Civil Registration Centre for Development-CRC4D

Supplementary assessment of civil registration in Botswana, Côte d’Ivoire, Namibia, Nigeria, Senegal and Uganda—UNICEF contribution to the Second Conference of African Ministers Responsible for Civil Registration

2nd draft

Gopalan Balagopal and Jaap van der Straaten

The Hague, 3 December 2012
Civil Registration Centre for Development-CRC4D

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

According to United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) data, in the period 1995–2004, only 5 per cent of the sub-Saharan African population lived in countries with complete birth registration (more than 90 per cent of births registered), while three decades earlier the percentage was higher, at 7 per cent. According to United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) data, the birth registration rate for sub-Saharan Africa in 2010 was 38 per cent, unchanged from 2006. The overall picture of civil registration in sub-Saharan Africa is one of stagnation with very few bright spots. There is a growing undercurrent of public recognition on the continent that something needs to be done. Most African countries have joined the bandwagon of introducing or upgrading national IDs but civil registration systems lack the quality and completeness for reliable breeder documents for ID enrolment.

In September 2012, the Second Conference of African Ministers Responsible for Civil Registration was held in Durban, South Africa, two years after the first had been held in Addis Ababa in August 2010. In the interim, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) provided secretariat services for the conference supported by a core group consisting of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), UNICEF and the World Health Organization/Health Metrics Network (WHO/HMN). The African Union, which declared the conferences a “standing platform”, and the African Development Bank jointly support the ministerial process.

To inform the second conference and lay the basis for improvement of the status of civil registration on the continent, ECA conducted a regional assessment survey. No fewer than 45 of 54 countries responded. In addition, the core group seconded a UNICEF proposal to conduct a supplementary assessment, the results of which are presented in this report. This report is divided into two parts: in the first part selected results of the regional assessment survey are illustrated with examples from six countries: Botswana, Côte d’Ivoire, Namibia, the Niger, Senegal and Uganda. The six countries were selected as they had introduced measures that are believed to have relevance beyond their borders for other countries wishing to improve their civil registration system. As will become clear, Côte d’Ivoire is a special case, as it is recovering from a decade of turmoil. The country was selected because of what it has done and continues to do to restore people’s identities, establish civil registration records that were not established and to reconstitute those that were lost or destroyed during the conflict. The country is not an isolated case. In fact, since the beginning of the century, about one fourth of the sub-Saharan countries have been or are still involved in a civil or foreign war. Côte d’Ivoire’s contribution to the supplementary assessment was to illustrate the problems that arise and what should be done in a post-conflict situation.

This supplementary assessment focuses on three “i-strategies”, while implicitly it is part of an important fourth “i-strategy”. The three strategies are: information and communications technology (ICT), interoperability and incentives. The fourth is the strategy of international exchange and, one could say, of “intelligence”, of which these assessments are an example. African countries have much to gain by working together, learning from and inspiring one another in addressing their civil registration challenges. The ministerial process is the engine for this international collaboration and exchange.

Most of Africa’s civil registration systems are still paper-based, local and disconnected. The availability of affordable information and communications technology and quickly improving conditions in Africa for its application by governments is one important way to change radically the way civil registration is done, and in the process have systems that are less prone to destruction (in conflict) or to wear and tear by storage in challenging environments. All six supplementary assessment countries are in the process of applying ICT, be it through the system known as “RapidSMS” monitoring (Nigeria), notification through cell phones (Uganda), digitizing the system wholesale (Senegal) or integration of ID services (People Hub, Botswana).
Interoperability is essential for civil registration. It needs to piggyback on outreach of government services superior to its own. The health sector is the most common partner for civil registrars as it is close to or involved in the occurrence of vital events. The introduction of registration possibilities in 21 hospitals in Namibia, each of adequate scale, has boosted birth registration rates to unprecedented levels. Registration is also possible in 135 Ugandan hospitals, while Botswana is introducing such a system and Nigeria has plans to do so. Interoperability also offers unprecedented possibilities in the area of social protection. Social assistance grants have been introduced in about four out of five sub-Saharan African countries. As they target the people who are least likely to be registered but will need identification for benefit delivery, the link with civil registration is obvious – besides the incentives offered for registration. All six supplementary assessment countries have social assistance grant programmes in place. In addition, the national ID systems that are now commonplace in almost all African countries need to be integrated with civil registration. This has been recognized in Senegal, Kenya, Malawi and the Sudan, which have passed laws that cover both identity systems in a single law. A few African countries (the Comoros, Mozambique and Seychelles) offer the ID from birth. Lowering the age for the national ID is a possibility worth considering.

Ultimately an efficient civil registration system for which ICT is used, effective interoperability arrangements and laws supporting a modern way of service delivery, will together lower thresholds and improve the accessibility of services, in other words, disincentives will be reduced and some even eliminated. Social assistance programmes for the poor and the growing global interdependence for the better-off (such as a photo ID to obtain a SIM card for a mobile phone service subscription, open a bank account, travel etc.), i.e. incentives, will ultimately bring everyone into the country’s civil registration system.

The advantages of a well-functioning civil registration system are not only apparent in times of conflict and post-conflict (e.g. Côte d’Ivoire). In peacetime it provides the foundations for good governance. Enabling effective government planning, it helps better government service delivery at lower unit cost. Effective civil registration helps to reduce issues of statelessness and risk of conflict over issues of nationality.
INTRODUCTION

This supplementary assessment of civil registration in Africa focuses on selected strategies used in several African countries. They are strategies for rapidly scaling up coverage of birth and civil registration. The supplementary assessment is one of the preparatory efforts that informed the Second Conference of African Ministers Responsible for Civil Registration. The conference was held in Durban, South Africa, from 3 to 7 September 2012. This assessment is supplementary to the ECA-conducted regional assessment survey.1

The UNICEF East and Southern Africa and Western and Central Africa regional offices contracted the Civil Registration Centre for Development (CRC4D) to carry out the supplementary assessment. Field visits were conducted in Botswana, Namibia, and Uganda and remote support was given to Cote d’Ivoire, Nigeria and Senegal. The six countries all presented their strategies for acceleration of civil registration development at the Durban Conference.

Part I of the present report sets out the major results of the regional assessment survey. The response rate was high: 45 out of 54 African countries targeted by the survey responded. The survey questionnaire covered a variety of aspects of the status of civil registration and vital statistics. The survey results are illustrated with selected country examples from the supplementary assessment, covering the legal framework, organization and management of civil registration, including how costs affect registration coverage; civil registration records; paper-based system challenges; birth certificate formats and the purposes for which they are used; population group coverage and the link between national ID systems and civil registration.

In Part II, selected strategies for scaling up effective civil registration methods are examined in more detail. These include:

- The use of ICT
- Interoperability with other sectors: health, national ID systems and social transfer programmes
- Incentives

Côte d’Ivoire is included among the six countries as an example of a country in a post-conflict situation restoring and reconstructing its civil registration system. During the first 12 years of the twenty-first century no fewer than one fourth of the countries on the continent have been affected by war.

1. PART I

SELECTED RESULTS OF THE REGIONAL ASSESSMENT SURVEY ILLUSTRATED BY COUNTRY EXAMPLES

1.1 Introduction

In this part of the report major results of the regional assessment survey are discussed. The survey covered a variety of aspects of the status of civil registration and vital statistics. Findings from the supplementary assessment are used to illustrate the generic findings of the regional assessment survey with specific country examples. These include descriptions of the legal frameworks that govern how civil registration systems work in Africa; the organization and management of civil registration, including how costs affect registration coverage; the status and use of civil registration records; the challenges posed by paper-based systems still prevailing in Africa; variation in birth certificate formats and purposes for which birth certificates are used; populations included and left out of civil registration coverage; and the relationship between ever more common national ID systems and civil registration.

1.2 Legal Framework

All the countries that responded to the survey (45), with the exception of South Sudan, have laws governing civil registration. The country that enacted its first law on civil registration most recently (June 2012) is Ethiopia. South Sudan has initiated action for framing the country’s legislation. Generally a single law covers live births, deaths and foetal deaths. Often, separate laws regulate marriage and divorce. An important point for follow-up action is that, while 43 countries have laws for compulsory registration of live births, only 24 of those countries have compulsory registration of foetal death.

In countries covered by the supplementary assessment, the status of the legal framework was found to be a fundamental factor in the efficiency and effectiveness of the civil registration system. For example, in Uganda the current law does not allow electronic records, either transmission or signatures. In a project for providing cash grants to vulnerable families, well over one million electronic records for the registration of births were collected. However, official registration could not be performed and birth certificates could not be issued in the absence of the required provisions in the Births and Deaths Registration Law of 1970 allowing for electronic records (status as at August 2012).

Namibia has in place a successful partnership between the civil registry and the health sector for the registration of babies born in hospitals by staff of the Ministry of Home Affairs deployed within the hospitals. Namibia is also rapidly computerizing its National Population Register. However, under the Births, Marriages and Deaths Registration Act of 1963, electronic registration is not valid.

Côte d’Ivoire, Nigeria and Senegal all reported that they have plans for legal reform or consider legal reform desirable. In Côte d’Ivoire (whose civil registration law dates from 1964) and
Senegal (1972; national ID: 2005) the spur to legal reform is the wish for overall modernization, including digitization of civil registration. In Nigeria (1979, 1992) the focus for legal reform appears to be on addressing organizational bottlenecks in the allocation of civil registration authority between different levels of government. Senegal reported the need for better integration of civil registration and national ID. A number of countries are in the process of amending laws to overcome such problems, including Namibia and Uganda. Kenya has recently amended its legal framework for civil registration while realigning government functions under the new Constitution. Instead of the current separation of laws for the civil registration system and national ID, Kenya will have a single law covering both. This is a recommended best practice, and Malawi and the Sudan have made similar changes to their legal framework. In many other African countries there is no such integration within the legal (and organizational framework) and this complicates the fundamental requirement for identity management, namely, that citizens should have a unique identity.

1.3 Organization and management of civil registration

**Government departments responsible; control**

In the great majority of African countries registration of births and deaths is the responsibility of the interior ministry (including home affairs and territorial administration), in others it is the ministry of justice. In the case of marriage, and especially divorce, the ministry of justice is responsible in the majority of cases.

The organization of civil registration may or may not be under central control. In all, 25 out of 45 countries reported that they had some form of national coordination. This regional assessment survey result could well be one of the most significant in terms of its relevance for and impact on the current status of civil registration in Africa, especially when it is recalled that coordination is not the same as central control.

The United Nations recommendation is that, “when the administrative and geographic organization of the country permits”, local registration offices be directly dependent on a national office that can coordinate, unify, supervise and promote registration efficiency for both legal and statistical needs. In federal states, central control may not be possible, but then the United Nations recommends that alternative, “effective coordination”, be in place instead. However, over the past few decades, many countries have devolved central government functions to local government. Often this has meant that decentralization processes have come into conflict with the United Nations principle of central control for civil registration.

The organization of civil registration differs between countries that have inherited a British administrative structure and those that have a French heritage. In the latter, decentralization is greater, municipal authorities having an almost independent role in the management of civil registration.

Another problem is that central ministries of interior or justice may have no presence below the regional level and will therefore need to coordinate their work with other agencies responsible for local government, which may or may not give adequate priority and resources to civil registration.

In the supplementary assessment countries, the problems caused by decentralization were also evident. Reportedly, chief administrative officers at the district level in one of the countries did not attach much importance to their civil registration duties as this did not count in their performance evaluation.

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2 The question was worded as follows: “Is there a civil registration coordination body or inter-agency coordination committee at the national level for needs and services among different agencies dealing with civil registration?”
Nigeria is a federal State, which adds an additional challenge to achieving universal registration. The National Population Commission is responsible for civil registration in Nigeria. A UNICEF-supported RapidSMS mobile phone solution is used to monitor registration in the country’s registration office. In 2004, Senegal set up a national office for civil registration (Centre National d’Etat Civil – CNEC) to strengthen national coordination. Côte d’Ivoire has plans for such a central office. Former French colonies have inherited a system that typically lacks such a national supervisory centre, a situation that has its origins in decisions taken in France in 1792 about devolution of responsibility for civil registration to municipalities. One such country, Cameroon, decided to create a national office in 2011.

Civil registration during and after conflict

Sadly, Africa still suffers from continuing violent conflict within and between countries. This has a direct impact on the administration of the civil registration system. Registers are destroyed, registrars have to flee and normal registration activity ceases. Once the conflict is over, the restoration of a routine service in ransacked offices, reconstitution of registers and management of late and delayed registration all put an extraordinary strain on the civil registration service, leaving aside the sensitivity of issues of statelessness that arise when citizenship is withheld from undocumented people. Table 1 lists twenty-first century conflicts in Africa, excluding what is termed the “war on terrorism” fought in a number of African countries and the transition in Tunisia and Egypt. No fewer than 13 countries have been affected by conflict (Central African Republic, Chad, the Comoros, Côte d’Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Eritrea, Kenya, Libya, Mali, the Niger, South Sudan and the Sudan), some of them repeatedly. This is no less than one fourth of all African countries. The regional assessment survey did not include explicit questions on this aspect of disruption of government and the civil registration service, but one of the countries affected, Côte d’Ivoire, gave a presentation at the Durban conference that is discussed in the second part of this supplementary assessment report.

Table 1: African countries affected by foreign or civil war since 20003

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year(s)</th>
<th>Conflict Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2001—2003</td>
<td>Central African Republic civil war</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002—2003</td>
<td>Ivorian civil war</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003—present</td>
<td>war in Darfur (the Sudan)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>French-Ivorian clashes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Current conflict in the Niger Delta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004—2007</td>
<td>Central African Republic bush war</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Present Kivu conflict (Democratic Republic of the Congo)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>2010 Civil war in Chad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005—2008</td>
<td>Mount Elgon insurgency (Kenya)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007—2009</td>
<td>Second Tuareg rebellion (Northern Mali, the Niger)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Kenyan crisis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Invasion of Anjouan (the Comoros)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Djiboutian-Eritrean border conflict</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>Sudan airstrikes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Second Ivorian civil war</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Libyan civil war</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Sudan-South Sudan conflict</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Present Tuareg rebellion (Mali)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3 Since 1987 there has also been a continuing conflict between Uganda People’s Defence Force (UPDF) and the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) outside Uganda’s borders and involving the Democratic Republic of Congo, as well as South Sudan.
1.4 Costs of registration

Resource constraints are a major problem in most countries. The regional assessment survey shows that in as many as ten countries there is no recurrent government-allocated budget for running the civil registration system. Of the countries, only six considered their budget adequate.

This problem is a major issue in all the countries (Botswana, Namibia and Uganda) visited for the supplementary assessment. In Uganda (Uganda Registration Services Bureau – URSB) and some other African countries (e.g. United Republic of Tanzania) the responsibility for civil registration is now with a quasi-governmental agency. In some cases, the agency is expected to raise the revenues needed to meet its operating costs;4 if no subsidy is given, quasi-governmental agencies are left with no option but to charge for their services. This violates the United Nations guideline that registration and the first copy of the certificate for both birth and death should be free of charge. The regional assessment survey shows that there is a charge for registration of births in eight countries, while 19 countries charge for the issuance of the first copy of birth certificates. Advocacy is required in these countries to eliminate those charges.

Charges for registration or obtaining a birth certificate are often just part of the cost for parents. The indirect costs of registration (cost of travel, accommodation, lost production or income) can be a multiple of the payment at the registration office, and amount to a significant barrier to achieving universal registration. Another CRC4D study (2010) found that the average cost of obtaining a long-form birth certificate from the only office where it is issued in Malawi (in Blantyre) could be as high as $25.5. While this may have been exceptional, the indirect costs of registration are significant in many African countries. If the registration is done outside the time frame prescribed by law, there is an additional charge for late or delayed registration,6 which in the case of the latter can involve the costs of witness attendance and a court procedure.

The regional assessment survey reveals that the average number of people served by each registration centre in the 30 countries that responded to this question ranges from 4,000 to 440,000. This wide range of average numbers served is a rough indicator of the accessibility and proximity of the civil registration service, although only a crude one. Population densities vary greatly between African countries, and in high population density countries civil registration offices can be organized with economies of scale, such as division of labour and specialization. According to the regional assessment survey, eight countries have registration centres catering for an average population of more than 70,000. If all births and deaths were registered this would mean about 3,000 vital events per average office per annum, which is not at all a high workload. Proximity of offices matters for the utilization of civil registration services. It is in the vast rural areas of Africa where population densities are low that it can be prohibitively costly for the government to reach the people, and for people to reach the registration office.

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4 Very successful examples operational elsewhere, such as the Registro Nacional de Identificación y Estado Civil (RENIEC) in Peru, do receive adequate government funding, and are able to keep birth registration and first birth certificate free.


6 “Late” registration is registration within the “grace period”, which is a period during which registration is still within the jurisdiction of the civil registrar. “Delayed” registration is beyond the grace period, usually requiring a court procedure.
1.5 Status of civil registration records

Civil registration systems are paper-based in most African countries. It is almost impossible to retrieve these records in reasonable time for verification and the issuance of extracts. While people become ever more mobile, their records stay where they were born and they will generally have to travel back for extracts from the register. Storing paper safely for any length of time is challenging and in many countries the physical condition of these records is very poor. This situation jeopardizes the very foundation of identity, which requires permanent storage and accessibility of civil registration records. The solution to this problem lies in computerization (see Part II).

1.6 Birth certificates: formats and purposes

In some African countries the practice is to issue a “short birth certificate” with minimum details of the birth in offices that are located relatively close to the place where birth occurs. The parents are advised to collect a “long birth certificate”, available from the central office for civil registration, after a certain period of time. This system was put in place in order to provide the family with proof of registration of birth in the form of the “short” certificate soon after registration has taken place. In the meantime, the record is sent to the central office where it is archived. An extract of that record is then provided as a “long birth certificate”. In August 2012, URSB in Uganda was still typing out “long birth certificates” manually, using typewriters, at their office in Kampala. This type of inefficiency can be fully removed if the registration is computerized and the different “long” and “short” formats can be eliminated.

To the extent that the long-cum-short birth certificate format is used for central verification, online verification can replace that within a fraction of the time required when the physical transportation of documents is necessary. Of course, digital storage of civil registration records completely removes the need for physical storage space. According to a required civil registration standard, a duplicate of the records needs to be kept in another physical space, which, in a digital system will again be infinitely less demanding. Questions concerning permanent electronic storage (given the high frequency of change in electronic format, a legitimate concern) have been studied and resolved. Only 28 of 45 countries have some sort of national action plan for development of civil registration and vital statistics systems. Among the supplementary assessment countries Côte d’Ivoire and Senegal have such plans, which include plans for computerization.
Civil registration records and the official extracts from these serve to establish claims to various legal and administrative services. Hence a birth record and its extract, the birth certificate, is legal evidentiary proof of age. It is also evidence of identity and entitlement to a range of economic and social rights.

The regional assessment survey provides important information for African countries about the utilization of birth certificates as legal evidence in courts and found that in 42 countries they were used as primary evidence and in seven countries as secondary evidence. In respect of services, 15 countries require birth certificates for access to post-natal services in health centres and hospitals, while 25 countries do not. In 12 countries, health workers required birth certificates for provision of immunization services, while in 31 countries they do not.

1.7 Coordination and monitoring

As was seen above, the regional assessment survey shows that only 24 of 45 countries have a coordinating body for civil registration at the national level. Considering that often the civil registration function depends on collaboration with other sectors of government in order to bring the civil registration service to the people, the lack of coordination in so many Africa countries is a serious weakness in the management of the system.

The supplementary assessment also noted lack of adequate stakeholder involvement in the monitoring of civil registration. In two of the three countries there was no arrangement for engaging a group of stakeholders for this purpose, though the value of such a mechanism was acknowledged. Uganda’s URSB did work with a multi-departmental committee, but the committee had recently had to be brought out of dormancy for a discussion of civil registration policy and legal development.

Monitoring of civil registration encompasses coverage and completeness. Coverage generally refers to the registration of events occurring to specific population groups or in all geographical areas. Completeness on the other hand means registration of every event that occurs in the country or every event that occurs to the population of the country. Other important measures of civil registration data quality are correctness (or “content error”), availability and timeliness.

In terms of the regional assessment survey definition of coverage, the number of countries that according to the survey did not fully cover live births and deaths for defined population groups is set out in table 2. The non-registration or under-registration of some groups, such as the rural population and nomads, reflects a situation common to all countries with incomplete registration. Urban and sedentary populations are better covered by the civil registration service, both for demand (need and benefit) and supply reasons (relative ease and cost for the civil registration authority to reach these populations). Only a general improvement on the demand and supply sides will enable a civil registration service to reach a point where it can focus on inclusionary efforts.

7 Similarly high scores were found for death certificates/records (40), marriage certificates/records (42) and divorce certificates/records (35 countries).
8 The regional assessment survey terminology, which is used here, is different from UNSD conventions. For example, UNSD refers to “completeness of coverage” in United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Statistics Division. Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System. Revision 2. Series M_19rev2E.New York (2001). “Complete registration exists when every vital event that has occurred to the members of the population of a particular country (or area), within a specified time period, has been registered in the system, i.e., has a vital event registration record. Thus, the system has attained 100 per cent coverage. Any deviation from complete coverage is measured as ‘coverage error’.”
What is more worrying is that some countries do not register the vital events occurring to internally dis-
placed persons, refugees, asylum seekers and non-citizens residing in the country. This goes against inter-
national norms and principles, and is an area for advocacy and change of practice. Countries have a duty to register vital events that happen within their borders (as well as on planes and ships under their flag). When all countries follow these rules, every person will have a birth record, whether within the country or abroad. Vital events occurring to citizens residing abroad need to be registered abroad and subsequently legalized and incorporated in a special register in the home country.

Table 2: Population groups not (fully) covered by civil registration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population not covered</th>
<th>Number of countries not covering:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Live births</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All rural population</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some residents of rural population</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nomads</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internally displaced persons</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refugees and asylum seekers</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some residents of urban population</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-citizens residing in the country</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizens residing abroad</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: RAS.

1.8 National IDs and birth certificates

National IDs are identity documents in the form of cards or other paper documents issued to individuals. They are usually issued at a particular age, often 16 or 18 years. IDs distinguish the person by assigning a unique number and adding biometric features of the holder (e.g. photo, fingerprint, iris scans). The data of the ID-holder are stored in a central database. The level of sophistication of a national ID varies, an increasing number of countries also incorporating biometric features other than the traditional photo in the national ID and database.

The regional assessment survey reveals that 38 of 45 countries report that they have a national ID system and that 24 are linked to the civil registration system. In all, 35 countries replied that they require the birth certificate as breeder document for the issuance of the national ID.

Among supplementary assessment countries, Botswana provides an example of excellent integration. The People Hub brings together registrations of births, deaths, marriages and divorces, immigration and citizenship, visa and migration, work and resident permits, as well as national IDs.
South Africa has a well-organized National Population Register along these lines and Namibia and other countries are also developing web-based population-registers.
2. PART II
SUPPLEMENTARY ASSESSMENT RESULTS

2.1 Introduction

Part I discussed the Regional Assessment Study undertaken by ECA. The core group of partners supporting the ministerial process (UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF and WHO/HMN) recommended collecting additional information on a few strategic areas that are considered crucial for accelerating progress in civil registration. The UNICEF regional offices for Eastern and Southern Africa and Western and Central Africa were requested to help undertake a supplementary assessment to complement the findings of the ECA regional assessment.

The areas identified were the use of ICT and interoperability: partnership between civil registration and the health sector, and linkage of civil registration and national ID systems with social protection programmes. These strategies also include another crucial strategy: incentives. Social protection programmes provide tangible benefits to the people enrolled, but the delivery of these benefits requires people to be identifiable, i.e. to have identity papers. The other strategies have the effect of reducing or eliminating disincentives to registration.

CRC4D undertook this supplementary assessment. Field visits were made to Botswana, Namibia and Uganda in August 2012. Remote support was given to Côte d’Ivoire, Nigeria and Senegal. Part II summarizes the findings of the supplementary assessment, which, it should be noted, is limited to the above-mentioned strategic areas in civil registration administration and does not extend to vital statistics aspects.

2.2 KEY DATA ON THE SUPPLEMENTARY ASSESSMENT COUNTRIES

The six supplementary assessment countries were selected for their adoption of strategies that hold the promise of quick and sustained civil registration improvement results.9

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9 Côte d’Ivoire was included for its experience with post-conflict civil registration recovery, rather than for accelerated civil registration improvement.
Table 3: Key data on supplementary assessment countries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Botswana</th>
<th>Côte d’Ivoire</th>
<th>Namibia</th>
<th>Nigeria</th>
<th>Senegal</th>
<th>Uganda</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Birth registration rate – total</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population (M)</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>19.7</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>158.4</td>
<td>12.4</td>
<td>33.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crude birth rate</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crude death rate</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vital events per annum</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>906</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>8,554</td>
<td>570</td>
<td>1,904</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(thousands)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area (km²)</td>
<td>581.730</td>
<td>322.463</td>
<td>824.292</td>
<td>923.768</td>
<td>196.722</td>
<td>241.038</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population density (inhabitants/km²)</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>61.1</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>171.5</td>
<td>63.0</td>
<td>138.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Required number of registration points within 5 km (RP5)</td>
<td>7,411</td>
<td>4,108</td>
<td>10,501</td>
<td>11,768</td>
<td>2,506</td>
<td>3,071</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vital events per annum per RP5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>727</td>
<td>228</td>
<td>620</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobile phones per capita (2011)</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gross national income per capita</td>
<td>56,260</td>
<td>$1,060</td>
<td>$4,310</td>
<td>$1,140</td>
<td>$1,040</td>
<td>$460</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antenatal care (% of pregnant women receiving at least one contact, 2006-2010)</td>
<td>99%</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One-year old children DPT1 immunized</td>
<td>99%</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are a number of factors that affect a country’s ability to deliver civil registration services, and some key data in respect of those factors are shown in table 3.

First of all, a country’s national income (here measured by its gross national income (GNI) per capita) is a measure both of a government’s tax base and ability to deliver services, and of the inhabitants’ disposable income and ability to buy goods and services and afford travel and indirect costs to make use of government services, including the registration of vital events. The world average birth registration rate in low-income countries (GNI per capita: < $1,006) is 32 per cent; for the lower middle-income countries (GNI per capita: $1,006–$3,975) the average is 49 per cent. Countries vary greatly, especially in the low-income group. It is only when GNI per capita increases to levels over $4,000 that birth registration rates are generally over 90 per cent, and variance is very low, meaning that a country will almost always have complete registration. The registration rates in the key data table are averages. Across states or regions within countries, large differences are not uncommon. For example, in Nigeria, according to preliminary results of the MICS-IV survey (2011), there are ten states with birth registration rates of between 60 and 75 per cent.
Population densities and the logistics challenge that they can pose are also an important factor, especially for countries that still have low national income (much more so than in rich countries like Australia or Canada, which have vast land areas and low population density, but are rich and have a high degree of urbanization). In African countries with a large proportion of the population still working in the primary sector, rural areas and low incomes, population density is crucial to the feasibility of delivering civil registration services. Both Botswana (3.4 inhabitants/km²) and Namibia (2.5 inhabitants/km²) are well below the African average population density of 30 inhabitants per km², which may explain why they have yet to reach a higher birth registration rate.

The logistics problem in all six countries can be appreciated from the required number of registration points the countries would need for the whole population to be within five kilometres of a registration point. For a population of only about two million, Namibia would need as many registration points as Nigeria with some 160 million inhabitants. But even in the country with the highest population density – Nigeria, with 171 inhabitants/km² – the number of vital events per annum per registration point would be just over 700 (if all were registered), or only about three per workday. This does not allow such registration points to have an acceptable economic scale. Accordingly, instead of having 11,768 registration points, Nigeria has only 2,951 – relatively few for its population – and because the country has a 30 per cent rather than a 100 per cent birth registration rate, the average workload of its registration points is low. Given that there are no offices that could be termed “average”, Nigeria has offices with a large workload (some 10 per cent have between 15 and 30 birth registrations per day), while at the other extreme some 11 per cent of offices have a service area with distances to the office of up to 17 kilometres. Offices with such large service areas will have difficulty serving the population in their area. This is the formidable challenge faced by civil registration in Africa.

Can this circle be squared? There are two ways in which it can. First, there is a need for a paradigm shift. Rather than having offices close to where people live, the traditional registration office can be replaced by a handheld “office” – a mobile phone – for vital event notification. Table 3 shows data for the penetration of mobile phones in the six countries. This is an indicator of the feasibility of mobile phone use for notification of vital events.10 Second, the civil registration service needs to piggyback on government services that have the best footprint in the country. In this report, this is lumped together under the term “interoperability”: the civil registration function working with another service of government as if they were one. There are three services that stand out: the health sector, the national ID organization and the social transfer outreach (if present).11 Table 3 shows that, apart from Nigeria, all countries have a high percentage of DPT1 immunization and antenatal care contact. This shows the outreach of the health sector.

2.3 USE OF ICT

Use of mobile phone technology

Internet coverage has improved rapidly and cell phones have become ubiquitous all over Africa. Advanced applications like mobile money are commonplace in some countries and spread quickly. There has also been interest in the use of this technology for development-related interventions. For instance, cell phones with purpose-designed software have been used to track availability of medicines in health centres and child malnourishment. Transmission of data from distant locations at negligible cost is a real solution in a continent of vast distances and sparse populations.

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10 The coverage of mobile phone networks in Africa is improving by the day. Notification of vital events does not need to be instantaneous and can be done later from areas with a signal.

11 The education sector has very good outreach too, and schools and schoolteachers can play a role in supporting registration, but the three other functions are more closely associated with the events of birth and/or death.
While the first use of cell phones for transmission of birth registration data was made in Vanuatu in the Pacific in 2009, Uganda pioneered its Mobile Vital Records System (MVRS) using locally available low-cost cell phones. The Uganda Registration Services Bureau (URSB) developed the system in partnership with Uganda Telecom Limited (UTL). UNICEF provides technical support.

Figure 2 shows the process for transmission of data from two sources: births in hospitals and home births in the community. Cell phones and computers are used to transmit data.

**Figure 2: Process for notifying births, registration and generation of certificates in Uganda’s Mobile Vital Records System**

Source: URSB presentation at the Second Conference of African Ministers Responsible for Civil Registration, Durban, September 2012

Information from rural areas for births occurring outside health facilities comes to “notifiers”, who in Uganda are the parish chiefs. A nurse or a records assistant is designated as notifier for hospital births. Cell phones or the Internet are used to transmit birth information to a digital database.

The birth notification is transmitted using cell phones with simple purpose-designed software using unstructured supplementary services data (USSD). USSD allows transmission from cell phones to computers.

An authorized “validator” checks notifications before registration by a civil registrar. These registrars are the chiefs of sub-counties, town clerks or administrators in hospitals. Immediately after this, “short-form” birth certificates can be printed. Depending on the purpose for which the birth certificate is required, short-form birth certificates may have to be replaced by a long-form birth certificate (that gives more detail) from the URSB office in Kampala.

The limitations of USSD messaging (a maximum number of characters per message) still limit the possibility of generating long-form certificates instantaneously. 12 Additional information on MVRS:
1. **USSD:** The advantages of USSD are, first, there is no need for an Internet connection; second, cheap cell phones can be used; third, it is easier to train people to use USSD than other options; and, fourth, USSD is universally available across mobile phone companies.

2. Online data inputting on computers works where Internet is available, and conditions for the use of computers are in place. The use of computers and the Internet makes it possible to capture more details, e.g. on location of birth and parents. Information stored on computers from USSD messaging can be edited online.

3. Off-line data-input is possible where power and Internet connectivity is intermittent. Information can be keyed in for transmission when power and Internet connectivity are available.

URSB priorities (as of August 2012) are to make USSD more robust, by enabling editing of data and incorporation of some automatic checks. This was almost complete. The offline version for computers is another priority activity.

Reportedly, MVRS was originally conceived largely from a technical perspective. The roll-out revealed many problems relating to inadequate understanding of the needs of the society it was seeking to serve. It is better to start from a clearer understanding of those needs.

One example is naming conventions in Uganda, where it often takes a considerable time to name a child. This is an issue where legal requirements collide with local culture, and the law rather than technology is to blame. India’s civil registration law allows a first name to be given during the first 15 years of life. Very recently, Trinidad and Tobago has amended its law to allow more time for name giving (rather than for the prescribed time for registration, as in India).

In Uganda, low literacy levels posed a challenge for training in the use of mobile technology for notification, which was another underestimated factor.

The future role of UTL (which is privately owned by a South African company) and its cost – and revenue – were explored. Initially UTL made its contribution as a corporate social responsibility project. However, reportedly there was also the expectation that, first, users would move to buying airtime and services from UTL; second, revenues would be generated from the use of the USSD platform for transmission of additional messages; and, third, closed user groups would be developed – free calls within such a group for a flat fee for the group as a whole.

These objectives, which are in fact at odds with the very idea of corporate social responsibility, are unlikely to be realized. There is also a turnover of skilled personnel at UTL and with its overall presence appearing to be challenged by new players, it remains to be seen how far this example of public-private partnership can be sustained. Despite all this, the partnership in Uganda between UTL, URBS and UNICEF has been a valuable learning experience for the whole of Africa.

It is important to note that the volume of vital events occurring in a country and the mobile phone traffic that it could generate is minimal compared with other mobile phone usage. It therefore has no incidence on the revenue of mobile phone companies.13

The National Population Commission of Nigeria and UNICEF have introduced the use of mobile phones for the monitoring of civil registration. A system known as “RapidSMS” is used to send real-time information to the Commission from the country’s close to 3,000 registration centres. It is understood that the authorities

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13 Of much more interest for mobile phone companies is first, the almost universal requirement that identification is required in order to have a SIM-card; and, second, that (government) social transfer programmes may increasingly use the mobile phone for money transfers to beneficiaries, whose identity needs to be associated with the mobile phone to which the money is sent. In other words: identification is of crucial importance to mobile phone companies, which points to an area of mutual interest of mobile phone companies and the civil registration authority.
in Nigeria are considering streamlining the organization of civil registration, among other things to address duplication of effort by local authorities and higher governmental levels in this federal country. For the moment, registration monitoring is an interim measure that may help address bottlenecks. Monitoring will thus help to improve registration rates (and reduce coverage error), identification of problem areas, etc. RapidSMS has proved a powerful tool. The next step is to expand digitization to the registration process itself, thus enabling content error (the quality of registration) to be tackled.

In Senegal, a pilot test has been carried out of the use of the mobile phone, with involvement of the Government, the French mobile phone company Orange, and the French non-governmental education organization Aide-et-Action. It has received an award, although it still is a small inception project, while projects in Kenya, Liberia and Uganda (see below) are older and larger in scale.

Use of the mobile phone for civil registration has yet to be introduced in any of the other three supplementary assessment countries. African countries that have started to use or test the mobile phone for civil registration are Kenya (with involvement of Plan and WHO), Liberia (with help from Crisis Management Initiative, Plan and UNICEF) and Cameroon (to start in 2013, with UNICEF involvement). Orange and Aide-et-Action may do a pilot in Côte d’Ivoire.

**Computerization**

There is widespread recognition that civil registration systems should move to digitization. Countries in the process of establishing national population registers have already started establishing computerized databases. Countries have also initiated steps for scanning past records while making the transition. In 2012, this was happening in both Botswana and Namibia. Namibia has a contract with a specialized documentation firm that is now scanning nearly 8 million birth registration records going back several decades. Meanwhile, current applications for birth and death registration and national IDs are entered in digital databases. Botswana has not yet computerized data entry in registration points outside the capital city, Gaborone, but instead uses a system of taking paper notifications by courier every day to Gaborone, where they are scanned into the database. Both Côte d’Ivoire and Senegal have plans in place for digitization, and have in fact already made a start on computerization.

In Côte d’Ivoire, the second civil war in 2011 brought a halt to the country’s programme to modernize its civil registry (MECCI). A significant contribution of €11 million from the European Union was forfeited because of the unrest in the country. The two civil wars during the 2002–2011 period resulted in the destruction of many registers. In accordance with the civil registration practice in Côte d’Ivoire, the courts should also keep duplicates of the records. Some of those court archives were destroyed during the civil wars. The reconstitution of registers, required by law, has been a very costly operation. The irony is that under the current law, which the MECCI programme aims to change, records are being reconstituted in the old paper-based format, which renders them as vulnerable as they were before. Obviously, the digitization of civil registers offers the possibility of much easier creation and safe storage of back-up records and much better risk management. In a country suffering from many conflicts, digitization is one way to eliminate, or at least greatly reduce, the risk of loss of legal identity for African people. This also reduces a source of new conflicts over citizenship claims and rights.

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14 The population register is a mechanism for the continuous recording of selected information pertaining to each member of the resident population of a country or area, making it possible to determine up-to-date information about the size and characteristics of the population at selected moments. Because of the nature of a population register, its organization, as well as its operation, should have a legal basis. Population registers start with a base consisting of an inventory of the inhabitants of an area and their characteristics, such as date on birth, sex, marital status, place of birth, place of residence, citizenship and language. To assist in locating a record for a particular person, household or family in a population register, an identification number is provided for each entity. Details of population registers are available at http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/sources/popreg/popreg-methods.htm. A population register is different from a civil register, which contains records of vital events where they occur. The databases that hold national ID holder information will generally mimic the features of population registers.
2.4 INTEROPERABILITY: THE HEALTH SECTOR

The health sector is a natural partner of civil registration. Hospitals and other health facilities accommodate most births and deaths. It is therefore logical to ensure that these facilities can register or notify the occurrence of these events. Such arrangements ensure that vital events are recorded with optimal accuracy, as will be the case at a time closest to its occurrence. A United Nations standard principle is that vital events should be reported as soon as possible because this will lead to the least “coverage error” (the longer the reporting is delayed the less likely it is to occur), and the least “content error” (mistakes made in the record of the vital event, and, thereafter, in the certificate or extract of the civil register).

A number of countries have recognized this and have or are in the process of arranging this partnership. In Namibia, arrangements are in place in 21 hospitals for the registration of births through a small facility for this purpose staffed by personnel of the Ministry of Home and Internal Affairs. While a formal review of the results of this arrangement is yet to take place, it is clear from reports from hospital staff and families that this intervention has made registration of births much simpler. According to figures available from the Ministry, registration rates show a growth from a few thousand in 2008 at the start to about 30,000 in 2011 (see figure 3 below, left-hand axis). While this figure also includes late registration numbers, and the graph shows that registration has partly moved from normal registration offices to hospital-based civil registration points, the most important effect has been the increase in total registration from about 45,000 in 2008 to more than 60,000 in 2011, an increase of around 33 per cent.

Figure 3: Namibia: Birth registration and child welfare grant beneficiaries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Registered in Hospital</th>
<th>Registered excluding hospital</th>
<th>Child Welfare Grant Beneficiaries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>40,000</td>
<td>25,000</td>
<td>10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>45,000</td>
<td>30,000</td>
<td>12,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>50,000</td>
<td>35,000</td>
<td>14,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>55,000</td>
<td>40,000</td>
<td>16,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: MGECW & MHAI, Namibia

There is no denying that hospital-based registration has resulted in a significant increase in birth registration. The annual number of births in Namibia is about 55,000, and the chart shows that Namibia has made great strides towards universal birth registration in only a few years.

In parallel with improved birth registration rates, child welfare grants have also gone up, as is shown in the chart, from about 100,000 to about 140,000 (right-hand axis), or an increase of about 40 per cent. From these data, it is impossible to say in what direction the causality works. A birth certificate is required to qualify for the child welfare grants, thus a clear incentive is given to families to register children. But there is also a reverse element, as better birth registration coverage allows the child welfare grants supply to reach a larger number of qualifying children.
While it may not be possible to disentangle the extent to which hospital-based registration or child welfare grants have spurred registration rates in Namibia, there is another lesson to be learned from Namibia. In all, 21 registration facilities were created in hospitals, which in 2011 registered about 30,000 births, i.e. on average about 1,400 per registration point. By contrast, in the Gambia, where about 61,500 children are born annually and the health ministry is responsible for civil registration, there are 280 registration points. Registration rates in the Gambia have increased from about 30 per cent in the early 2000s but have been stagnant at about 50 per cent since 2006. One of the reasons may be that the average workload of a registration point in the Gambian health facilities is too low (about 220, which means that many have far fewer). Economic scale is important for health-based registration facilities; when that scale (number of deliveries) is inadequate, the choice should be for notification rather than registration.

Botswana has started on-site registration facilities in six hospitals. Nigeria reportedly has plans to create registration points in all health facilities, which, as the Gambian example shows, may need to be amended.

In Uganda, in the Mulago Referral Hospital, one of the largest hospitals in Africa (annual number of births exceeds 32,000), in-hospital registration of births, which used to be traditional and paper-based, has recently been computerized with support from UNICEF. In the maternity wards, designated staff equipped with laptop computers record birth information, notify the Uganda Registration Services Bureau and provide short-form birth certificates to mothers before they leave the hospital.

The hospital administration is highly appreciative of the digital birth registration system in the hospital. Now the hospital is able to register births within one day, a process that used to take much longer, was much more error-prone and resulted in a high percentage of coverage loss as parents would not return to the hospital to complete the registration process or collect the short-form birth certificate.

**Bedside collection of registration details, Mariental State Hospital, Namibia**

Time-consuming name-giving practices in Uganda are an obstacle to hospital-based registration. Another problem is that mothers may not be able to give all the required details, such as their husband’s full name. It is difficult to register a child when the names of the parents are not available (as is the case of an orphan with neither parent). These problems are unrelated to the use of digital technology, but technology-embedded programmed instructions cannot be as easily bypassed as instructions in a paper-based system without content control. Technology thus forces solutions to problems that in paper-based systems are not
addressed.

At Mulago Hospital, staff from the Records Office register births using laptops in the area just outside the maternity wards. This is a practical approach as the records office staff directly interact with mothers and conclude the registration process easily. Mothers are provided with a counterfoil receipt after the data are collected. The data are transmitted wirelessly to the desktop computer in the Records Office. The hospital administrator – the designated registrar – enters the birth registration online after a supervisor has checked the data. Short-form birth certificates are printed and given to the mother before discharge. The hospital suffers from recurrent power disruption, which affects the online registration process. An offline system of registration has just been developed to overcome this problem.

In Mulago, computerized registration of deaths was not yet in place (situation as of August 2012). Close to 20 deaths per day occur in the hospital. Hospital management would like death registration to be computerized as well. Death registration takes place routinely in hospitals in Botswana and Namibia.

UNICEF has supported the installation of hospital-based, Internet-connected registration points in 135 more hospitals in Uganda, which could well have the same positive results for registration as in Namibia.

Another significant contribution that the partnership between civil registration and health can make to improved registration rates is through the contact that the mother has with health personnel prior to the birth of her child: antenatal care. A small qualitative study (approximately 240 respondents) supported by UNICEF in the Kavango region of Namibia in 2012 demonstrated that the health worker is an important source of information for mothers: 63 per cent of mothers interviewed who had registered their children found out about it from the antenatal care service, which in Namibia has 95 per cent coverage. In all supplementary assessment countries, with the exception of Nigeria (58 per cent), the percentage of expectant mothers who have contact with antenatal care is above 80 per cent.

2.5 INTEROPERABILITY: TARGETED INTERVENTIONS, SOCIAL TRANSFER PROGRAMMES AND COMMUNICATION FOR DEVELOPMENT (C4D)

When birth registration coverage has improved through generic measures into the 60–80 per cent range, a major imperative in the strategy for further scaling up of registration coverage is to reach the most vulnerable population, which generally escapes routine registration service coverage. In the lower reaches of birth registration coverage (say below 60 per cent), generic measures may be more effective than targeted measures. At any level the registration of the most vulnerable should of course be a priority; the way it is done depends on where a country is on the trajectory towards universal registration.

Analysis of data from Botswana shows some of the causes of low registration rates (in addition to the chart for orphans, a very common picture applicable to most African countries is shown).
**Targeted outreach**

Targeted outreach is pursued when countries take steps to serve difficult-to-reach communities and families who live in remote locations or are nomadic. This target group is unable to travel to the nearest civil registration point. Home delivery is common in such communities. The group includes children without carers, and the poor, who cannot afford the cost of registration.

Efforts to reach such population groups are usually undertaken by registration authorities in collaboration with other government departments (such as the social affairs ministry) and non-governmental organizations that are more likely to be in touch with such population groups.

In Namibia the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare, community-based and non-governmental organizations work with the Ministry of Home and Internal Affairs to identify and target such populations. In Botswana, a new initiative was launched in April 2012 to hold meetings at the kgotla (a traditional village committee in rural areas convened by village chiefs and sub-chiefs), under the leadership of district commissioners, to explain the importance of registration and mobilize unregistered people, including children, to register. This is being taken up as part of the Revised Remote Area Development Programme.
The Department of Social Services in Botswana is also responsible for locating orphans and arranging their registration by sending mobile teams to their locations. The use of mobile registration units with staff and equipment to serve remote locations for the registration of births and deaths is an intervention that several countries have tried. While this is well sustained in the more affluent countries like South Africa, most developing countries find it difficult to maintain such services.15

A good example of the use of targeted mobile interventions was conducted at the Andimba Tovo Senior Secondary School, in the Oshana Region of Namibia. A team from the Ministry of Home and Internal Affairs helped students approaching the age of 16 to obtain their national ID. The team briefed the students on the importance of having the ID, examined the children's documentation, including birth certificates, and arranged to take their photographs and fingerprints. All the children needed to do thereafter was to pick up their ID at the nearest subregional office of the ministry by producing the counterfoil issued to them at school. This example of partnership between the organization responsible for civil registration and the education ministry is a good practice worth replicating in other countries.

None of the other supplementary assessment countries reported targeted registration efforts for a hard-to-reach population, but such activities are quite common in many African countries.

Côte d’Ivoire, for reasons specific to the country, did conduct targeted, mobile registration following the hostilities in 2002 and the division of the country until 2007, when the Ouagadougou Agreement was signed. The very first point of the agreement was the “General identification of the population”. The backlog in registration that had developed during the years of conflict and separation (most of the government activities in the northern half of the country came to a standstill) and the numerous cases of people who had lost their identity papers during the conflict led to the need for a large (re)registration campaign. The government organized audiences foraines, which in essence meant that a one-stop late or delayed registration service came to communities. A team consisting of a civil registrar, a judge and a physician (for probable age assessment) visits communities and registers people on the spot. These campaigns managed to deliver almost 700,000 jugements supplétifs (a court decision and late birth (re) registration) through 5,772 such audiences. The operation was quite expensive: at a total cost of about €8 million, the average cost of an individual registration was close to $15. One of the reasons that the cost was so high is that the procedure itself is relatively complicated. In India, the enrolment of the adult population in the new national ID system costs $2 per person. India uses a very pragmatic procedure for the enrolment of undocumented persons: the so-called “introducer” system. An undocumented applicant for the ID can bring two witnesses with identity papers who vouch for the undocumented person. But the more important lesson from Côte d’Ivoire is that paper-based civil registration systems are extremely vulnerable and reconstitution is expensive. In 2010, the cost of computerization of the civil registration system for Côte d’Ivoire was estimated at €16.5 million.16 In other words: the costs of the audiences foraines of 700,000 people (out of a population of almost 20 million) amounted to about half the cost of the computerization of the registration of all Ivorians. With so many African countries suffering from conflicts, the computerization of civil registration systems should be given high priority.

**Social transfer projects**

Social protection measures that protect the most vulnerable, such as child-headed households or households with no earning members, are being implemented in many countries in Africa. These measures include some form of cash transfer, which could be conditional on adopting some desired behavioural changes or unconditional. Legal identity, through registration of birth, provides in and by itself an addi-

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15 This supplementary assessment came across an example where large vans, unsuitable for the poor-quality roads leading to remote locations, had been procured for mobile registration.

tional layer of protection to the members of vulnerable households. Social transfers also serve as a tangible incentive for registration.

One of the largest of such social protection interventions is conducted in Uganda. The Social Assistance Grant for Empowerment project (SAGE) is intended to provide cash grants to qualifying families living in 14 districts with a total population of 3.5 million. About 95,000 families are expected to be eligible for SAGE. The average grant is about $10 per month per household. The total SAGE budget is $60m (of which $53 million comes from the Department for International Development of the United Kingdom – UK Aid – and $7 million from Irish Aid). The assessment process involves a survey of the entire population. Registration of births was part of the intervention. UK Aid has completed an evaluation of the project and the draft report is now available. It is expected that the experience of the SAGE project will provide valuable information for the linkage between social transfer programmes and civil registration in the future.

Some of the main points that emerged from a detailed discussion with the SAGE team are summarized below.

1. The scale of the intervention and its challenges were not understood when the project was started. Covering a population of 3.5 million proved a much larger exercise than anticipated. The resources needed for manpower, vehicles and other logistical needs were twelve times the budget.

2. Available capacity was grossly underestimated. Data entry was a major bottleneck and resources had to be diverted to quality assurance. Several unforeseen rounds of training had to be organized.

3. Problems arose concerning the organization of civil registration. URSB does not have a presence in the field and registrars did not give priority to this work, as it does not figure in their performance evaluations.

4. Because civil registration law in Uganda has not yet been amended to allow electronic registration and records, a parallel traditional paper-based registration activity needed to be conducted as well.17

The project had to be redesigned and go through two pilot stages before results could be seen. As of August 2012, 1.11 million records had been collated from registration work undertaken in the field. The good news is that, according to the assessment report, the average cost per registration was only about $1. While the recommendation appears to favour moving towards another model for mass registration (outside the SAGE project) or another methodology for beneficiary selection, there is no evidence in the report that the consequences of such a change have been thought through. SAGE beneficiaries will need to be able to identify themselves and to be identifiable for the project. As registration rates are just 30 per cent and probably lower in the SAGE area, the question is what alternative there is. The costs of a purpose-designed ID may also be significant and the question remains what the breeder documents will be for such “SAGE IDs”.

17 In order for births to be registered in the traditional, legal way, registration books have to be signed by village headmen. Birth certificates have to be signed by the sub-county chiefs before they are issued. There were over 200,000 documents awaiting signature at the time of the supplementary assessment visit.
Figure 2.7: Sub-Saharan African Countries’ Experiences with Cash Transfers, 2010

Source: Authors’ representation.
Note: Countries in which only conditional CT programs were identified were the following: Eritrea, Ghana, Mali, Nigeria and Sao Tome and Principe. Countries in which only unconditional CT programs were identified were as follows: Botswana, Burundi, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Republic of Congo, Cote d’Ivoire, Lesotho, Liberia, Mauritius, Namibia, Rwanda, the Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Africa, Sudan, Swaziland, Togo, Uganda, and Zimbabwe. Countries that were identified as having had both conditional and unconditional CT programs were as follows: Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Niger, Senegal, Tanzania and Zambia. Countries with no known CT programs were as follows: Angola, Benin, Cameroon, Chad, the Comoros, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, The Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Madagascar and Mauritania.

The need for legal reform has been widely acknowledged in Uganda and a first step towards it – the formulation of a civil registration policy – has been made. A legal framework supporting computerization of the civil registration system is one of the important elements to support mass registration by SAGE that have been lacking.

A successful social transfer programme was mentioned earlier. Namibia’s child welfare grant system has flourished in the past four years. The number of beneficiaries increased by 40 per cent over the same period. Child welfare beneficiaries are required to have been registered and the available evidence suggests that the incentive of eligibility for the child welfare grant is strong enough to overcome obstacles that may still exist in Namibia. The latest data for registration (shown in the chart in section II.4) appear to indicate
that the country might be close to universal birth registration, a feat achieved in just four years.

Each of the four remaining supplementary assessment countries has one or more cash transfer programmes. Botswana has an unconditional cash transfer programme, as has Côte d’Ivoire. Nigeria has an unconditional transfer programme and Senegal has a conditional and an unconditional social transfer programme.

The figures at the previous pages show the impressive number of African countries that have embarked on social transfer programmes. In sub-Saharan Africa, 39 of 47 countries either implement cash transfer programmes or are discussing or planning their introduction. These programmes offer a new window for the acceleration of civil registration development on the continent.18

**Communication for development (C4D)**

The targeted approach discussed above implies the often costly delivery of civil registration services to hard-to-reach populations. This is also what social transfer programmes are designed to do, and they require beneficiary identities but also incentivize the target group to register. Collaboration between the civil registration and the social protection function was recommended above. Such efforts to target vulnerable segments of the population may also require efforts in the area of behavioural change and knowledge.

The behaviour of parents and others responsible for registration of births, such as health care providers, has a bearing on the extent to which an environment conducive to birth registration is in place. Activities within the domain of communication for development that can complement the strategies are:

- Encouraging well-informed discussion of the importance of identity in the media;

Identity issues are a hot topic not only in developing countries, but also in the developed world, which is the destination of many illegal immigrants from developing countries.

However, except for coverage of events like the launch of a new campaign on hospital registration in the newspapers in Botswana, there is little serious discussion of the issue and its many dimensions, which could create the supportive environment for strengthening civil registration.

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• The garnering of political support to ensure registration of all births. There is much scope for engaging with members of parliament, who can play a decisive role in highlighting the importance of civil registration and lobby for funding.19 This is key in all supplementary assessment countries, and sub-Saharan Africa in general;

• Opening dialogue with communities on traditional and cultural barriers, such as the time available for registration, the right of women to register their own children, etc. in order to bring about understanding and resolution of these issues;

The need for cultural sensitivity and understanding of cultural tradition is an issue common to most, if not all, African countries. There are often local variations within the same country. In the northern part of Namibia, the father’s identity is very important for naming children, while in the Hardap region in the south it is not. It is not clear if an attempt to engage the communities themselves in a dialogue about these practices has been made.

• Promoting the participation of children and youth in articulating the importance of identity;

• Reflecting the principles of inclusion, equity, self-determination and participation by ensuring that the registration situations of the poorest and hardest to reach populations (including indigenous populations, refugees, and internally displaced persons – IDPs) are highlighted and given high visibility and voice;

• Linking community views on registration and problems identified at the community level to subnational and national policy and governance systems;

• Forming partnerships with faith-based organizations already involved in rituals connected with birth (for instance, baptism), death and marriage.

Promoting the participation of children and youth is a signature area for UNICEF action. The experience of interacting with children in Namibia who were being helped to obtain national IDs provides the sort of window for a wider engagement with young people to locate also those who are left out of registration.

19 The Registrar General of Uganda mentioned that members of parliament have very little information on how the civil registration system works and how it can be strengthened, but are interested to learn.
In recent years, governments, UNICEF and others have expended considerable efforts and resources on raising awareness, especially targeting the population at large. In Africa those efforts have clearly had little or no effect. While communication for development goes well beyond the narrow intervention of raising awareness in the population, it is important to realize that the civil registration deficit in Africa is by no means a problem of demand and knowledge alone. Communication for development needs to be part of an integrated approach to civil registration improvement. As the saying goes, when you only have a hammer, there is a tendency to see only nails.

### 2.6 Interoperability: national ID systems

In this supplementary assessment, national ID systems were found not to suffer from the same resource constraints as civil registration as they have a much higher priority and visibility on the national political agenda. In Côte d’Ivoire, a new national ID was introduced in 2010. About 6 million cards were issued in three weeks through 18,000 temporary distributors. Responsibility for the national ID lies with the same ministry as civil registration. In Senegal, the national ID is well established, but responsibility for it does not lie with the same ministry as civil registration. It is reported that records in the national ID database are not updated for death of the ID-holder (in Kenya no death certificate is issued unless the national ID of the deceased is surrendered). About half of Senegal’s population is enrolled in the national ID system, which was introduced by law in 2005. Senegalese citizens are required to have ID from the age of 15, while it can be issued to children from the age of five years. Birth registration seems to be a requirement for the carte national d’identité (CNI).

The age at which African countries issue their national ID varies. The Comoros, Mozambique and Seychelles provide it from birth, which is the optimal practice. Angola issues the national ID from 10 years old. The possibility of obtaining the ID for children aged 5–14 in Senegal can be an advantage when an ID is required to do an exam at the end of primary school, or for entry to and participation in secondary education.

In fact, because of the under-registration of children in the past, a substantial percentage of African teenagers are currently undocumented, with all the risks and curtailing of rights this brings with it. One way of providing such people with a legal identity is by lowering the mandatory age for the national ID. Although this entails a temporary backlog campaign, it would only cause a temporary surge in the workload and a system to deal with normal enrolment numbers would be in place after the campaign. A stepwise lowering of the age can be used to reduce the magnitude of the backlog campaign. While its birth registration rate is 55 per cent, the enrolment rate in the national ID of Senegal may be about 80 per cent.

In Nigeria and Uganda, the introduction of national IDs is at an early stage. In supplementary assessment countries, Botswana and Namibia, where the responsibility for the national ID lies with the same ministry as civil registration, it is easier to establish the required linkage between and integrity of the two so that each individual has a unique identity. In all African countries that need organizational and legal reform of their civil registration systems it would be optimal practice to seek seamless integration between civil registration and national ID. This is what Kenya, Malawi and the Sudan have initiated by bringing their civil registration and national ID systems under a single law.

### 2.7 Incentives and disincentives

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20 In 2011, in Asia, Thailand reduced the age for its national ID from 15 to 7 years.
21 57 per cent of Senegal’s population is 15 years or older: 7.4 million people. The number of ID holders is 6.1 million. The latter number may include IDs of deceased ID-holders, and ID-holders aged 5–14.
Finally, in this section we provide a short discussion of what might be the most effective strategy among all available options to improve the status of civil registration in Africa: the use of incentives and the reduction or complete elimination of disincentives. Much of what was discussed under the headings ICT and interoperability has the effect of improving the effectiveness and quality of the civil registration service, which by and large (apart from teething problems encountered when changes are introduced) lead to a service that is more hassle-free and customer-friendly, and has lower indirect costs. The example of Namibia shows that an efficient hospital-based service can make all the difference to registration. The example of Côte d’Ivoire shows that the lack of a computerized civil registration system makes civil registers extremely vulnerable to destruction in times of conflict, resulting in the need for an €8 million campaign to provide about 700,000 Ivorians with new identity documents, which, had the registers been computerized, would simply have been reissued. In peacetime, running a digital civil registration operation substantially improves registration coverage and the quality of registration records, making it possible to phase out costly traditional ways of keeping records in duplicate and physical storage. A digital system means that records are accessible anywhere in a country, substantially reducing costs for the public, while the possibility of shifting the emphasis from extracts to records and integrating civil registration and national ID systems reduces the use of counterfeit documents.

Social transfer programmes, which are being introduced in the great majority of African countries, represent an important new window for offering specific financial incentives for civil registration, especially to populations that, because of their social and economic situation, are the least likely to be registered.

Ultimately, however, it is the speedy growth of global interconnectedness that will spur civil registration development in Africa, as can already be deduced from the urban-rural and rich-poor divide in registration coverage. Mobile phones, computers and social media have reached remote parts of Africa. In many countries, a SIM card for a mobile phone is only issued when a photo ID can be shown. Mobile money will require ID credentials. The rapid changes in society and technology may well result in solutions for civil registration that come from unforeseen sources.
Advocacy: Advocacy is a political process by an individual or group aimed at influencing public policy and resource allocation decisions within political, economic, and social systems and institutions.

Audiences foraines: Late or delayed birth registration in communities by a visiting team of judge, civil registrar and physician (for probable age assessment).

Antenatal care: Antenatal care (also known as prenatal care) refers to the regular medical and nursing care recommended for women during pregnancy.

Best practices (or “good practices”): Affordable and practical approaches that have been effective in particular situations to support development processes and have been assessed, validated and documented for possible use by other communities or countries.

Birth certificate: Vital record that documents the birth of a child. The term “birth certificate” can refer either to the original document certifying the circumstances of the birth or to a certified copy of or representation of the ensuing registration of that birth, depending on the country issuing the certificate.

Birth registration rate: See “Registration completeness”.

C4D: Communication for development.

Cash transfer: One of the main instruments for delivering social assistance.

Causality: Causality (also referred to as “causation”) is the relationship between an event (the cause) and a second event (the effect), where the second event is understood as a consequence of the first.

Citizenship: Legal nationality of a person.

Civil register: Loose-leaf file, ledger book, electronic file or any other official file set up for the permanent recording, in accordance with established procedures, of each type of vital event and its associated data of the population of a well-defined area (a country, district, municipality, parish, etc.).

Civil registrar: Official authorized to register the occurrence of vital events and to record the required details relating to them.

Civil registration: Continuous, permanent, compulsory and universal recording of the occurrence and characteristics of vital events (live births, deaths, foetal deaths, marriages and divorces) and other civil status events pertaining to the population as provided by decree, law or regulation, in accordance with the legal requirements of the country. It establishes and provides legal documentation of such events. These records are the best source of vital statistics. Or: The legal recording by the authorized officials of the occurrence of a vital event, together with certain identifying or descriptive characteristics of the event.

Civil registration system: The institutional, legal and technical procedures established by a government to conduct civil registration in a technical, sound, coordinated and standardized manner throughout the country, taking into account cultural and social circumstances particular to the country.
Civil registration record (or “vital event record”): A legal document entered in the civil register, which attests to the occurrence and characteristics of a vital event.

CNEC: Centre National de l’Etat Civil (National Civil Registration Centre), Senegal.

CNI: Carte National d’Identité (National identity card, or national ID)

Complete registration (or “registration completeness”): The level of registration at which every vital event that has occurred to the members of the population of a particular country (or area) within a specified time period has been registered in the system, i.e. has a vital event registration record. Thus, the system has attained 100 per cent coverage. Any deviation from complete coverage is measured by “coverage error”.

Coverage: See “Complete registration”.

Coverage error: See “Complete registration”.

Correctness of registration (or “accuracy of registration”): Status in which data items for each vital event on the vital record have been accurately and completely filled in, i.e. there are no response errors and there are no missing items. The measurement of any deviation from correctness is called “content error”.

Counterfeit: Counterfeit products are fake replicas of the real product. Counterfeit products are often produced with the intention of taking advantage of the superior value of the imitated product. The word “counterfeit” frequently describes both forged currency and documents, including identity documents.

Crude birth rate: The number of live births occurring in a population of a given geographical area during a given year per 1,000 mid-year total population of the given geographical area during the same year.

Crude death rate: The number of deaths occurring in a population of a given geographical area during a given year per 1,000 mid-year total population of the given geographical area during the same year.

Delayed registration: The registration of a vital event after the prescribed period laid down in existing laws, rules or regulations (including any grace period, if one is prescribed). A late registration is the registration of a vital event after the prescribed time period but within the grace period. Since the grace period is usually considered to be one year following the vital event, delayed registration is usually considered the registration of a vital event one year or more after the event has occurred.

Digital: Using discrete (discontinuous) values, rather than continuous values as used in analog systems. The word “digital” comes from the same source as the words digit and digitus (the Latin word for finger), as fingers are used for discrete (whole number) counting. It is most commonly used in computing and electronics, especially where real-world information is converted to binary numeric form (any combination of 0 and 1).

DPT1: First immunization for diphtheria, pertussis and tetanus.


GNI per capita: Gross national income per inhabitant, a measure of the personal income of a country.

HMN: Health Metrics Network (associated with WHO).
ICT: Information and communications technology.

ID: Identity document.

IDPs: Internally (i.e. within a country) displaced persons (as distinguished from refugees who are displaced to a country other than their own).

Informant: The individual whose responsibility, designated by law, is to report to the local registrar the fact of the occurrence of a vital event and to provide all the information and characteristics related to the event. On the basis of such a report, the event may be legally registered by the local registrar.

Jugement supplétif: Court decision attesting to the occurrence of a vital event.

Incentive: a thing that motivates or encourages one to do something; a payment or concession to stimulate greater output or investment.

Interoperability: the ability of diverse systems and organizations to work together (inter-operate).

Km²: square kilometre.

Late registration: The registration of a vital event after the legally specified time period, but within the grace period. The grace period is usually considered to be one year following the vital event.

Long-form birth certificate: (example: Canada) Long-form: legal size or two-page form containing details of the person, their parents, place of birth, certification by the parents, signature and stamp of the issuing agency or department. Short-form or card: provides name, birth date, place of birth, date of registration, date of issue, registration number, certificate number, and the signature of registrar general.

MECCI: Modernisation de l’état civil en Côte d’Ivoire (modernization of civil registration in Côte d’Ivoire).

MGECW: Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare (Namibia).

MVRS: Mobile Vital Records System (Uganda).

Nomads: People with no permanent abode, who travel from place to place to find fresh pasture for their livestock.

Notifier (see also “Informant”): An individual appointed by the local registrar to act as intermediary between the local registrar and the informant in providing all information and characteristics of an event that is to be legally registered by the local registrar.

Ouagadougou Agreement: The peace agreement signed in Ouagadougou on 4 March 2007 resolving the armed conflict in Côte d’Ivoire.

Paradigm: A worldview underlying the theories and methodology of a particular scientific subject.

Piggyback: Use existing work or an existing product as a basis or support.

Population density: The number of people per square kilometre (population size divided by land area).
Post-natal: After birth.

RapidSMS: A web framework based on the Django web framework (an open source Web 2.0 application framework) that extends the logic and capabilities of Django to communicate with SMS messages.

RAS: Regional assessment survey.

SAGE: Social Assistance Grant for Empowerment (Uganda).

SIM card: A SIM (subscriber identity module) card is a portable, exchangeable memory chip used in some cell phones. A SIM card contains its unique serial number (ICCID), international mobile subscriber identity (IMSI), security authentication and ciphering information, temporary information related to the local network, a list of the services the user has access to and two passwords: a personal identification number (PIN) for ordinary use and a personal unlock code (PUC) for PIN unlocking.

Short-form birth certificate: See “long-form certificate”.

Social protection: Policies and actions that enhance the capacity of poor and vulnerable people to escape from poverty and better manage risks and shocks. Social protection measures include social assistance, social insurance and minimum labour standards.


Universal registration: Complete registration (See “completeness”).

UNSD: United Nations Statistics Division (part of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs).

URSB: Uganda Registration Services Bureau.

USSD: Unstructured Supplementary Service Data is a protocol used by cellular telephones to communicate with the service provider’s computers.

UTL: Uganda Telecom Ltd.

Vital event: the occurrence of a live birth, death, foetal death, marriage, divorce, adoption, legitimation, recognition of parenthood, annulment of marriage or legal separation.

Vital (event) record: A legal document entered in the civil register which attests to the occurrence and characteristics of a vital event.

WHO: World Health Organization.

Wireless: Refers to the transfer of information between two or more points that are not physically connected.