Completing and publishing the revised Handbook of Vital Statistics Methods; 20/

(b) Establishing at the Office in 1981 a register of all national and international agencies responsible for civil registration and vital statistics;

(c) Attempting to create among the policy and decision makers at government level in the developing countries an awareness of the necessity and importance of a functionable civil registration and vital statistics system, by promoting, in collaboration with regional commissions, international and national agencies in the field, regional meetings of government officials and national civil registration and vital statistics offices in order to appraise the civil registration and vital statistics systems in each country and make recommendations for their development;

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19/ Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, Fifty-fourth Session, Supplement No. 2 (E/5236), para. 48.

20/ United Nations publication, Sales No. 55.XVII.1.

(d) Encouraging Governments of the developing countries to adopt laws and regulations creating unified and uniform civil registration systems and establishing standardized and efficient vital registration record systems for the entire population;

(e) Working towards the formation of National Committees on Vital and Health Statistics in all developing countries;

(f) Designing and assisting in the conduct of sample surveys in order to check and/or obtain vital statistics on a short-term basis, pending the establishment of viable civil registration and vital statistics systems in the developing countries, particularly in Africa;

(g) Developing and organizing, in collaboration with other international and national agencies, training programmes at various levels for staff of national offices, particularly in methods and techniques of keeping vital records, techniques of compiling vital statistics reports, the use of vital statistics data and the implementation of international standards and recommendations;

(h) Encouraging Governments and national offices to simplify as much as possible the forms to be completed for registration of a vital event and to co-operate with other national offices to establish facilities, systems etc. that would encourage the registration of vital events;

(i) Encouraging and assisting countries to develop public information systems that would make the people more aware of the necessity of registering all vital events and the benefits to be derived therefrom, and to inform them of any incentives created for that purpose.

74. Underlying further work are three broad principles. First, it is not possible to base improvements on a single rigid model for the organization of a civil registration system applicable to all developing countries. The solutions proposed for any country must be tailored to its particular situation and its administrative capabilities and arrangements.

75. Secondly, the civil registration system must be seen and planned as an essential component of a comprehensive and complementary system for obtaining population statistics, with the population census and sample surveys as the other two components. None of these three components can be viewed as a replacement or total substitution for the others. Although civil registration is carried out primarily for the legal and administrative value of the documents, those records provide vital statistics for the population on a continuous basis, the periodic estimation of the population and statistical information on which economic and social development planning can be based. The essential nature of reliable population and vital statistics demands that they be obtained from an integrated system of data collection. Any programme for improving demographic statistics must therefore be viewed in the context of over-all statistical development, which makes use of all types of data-collection methods.

76. Thirdly, the activities proposed for promoting civil registration and vital statistics (see para. 73 above) will require, in addition to the active interest



and concern of each member State with respect to its own system, the close and continued collaboration of the Statistical Office, WHO, UNFPA, the regional commissions, appropriate non-governmental organizations such as IIVRS, and interested bilateral technical co-operation programmes, such as the VISTIM project of USNCHS.

#### VII. POINTS FOR DISCUSSION

77. The Commission may wish to:

(a) Comment on the work achieved in civil registration and vital statistics over the past decade (paras. 5-68);

(b) Endorse the proposals for future action (paras. 69-76);

(c) Encourage further work at the national, regional and international levels in this important field.

## Annex I

## DETAILED INFORMATION ON COUNTRIES WITH CIVIL REGISTRATION SYSTEMS AS OF 1 JANUARY 1977

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The years shown in the columns headed "legislation" are generally those of enactment and implementation of birth and death registration laws. In all other columns, an "X" indicates "YES"; a dash ( - ) indicates "NO"; a dot ( . ) indicates that there is no legal provision for registration; and three dots ( ... ) indicate that no information is available.

Continent and country or area	Government provisions for registration						Vital statistics					Published
	Legislation		Compulsory	Voluntary	Coverage		Compiled					
	Enacted	Implemented			Total	Partial	Live births	Deaths	Foetal deaths	Marriages	Divorces	
AFRICA												
Botswana .....	1968	1969	1/	1/	1/ X	1/ -	2/ -	2/ -	2/ -	2/ -	2/ -	-
Central African Republic .....	3/1969	3/1969	X	-	X	-	X	X	.	X	.	X
Chad .....	4/1961	4/1961	5/ X	-	-	5/ -	X	X	.	X	.	6/
Congo .....	1957	1958	X	-	X	-	X	X	-	X	X	X
Guinea-Bissau .....	7/	7/	X	-	X	-	X	X	X	X	X	X
Kenya .....	8/1904	8/1904	X	-	X	-	X	X	X	X	-	X
Libyan Arab Jamahiriya .....	9/1968	9/1968	X	-	X	-	X	X	-	X	X	X
Malawi .....	1904	1904	10/	10/	-	10/	11/	11/	11/	11/	11/	-
Mauritius .....	12/	12/	X	-	X	-	X	X	X	X	X	X
Morocco .....	1950	1950	X	-	X	-	X	X	.	.	.	-
Rwanda .....	1963	1963	X	-	X	-	X	X	.	X	X	X
Senegal .....	4/1961	4/1961	X	-	X	-	X	X	-	X	-	X
Seychelles .....	1893	1893	X	-	X	-	X	X	-	-	-	X
Sierra Leone .....	1857	1857	13/	13/	-	13/ X	X	X	X	-	-	X
South Africa .....	14/1924	14/1924	14/	14/	14/	14/	X	X	X	X	X	X
Swaziland .....	1927	15/	15/	15/	-	15/	-	-	.	-	.	-
Tunisia .....	1918	1918	X	-	X	-	X	X	X	X	X	X
Uganda .....	16/1970	1973	X	-	X	-	17/-	17/ -	.	.	.	-
Upper Volta .....	1950	1951	18/	18/	18/	18/	19/-	19/ -	.	19/-	19/ -	-
Zaire .....	1957	1958	X	-	X	-	X	X	-	X	X	X
AMERICA, NORTH												
Bahamas .....	1931	1931	X	-	X	-	X	X	X	X	X	X
Belize .....	1884	1885	X	-	X	-	X	X	X	X	X	X
Canada .....	20/	20/	X	-	X	-	X	X	X	X	X	X
Costa Rica .....	1887	1888	X	-	X	-	X	X	X	X	X	X
Cuba .....	1885	...	X	-	X	-	X	X	X	X	X	X
Dominican Republic .....	1881	1881	X	-	X	-	X	X	X	X	X	X
El Salvador .....	1879	1879	X	-	X	-	X	X	X	X	X	X
Guatemala .....	1877	1877	X	-	X	-	X	X	X	X	X	X
Haiti .....	1880	1922	X	-	X	-	X	X	...	X	X	X
Honduras .....	1880	1880	X	-	X	-	X	X	...	X	X	X
Mexico .....	1859	1859	X	-	X	-	X	X	X	X	X	X
Panama .....	1914	1914	X	-	X	-	X	X	X	X	X	X
Canal Zone .....	1904	1904	X	-	X	-	X	X	X	X	X	X
Puerto Rico .....	1884	1884	X	-	X	-	X	X	X	X	X	X
Trinidad and Tobago .....	1847	1847	X	-	X	-	X	X	X	X	X	X
United States of America .....	21/	21/	X	-	X	-	X	X	X	X	X	X
AMERICA, SOUTH												
Argentina .....	22/1884	22/1886	X	-	X	-	X	X	X	X	.	X
Bolivia .....	1898	1940	X	-	X	-	X	X	-	X	-	X
Brazil .....	1888	1889	X	-	X	-	X	X	X	X	.	X
Chile .....	1884	1885	X	-	X	-	X	X	X	X	.	X
Colombia .....	1938	1938	X	-	X	-	X	X	X	X	23/	X
Ecuador .....	1901	1901	X	-	X	-	X	X	X	X	X	X
Guyana .....	1868	1869	X	-	X	-	X	X	X	X	X	X
Peru .....	1852	1852	X	-	X	-	X	X	X	X	X	X
Uruguay .....	1879	1879	X	-	X	-	X	X	-	X	X	X
Venezuela .....	1873	1873	X	-	X	-	X	X	X	X	X	X

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Continent and country or area	Government provisions for registration					Vital statistics						Published
	Legislation		Compulsory	Voluntary	Coverage		Compiled					
	Enacted	Implemented			Total	Partial	Live births	Deaths	Foetal deaths	Marriages	Divorces	
ASIA												
Afghanistan .....	1956	1956	X	-	X	-	24/-	24/-	.	24/-	.	24/-
Bangladesh .....	1875	...	X	-	X	-	25/	25/	...	25/	...	25/-
Brunei .....	1923	1923	X	-	X	-	X	X	-	X	.	-
Hong Kong .....	1872	1872	X	-	X	-	X	X	.	X	.	X
India .....	26/1969	26/1970	X	-	X	-	X	X	X	.	.	X
Iraq .....	1947	1947	X	-	X	-	X	X	X	...	...	X
Israel .....	1918	1918	X	-	X	-	X	X	X	X	X	X
Japan .....	1871	1872	X	-	X	-	X	X	X	X	X	X
Jordan .....	1926	1926	X	-	X	-	X	X	.	X	X	X
Korea, Republic of .....	1909	1912	X	-	X	-	X	X	-	X	X	X
Kuwait .....	1964	1967	X	-	X	-	X	X	X	X	X	X
Macau .....	1887	1887	-	X	X	-	X	X	.	X	X	X
Malaysia												
Peninsular Malaysia .....	1957	1958	X	-	X	-	X	X	X	X	...	X
Sabah .....	1948	1951	X	-	X	-	X	X	X	-	-	X
Sarawak .....	1910	1910	X	-	X	-	X	X	X	X	X	X
Philippines .....	1930	1931	X	-	X	-	X	X	X	X	.	X
Singapore .....	1872	1872	X	-	X	-	X	X	X	X	-	X
Sri Lanka .....	1867	1895	X	-	X	-	X	X	X	X	X	X
Syrian Arab Republic .....	1923	1923	X	-	X	-	X	X	-	X	X	X
Thailand .....	1909	1909	X	-	X	-	X	X	X	X	X	X
EUROPE												
Austria .....	1784	1784	X	-	X	-	X	X	X	X	X	X
Belgium .....	1796	1796	X	-	X	-	X	X	X	X	X	X
Bulgaria .....	1880	1881	X	-	X	-	X	X	X	X	X	X
Channel Islands												
Guernsey .....	1840	1840	X	-	X	-	X	X	X	X	X	X
Jersey .....	1842	1842	X	-	X	-	X	X	...	X	X	X
Czechoslovakia .....	1785	1785	X	-	X	-	X	X	X	X	X	X
Denmark 27/ .....	1646	1646	X	-	X	-	X	X	X	X	X	X
Faeroe Islands .....	...	...	X	-	X	-	X	X	X	X	X	X
Finland .....	1686	1686	X	-	X	-	X	X	X	X	X	X
France .....	1792	1792	X	-	X	-	X	X	X	X	X	X
German Democratic Republic .....	1875	1876	X	-	X	-	X	X	X	X	X	X
Germany, Federal Republic of .....	1875	1876	X	-	X	-	X	X	X	X	X	X
Gibraltar .....	1848	1848	X	-	X	-	X	X	X	X	X	X
Greece .....	1920	1924	X	-	-	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Hungary .....	1894	1895	X	-	X	-	X	X	X	X	X	X
Iceland .....	1785	1785	X	-	X	-	X	X	X	X	X	X
Ireland .....	1863	1864	X	-	X	-	X	X	X	X	.	X
Isle of Man .....	1849	1878	X	-	X	-	X	X	X	X	X	X
Italy .....	1865	1865	X	-	X	-	X	X	X	X	X	X
Luxembourg .....	1792	1792	X	-	X	-	X	X	X	X	X	X
Malta .....	1862	1863	X	-	X	-	X	X	X	X	.	X
Monaco .....	1793	1793	X	-	X	-	X	X	...	X	X	X
Netherlands .....	1811	1811	X	-	X	-	X	X	X	X	X	X
Norway .....	28/1915	28/1916	X	-	X	-	X	X	X	X	X	X
Poland .....	29/1945	29/1946	X	-	X	-	X	X	X	X	X	X
Spain .....	1870	1870	X	-	X	-	X	X	X	X	.	X
Sweden .....	1686	1686	X	-	X	-	X	X	X	X	X	X
Switzerland .....	1874	1876	X	-	X	-	X	X	X	X	X	X
United Kingdom												
England and Wales .....	1836	1837	X	-	X	-	X	X	X	X	X	X
Northern Ireland .....	1863	1864	X	-	X	-	X	X	X	X	X	X
Scotland .....	1854	1855	X	-	X	-	X	X	X	X	X	X
Yugoslavia .....	1946	1946	X	-	X	-	X	X	X	X	X	X

Continent and country or area	Government provisions for registration						Vital statistics					Pub- lished
	Legislation		Compul- sory	Vol- untary	Coverage		Compiled					
	Enacted	Imple- mented			Total	Partial	Live births	Deaths	Foetal deaths	Mar- riages	Di- vorces	
OCEANIA												
Australia .....	30/	30/	X	-	X	-	X	X	X	X	X	X
Fiji .....	1874	1874	X	-	X	-	X	X	X	X	...	X
French Polynesia .....	1874	1874	X	-	X	-	...	...	...	...	...	...
New Hebrides .....	1970	1975	X	-	X	-	19/	19/	19/	19/	...	19/-
New Zealand .....	1848	1848	X	-	X	-	X	X	X	X	X	X
Pacific Islands .....	1952	1952	X	-	X	-	X	X	X	.	.	X
Samoa .....	1961	1961	X	-	X	-	X	X	X	X	X	X
Tonga .....	1926	1926	X	-	X	-	X	X	X	X	X	-
UNION OF SOVIET SOCIALIST REPUBLICS												
Union of Soviet Socialist Republics .....	1917	1918	X	-	X	-	X	X	X	X	X	X

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| <p><u>1/</u> Compulsory registration is being introduced gradually to the entire country. In 1974 compulsory registration covered 4 townships and 8 districts, and registration was voluntary in the rest of the country.</p> <p><u>2/</u> Vital statistics not presently compiled.</p> <p><u>3/</u> Civil registration for births, deaths and marriages was introduced in the country before 1900 but with very limited coverage. The first national legislation governing the civil registration system in the Central African Republic was enacted 1 July 1969.</p> <p><u>4/</u> The first national law governing civil registration enacted.</p> <p><u>5/</u> The civil registration system covers all localities situated within a radius of 10 kilometres from the civil registry.</p> <p><u>6/</u> Publication of data limited to Ndjamena (the capital).</p> <p><u>7/</u> No information is available as to the year when the civil registration system was originally introduced except the year (1922) when the registration of births, deaths and marriages became compulsory. A new civil registration law covering live births, deaths, foetal deaths, marriages and divorces was enacted 5 March 1976 and implemented 6 April 1976.</p> <p><u>8/</u> Compulsory registration of all deaths occurring within the municipalities was introduced in 1904; of births and deaths to Europeans and Americans in 1904 and to Asians in 1928. Compulsory registration for the African population was carried out under a phased programme, that is, district by district from 1963 until 1971 when the whole country was covered.</p> <p><u>9/</u> The introduction of the civil registration system dates back before 1968; however, there was no uniform legislation for registration of vital events applicable to the whole country until 1968.</p> <p><u>10/</u> Registration of vital events is compulsory for European, Asian and Coloured population and voluntary for African population.</p> | <p><u>11/</u> Compilation of vital statistics has been discontinued.</p> <p><u>12/</u> The first important legislation relating to the establishment of the civil registry for births, deaths and marriages is the Royal Ordinance of 1667, but the first legislation devoted exclusively to the registration of these events is the Royal Declaration of 1736, registered in the "Superior Council" of Ile de France (former name of Mauritius) in 1737.</p> <p><u>13/</u> Registration of births and deaths is compulsory only in the Western Area and in 22 chiefdoms out of 146. In the rest of the country, registration is voluntary.</p> <p><u>14/</u> The Births, Deaths and Marriage Registration Act of 1 January 1924 consolidated and amended the laws in force in the various provinces. Registration is compulsory, except in the rural areas where registration is voluntary for the Bantus.</p> <p><u>15/</u> Voluntary registration covers the whole country for civil marriages and the urban and industrial areas for births and deaths. An attempt is being made to implement gradually compulsory registration in the whole country, as provided for in the 1970 Amendment to the 1927 Births, Marriages and Deaths Act.</p> <p><u>16/</u> The Births and Deaths Act of 1970 is the first legislation prescribing universal compulsory registration of births and deaths.</p> <p><u>17/</u> Compilation of statistical information is envisaged to start in 1978.</p> <p><u>18/</u> Registration of births and deaths is compulsory in localities situated within a radius of 10 kilometres from the primary or secondary registration centres. Registration of marriages is voluntary. Divorces are registered in the civil registry in the margin of the original record of marriage.</p> |
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- 19/ Compilation of vital statistics has not yet been established.
- 20/ The civil registration of vital events is under the jurisdiction of the provincial governments. Registration acts were adopted in the provinces and territories at different times; from 1678 in Quebec to 1916 in Saskatchewan,
- 21/ Within the United States of America, the authority for civil registration is within the jurisdiction of the state governments. Registration laws were enacted in the states at different times, from 1811 in Louisiana to 1915 in Alaska.
- 22/ Within the federal system of the Government of Argentina, each province is governed by its own laws. The provincial civil registration laws were enacted at different times; the first one to adopt such legislation was the Capital Federal and National Territories in 1884, and by 1890 nearly all the provinces with the exception of Salta (which enacted its legislation in 1902) had enacted legislation.
- 23/ Since the divorce law was not enacted until 1975, compilation of statistics from registration has not yet been initiated.
- 24/ Not compiled at the present time due to very incomplete reporting and coverage in the registration.
- 25/ Compilation of statistics was discontinued in 1968 and was resumed January 1977 under a new system by the Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research.
- 26/ Registration in India dates back to mid-nineteenth century. Due to the diversity of the registration legislation, there was no uniformity in the registration procedures in the different parts of the country until the enactment of the Registration of Births and Deaths Act of 1969, which provides for compulsory registration throughout the country and for a uniform basis for registration.
- 27/ Includes Greenland.
- 28/ Date when civil registers were introduced but compulsory registration for ecclesiastical records started in 1685 for births, deaths and marriages, and in 1797 for late foetal deaths.
- 29/ In some parts of the country, registration has been compulsory since 1874. For the whole of Poland, registration has been compulsory since 1946.
- 30/ The civil registration laws in each state and territory were enacted at different times, from 1839 in Tasmania to 1856 in New South Wales and Queensland.

Annex II

EXCERPT (CONCLUSIONS) FROM THE FINAL REPORT OF THE MEETING  
ON STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING CIVIL REGISTRATION (MONTEVIDEO,  
URUGUAY, 7 TO 11 NOVEMBER 1977) a/

1. At present civil registration services in Latin America undergo technical and administrative deficiencies and lack adequate financing; its personnel, with few exceptions, lacks the required experience and, in general Governments do not recognize the significant importance of their functions.
2. It is recognized that the modernization of civil registration services, through a reform, of its machinery, will contribute in a direct and meaningful way to support national institutions and thus will increase the possibilities of countries to carry on their development process by themselves.
3. Several measures have been proposed to foster the development and improvement of civil registration but their implementation has not been fully attained.
4. The support required by civil registration services should be provided through an integrated, continued Latin American-wide program, implemented by a specialized unit working in this field.
5. Consequently, the establishment of a focal point, within the institutional frame of the IACI [Inter-American Children's Institute], is promoted with the purpose of boosting and ensuring the prompt and efficient enforcement of an action program leading to the modernization of civil registration services in those countries which require its aid.
6. Financial and technical assistance for the normal operation of this machinery should be provided by national and international organizations involved, such as the United Nations Fund for Population Activities, the Statistical Office of the United Nations, the World Health Organization, the Agency for International Development of the United States, the United States National Center for Health Statistics, etc.

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a/ See Inter-American Children's Institute, "Final report of the Meeting on Strategies for Improving Civil Registration, Montevideo, Uruguay, 7-11 November 1977."

Annex III

EXCERPT (PROGRAMME OF ACTION) FROM THE REPORT OF THE WORKING GROUP ON  
CURRENT DEMOGRAPHIC STATISTICS (BANGKOK, THAILAND, 9 TO 14 JUNE 1975) a/

34. The Working Group recommended the following minimum programme of action:

(a) Suitable legislation should be promulgated to ensure uniform application to the entire country where it was not in force or required revision. Progress could also be made by rationalizing existing practices or by instituting the system afresh;

(b) To obviate the general apathy of the public as well as of governmental organizations towards the civil registration system, it was necessary to evolve ways and means of effectively motivating them towards achieving a sound civil registration system;

(c) The civil registration system should involve the active co-operation of hospitals, health centres, and medical and para-medical personnel in the registration of births and deaths and particularly in improving data on the causes of death;

(d) In areas where the system remained to be initiated, emphasis should be placed on obtaining information on a minimum set of topics in the first instance. The minimum set of characteristics might be:

- (i) Births and late foetal deaths: Dates of occurrence and registration, age and place of usual residence of mother, sex, attendant at birth.
- (ii) Deaths: Dates of occurrence and registration, place of occurrence, place of usual residence, age, sex and cause of death, attendant at death.

Even in areas where some system was already in existence, attention should be given to achieving a complete reporting of the events. To that end, emphasis should be placed on obtaining accurately the minimum set of particulars described above. The tabulation programme should attempt a minimum cross-classification involving a basic set of particulars as emphasized above;

(e) The status of civil registration, wherever it existed, should be surveyed as early as possible to assess the extent of geographic coverage, under-registration, timeliness in the receipt of returns, and under-reporting of events from the periphery to Headquarters;

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a/ See Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, "Report of the Working Group on Current Demographic Statistics" (E/CN.11/L.430/INF).

(f) Based on the survey under (e) above, it might be possible to identify areas in which the records were fairly complete. For such areas separate tabulations should be made;

(g) Experience showed that the responsibility for registration rested with officials drawn from different departments according to local convenience obtaining in several countries. In such cases, a suitable mechanism should be evolved to maintain strict supervision over those officials through the formation of interdepartmental co-ordination committees;

(h) The system of soliciting the assistance of local officials such as village headmen, teachers, social and religious workers, practical midwives, barbers, funeral directors, health visitors, sanitary workers, etc. to function as notifiers as the periphery was regarded as one of the effective means of promoting good registration. Notification so received should be followed up by registration officials promptly. The success of that system depended on the establishment and maintenance of constant and easy communication with notifiers by registration officials;

(i) Extensive publicity through all modes of communication such as radio, television, cinema, books and pamphlets and other audio-visual media was considered helpful;

(j) Intensive training programmes for registration officials at all levels should be organized;

(k) A programme of visits of registration officials among the countries of the region would help in assessing the problems of providing civil registration systems as well as the ways and means of coping with them. The Working Group noted with appreciation the offers of some developed countries to provide assistance both in that programme and with regard to other aspects of improving current demographic statistics;

(l) In the context of promoting effective co-ordination and dissemination of knowledge regarding the status of the civil registration system at the national level, it was considered advantageous to establish a national committee on civil registration and vital statistics composed of agencies responsible for registration, collection, tabulation, analysis and dissemination of civil registration matters and vital statistics in the country;

(m) ESCAP [Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific] might consider establishing a mechanism for providing detailed information on the current status of civil registration systems in the countries of the region, such as the publication of a periodical news bulletin.