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**Decade for Repositioning
of Civil Registration and
Vital Statistics in Africa
2017-2026**

**Fourth Conference of African Ministers
Responsible for Civil Registration
4-8 December 2017
Nouakchott**

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Topic: *Birth registration as an opportunity to integrate civil registration and identity management systems*



Monday, 4 December 2017

Background

Target 16.9 of the Sustainable Development Goals states: “By 2030, provide legal identity for all, including birth registration”. That presents an opportunity for countries to link civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) and identity management (IDM) systems, which has benefits for multiple sectors.

The United Nations defines civil registration as the universal, continuous, permanent, and compulsory recording of vital events provided through decree or regulation in accordance with the legal requirements of each country.¹ The term “identity” refers to the unique set of features and characteristics that individualize a person, including the name and other biographical data of the individual, while the IDM system is the technical and organizational infrastructure used to define, design and administer the attributes of an identity.²

An individual’s biographical information is recorded through civil registration (such as name, date of birth, place of birth, and names of the parents) to establish a legal identity. IDM systems typically add other attributes of the individual, such as a unique identification number (UIN), photograph, signature and biometrics (for example, fingerprint, facial recognition, hand geometry, voice recognition, iris scan, retinal scan) to prove their identity for a wide range of activities, including access to education, voting, opening a bank account, buying or inheriting property, paying taxes, enrolling in a health insurance plan, and qualifying for a cash transfer. The data link between CRVS and IDM systems is possible through the UIN assigned to each individual at birth. It is the same UIN that is used later in life on the identity card.

This UIN is used on various legal and other documents that a person receives during his or her lifetime. For example, an individual’s birth certificate, marriage certificate, and national identification card will be associated with the person’s UIN, and that number serves as a link between databases belonging to different ministries and agencies.

Some countries assign the UIN randomly while in other countries it is logic-based (data are used on location, birth, date and sex). The following are examples of countries with logic-based UIN: Norway, which has an 11-digit identity number assigned at birth (the first 6 digits represent date of birth, the next two are individual numbers, the following number indicates sex (even numbers for women, odd numbers for men), and the last two are check digits (for control); and Korea, which has a 13-digit identity number assigned at birth (the first 6 digits represent date of birth, followed by 1 digit for gender, 4 digits for area code, 1 digit for the registered serial number and 1 for the verification number). In contrast, India employs a random Aadhaar number, which has 12 digits (11+1 check sum).

Electronic on-site birth registration in Botswana, for example, illustrates a process that assigns the UIN at birth. Assistant Registrars are stationed at major hospitals in Botswana. Soon after a newborn is delivered, the attending midwife or doctor completes a birth

¹ United Nations Statistics Division, *Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System*, rev. 3. (2014) New York, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, paragraphs 1–39, 279–299. Available at:

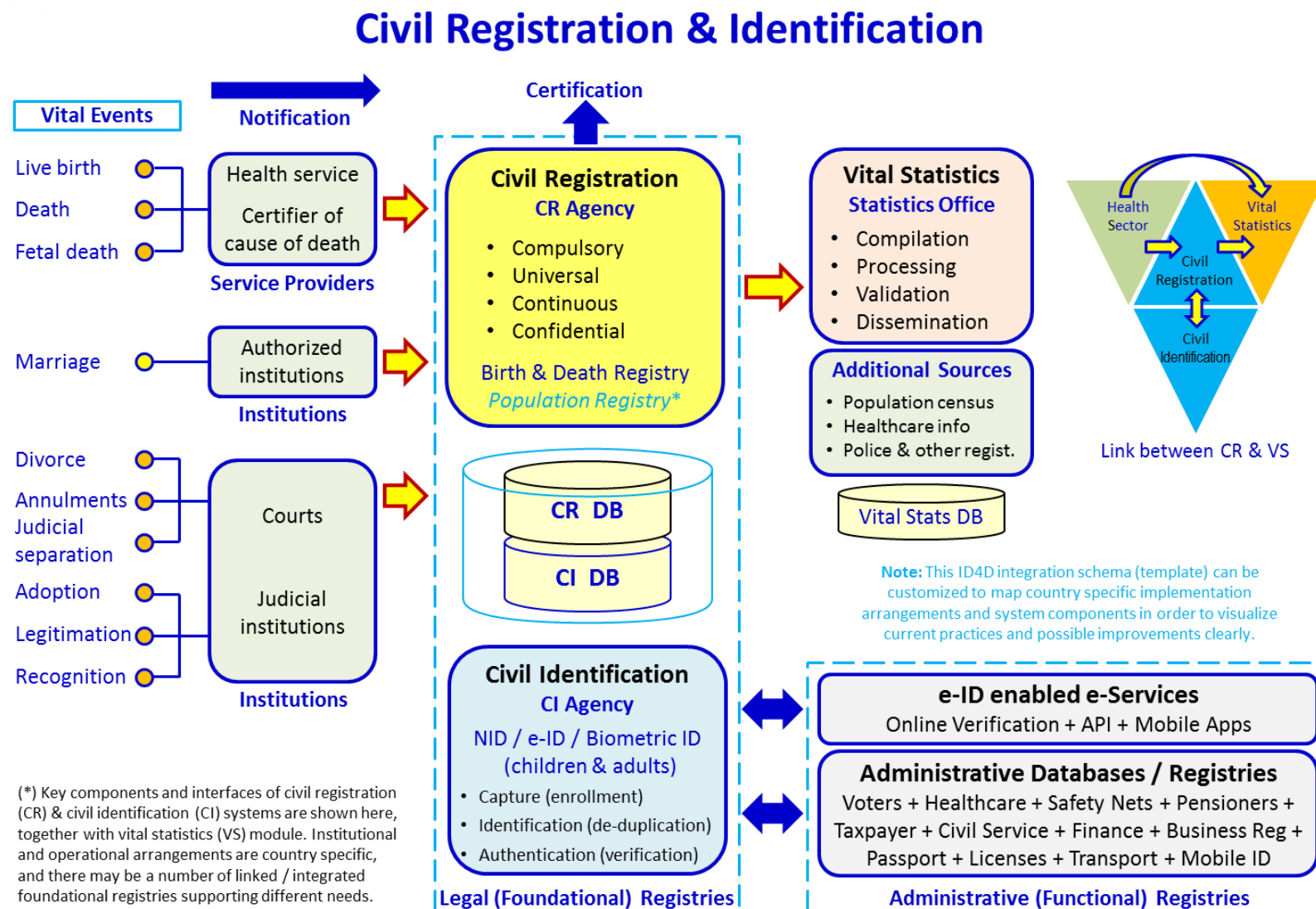
<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/Demographic/standmeth/principles/M19Rev3en.pdf>

² Inter-American Development Bank. *Civil Registration and Identity Management* (2011). Available at: <http://www.iadb.org/en/topics/government/civil-registration-and-identity,4032.html>

notification form and gives it to the Assistant Registrar who enters the information onto an online registration system. The mother or father checks the accuracy of the information that is entered electronically, and then a registration number (UIN) is generated from the central database. A birth certificate with the UIN on it is printed and given to the mother prior to discharge from the hospital. Subsequently, the UIN is used for the national ID card that is issued to an individual who must be 16 years of age or above. In health centres and small hospitals that do not provide on-site birth registration, a midwife or doctor completes the birth notification form; within a week the form is forwarded to the nearest registration office where the data are entered into the central database, quality-checked, and authorized by a supervisor. Since the information is captured in electronic form, the parent can go to any registration office in the country to obtain a printed copy. The parent will, however, have to show the relevant torn-off portion from the birth notification form and identify him- or herself.

In Botswana, the Department of Civil and National Registration is within the Ministry of Labour and Home Affairs, and administers both civil registration and IDM. That makes assigning the UIN at birth easier. The figure illustrates the interrelationship between civil registration and IDM systems. Ideally, a designated anchor ministry (that liaises with other ministries) houses the Civil Registration Office and Identity Management Office in one department or agency and performs the functions of national civil registration and IDM. Having one Registrar General or Director overseeing both functions enables efficient decision-making and the coordinated provision of civil registration and identification services. In countries where civil registration and IDM are housed in different departments or ministries, however, it is important to ensure that the UIN generated and assigned at birth is interoperable in terms of the civil register and the other administrative registers (or databases) (see the figure). Good integration and coordination of the CRVS and IDM systems enable effective communication among systems, prevent duplication of efforts, and allow efficient public service delivery.

Figure **Integration of civil registration (CR) and civil identification (CI)**³



³ From “Identity Management System Analysis – Guidelines and Questionnaire”, August 2015, Washington, DC. World Bank. License: Creative Commons Attribution CC BY 3.0. Adapted from the CRVS figure in *Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System, rev. 3*

Session description

Target 16.9 of the Sustainable Development Goals states, as previously mentioned: “By 2030, provide legal identity for all, including birth registration”. That presents an opportunity for countries to link civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) and identity management (IDM) systems, which has benefits for multiple sectors. Several countries in Africa are considering linking the two systems but wish to study precedents in other countries. The present panel session will provide the opportunity to share experiences from selected countries, including Mauritius, Namibia, Uganda and Zambia. The session will highlight civil registration as a foundation for IDM and discuss approaches for assigning the UIN at birth, and integrating this number in the civil register and on the physical birth certificate. The session will begin with an overview by the World Bank Group on the integration of civil registration and IDM.

Questions to panellists

1. Are the civil registration and IDM offices housed in the same department or ministry? If not, how are the activities of civil registration and IDM coordinated or integrated?
 2. Is a unique identification number assigned at birth? Why or why not?
 3. Which administrative registers are currently linked to the civil register?
 4. What are some examples of future efforts to integrate civil registration and IDM?
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