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United Nations Workshop on Civil Registration and
Vital Statistics for ESCWA Region
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**Report on the United Nations Workshop on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics
for ESCWA Region ***

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I. Introduction

A. Background and objective of the meeting

1. The United Nations Workshop on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics for ESCWA Region was held 3-6 December 2007, in Cairo, Egypt. It was jointly organized by the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD), the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) and the Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics of Egypt (CAPMAS). It was hosted by the Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics of Egypt.

2. The main purposes of the workshop were to (a) provide guidance to countries on the implementation of the United Nations recommendations for the collection and compilation of vital statistics at national level through civil registration system; (b) assess the current status of the civil registration and vital statistics systems in ESCWA countries and identify strategies for the improvement of the civil registration system; (c) analyze procedures to maximize the use of multiple data sources for vital statistics; and (d) examine the availability of data that countries are able to provide to UNSD through the *Demographic Yearbook* data collection and look for ways for further improvement. More detailed information about the objectives of the workshop is included in Annex 1.

3. This report summarizes the presentations and discussions made during the workshop; documents countries' experiences in the collection and compilation of vital statistics and highlights the major conclusions and recommendations for the improvement of the civil registration and vital statistics systems in the region.

B. Participation

4. Eleven countries in the ESCWA region were represented in the workshop – Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Oman, Occupied Palestinian Territory, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syrian Arab Republic, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen. Participants included those from National Statistical Offices who have experience with the collection and compilation of vital statistics and those from the Ministry of Health or Interior who are responsible for and/or familiar with the registration process of vital events in their respective countries. International and regional organizations, the Arab Institute for Training and Research in Statistics (AITRS), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and World Health Organisation (WHO), were also represented in the workshop. The list of participants is included in Annex 2.

C. Opening session

ESCWA

5. Ms. Fathia Abdel Fadil from the ESCWA Statistics Division welcomed the participants to the workshop. She stressed that vital statistics are important to monitor population changes, to assess health status of a nation and to plan and monitor various national programmes. The availability and reliability of vital statistics are also important indicators of national statistical capacities. As civil registration is the main source of vital

statistics, she hoped that workshop would help the countries in improving their civil registration and vital statistics system. Ms. Fathia also thanked General Abou Bakr El Guindy for his support.

UNSD

On behalf of Dr. Paul Cheung, Director of the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD), Mr. Srdjan Mrkic welcomed the participants to the workshop. He outlined that the main objective of this workshop was to bring more understanding of the United Nations guidelines and standards on civil registration and vital statistics. The workshop would also assess the current status of national capacities in compiling vital statistics and the sources for vital statistics. In addition, the workshop would provide a platform for ESCWA countries to learn from each other. Mr. Mrkic expected that the workshop would stimulate fruitful discussions and also generate useful recommendations. Mr. Mrkic also expressed UNSD's appreciation to CAPMAS for hosting the workshop.

CAPMAS

6. General Abou Bakr El Guindy, the President of CAPMAS, welcomed UNSD, UNESCWA and participants from the other ESCWA countries. He pointed out that the workshop was a great opportunity for countries to understand the importance of civil registration and vital statistics; and to get more knowledge on the internationally agreed concepts, definitions, classifications and methodologies. He also highlighted the fact that Egypt had a long history in vital statistics and is quite advanced in this area. There are currently more than 4000 health offices that are working on the registration of births and deaths and these offices are also responsible for providing data to the civil registration offices within the country. The work of different agencies – Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Health and CAPMAS is well coordinated. The ongoing project is to connect all local health offices, local civil registration offices, civil registration offices at regional level and central civil registration office electronically to facilitate data sharing and data accessibility. At the end, he extended his welcome to all the participants assuming that CAPMAS would do its best as a host.

D. Organisation of the workshop

7. The full and annotated agenda of the workshop is included in Annex 3. The abridged version is shown below:

1. Registration of participants
2. Opening
3. Vital statistics and their sources
4. The need for a civil registration system
5. Vital events to be registered and characteristics of the civil registration method
6. Integration and coordination in the civil registration system
7. Topics and themes to be investigated in a vital statistics system
8. Evaluating the completeness of the civil registration system
9. Civil registration and vital statistics in ESCWA countries

- 10a. Concepts and definitions of vital events in national civil registration systems (for civil registrar)
- 10b. Censuses and sample surveys as a source of fertility and mortality data (for statisticians)
- 11. Plenary discussion – report from the group discussion in sessions 10a and 10b
- 12. Civil registration and population registers
- 13. Compilation of vital statistics at international level
- 14. Round table discussion
- 15. Conclusions and recommendations

8. Most of the sessions, except sessions 10a and 10b, were plenary with presentations followed by floor discussions that provided the participants with a forum for debates, sharing of experiences and exchange of views. Session 10a and 10b were group discussions for civil registrars and statisticians, respectively. Session 11 presented the results of the group discussion in plenary.

9. The workshop was co-chaired by Mr. Roushdy Said Ibrahim Atallah (Egypt), Mr. Kamal Saleh (Jordan), Ms. Zikriyat Ali S M Almuhanadi (Qatar), and Mr. Abdulaziz alabdulhady (Saudi Arabia). The Rapporteur for the workshop was Mr. Medhat K. El Sayed (Oman).

II. Summary of presentations and discussions

Session 3. Vital statistics and their sources

10. A representative from the United Nations Statistics Division introduced three main data sources of vital statistics – civil registration, population census and sample surveys. The presentation also highlighted the advantages and disadvantages of each source and emphasized that civil registration is the best source for coherent, reliable and accountable vital statistics.

11. The civil registration system, when complete, represents the most adequate source for vital statistics as it is universal, constantly updated, and can be modeled to provide details of the causes of death. However, often the information is not processed for the smallest geographical unit and it is not self sufficient for the calculation of rates as it needs other data sources for the estimates of the population at risk.

12. Censuses have their advantages and disadvantages when used for fertility and mortality statistics. A well-documented advantage refers to the fact that they provide statistics for small areas, they are self-sufficient for the calculation of rates and they are universal. On the other hand, they are undoubtedly most expensive statistical exercises and too far apart in time. When analyzing in depth the appropriateness of the census for fertility and mortality statistics it was recognized that the processing of results is slow and expensive and that there is a danger that data become obsolete by the time they got published. Another consideration when using censuses refers to the framing of census questions relating to fertility and mortality, as they pertain not to the census date itself,

but to a period of time preceding the census (for example, the number of children born to the woman in the 12 months prior to the census date).

13. As far as sample surveys are concerned, their quality is often affected by sampling and non-sampling errors and they are not suitable for small area statistics. On the other hand, they provide a much broader range of socio-economic characteristics of the respondents, as they allow for detailed questioning.

14. The second part of the presentation summarized the findings of the review of the pre-workshop assignments (Annex 4 and 5) that were sent to countries on data sources and in particular the use of civil registration for vital statistics¹. On the pre-workshop assignments, participants were asked to provide information on major sources of vital statistics in their respective countries and the coverage of the civil registration system if it was used for the production of vital statistics.

15. The findings indicate that, civil registration system exists and functions in most of the ESCWA countries. Population censuses and sample surveys, except for Lebanon where census has not been conducted due to different circumstances, are also widely used. The analysis of the pre-workshop assignments also revealed that many countries in the region still suffer from incomplete coverage of their civil registration systems and for a number of countries it was indicated that no evaluation has been done in the past ten years on the coverage of the system.

16. During the discussion, participants emphasized the need to use multiple data sources for an integrated population information system available at small geographic area level and disaggregated by socioeconomic characteristics, for programme monitoring and evaluation purposes. It was also pointed out that population censuses and sample surveys obtain population information at certain point in time (stock statistics) while the civil registration system collects information that can reflect directly the population changes, which is the flow statistics. The use of multiple sources is also useful for quality examination for each source.

17. The participants also stressed the importance of a complete civil registration system, not only for statistical purposes, but also for the protection of human rights. For example, every child born has the right to a name, an identity and a birth certificate and it is the right of the survivors to receive the death certificate and a specified cause of death for the deceased.

18. One question was raised by a participant regarding the efforts initiated by the United Nations Statistics Division to help countries with their population censuses and civil registration systems. The UNSD representative responded that the United Nations Statistics Division is currently working on the 2010 World Population and Housing Censuses Programme, which was endorsed by the Statistical Commission. The Program aims to provide countries with technical guidance and assistance in various issues such as the use of Geographical Information System for census, census records editing, census

¹ These will be presented in detail in a forthcoming Technical Report. A summary of findings is presented under Session 9 of this report (page 13).

data dissemination and etc. The ultimate goal of the Programme is that every country in the world conducts a population census between 2005 and 2014.

19. Regarding helping countries with their civil registration systems, the UNSD representative stressed that the civil registration system provides an important linkage between two consecutive censuses and has the advantage for providing continuous information to policy makers. UNSD has been working on the improvement of civil registration at country level since 1968. The most recent International Programme for Accelerating the Improvement of Vital Statistics and Civil Registration Systems² was adopted by the Statistical Commission in 1991. The Programme aims to provide technical guidance and support for countries to undertake activities to strengthen their civil registration and vital statistics systems. UNSD activities related to this Programme refer to the issuance of a series of subject-specific handbooks on civil registration and vital statistics, as well as a number of workshops in different regions in the world on strategies in improving the civil registration and vital statistics systems within the country.

20. It was noted that for many countries in the ESCWA region, civil registration system is closely linked with a population register, which covers more aspects of a person rather than the vital events occurred during his or her life. Due to the setup of the system, specific measures might be necessary in generating statistics from the population register and evaluating the quality of the statistics. It was responded by the representative from UNSD that the issue of the civil registration and population register will be addressed later during the workshop.

21. There was also a discussion on the reasons that the civil registration method usually provides more accurate information on age than population censuses and sample surveys. It was explained that the main reason was that the recording of age in a civil registration system always required some formal documents – doctor’s notes on the date the child was born, identification card (ID card) of parents or those involved in a marriage or a divorce, while in censuses and surveys the report of age solely relied on self-reporting, which might suffer from memory loss or faulty reports. Another reason that the age of child was recorded more accurately in the civil registration was the short time lag between occurrence and registration of the birth, compared to the difference between the occurrence of a birth and the time the census or survey was conducted.

22. As an example, the representative from Oman emphasized that in his country there was no registration system for births and deaths and no ID card was issued to the public except for those working in public sectors before 1980. As a result, age was purely an approximation for most people in the country when no official document indicated how old they were.

Session 4. The need for a civil registration system

23. A representative from UNSD made a presentation which consisted of two parts. The first part elaborated on the definition and essential features of a civil registration system.

² The Programme is available online at <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/sources/civilreg/civilregprogramme.htm>

The four basic characteristics of a civil registration – universal, continuous, permanent, compulsory were explained. It was also noted that civil registration had to be operated by a state-run public institution and the registration functions included: recording vital events, storing, safe-keeping and retrieval of vital records; protection of confidentiality certificate issuing and other customer services; recording and reporting information on vital events for statistical purposes; and providing reliable and timely information and data to other government agencies.

24. The presentation also outlined the importance of a properly functioning civil registration system and its impact on exercising basic human rights. A civil registration is needed to safeguard individual rights to social status and benefits. The system establishes identity, parental relationship, heirship and citizenship, and provides eligibility data for social benefits and age-related items, such as school entry, right to work and driver's license. Total registration also has an administrative advantage for monitoring such items such as cause of death; and is able to identify individual needs, such as maternal and child health care.

25. During the discussion participants stressed the importance of a civil registration system to safeguard individual rights regarding social status and benefits – in Bahrain all births have to be registered so they can be vaccinated within 30 days after birth; and in Jordan, the civil registration system makes it possible to estimate maternal mortality rates for geographic divisions, rather than for the whole country only, which cannot be accomplished by using population censuses and surveys. In answering a question regarding the right of a child for nationality of the country that the child was born, it was clarified that the child had the right to have a nationality, irrespective of the country that granted the nationality.

26. There was a discussion regarding definitions for the two specific characteristics of the civil registration system - continuity and permanency. It was explained that these two characteristics required the existence of an agency that had sufficient administrative stability and its operation must not be limited by time. Permanence is contingent upon the authority given to the civil registration administration through the enactment of a civil registration law. Permanence of the system is a requirement for continuity of registration and vital statistics data, a necessary characteristic for producing meaningful understanding of both current levels as well as trends in vital statistics measures.

27. A question was raised regarding how to enumerate difficult-to-reach areas, such as desert and unpopulated areas. It was explained by UNSD that various methods had been used in different countries to target these areas. For example, a so-called “moving civil registration unit” is used in Thailand when a truck is driving around registering those who live in difficult-to-reach areas. In Chile, a boat moves from one island to another to register vital events. Both measures help to maintain the continuity and completeness of civil registration systems in their countries. It was recommended that the country identifies the best suited method for its unique circumstances. For example, for countries that have nomad population, the registration procedure needs to take into consideration the moving patterns of nomads for the proper registration of vital events related to them.

28. It was noted that the computation of rates needs to be approached in a careful manner, given the fact that some of the countries host significant numbers of young, single foreigners. For example, including them in the denominator for computing age-specific fertility rates distorts the results, because foreign-born usually do not give birth.

29. It was suggested by some participants that unified registration forms, in conjunction with uniform concepts and definitions, to be used by countries in the region, to improve regional comparability. The UNSD representative clarified that the United Nations recommendations do not provide a registration form that can be used throughout different countries. The proposed standards within the UN recommendations, however, can be used as a basis for a unified registration form in the ESCWA region.

Session 5. Vital events to be registered and characteristics of the civil registration method

30. A representative from UNSD made a presentation on the basic characteristics of the civil registration method and the definitions of the vital events that need to be registered in the civil registration system. In addition, the presentation provided detailed definitions for the vital events that should be covered by a civil registration system. These include five vital events with high priority according to the UN recommendations - live births, foetal deaths, deaths, marriages and divorces. Definitions for other vital events such as annulments, judicial separation, adoption, legitimation and recognition were also briefly discussed.

31. During the discussion, several participants pointed out that foetal death was not registered in their respective countries. In addition, there seems to have some confusion regarding the definition of foetal deaths and stillbirths. It was clarified by the UNSD representative that foetal death was defined as death prior to the complete expulsion or extraction from its mother of a product of a conception, irrespective of the duration of pregnancy. Stillbirths are included in the overall foetal deaths and are usually referred to as late foetal deaths.

Session 6. Integration and coordination in the civil registration system

32. A presentation was made by UNSD on the coordination necessary among parts of the civil registration and vital statistics systems. It was pointed out in the presentation that the need for coordination within the civil registration system exists irrespective of the organization of the system. Whether civil registration is centralized or decentralized and whether civil registration and vital statistics are in the same or different agencies, the need for coordination of the system is of paramount importance.

33. The coordination activities exist in three aspects. First, there should be a uniform legislation and regulation nationwide and procedures for each registration function is clearly stated in a manual and disseminated at each level. Second, there is a need to create an inter-agency coordinating committee, consisting of all reporting sources such as hospitals, private doctors, court houses, and funeral directors, to monitor and evaluate the completeness and reliability of the registration procedure. Another committee could be

formed involving users and potential users of the civil registration records so that the demand for civil registration is strengthened. The third aspect is to maintain regular communications within the system, through periodic meetings, electronic dialogues and site visits. These activities also apply to the coordination within the system of vital statistics and between the systems of civil registration and vital statistics.

34. During the discussion the participants emphasized the importance of coordination in generating vital statistics from a civil registration system. The representative from Jordan Statistical Office shared their experience in collaborating with the Department of Civil Affairs – there is an agreement between the two departments that the latter provides civil records to the Statistics Office on a monthly basis.

35. While discussing new technologies on maintaining a civil registration system, it was noted that the United Nations do not recommend any particular commercial product. However there are various commercial products that can be used to maintain a civil registration system and outsourcing the daily operation is a possibility.

36. Another question was also raised regarding how the total number of citizens died abroad can be estimated if they were not properly registered. It was pointed out by the representative from UNFPA that a key criterion for a successful and complete coverage of all vital events is coordination. How best can countries coordinate the system to deal with large proportion of population that are either living abroad or internally displaced remains a challenge, and is contingent on the functioning of various institutions involved in the registration.

Session 7. Topics and themes to be investigated in a vital statistics system

37. A representative from UNSD reviewed the items that are internationally recommended to be collected in a vital statistics system. The first part of the presentation covered core variables that need to be collected in the statistical report for births, deaths, foetal deaths, marriages and divorces. The second part of the presentation examined the recommended items that should be collected in population censuses and household sample surveys. It was pointed out by the presenter that these topics were core topics and the list of extended topics is available on the *Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System*, Rev. 2³.

38. One question was asked during the discussion on the reason that the date of marriage of mother was one of the core items to be collected and its analytical implications. It was later explained that such question can be used to derive duration-specific marital fertility rates. For those births occurred to married couples, fertility varies as sharply with the duration of the marriage as with the age of the parents. Tabulations of births by duration of marriage are rendered more useful for analysis if they are cross-tabulated by age of mother and birth order.

³ United Nations Publication, Sales No. E.01.XVII.10. The publication was distributed to the participants and is also available online at <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/pubs/gesgrid.asp?id=264>

39. After reviewing the core topics that need to be included in the registration of vital events, a concern was voiced that some of the socio-economic characteristics of the mother are not included as core items, such as occupation of the mother, although they are listed as non-core topics.

40. It was pointed out by the participants that vital statistics obtained from a civil registration system is mainly for the purpose of governing and planning. More in-depth analysis of fertility and mortality patterns should involve more detailed and specialized sample surveys. In that context, civil registration can be used as a sampling frame for specialized surveys.

Session 8. Evaluating the completeness of the civil registration system

41. A representative from UNSD examined methods that detect problems with the registered vital events. To maintain the goal of universal coverage, central and sub-national registration offices need to establish regular protocols to assure that all local registration areas are properly performing registration functions. The protocols should also examine other quantitative and qualitative aspects of the registration of vital events. In addition to internal management and surveillance protocols, objective assessments by external authorities are also recommended. The presentation examined both direct and indirect methods of assessment of civil registration in detail.

42. The direct method for evaluating the completeness of civil registration involves the direct matching of these records with those from an independent source. Several independent sources – civil registration records (for an independent vital event), administrative and social records, population census and sample survey records, and dual record system - may be used for making a direct evaluation. A direct method can provide useful information on the sources of under-reporting, particularly if the test is carefully designed and can also improve registration by identifying unregistered vital events. Indirect assessments indicate whether a data quality problem exists. The following methods were described: comparison of trends, delayed registration, comparison with census data and comparison of rates.

43. During the discussion, participants re-emphasized the importance of assessing the civil registration and vital statistics system. It was also pointed out that the techniques needed for the assessment require a certain level of human and financial capacity in government agencies. Learning from the experience of some European countries on data matching from different sources and assessment tools can bring benefits to countries in this region.

44. One of the issues raised in regard to the quality of data referred to the consistency of individual records. Even if the coverage of civil registration system and, consequently, vital statistics generated out of it, is complete, errors in entering the information into individual records may occur, thus making the final compilation erroneous. This is an example on how important it is to develop quality assurance at each step of the process. In this specific case, the system has to incorporate editing and logical-checking programs

that will identify inconsistencies within each individual record and prompt for the correction.

45. Regarding the use of matching for the completeness assessment, there was a question on how other administrative records could be matched with civil registration records when there is no unique ID system in the country. It was pointed out that there was a possibility to use names for the matching although this could become very tedious.

46. One participant asked the question on whether confidentiality issue also applies to the matching of the births and deaths records. It was responded that according to the *Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics*⁴ item 6, individual data collected by statistical agencies for statistical compilation are to be used exclusively for statistical purposes. Therefore matching the births and deaths records is valid if it is for statistical purpose only. However, any actions in danger of jeopardizing the confidentiality of individual should be avoided.

47. In some countries (Syria 1970s), a question was asked to mother of the Syrian citizens whether their children were registered at birth and it was found out that around 70% of the children were not registered. It was pointed out by the UNSD representative that although such question was asked in censuses in a number of countries, it was not recommended for two reasons. First, the reply to a population census was not based on any documents and self-reporting could not be used to evaluate the civil registration system. Second, in many countries registration of birth was mandatory and the person who did not register might be reluctant to respond to this question in the census and even to the entire questionnaire. Therefore the quality of the entire census might be jeopardized.

48. The representative from Qatar stated that currently there is no systematic measure in the country to monitor and evaluate the civil registration system. He requested technical assistance from UNSD in this area and was advised to do so through regular channels.

Session 9. Civil registration and vital statistics system in ESCWA countries

Bahrain

Vital statistics

49. Civil registration system is the main source of vital statistics in Bahrain. Ministry of Health is the agency compiling and disseminating births and deaths statistics. The main dissemination tool is the internet (web address). The following information are published total number of births and deaths; births by sex, place of birth, age, and father (or mother)'s nationality; stillbirths by sex, father's nationality and gestational age; deaths by sex, age, nationality and cause of deaths.

Civil registration

⁴ Available online at <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/dnss/gp/fundprinciples.aspx>

50. The civil registration system in Bahrain is a centralized system and is carried out in two different ministries – the Ministry of Health is responsible for the registration of births and deaths; and the Ministry of Justice and Islamic Affairs is responsible for the registration of marriages and divorces.

51. The birth registration is done in the hospital. Births occurred outside of the hospital are required to be registered according to the law. In this case, the midwife will transfer the mothers and children to the hospital for registration. For those born abroad, Bahrain embassies abroad are responsible for the reporting of the births. Those reports will be sent to the court for evaluation and a birth certificate will be issued. The report of deaths in Bahrain comes from multiple sources – public or private hospitals, relatives, and embassies abroad. The coverage of the civil registration system is close to 100%, according to the most recent assessment in 2006.

Difficulties and future plans:

52. One area that currently needs improvement is the registration of birth. It is still a rather long process from the time that the mother is admitted into the hospital for delivery to the time that a new born child is registered. The registration form is sent from the hospital to the Birth and Death Registration Office through fax and sometimes the form gets lost. In order to improve in this respect, there is a plan to computerize the registration system in all three main government-owned maternity hospitals so information about the mother and the child is integrated into the system shared by the Birth and Death Registration Office the moment that the mother gets admitted into the hospital. Such electronic system can improve the efficiency of work on both sides –hospitals and registration offices. It certainly will also reduce the risk of paperwork being missing during the process.

Egypt

Vital statistics

53. The vital statistics system in Egypt is a centralized system, where the collection, compilation and dissemination of vital statistics are done at the national level by CAPMAS, under the Ministry of Planning. CAPMAS receives information on the registered vital events from the Civil Registration Office (under the Ministry of Interior) and then compiles and disseminates the statistics. While compiling vital statistics obtained from civil registration, CAPMAS evaluates the data and provides feedback to the Civil Registration Office if revision is necessary. The completeness of births and deaths statistics for Egypt is around 98%. Population censuses and sample surveys are also used to obtain vital rates.

Civil registration

54. Civil registration system in Egypt is also centralized. Health unit spread around the country (4417 units) register births, deaths and foetal deaths, while courts, land registration offices, marriage and divorce declaration points and notaries register marriages and divorces (a total of 5594 registration sites). All the information collected at

the local registration offices is sent to Department of Civil Status (under the Ministry of Interior) through the local civil registration offices and centers (27 in total).

55. In Egypt, there is a uniform law on civil registration that applies to every person in the country and throughout all agencies. In addition, any improvement of the system has to be done under the collaboration of all involved agencies. There are also bi-lateral cooperation between agencies for issues both parties are concerned.

Difficulties and future plans

56. There are several areas in the civil registration system that needs further improvement. First of all, there is a lack of awareness of the importance of the civil registration system by general public and staff working at the local health offices. Second, the infrastructure for the civil registration system is old and cannot sustain the normal operation of the system. Third, there is no regular training of the local health office staff. Fourth, there is not enough system monitoring and evaluation.

57. Egypt plans to develop an electronic information network involving the Ministry of Health, the Data Information Network, Ministry of Interior (Department of Civil Status) and CAPMAS (statistics). The network is going to connect regional and local offices nationwide and will facilitate information sharing among all relevant agencies. The civil registration office is also going to develop a simplified registration method for the registration of births and deaths. Under the new method, all information will be recorded electronically at the registration point and will be accessible by the Department of Civil Status. Another undergoing plan is to integrate and link various existing databases so more detailed information on births and deaths can be obtained. (e.g., linking births and deaths data)

Jordan

Vital statistics

58. The main source of vital statistics in Jordan is the civil registration system. Sample surveys are also used to obtain core indicators as well as to evaluate the civil registration system. The most recent two surveys were conducted in 2002 and 2007. Data obtained from these two sources are consistent. Population census is not currently used as a source for vital statistics.

Civil registration

59. The civil registration system in Jordan is a centralized system. The Department of Civil Status and Passport (CSP) is responsible for civil registration in the country. It registers all vital events occurred to Jordanian citizens, living in the country or abroad as well as foreigners living in the country; provides certificates for vital events; registers Jordanian families; issues family books; provides national IDs for all citizens; and issues temporary passports to people from the West Bank. There are 74 sub-offices spread around the country. CSP also works with other government agencies for information on employment, acquisition of citizenship and other personal characteristics to incorporate

such information into the person identification card. The system is operated electronically and all parties have access to the database through terminals. Embassies abroad are also included in the system.

60. The birth registration in Jordan is complete (99%) and the coverage of death registration is incomplete (60%). Marriage and divorce registration is covered at 100%. The coverage of foetal deaths is rather low (50%). The assessment was recently conducted in 2006 using dual-records system and fertility and mortality surveys.

61. In terms of coordination within the system, there is a planning committee consisting of the Department of Civil Status and Passport and other relevant departments. The committee oversees the development of plans and actions necessary to facilitate the work of the Department of Civil Status and Passport.

Difficulties

62. Despite the successes that the country has made over the past 70 years, there are still some areas that need improvement. The first issue is the registration coverage and the under-reporting of vital events in the country. There are several reasons for the non-reporting of the 1% of the births – disagreement within the family, poverty and lack of awareness. For some of the geographical non-reporting, reduced penalty for late reporting in the legislation might be a reason.

63. The under-reporting of deaths is much more prevalent in Jordan – only 60% of all deaths were registered in 2000. The most important contributing factor to the non-reporting is the adoption of a burial certificate issued by municipalities rather than a death certificate issued by CSP. Other reasons include the lack of awareness on the importance to registering deaths and deliberate un-reporting of deaths of non-citizens so the survived can still benefit from the welfare for the deceased. For a child died shortly after birth, if death happens prior to the reporting of birth, neither birth and nor death of the child is reported. The underreporting of stillbirth happens quite often as well.

64. In addition to the coverage issues, accuracy of the reporting is also a problem. For example, it is the interest of the parents to report a child's birth in another month other than the one the child was born for school enrolment purposes.

Future plans

65. The ultimate goal of the CSP is to register vital events occurred to Jordanian citizens living in the country or abroad, as well as foreigners living in the country. The first step is to promote the importance of civil registration and vital statistics, through improving data dissemination and conducting workshops and seminars, in collaboration with UNFPA.

Lebanon

Vital statistics

66. Two agencies in Lebanon are involved in the production of vital statistics – General Directorate of Civil Affairs (Ministry of Interior and Municipalities) and Central Statistical Department. The Department of Statistics under the General Directorate of Civil Affairs compiles monthly and annual vital statistics based on civil registration for Lebanese citizens and foreigners. A copy of these tabulation is also sent to the Central Statistical Department the end of every month. The Central Statistical Department is responsible for the collection of vital statistics through various sample surveys such as the survey initiated by the Pan Arab Project for Family Health (PAPFAM), Living standards of families and Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS). A complete count of population through population census has not been conducted since 1932 and the most recent sample census was conducted in 1995.

Civil registration

67. The General Directorate of Civil Affairs registers vital events such as births, deaths, marriages and divorces. Foetal deaths are not registered according to the law passed in 1956. The agency is also in charge of various administrative tasks such as issuing personal ID card, providing information for electoral purposes, providing services to Lebanese citizens living abroad and so on. In addition, the General Directorate of Civil Affairs compiles basic vital statistics such as births and deaths by sex as well as marriage and divorce rates. There are 52 registry offices working under the central office through regional departments in 6 provinces. The mayor fills out the registration forms and sends them to local registration office for registration.

68. There was no assessment of the completeness of the civil registration in the past 10 years. It was pointed out by the participant from Lebanon that the registration of births and deaths was likely to be complete due to the strong association between registration and the social welfare system; as well as the enforced penalties for non-registration.

Difficulties and future plans

69. The civil registration and vital statistics systems in Lebanon are facing difficulties in terms of human and technology capacities. There is not enough staff working in the system and training is lacking as well. There are, for example, only 40 staff members working at the Central Statistical Department. From the technical point of view, the current design of the registration form is not compatible with the new information system that was setup to process the registration records. In addition, part of the registration and processing is still manually done.

70. There is a 3-stage plan that has been laid out to improve the civil registration and vital statistics systems in Lebanon. The short-term plan is to improve the human capacity by bringing more staff to work in the system. There is also a plan to further exploit the existing data. The medium-term plan is to revise the registration forms so that they are compatible with the newly designed information system. The long-term plan is to build a fully electronic database to facilitate data collection, compilation and dissemination, as well as coordination among different agencies.

Iraq

Vital statistics

71. The sources for vital statistics in Iraq are population censuses and sample surveys. The most recent population census was conducted in 1997 and was considered to be inaccurate. Civil registration system is not used for vital statistics because of its deficiencies.

Civil registration and related difficulties

72. The situation in Iraq worsened since 1990, where almost all normal activities came to a stall including civil registration. The system is unreliable – sometimes people intentionally give out inaccurate information to avoid compulsory military services or for certain financial benefits. Administratively, there are not enough registration offices around the country. There is one headquarter office located in Baghdad and 11 sub-offices in the city. For the rest of the country, only 1 office exists in each province to cover the registration. The registrars are lack of qualifications and experiences and most of them are just barely literate. The registration of vital events is not complete, nor does it cover all areas in the country. From the most recent studies on fertility and mortality, the coverage of birth and registration in Iraq is 68% and 34%, respectively.

Oman

Vital statistics

73. Vital statistics in Oman are obtained from three sources: a newly built civil registration system (since 2004), population censuses and sample surveys. Fertility and mortality statistics obtained from the census was used to assess the situation in Oman and also to compare with and evaluate the newly developed civil registration system. A number of fertility and mortality related questions were asked in the 2003 population census: children ever born and surviving, number of live births occurred the year before the census, deaths occurred in the household and the time and reason for the death. Sample surveys were also used to measure the level of fertility and mortality. These surveys were mainly conducted by the Ministry of National Economy and Ministry of Health.

Civil registration

74. The civil registration system in Oman started in 2004. Directorate General of Civil Status (DGCS) under the Royal Oman Police is the responsible agent. There are many possible information sources for the births and deaths registration. For example, births and deaths can happen in the public hospitals where information is linked directly with the Ministry of Health. There are also other information sources such as private hospitals, community leader (for births and deaths happened at home) and Omani Embassies abroad. Ideally, all those information providers send information to DGCS once an event occurs. When DGCS receives the registration forms, it would also pass the information back to the Ministry of Health so the health-related variables can be linked to the event, as MOH

maintains a database containing all health related information collected at different types of health institutions, public owned or private.

75. In order to facilitate the registration procedure, a committee was created which was lead by DGCS and involved different Ministries such as Ministry of National Economy, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Social Affairs, Labour and Vocational Training, Ministry of Justice and Ministry of Education. The committee was created to streamline the work of DGCS and to contribute to the development of the civil registration programme.

76. An assessment was done based on the 2006 data collected through the civil registration system. It was found out that birth registration coverage was nearly complete while the completeness for death registration is much lower. One possible reason for the incomplete death registration is the introduction of an earlier legislation that allowed burial without death certificate. Incomplete information within the vital record is also a problem. For example, there is no information on sex for 30% of the deaths; and a significant number of deaths were reported without specifying age. The report of the sex of live births is highly complete (above 99%), while the age of mother is reported less – 87% for Omani citizens and 95% for foreigners.

Difficulties and future plans

77. The civil registration system in Oman is rather new. As a result, it is influenced by the long-standing lack of awareness of the public regarding the importance of the registration. In addition, the registration system is heavily burdened by the fact that there is no exact age recording for most of the population and has to rely on age estimation. Another important limitation of the system is the incomplete information within records such as age, sex and health-related variables (e.g. cause of death). It was noted that trainings for medical doctors and coders for the cause of death variable were not sufficient. The missing information on cause of death was particular severe for deaths occurred outside of the health institutions.

78. There is a plan to raise the awareness through public campaigns on the importance of civil registration and vital statistics. It was realized that the shorter the period between the event occurs and the registration, the more accurate and reliable information is obtained. Therefore there is a need to improve the current system so that the time allowed between occurrence and registration is more appropriate. There is also a need to bring more access to the registrars, especially in the less developed area. Standardizing the terms and definitions used in the registration is also needed to improve the quality of data.

The Occupied Palestinian Territory

Vital statistics

79. The main data source of vital statistics in Palestine is the civil registration system. Population censuses and sample surveys are used as supplement to civil registration to build an integrated vital statistics system. The Department of Civil Registration within the Ministry of Interior is in charge of the civil registration system and the Palestinian

Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) is responsible for the collection of vital statistics through population censuses and sample surveys and for the dissemination of vital statistics from all three data sources. Vital statistics obtained from these three sources are consistent.

Civil registration

80. The civil registration system in Palestinian Territories is under the administration of the Department of Civil Registration. The system is a centralized system and registers the following vital events – births, deaths, foetal deaths, marriages and divorces. Other vital events such as adoption, judicial separation, annulments do not apply to the national practices and are not covered. The entire system is linked electronically from the central office to local offices.

81. According to the law, the Department of Civil registration is responsible for registering vital events, extracting information for administrative or other purposes, and issuing certificates. The current registration system covers Palestinians with Palestine identities, regardless where they reside. Palestinians holding Israeli identity card or foreigners living in Palestine are not covered.

82. The external evaluation and validation of vital records received from the Department of Civil Registration is conducted by PCBS. According to the 2004 assessment, the completeness of data on births and deaths is 86% and 75%, respectively. The evaluation was done by linking civil registration records with records in the population register. Assessing the completeness of other registered vital events – foetal deaths, marriages and divorces has not been conducted in the past 10 years.

Difficulties and future plans

83. It is realized that the current population register needs to be revised and modernized so it is consistent with international standards and is also meeting the needs of users. The shortfalls related to the system are reflected in various areas. First, there are still many quality issues within the system that need to be improved. For example, the issue of duplicate identification cards, inaccurate recording of date (sometimes date of birth is later than date of death) and coding errors due to the manual work. The second problem with the current system is the under-coverage of the birth and death registration. Third, additional variables and characteristics of population might need to be incorporated as the current ones can not meet the needs of users. The fourth issue lies in the fact that there is no clear delineation of responsibilities among different data providers that is required for a continuous and systematic flow of information. The last issue that needs to be solved is to establish linkage with the Israeli side to access information for Palestinians living under the Israeli administration.

84. The first priority in the future development of the civil registration system and related population register is to setup a national commission to improve the quality of data and facilitate the modernization of the system as well as the dissemination of data. The commission will (1) oversee the technical, administrative and legal perspectives of the

register, link all administrative sources and services together and facilitate the flow of information among different agencies; (2) identify actions necessary to overcome technical, administrative and financial problems and set up a plan for the improvement of the system; and (3) establish sub-working groups to identify and develop legal and regulatory aspects needed to revitalize the civil registration and vital statistics systems in the country.

Qatar

Vital statistics

No information.

Civil registration

85. The civil registration system in Qatar is maintained by CAPMS under Qatar National Health Authority. Main duties of the agency include registering births and deaths; issuing birth and death certificate and burial permit; storing and archiving births and deaths records; producing and disseminating statistical report on issues such as neonatal mortality, health related indicators; and responding to internal and international data requests. The Agency also plays a role in the coordination activities with other relevant agencies on various issues. Those agencies include the Department of Planning and statistics (for issues related to vital statistics) and the agency on age estimation. In addition, the Agency is involved in many national committees that are in charge of issues such as age estimation, population census, births and deaths, annual statistical report and name changing.

86. The registration of marriages and divorces is completed at the court. The court then sends the records to CAPMS every month in both electronic and hard copies. These records are also sent to the Ministry of Interior (for population registration).

87. The coverage of births and deaths in Qatar is considered above 90%. Death registration coverage has improved significantly since 1990 – only 36% of the deaths were covered and the coverage became 97% since the year 1990. The coverage of marriages and divorces registration is much lower.

Difficulties and future plans

88. The coverage of marriages and divorces registration still need to be improved. In addition, more efforts are necessary to evaluate the civil registration system against other data sources.

Saudi Arabia

Vital statistics

89. Civil registration, population census and sample surveys are the sources of vital statistics. Civil registration system is the responsibility of Department of Civil Status

while population censuses and sample surveys are conducted by Central Department of Statistics and Information. The most recent population census was conducted in 2004 and questions on fertility and mortality included children ever born and births and deaths occurred 12 months before the census. The population census is de-facto based although all detailed tables are provided only for Saudi citizens. Demographic survey is also a source for vital statistics in Saudi Arabia. The most recent demographic survey was conducted in 2007 and topics covered in the survey included fertility, mortality, basic characteristics of population and housing conditions. There is no information on whether vital statistics obtained from these three sources is consistent.

Civil registration

90. Civil registration system in Saudi Arabia is administered by the Department of Civil Status (under the Ministry of Interior). Actual registration of births and deaths is conducted by the Ministry of Health and the registration of marriages and divorces is done by the Ministry of Justice. The registered information is sent to the Department of Civil Status (under the Ministry of Interior) to update the information in the population registry. The Department of Civil Status has 2000 employees in 84 offices within the country. The Department consists of one section on civil registration and another one on passport services.

91. There is no assessment for the coverage of the civil registration system in the country.

Difficulties and future plans

92. The challenges that the civil registration system currently faces are (1) there is a need to re-engineer the procedures of system so it is more efficient; (2) there is a need to take quality control measures and to improve qualities of the information collected; (3) small offices are needed to handle the work load brought by moving everything online; and (4) more effort is needed to speed up the process of e-government, telecommunication so better services can be provided to the population.

93. Most recently the Department started to outsource the part related to technology and computer networks to private companies. It was hoped that the population registry would be more complete as more and more people start to use the system and feel the urge to update their information in the register.

Syria

Vital Statistics

No information.

Civil registration

94. The civil registration system in Syria is under the responsibility of the Directorate of Civil Status. The Directorate is in charge of recording and registering all vital events and

issuing certificates, IDs, electoral cards and family IDs for citizens and residence cards for non-citizens. There are currently 255 civil registration offices in the country.

95. For citizens, the family is responsible for the declaration and reporting of the vital events occurred in the family. For non-citizens, the civil registration office also needs to send a copy of the registration record to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. For vital events happened abroad, the law requires that notifications have to be sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In reality, however, this is rarely done.

96. The coverage of births registration is at 98% while the coverage for the death registration is only at 75%.

97. The importance of data confidentiality is fully understood and respected. There is mutual agreement between the civil registration office and statistical office for data sharing. Other agencies do not have access to data without special approval from the civil registration office.

Difficulties and future plans

98. Currently the registration is done manually and computerizing the entire system is an ongoing project, in collaboration with UNFPA. The project is going to be completed by the end of 2007.

99. One important aspect that Syria needs help is on the techniques that can be used to evaluate data more frequently. After the 1994 census, a decline of population growth was observed and after careful checking and cross-checking it was found out that the registration records had major flaws and needed to be corrected.

United Arab Emirates

Vital statistics

100. Sources for vital statistics in the country are civil registration, population censuses and sample surveys. The Department of Preventive Medicine under the Ministry of Health is responsible for the registration of births and deaths. The registration of marriages and divorces is covered by the state courts under the Ministry of Justice. Population censuses and sample surveys are conducted by the Central Statistical Department under the Ministry of Economy. The questions that are often used include the total number of women or married women by age; children ever-born and living; and number of births in one year.

Civil registration

101. Both births and deaths are to be reported to the nearest health center and the information will be forwarded to the Ministry of Health for registration. Both marriages and divorces should go through state courts formally and the court provides the information to the Central Statistics Department for statistical purposes.

102. There is no formal assessment on the coverage of civil registration system. However, it was believed by the country representative that the coverage is complete (above 90%).

Difficulties and future plans

103. The presentation did not outline the difficulties encountered and future plans for the civil registration system. However, a population register is being implemented until 2008. The population register will assign a unique identification card to all citizens in the country and for each person the basic characteristics are stored in the system. An ID card will also be issued and the same card could be used as a driver's license, healthcare card and passport.

Yemen

Vital statistics

104. Sources for vital statistics in Yemen are population censuses and sample surveys (10% household survey) and civil registration system. Central Statistical Office conducts censuses and surveys in the country while the Department of Civil Status under the Ministry of Interior is responsible for the civil registration system. Data collected from the Ministry of Interior are provided to the Central Statistical Office for dissemination through the statistics yearbook. It was noted that there were inconsistencies among data generated from different sources and the main reason for the discrepancy is the under-coverage of the civil registration system.

Civil registration

105. The civil registration system in Yemen is centralized and all vital events are registered by the Department of Civil Status. The actual registration of births and deaths is completed at the Ministry of Health when events occur, while the registration of marriages and divorces is done by the Ministry of Justice. Registered information is then delivered to the Department of Civil Status for processing.

106. An assessment on the completeness of the civil registration system was done in 2003 by comparing statistics obtained from civil registration with those obtained from census and surveys. The results of the study showed that the coverage was 39.2% for birth and 13.2% for deaths. Among all the reasons, high illiteracy rate in the population as well as high percentage of birth delivery outside of the hospital (70%) contributed most to the low coverage of the births and deaths registration.

Difficulties and future plans

107. The major obstacles that Yemen faces in its effort to improve the civil registration system are (1) inadequate legal provisions on civil registration; (2) lack of awareness of the public on the importance of the civil registration; (3) inefficient administrative work; (4) lack of or absence of coordination within each agency and among different agencies; (5) lack of expertise in qualitative and quantitative analysis; (6)

lack of a clear delineation of the responsibilities for different agencies; and (7) a large number of inhabitant island which make the registration very difficult (185 islands).

108. The current plan for Yemen to improve the civil registration system is to amend the current legislation; improve the coordination among different agencies; build technical capacities through training and international assistance; make services easily available to the public so people are more familiar with the system; and conduct national campaigns on the importance of civil registration. Yemen is also building a population registrar which will assign each person a unique identification number and the civil registration system will be used to update the population registrar. The new population registrar will issue certificate and ID cards to the public. The Central Statistical Office is currently working on a new strategy to register international migrants living in Yemen and Yemen citizens living abroad.

Session 10a. Concepts and definitions of vital events in national civil registration systems (for civil registrars)

109. A group of civil registrars were brought together and two subjects were discussed: (1) definitions of vital events used in civil registration systems in their respective countries and (2) the variables that are registered in the system. During the discussion, it was found out that some of the participants were not aware of the statistical definitions for vital events in their respective countries. Another finding from the group discussion was that sometimes different agencies from the same country would provide inconsistent answers to the same question, which indicated some degree of lack of coordination. For example for the same country, one agency indicated that foetal deaths were not registered while another one confirmed later that there was a special registration system for foetal deaths.

110. In conclusion, it was agreed that more coordination within the country was needed, between civil registrars and statisticians so that the registrars were familiar with the statistical definitions of vital events. Another level of coordination is needed among countries within the ESCWA region. Some noted that discrepancies exist for terminologies and their definitions. Sometimes even when the same term was used across countries, their meanings could well be different. Therefore, there is a need to build a glossary on relevant terms for the region to improve comparability within the region.

Session 10b. Censuses and sample surveys as a source of fertility and mortality data (for statisticians)

Fertility statistics

111. A presentation from UNSD was first made on the use of censuses and surveys for the purpose of generating fertility statistics. Six major methods of estimating fertility from population censuses and sample surveys were reviewed: reverse survival; own-children method; reconstructed birth histories; children ever born; recent births and birth histories.

112. The *reverse survival* method considers the number of persons less than one year of age enumerated in a population census as the survivors of the births that occurred in the population during the year prior to the census. The number of births occurring in that specific year prior to the census can be estimated by using life table survivorship probabilities to “resurrect” numerically those who died before the census was taken. This method of estimation is known as *reverse survival* or *reverse projection*. In the absence of complete vital registration, the reverse survival method may be used to estimate the number of births, the crude birth rates and the general fertility rates for the 15 years before each population census and some surveys.

113. The *own-children method* is an extension of the reverse survival method in which the children who survived in the household are matched to their mothers. Reverse survival method and own-children methods differ most markedly by the type of data they require. Namely, the matching of children and mothers in the *own-children* method provides for the characteristics of the mothers to be linked to their children, which is not necessary in the *reverse survival method*. This procedure allows disaggregating the number of births by age of mother at birth and therefore calculates age specific fertility rates for the 10 or 15 years preceding a census or survey. In addition, it allows the calculation of age specific birth rates for various subgroups of the population, such as by educational attainment of mother, religion, ethnicity etc.

114. The *birth history reconstruction* method is an extension of own-children method that produces a complete history for every woman under age 65 using statistics from population census or survey. The birth history reconstruction imputes the years since birth for surviving and deceased children based on the years of birth of the own children and the estimated age patterns of fertility and mortality.

115. Questions on the number of *children ever born* (CEB) to women have been consistently used in population censuses over the past 50 years and represent the core of the CEB method. These questions provide important information on fertility and when combined with the question on surviving children, estimates of infant and child mortality can be constructed.

116. Census and survey respondents may be asked how many live births occurred in their household or to particular women in the household during the past year or other recent time period. This type of questions refers to the *recent births* method.

117. The last method is the one of *birth histories* that consists essentially of a list of all children a woman has had, living and deceased. In addition, for these children it contains certain information such as the date of birth, the sex of the child and whether it was a single or multiple births. The use of birth histories is generally restricted to samples of 5,000 to 10,000 women and is only occasionally used in larger surveys and population censuses.

118. In concluding, it was highlighted that there is a sign of an improvement in both quantity and quality of demographic data for fertility analysis, primarily based on successful censuses and the increasing number of surveys. Estimation of fertility levels,

differentials and trends should attempt to use as many of the six techniques highlighted as possible.

Mortality statistics

119. A representative of UNSD introduced this session with a presentation covering the major techniques to estimate mortality statistics and highlighting advantages and disadvantages for each of them. A general overview of the set of techniques available in the estimation of mortality included: (a) survival of children ever born, (b) birth histories, (c) recent household deaths, (d) survival of parents and (e) survival of siblings. He then focused on each technique pointing out the questions used, tabulations needed, estimation techniques and quality of statistics obtained.

120. Survival of children ever born provides information on mortality for persons younger than 15 years old. Questions on children ever born and children surviving have been used extensively in both censuses and surveys to collect data on both fertility and mortality (infant and child mortality). The quality of the data obtained has been encouraging especially for countries conducting censuses regularly. The basic questions asked to women 15 and above are: (i) the number of female children a woman has had altogether in her lifetime, (ii) the number of male children a woman has had altogether in her life time, (iii) the number of female children who are surviving and (iv) the number of male children who are surviving. When the procedure was conceived it had only 2 questions: 1) children ever born and 2) children surviving, but the accuracy of reporting was not very good; the splitting of the basic questions into more detailed questions on sex and place of staying of children (in household/elsewhere), provided better estimates.

121. *Birth histories* (BH) provide information on mortality for persons younger than 5 years old (estimates of level and trend of infant and child mortality). The birth histories method also provides reliable data on the age pattern of infant and child mortality. The data may be used to check the validity of the assumed age pattern of mortality used to produce mortality estimates from data on children ever born and surviving.

122. *Recent household deaths* provide information for the estimation of mortality for all ages and they are generally used to estimate age patterns for adult mortality. Questions on recent deaths in households have not been as widely used. However, they are the only possible source of information on the age pattern of adult mortality in the absence of complete and accurate death registration data. They are also the only census and survey questions that potentially provide data on mortality over the entire age span. Questions on recent household deaths may provide useful information on cause of death.

123. *Survival of parents* only provides information on adult mortality (estimates of level and trend of adult mortality). The basic questions are: (i) Is your [this person's] mother still living? (ii) Is your [this person's] father still living? Either questions may be elaborated by asking the year and month of death when the mother or father is deceased. The quality of adult mortality estimates derived from data on survival of parents depends on the quality of the data, the accuracy of supplementary parameters required by the estimation procedure and the validity of the model life-table family used for the

estimation. Generally, the most effective way of assessing quality is to compare the parental survival estimates with estimates from other sources

124. Questions on *survival of siblings* are used for estimating adult mortality but have not experienced a wider usage. The technique is similar to that of basing estimates on survival of parents or children ever born. The basic sibling survival questions are as follows: Brothers ever born (Brothers surviving to age 15); Sisters ever born (Sisters surviving to age 15). The form of the tabulation for both the basic sibling-survival questions and the adult sibling question is the same. The basic tabulation for the sibling-survival questions shows all persons over age 15 by age in five-year groups (15-19, 20-24, ... 85+) classified by brothers (living here, living elsewhere, and deceased) and sisters (living here, living elsewhere, and deceased).

125. In conclusion, concerted efforts should be made in the training and supervision of fieldworkers to ensure the most accurate reporting possible in the collection of mortality data from censuses and surveys. In addition sample sizes for mortality estimation should be increased to overcome the rarity of the event. The best solution to the lack of data on mortality is the establishment and rapid improvement of the sources of basic vital statistics through the registration of births and deaths.

Discussion

126. A number of countries indicated that the above-presented indirect estimation methods were widely used. These methods were particularly useful for countries that did not have complete civil registration system. For countries that did have a complete civil registration system, these methods were usually used in specialized sample surveys to evaluate the civil registration system or to conduct in-depth analysis. For example the results from the Jordan *Demographic and Health Survey* were used to evaluate the civil registration system in the country. The comparison showed that the birth registration was complete in the country while birth registration for young babies was the lowest among all age groups due to delayed reporting. Another example of using the indirect method was that the birth history method was used in Jordan for all indicators related to child mortality. Countries agreed that the use of multiple data sources was crucial for an integrated population information system covering small geographic areas and by social economic characteristics.

127. Several countries raised the issue that while multiple data sources were used within the country, they sometimes provided inconsistent results which might confuse the users and jeopardize the authority of each data producing agencies. Sometimes the sample surveys administered by international agencies also contributed to the inconsistency. Therefore, it was recommended by the participants that coordination among different data producers should be strengthened. One way of doing this is through the creation of a committee that consists of representatives from all data producers. Furthermore, the National Statistical Office should always be consulted before any data are released to the public.

128. It was agreed that training is needed to evaluate the completeness of the civil registration system using indirect estimates method. It is also important to provide training on collecting and compiling information on cause of deaths and in particular, maternal mortality. Such training should involve agencies from civil registration offices, offices providing certificates to the public and agencies conducting statistical analysis.

129. As noted by the participants, the degree of statistical development was not uniform within the ESCWA region. Some were more developed than others and therefore it would be useful to encourage South-South cooperation among countries in the region. One way of doing so was to organize regional workshops and seminars to exchange experiences. For more in-depth training opportunities, study tours could be arranged in more statistically developed countries. The experience from the ECLAC region, where a uniform census questionnaire is used in some countries and technologies are shared in the region, can be used in planning South-South cooperation activities.

130. It was pointed out that more guidance was needed on the measurement of maternal mortality, which was not covered in earlier presentations. As all ESCWA countries are working to report on the achievement on the Millennium Development Goals (MDG), maternal mortality measurement becomes very important since it is related to the third Goal of the MDG. The representative from UNSD responded to this issue by bringing the attention to the new core topics on maternal mortality during the most recent revision of the *Principles and Recommendations on the Population and Housing Censuses, Rev. 2*. The experience of Morocco was shared with participants on the use of population census to identify households with deaths related to pregnancies. Once these households were identified, they were used as a sampling frame for more in-depth analysis on maternal mortality. It was recommended that such method be investigated so more concrete guidance could be provided to countries in this region.

131. In terms of the use of indirect methods, one has to be cautious when a multiplier is involved in the calculation. These multipliers were derived by the United Nations based on past experiences of some other countries and might not work for countries in the ESCWA region⁵.

Session 12. Civil registration and population registers

132. The representative from UNSD provided definition for a population register and explained the relationship between civil registration and population register. It was highlighted that population register was a device used to continuously record population, the characteristics of the population and related events. Population register was mainly used for administrative purposes such as taxation, issuing IDs, tracking movements of persons and public security. It was also used for statistical purposes such as preparing population estimates, conducting population censuses, producing social and migration

⁵ For more information on multipliers and how they can be used for vital statistics, see Manual X: Indirect Techniques for Demographic Estimation, United Nations Publication, Sales No. E.83.XIII.2. The publication is also available online at http://www.un.org/esa/population/publications/Manual_X/Manual_X.htm

statistics, and building sampling frames. Population register could also be used for the evaluation of census results.

133. Civil registration and population register were closely linked: the population register should be constantly updated by births, deaths, marriages and divorces, which were part of the civil registration system in the country. As it was observed that quite a number of ESCWA countries either have a population register or are planning for one, the linkage between the civil registration system and the population register needed to be strengthened through coordination. It was also important to understand that population register was not an ultimate solution for an incomplete civil registration system.

134. As noted during the presentation, population register may be maintained in one agency or in different agencies for different functions or for different types of information. It was suggested by one participant that a recommendation should be issued by the United Nations on strengthening the coordination among different agencies involved in the population register. In addition, the recommendations should note that all records need to be stored in one place to facilitate data evaluation and data sharing.

135. One question was raised on how to capture illegal migrants living in the country. It was responded that population register was designed to record information on legal residents of the country and was not capable of documenting illegal migrants.

Session 13. Compilation of vital statistics at international level

UNSD presentation

136. A representative from UNSD made a presentation on the United Nations *Demographic Yearbook* and the level of responses to the Yearbook from ESCWA countries. The *Demographic Yearbook* is an international data collection and dissemination tool, which collects national demographic and social statistics through a number of questionnaires and disseminates those statistics at the international level.

137. The Vital Statistics Questionnaire, more specifically, collects live births, deaths, late foetal deaths, marriages and divorces from more than 230 countries. This questionnaire is sent to countries annually. The questionnaire also collects metadata such as the completeness of the statistics, methods used for data quality assessment, and whether the data were collected by occurrence or by registration.

138. From what had been collected from the ESCWA countries, it was found out that the responses were good for the more general tables such as total number of vital events occurred in the country. However, when more detailed information was requested such as births by birth order and deaths by marital status, the response rate was much lower. The last part of the presentation explored ways that can improve the response rate from ESCWA countries.

139. Following the presentation, one participant asked what strategies UNSD took when there was no response from the country. It was replied that UNSD usually followed up with countries by contacting them directly through email or telephone. Some

countries raised the issue that their national agencies had been receiving too many data inquiries from regional and international organizations and the response burden was overwhelming. It was clarified later that UNSD was trying its best to reduce the burden of countries in responding to the questionnaires. For countries that did not respond to the questionnaire, UNSD obtained data from the official publication and/or website of the National Statistical Offices. In addition, UNSD established a practice with Eurostat so the European countries only receive one questionnaire. Similar practice for the ESCWA countries is being explored, in collaboration with the Statistics Division of ESCWA.

140. Some countries also requested that longer time period should be given to fill out the questionnaire as the compilation of vital statistics was sometimes done by agencies other than the National Statistical Office and it took time to pass the information from one agency to another.

141. One participant also raised the possibility of UNSD obtaining data directly from the Ministry of Health website because in some countries the Ministry of Health was responsible for the dissemination of vital statistics. It was later explained that UNSD worked directly with National Statistical Offices only and therefore any data being collected and disseminated by UNSD have to be endorsed by the statistical office. Taking data directly from the website of other agencies, therefore, is considered as inappropriate. The representative from UNSD then stressed the importance of providing data to the *Demographic Yearbook* for regional and international comparability. In addition, making data available at international level shows, to a certain degree, the level of statistical capacity of a country.

WHO presentation

142. A representative from the World Health Organisation made a presentation on “Vital Statistics and Data Management for Evidence Health Situation and Trend Assessment”. The presentation first explained how health statistics at WHO were collected and the core indicators that the organization compiled. The World Health Organisation collected health statistics from the Ministry of Health and the technical units within regional offices. The data were then validated and adjusted by the Organization and sent for verifications from the country before they were disseminated.

143. The second part of the presentation highlighted a number of difficulties in the WHO health statistics collection. They include: (1) the concepts, definitions and classifications used in some countries not complying with international standards; (2) delay in data reporting; (3) incomplete or inaccurate statistics provided; and (4) inconsistency in data reported from the same agency and from different agencies.

144. The last part of the presentation raised the issue that for some countries, the estimates provided by countries are different from those provided by the United Nations. Examples of these estimates include the total population, population growth rate, total fertility rate, infant mortality rate, under-5 mortality rate and maternal mortality. The impact of the existing difference was discussed and the presentation was then concluded

by stressing the importance of a unified health information database throughout all international agencies.

145. During the discussion, participants pointed out a number of reasons for the lack of comparability of national data and data from the United Nations. One reason was that countries did not use the correct methodology and the results obtained were flawed. Another reason was that countries did not provide any national data to the United Nations for various reasons (e.g. lack of resources, no data at country level, etc.), and as a result the United Nations had to produce estimates based on demographic models. The results coming from those models might not be consistent with the national ones.

146. There was no doubt that the best source for data was the National Statistical Office and the best way to improve data comparability at international level was to improve country capacities in data collection and to improve the response to the data inquiries from international agencies. International agencies, on the other hand, were recommended to send their estimates to countries for validation before data were being disseminated.

Session 14. Round-table discussion: future activities to improve the civil registration and vital statistics systems for countries in the UNESCWA region

147. The representative from ESCWA raised the following points for discussion: (1) reviewing the Arabic translation of the *Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System, Rev. 2* by experts in the region; (2) establishing a regional instrument so data are consistent from different data sources; and (3) improving the quality of vital statistics produced in the country.

148. During the discussion, it was recognized by the participants the importance of having an assessment of the current status of civil registration and vital statistics systems within each country. The assessment should include the level of development of civil registration and the use of population censuses and sample surveys in the production of vital statistics. UNSD agreed to prepare a technical report on the current status of vital statistics in ESCWA countries, based on the country presentations in this workshop as well as pre-workshop assignments submitted by countries.

149. The group agreed that it was crucial to have coherent vital statistics within each country and across countries. Therefore the following steps were proposed:

- Countries should make an effort in providing metadata whenever data are provided and as a result, users could find out the reasons behind discrepancies from different data sources, if there were any.
- The Arabic translation of the *Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System, Rev. 2* should be reviewed by each country so that uniform estimation techniques can be used across countries. Building a glossary of terms in Arabic that are relevant in civil registration and vital

statistics systems might be the first step towards harmonization within the ESCWA region.

- Countries should learn from Latin American countries on how vital statistics are compiled as well as on the regional collaboration modality that was setup in ECLAC.
- Countries should set up a clear plan on what needs to be worked on, why and what outcome will be delivered, in the area of civil registration and vital statistics. Such plan should be submitted to donor agencies for financial supports.

150. UNSD will continue to work on the improvement of civil registration and vital statistics in each country and to bring comparable data at regional and international level. Currently there is an agreement from the GCC countries to conduct census at the same date and the ultimate goal of UNSD in the area of civil registration is similar – a unified civil registration system among all countries in the ESCWA region.

III. Conclusions and recommendations

General

151. The participants expressed appreciation to the United Nations Statistics Division and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia for organizing the workshop and to the Central Authority for Public Mobilization and Statistics of the Government of Egypt for hosting it.

152. The workshop concluded that the timing of the workshop was very appropriate, given the fact that in a number of countries in the region initiatives were underway aimed at improving both the civil registration and vital statistics systems and that participants would benefit from acquiring a better understanding of international standards in these two areas. Similarly, participants concluded that the exchange of national experiences is crucially important and that provisions should be made for follow-up meetings at regular intervals.

153. The participants noted with satisfaction that the workshop brought together civil registrars and statisticians, thus providing an excellent opportunity to discuss issues pertinent to all sides in a direct manner. The workshop concluded that establishing a regional association of civil registrars and statisticians should be considered as an option of introducing these exchanges on a more regular basis.

154. Assessing in general the state of art of the development of civil registration and vital statistics in the region, the workshop concluded that all the participating countries can be classified in four clusters. The first cluster consists of countries where civil registration is at high levels of coverage and the links with generating vital statistics are robust and functioning on a regular basis. The next cluster consists of countries where the civil registration is strong, but does not translate in reliable vital statistics due to inadequate coordination between the two. Cluster three would comprise of countries with weak civil registration, but strong vital statistics derived from special surveys and censuses. Finally, there are countries that are weak in both of these areas and require considerable support. In addition, some countries are having their civil registration in development phase and require further assistance in ensuring the quality of the system.

155. The workshop acknowledged the crucial interactive linkage of functioning civil registration system, accurate vital statistics, good governance and human rights. It emphasized the necessity to broadly advertise the negative impact that a non-functioning civil registration and lack of solid vital statistics have on exercising basic international human rights, specifically the rights of the child.

156. The workshop also addressed the issue of the necessity to establish coordination within the national statistics system regarding the provision of data to international agencies.

Civil registration

157. The workshop noted that registering crucial events in the life of an individual had a long tradition in the region. However, currently the civil registration systems are not equally developed and functioning throughout the region. While the coverage and registration of births is more or less adequate, this is certainly not the case with deaths. Special attention should be given to registering family formation and dissolution.

158. Throughout the region, the workshop noted, the registration of foetal deaths suffers from inaccuracy as a consequence of non-reporting. Recognizing the importance of this issue, the workshop recommended that countries follow international recommendations for registering occurrences of foetal deaths to the letter.

159. In most countries of the region the registration of deaths represents a specific challenge. The workshop recommended that the process of registration of deaths should be specifically targeted for improvement given the much lower coverage than in the case of live births. There are various reasons for the lack of registration of deaths, such as illiteracy, lack of incentives and of knowledge.

160. The workshop identified the higher non-registration of deaths of females as an area of special concern and in need of substantive improvement. In the context, the workshop recommended that all the countries should introduce disaggregating civil registration coverage rates by sex, thus pinpointing the major/minor civil divisions where the most immediate remedial actions are needed.

161. Aside from registering deaths in general, the workshop concluded that the registration of causes of deaths is also a deficient area in many countries. It recommended that a set of training courses in the use of the International Classification of Diseases (ICD-10) should be developed and undertaken in the region as this classification is not completely implemented throughout the region, including the implementation of the concept of underlying causes of deaths. Such training needs to be followed up at the small area level within each country to insure consistency and uniformity of ICD-10 implementation in all civil divisions.

162. Addressing the issue of the time prescribed by registration regulations between the moment of birth and the registration itself, the participants noted that in the case of unnecessary long period there is a danger not to register a live birth in cases when the newborn died shortly after birth. Therefore, allowing for a period of three months to register a birth often results in non-registration of a baby that died after a week. The workshop recommended that each country should revisit this provision in the civil registration legislation accordingly.

163. The workshop attributed crucial importance to the coordination at the national level between relevant institutions and ministries. This is especially the case regarding the links between civil registration administration and the statistical system, but is of no less importance in regard to other carriers of information. Thus the coordination should

also involve other entities in countries that can be used as sources of data for vital statistics, such as population registers.

164. In the context of population registers, the participants concluded that a number of countries in the region were turning towards population registers as vehicles for improving civil registration. This approach is often combined with issuance of new identification cards, which can carry all the characteristics of a “smart card”, used for a variety of purposes, doubling as driver’s license, passport, money withdrawal card, and so forth. In developing these new registers, many countries in the region are resorting to assigning personal identification numbers to their citizens and building a full framework for establishing a set of registers for meeting various administrative needs; it certainly could be used for statistical purposes as well, vastly improving vital statistics.

165. The workshop noted with concern that civil registrars are not fully acquainted with statistical definitions of major vital events, such as births, deaths, marriages, annulments, and so forth. It recommended that training programs in basic vital statistics definitions and concepts should be developed at national level. Conversely, statisticians must be included in refreshment courses for civil registrars.

166. In regard different techniques that were developed to check on the quality of civil registration systems, the workshop recommended that an appropriate set of checks and balances must be an integral part of all civil registration systems in the region.

167. On several occasions during the workshop, participants raised the issue of developing, in the spirit of South-South cooperation, a uniform regional set of forms for registering vital events. This conclusion was further reinforced by identifying the fact that, although homogenous in terms of language, civil registration terms remain vastly different. Consequently, the workshop recommended that all effort should be geared toward developing uniform regional forms, or, short of that, a harmonization of terms, definitions and concepts, providing for intra-regional comparison.

Vital statistics

168. Vital statistics are derived from variety of sources in the countries in the region. Some countries are deriving these statistics from the well-functioning civil registration system. Yet another set of countries is using specialized surveys and censuses, while other use censuses. There are also examples of countries using all three in order to double-check the accuracy of data. Consequently, the workshop concluded that there is a significant variation in national capacities to produce reliable, accurate, regular and up-to-date vital statistics. In certain cases, the introduction of civil registration-generated vital statistics started only a few years ago (Oman, 2004). The participants recommended that the development of vital statistics should be given constant monitoring at the regional level to ensure more efficient bridging of the gaps between countries in the region.

169. It was also noted that the computation of rates needed to be approached in a careful manner, given the fact that some of the countries host significant numbers of

young, single foreigners. For example, including them in the denominator for computing age-specific fertility rates distorts the results; foreign-born usually do not give birth, but are included in population figures. The workshop recommended that, in some cases, it would be appropriate to display rates broken down by citizenship.

170. As far as variables are concerned, the workshop concluded that several non-core topics in the *Principles and Recommendations for Vital Statistics System, Rev. 2*, birth order and economic characteristics of the mother were of particular interest to the countries in the region. It recommended that the countries consider incorporating these in their civil registration systems.

171. The workshop concluded that indirect methods of generating vital statistics were applied in quite a number of countries. It recommended that a project of collecting all national experiences using indirect techniques for estimating vital statistics should be initiated as a basis for assessing the feasibility of these approaches in the region.

172. The workshop noted that there were instances, at the national level, of disseminating greatly different vital statistics by various data collectors. In addition to confusing general public, such practices adversely affect the credibility of statistics. The workshop recommended that there is a necessity of introducing a joint body, such as a committee, that will coordinate the dissemination and consistency of vital statistics.

Demographic Yearbook and provision of data

173. The workshop noted that the level of response rates to the United Nations *Demographic Yearbook* was adequate for the table at general level, that is, for total number of vital events and crude rates. However, the response rates tend to decline with the level of detail requested. The workshop recognized that statistical authorities of participating countries should make every effort to improve this response rate.

174. Simultaneously, the workshop also concluded that national statistical authorities in the region find themselves very often overburdened by the request for data and by voluminous questionnaires sent by international data collectors. In that context, the workshop recommended that United Nations Statistics Division should address this issue in appropriate fora.

175. In that context, the workshop concluded that there are instances that the solicitation of data by international users often bypasses the statistical authorities, resulting in the inconsistencies in data for the same variable and for the same country. Such statistics find their way in various international overviews and tend to confuse users as they may differ considerably from nationally published figures. Therefore, the workshop recommended that all efforts should be made to ensure that all the data request are channeled through only one competent national agency, the national statistical authority.

176. In addition, the workshop strongly emphasized the need to ensure that all the figures provided to international collectors be accompanied by meta-data that will clearly outline the methodology used as well as all the accompanying footnotes and explanation.

177. Given the fact that many countries in the region hosts a large proportion of non-citizens which might show different demographic patterns from citizens living in the country, it was suggested that international agencies should consider collecting and disseminating data for both citizens and non-citizens.

The way ahead

178. The workshop concluded that it was necessary to develop a multi-year project aiming at improving civil registration and vital statistics in the region. The project has to have clear objectives, divisions of labor and outcomes. It should include a comprehensive review of the state of the art of these components by the United Nations Statistics Division and ESCWA. The starting point should be the report and findings of this workshop.

179. The workshop also requested ESCWA to work toward establishing a regional mechanism for supporting the improvement of demographic and social statistics, dissemination of pertinent data and ensuring the regional harmonization. The modalities of such a mechanism will be elaborated within the Statistical Committee of ESCWA.

Annex 1. Meeting announcement

Venue: Cairo, Egypt

Time: 3-6 December 2007 – (4 days meeting)

Purpose/background:

The civil registration system is considered the best source for generating accurate, reliable and timely vital statistics. Not all national civil registration systems are fully in place in terms of coverage of vital events, effectiveness and their linkage with national statistical systems, thus preventing their use for producing reliable vital statistics. Consequently, alternative data sources such as censuses and sample surveys are then used to obtain these statistics.

In that context, the main purpose of the workshop is to provide guidance to countries on the implementation of the United Nations recommendations for the collection and compilation of vital statistics at national level through civil registration system, at the same time providing full overview of international statistical standards and requirements. The workshop will analyze procedures to obtain vital statistics by maximizing the use of multiple data sources: population censuses, sample surveys and incomplete civil registration. The workshop will also aim at identifying the components of civil registration and vital statistics systems that are in need of improvement, providing a basis for developing technical assistance project to countries in the region.

Objectives:

The specific objectives of the meeting are as follows:

- Introduce the UN guidelines⁶ for the collection and compilation of vital statistics
- Assess the current status of civil registration and vital statistics system in the country and identify gaps to be filled
- Identify strategies for the improvement of civil registration
- Review national experience on the production of vital statistics through incomplete civil registration systems, population censuses and sample surveys
- Identify good practices that countries might follow (a) to collect data, (b) to calculate vital statistics, (c) to evaluate their quality
- Examine the availability of data that countries are able to provide to UNSD through the Demographic Yearbook data collection and look for ways for further improvement.

Expected output:

⁶ See the section on Preparation/Requirements later in this document for the list of UN recommendations and manuals.

The major output refers to the guidance provided to participants in terms of international statistical standards and their implementation at national level. A report documenting countries' experiences on the collection and compilation of vital statistics, and identifying strategies for improving data collection systems for vital statistics will be produced and will serve as a framework for assisting countries in building up their statistical capacities.

Participants:

Representatives from national statistical offices and civil registrars responsible for the collection and/or compilation of vital statistics will be invited from each country in Western Asia.

Organization of meeting sessions:

Each session of the meeting will consist of introductory presentations on the topic of the session, followed by presentations of country experiences and plenary discussion. In addition, there will be group discussions and presentation of conclusions of the group work in plenary.

Preparation/Requirements:

Each participant will be provided in advance with a copy of:

- Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System, Revision 2, United Nations (2001).
- Handbook on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems: Computerization, United Nations (1998)
- Handbook on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems: Developing Information, Education and Communication, United Nations (1998)
- Handbook on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems: Management, Operation and Maintenance, United Nations (1998)
- Handbook on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems: Policies and Protocols for the Release and Archiving of Individual Records (United Nations) (1998)
- Handbook on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems: Preparation of a Legal Framework, United Nations (1998)
- Handbook on the Collection of Fertility and Mortality Data, United Nations (2003)
- Manual X Indirect Techniques for Demographic Estimation, United Nations (1983)
- United Nations *Demographic Yearbook* (DYB) questionnaire on vital statistics

In preparation for the workshop and to enable sharing of experiences and knowledge among countries, participants will be requested to provide several inputs, in the form of a pre-workshop assignment, following an outline provided by UNSD:

- A report on country experience in the compilation of vital statistics
- Filling a questionnaire on data sources and techniques used to obtain vital statistics.

Assignments should be completed and sent back to the United Nations Statistics Division before 16 November, 2007 at the following address via email if possible or by fax, mail:

Att. Ms. Haoyi Chen
2, UN Plaza DC2-1536
10017 New York, NY, USA
Tel. 1 212 963 4375
Fax. 1 212 963 1940
chen9@un.org
cc: mrkic@un.org

Participation in the workshop will entail to give a short presentation in plenary (7-10 minutes) followed by group discussion on civil registration and vital statistics system in his/her country. In addition, participants are expected to actively participate in group discussions.

A draft report of the meeting will be circulated among participants for comments before being finalized.

Annex 2. List of participants

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Annex 3. Organisation of work

Monday, 3 December 2007	
9:00–9:30	1. Registration of participants
9:30–10:30	<p>2. Opening Introductory remarks by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - General Aboubakr Elgindy, President of Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics (CAPMAS), Egypt - United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) - United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) <p>Selection of Chair and Rapporteur Logistics and getting acquainted</p>
10:30–11:30	<p>3. Vital statistics and their sources. The session introduces and compares the three sources used to obtain vital statistics —civil registration, population censuses and sample surveys— and discusses the purposes for which they are best suited, their major advantages and limitations. The session also summarises data sources that are used in ESCWA countries to obtain vital statistics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UNSD presentation • General discussion
11:30–11:45	Coffee break
11:45–12:45	<p>4. The need for a civil registration system. The session examines why every country needs a civil registration system. It covers the legal and protective advantages of vital records to individual citizens and considers the administrative and statistical advantages of a well operated and maintained civil registration system.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UNSD presentation • General discussion
12:45 – 13:30	<p>5. Vital events to be registered and characteristics of the civil registration method. The session reviews the specific characteristics of the civil registration method and its connection to the vital statistics system. It also identifies the vital events that should be registered.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UNSD presentation • General discussion

13:30–13:45	Coffee break
13:45- 14:45	<p>6. Integration and coordination in the civil registration system. Civil registration system includes civil registration and all its institutional and technical associations. The process of the compilation, analysis, evaluation, presentation and dissemination of these data in statistical form completes the definition of the vital statistics system. This session provides an overview of the coordination necessary among the parts of the civil registration system and the vital statistics system. It also examines the integration of the vital statistics system with other agencies related to registration and vital statistics.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UNSD presentation • General discussion
14:45 – 15:30	<p>7. Topics and themes to be investigated in a vital statistics system. The session reviews a list of topics and themes and their definitions to be investigated in the registration process for vital statistics purposes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UNSD presentation • General discussion
Tuesday, 4 December 2007	
8:30- 9:30	<p>8. Evaluating the completeness of the civil registration system. The session reviews techniques, both direct and indirect, that can be used to evaluate the completeness of a civil registration system and reported vital statistics.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UNSD presentation • General discussion
9:30 – 10:45	<p>9. Civil registration and vital statistics system in ESCWA countries. The session provides a platform for countries to share experiences. Countries will present their national civil registration system, focusing on the legal framework, administrative structure, technical settings and government and public involvement. Difficulties and challenges facing while using civil registration system for vital statistics are also covered.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Country presentation – Bahrain • Country presentations - Egypt • Country presentations - Iraq • Country presentation – Jordan • Country presentations - Kuwait • Country presentations - Lebanon

10:45-11:00	Coffee break
11:00- 12:45	<p>9. Civil registration and vital statistics system in ESCWA countries (cont.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Country presentations - Oman • Country presentations - Palestine • Country presentations - Qatar • Country presentations - Saudi Arabia • Country presentations - Syria • Country presentations - UAE • Country presentations - Yemen
12:45 – 13:00	Coffee break
13:00 – 15:00	<p>9. Civil registration and vital statistics system in ESCWA countries (cont.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General discussion
Wednesday, 5 December 2007	
8:30 – 12:45 (incl. coffee break 10:45- 11:00)	<p>10a Concepts and definitions of vital events in national civil registration systems (for civil registrars). The session provides a framework for registrars to fulfill the assignment of producing a comparative overview of vital statistics variables collected by their respective national systems. It will also include an elaboration of differences in definitions and concepts of vital events and registration that have an impact on regional comparability.</p>
8:30 – 12:45 (incl. coffee break 10:45- 11:00)	<p>10b Censuses and sample surveys as a source of fertility and mortality data (for statisticians). The session reviews the major techniques to obtain fertility and mortality statistics using censuses and/or sample surveys, highlighting the requirements and complexities of each source.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UNSD presentation • General discussion
12:45 – 13:00	Coffee Break
13:00– 14:15	11. Plenary discussion – report from the group discussion in sessions 10a and 10b

14:15 – 15:00	<p>12. Civil registration and population registers. The session reviews the relationship between civil registration and population registers as per the <i>United Nations Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System, Rev. 2</i>.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UNSD presentation • General discussion
Thursday, 6 December 2007	
8:30 – 9:45	<p>13. Compilation of vital statistics at international level. The session reviews the data and metadata requirements at international level for vital statistics, as indicated on the Demographic Yearbook vital statistics questionnaire. It also assesses how well participating countries are able to comply with the international standard and propose ways to improve both the level of responses and the quality of data provided to the Demographic Yearbook questionnaire.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UNSD presentation • WHO presentation • General discussion
9:45 – 10:45	<p>14. Round-table discussion: future activities to improve the civil registration and vital statistics systems for countries in the UNESCWA region</p>
10:45 – 11:00	<p>Coffee break</p>
11:00-12:00	<p>15. Conclusions and Recommendations Presentation and discussion of the summary of the workshop’s proceedings: conclusions and recommendations on how to improve the quality of vital statistics in ESCWA countries.</p> <p>Evaluation of the workshop</p> <p>Closing</p>

Annex 4. Pre-workshop assignments for civil registrars

Pre-workshop assignment 1- Review and assessment of the national civil registration system

The purpose of this questionnaire is to collect information on the organizational and technical aspects of the national civil registration system. The questionnaire also assesses the state of the development and methods of evaluation in the civil registration system. Please return the completed questionnaire before **20 November** at the following address by email if possible or by fax:

Att. Ms. Haoyi Chen
2, UN Plaza DC2-1536
10017 New York, NY, USA
Tel. 1 212 963 4375
Fax. 1 212 963 1940
Email. chen9@un.org

Please provide detailed answers to the questions. When necessary, please attach additional sheets of paper.

Name, title, address and country of official completing this questionnaire:

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Part 1. Legal and organizational aspects of the civil registration system

1. Is there a legal framework providing guidelines concerning how the civil registration system works?

Yes No

a. If Yes, please provide us with a copy of the law.

2. Which of the following best describe the type of civil registration organization currently in operation in your country?

- a national system with a central office to administer the system
- a national system with different governmental departments to administer the registration of vital events
- The country has separate systems of registration in each major administrative division (e.g., province or state level) with a central office at those levels to administer the system)
- Other arrangements (specify) _____

3. At national level, which agency has the primary responsibility for the registration of the vital events:

Vital events	Agency primarily responsible for registration
Live births	
Foetal deaths	
Deaths	
Marriages	
Divorces	

4. If the country has separate systems of registration in each major administrative division (e.g., province or state level), provide the most common name of the sub-national agency responsible for its administration.

Vital events	Sub-national agency primarily responsible for registration
Live births	
Foetal deaths	
Deaths	

Marriages	
Divorces	

5. Is there a coordination agency or inter-agency coordination committee at national level, for needs and services among different agencies dealing with civil registration?

Yes No

If Yes, provide the name and main responsibility.

6. What is the common name given to these local registration offices? (example: Civil Registration Office, Registry of Births and Deaths, Registry of Marriages, Births and Deaths, and so on.). If different offices, give all names.

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7. Location of the primary registration units? (Check applicable items)

Births Foetal Deaths Marriages Divorces
 deaths

	Births	Foetal deaths	Deaths	Marriages	Divorces
a) Municipal offices					
b) Health offices					
c) Revenue offices					
d) Court offices					
e) Parishes/temples					
f) Population registers					
g) Other, specify					

8. Are there secondary registration units in certain hospitals, clinics, or religious places (e.g., churches, temples) or other public places to supplement the registration network?. Include subsidiary registration places for marriages and divorces.

Yes No

9. Which of the following perform the functions of the local civil registrars in your country? (Local civil registrars are the persons authorized by law to record vital events and civil status). Check applicable items:

	Births	Foetal deaths	Deaths	Marriages	Divorces
a) Appointed civil registrars					
b) Priests, ministers					
c) Court clerks					
d) Notaries					
e) Justices of peace					
f) Teachers					
g) Other, specify					

10. Main duties and responsibilities of the local civil registrars as specified by civil registration law and regulations. Check applicable items.

a. With respect to registration:

- Recording vital and civil status events and safekeeping of the records
- Issuing certified copies of civil registration records
- Celebrating marriages
- Issuing burial permits
- Promotion of registration completeness
- Other, specify:

b. With respect to vital statistics collection and reporting:

- Reporting civil registration data to higher level offices
- Other, specify:

11. Do local civil registrars receive guidance for their work? Check applicable items.

- Copies of current laws and regulations on civil registration
- Updated handbooks or instructions on civil registration
- Handbooks on vital statistics reporting
- In service training
- Direct advice by higher level civil registration authorities through field visits
- Periodical bulletin of information concerning civil registration and vital statistics
- Circulars regarding procedures for civil registration
- Other, specify:

12. Technical supervision to local civil registrars work is provided by: (Check applicable items)

- Registration authorities from the National Agency (field visits from central office staff)
- Regional Registration authorities
- Judicial authorities vested with responsibility for the custody of the records
- The Mayor
- The Priest or Minister
- The local government authority

Other, specify:

13. Administrative supervision to local civil registrars work is provided by: (Check applicable items)

- Registration authorities from the National Agency (field visits from central office staff)
- Regional Registration authorities
- Judicial authorities vested with responsibility for the custody of the records
- The Mayor
- The Priest or Minister
- The local government authority
- Other, specify

Part 2. Technical aspects of the civil registration system

1. Please specify the definitions of vital events adopted in your country.

Live birth

Foetal death

Death

Marriage

Divorce

2. Who are the informants for the vital events? Informant is the individual designated by law with responsibility for reporting the vital event to the local civil registrar (e.g., for live births: the mother, the father; for deaths: nearest relative; for marriages: the bride, the groom; etc.)

	Informant
Live births	
Foetal deaths	
Deaths	
Marriages	
Divorces	

3. Are vital events registered by place of occurrence and/or place of registration?

	Place of occurrence	Place of registration
Live births		
Foetal deaths		
Deaths		
Marriages		
Divorces		

4. Which of the following are required for registration (Check applicable items):

Live births:

- Medical certification
- Witness(es)
- Verbal or written declaration of the main informant
- Presence of the child at the local civil registry
- Fee, amount _____
- Identity card of parent(s)
- Other, specify:

Foetal deaths:

- Medical certification
- Witness(es)
- Verbal or written declaration of the main informant
- Fee, amount _____
- Other, specify:
- No provisions for registration

Deaths:

- Medical certification
- Witnesses
- Verbal or written declaration of the appropriate informant
- Coroner certification
- Fee, amount _____
- Other, specify:
- Verification by municipal authority

Marriages:

- Certification of notice of intended marriage
- Health certificate for bride and groom
- Birth certificate for bride and groom
- Identification card for bride and groom
- Religious marriage record
- Witness(es)
- Verbal declaration of the parties
- Fee, amount _____
- Other(specify)-----
- No provisions for registration

Divorces:

- Notification of the court or institution granting the divorce decree
- Routinely registered by religious or judicial authorities once divorce decree has been issued
- Birth certificates of the parties
- Marriage certificate
- Fee, amount _____
- Other (specify)-----
- Divorce does not exist in the country

5. Provide the legally stipulated time periods to register vital events in the country.
 FOR INDEPENDENTLY ADMINISTERED CIVIL REGISTRATION SYSTEMS AT THE SUB-NATIONAL LEVEL, INDICATE THE CORRESPONDENT TIME ALLOWANCES IN A SEPARATE PAGE.

	Period of time allowed (specify whether hours, days or months)
Live births	
Foetal deaths	
Deaths	
Marriages	
Divorces	

6. What are the legal provisions for late registration of each type of vital event in the country?

	Legal provisions for late registration
Live births	
Foetal deaths	
Deaths	
Marriages	
Divorces	

7. Are penalties for late registration being enforced?

- Yes No

8. Which of the following social services and benefits are linked to registration of vital events?

Birth certificate:

- Birth allowances
- Maternity allowances
- Maternity leave with pay
- Child care family allowances
- Bonuses per child
- Food rationing programmes
- Allocation of Government housing
- Education allowances up to certain age
- Some allowances and also social security benefits
- Other(specify)-----

Death certificate:

- Insurance claims
- Inheritance claims
- Requisite for remarriage of the survivor partner
- Pension benefits claims of his/ her survivors
- Others

Marriage certificate:

- Provision and allocation of government housing for newly married couples
- Participation in guaranteed minimum monthly family income programmes
- Participation in government programmes of interest-free loans for purchasing a house to promote family formation
- Marriage allowances
- Income tax allowance
- Other(specify)-----

9. Type of forms currently being used for registration of vital events:

Births Foetal Deaths Marriages Divorces
 deaths

	Births	Foetal deaths	Deaths	Marriages	Divorces
a) Book register for recording one vital event per page					
b) Book register for recording of a number of vital events per page					
c) Loose-leaf forms that combine information for registration and statistical purposes					
d) Cards					
e) Directly keyed and stored into a computer media					

g) Other, specify					
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10. Please provide a complete set of forms used for legal recording of all types of vital events.

11. What are the legal provisions taken to preserve confidentiality of civil registration data?

Part 3. Evaluation of completeness and quality of the civil registration system

1. Does the civil registration system cover all segments of the population in the entire country?

Yes No

If NO, please give a brief description of the coverage:

a) Which geographic areas are not covered? Why?

b) Which population groups (ethnic or national groups) are not covered? Why?

c) Any other categories that are not covered? Why?

2. Indicate if the registration coverage of vital events has been estimated in your country in the past ten years?

	Live births	Foetal deaths	Deaths	Marriages	Divorces
Yes					
No					

3. If YES for at least one event, indicate the most recent estimate of coverage for each event, the year to which this estimate refers and the method of evaluation used.

a. Level of coverage and year of reference

	Percentage of coverage	Year to which this estimate refers
Live births		
Foetal Deaths		
Deaths		
Marriages		
Divorces		

b. Method of assessment

	Live births	Foetal deaths	Deaths	Marriages	Divorces
Through retrospective questions in population census(es)		Not applicable			
Through a follow up survey					
Through retrospective questions in a single round retrospective survey					
Through a maternity history in a single round retrospective survey				Not applicable	Not applicable
Through a dual-records system					
Other (specify)					

Pre-workshop assignment 2

Please address, in a maximum of 5 pages, the following items:

- Do current available vital statistics satisfy users' needs? If not, explain why.
- Provide a brief overview on the development of civil registration and vital statistics system in your country.
- What are the factors that hamper the production of vital statistics from civil registration in your country?
- Are there any plans to improve the civil registration and vital statistics system in your country?

The report can be in Arabic or English. Please return the completed report before **20 November 2007** at the following address by email if possible or by fax:

Att. Ms. Haoyi Chen
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10017 New York, NY, USA
Tel. 1 212 963 4375
Fax. 1 212 963 1940
Email. chen9@un.org

Annex 5. Pre-workshop assignments for statisticians

Pre-workshop assignment 1 - Review of sources and methods for vital statistics

The purpose of this questionnaire is to collect information on the sources and methods for obtaining vital statistics used in your country. Please return the completed questionnaire before **20 November** at the following address by email if possible or by fax:

Att. Ms. Haoyi Chen
2, UN Plaza DC2-1536
10017 New York, NY, USA
Tel. 1 212 963 4375
Fax. 1 212 963 1940
Email. chen9@un.org

Please provide detailed answers to the questions. When necessary, please attach additional sheets of paper.

Name, title, address and country of official completing this questionnaire:

--

Part 1. Summary information on vital statistics

1. Is there a legal framework defining responsibilities for the collection, processing and dissemination of vital statistics?

Yes No

a. If Yes, which agency has the primary responsibility for the:

Vital events	Agency primarily responsible for	
	Collection of data	Processing and dissemination of data
Live births		
Foetal deaths		

Deaths		
Marriages		
Divorces		

b. If Yes, please provide us with a copy of the law.

2. Which of the following best describe the type of organizational structure for the collection, processing and dissemination of vital statistics?

- a centralized system at the national level
- a decentralized system in each state or province or any other major division of the country
- The head office of the population register is in charge of the vital statistics
- Other arrangements (specify) _____
- Vital statistics are not compiled

3. Indicate the source(s) of data currently used to obtain vital statistics on:

	Births	Foetal deaths	Deaths	Marriages	Divorces
a) Civil registration					
b) Population Censuses					
c) Sample surveys					
d) Dual record system					
e) Other (please specify)					

4. Indicate if current available vital statistics are obtained from multiple data sources, if these statistics are coherent and if not explain why.

5. Please specify the definitions of vital events adopted in your country.

Live birth

--

Foetal death

--

Death

--

Marriage

--

Divorce

--

Part 2. Data sources in detail

A – Civil registration:

1. Does a civil registration system exist in your country?

Yes No

2. If YES, what event does the civil registration register cover?

	Live births	Foetal deaths	Deaths	Marriages	Divorces
Yes					
No					

If you replied YES to at least one event, please answer to questions 3 to 18, otherwise go to **section B – Sample Surveys**.

If possible, copies of registration forms for vital events should be brought at the meeting.

3. Which national agency and ministry are responsible for civil registration?

Agency	
Ministry	

4. When was the original civil registration law enacted?

	Live births	Foetal deaths	Deaths	Marriages	Divorces
Give date					

5. When was the civil registration law implemented?

	Live births	Foetal deaths	Deaths	Marriages	Divorces
Give date					

6. Does the system cover all segments of the population in the entire country?

Yes No

If NO, please give a brief description of the coverage:

a) Which geographic areas are not covered? Why?

--

b) Which population groups (ethnic or national groups) are not covered? Why?

--

c) Any other categories that are not covered? Why?

--

7. Is civil registration used as a source for statistics on:

	Fertility	Foetal mortality	Mortality	Marriages	Divorces
Yes					
No					

If YES to at least one of the event, please answer to questions 8 to 18, otherwise go to **section B – Sample surveys**.

8. Which national agency and ministry are responsible for compiling vital statistics from civil registration?

Agency	
Ministry	

9. What are the legal provisions taken to preserve confidentiality of civil registration data?

--

10. Are vital rates calculated from civil registration data on vital events?

	Live births	Foetal deaths	Deaths	Marriages	Divorces
Yes					
No					

If YES,

a. Please indicate the source used for the most recent population estimates used as denominator in the computation of current vital rates:

Continuous population register

Population census (give year)	
Sample survey (give year)	
Other, specify	

b. Please indicate the technique used for the time adjustment in the population estimate (when the base data is not secured annually by a population register):

Interpolation	
Extrapolation	
Demographic equation	
Other, specify	

11. Indicate if vital statistics are published, their frequency and the title of the last publication containing these statistics?

	Fertility	Foetal mortality	Mortality	Marriages	Divorces
Published					
Frequency					
Title					

12. Are data on vital events tabulated by date of occurrence or/and registration?

	Date of occurrence	Date of registration
Live births		
Foetal deaths		
Deaths		
Marriages		
Divorces		

13. Are data on vital events tabulated by place of occurrence or/and place of registration?

	Place of occurrence	Place of registration
Live births		
Foetal deaths		
Deaths		
Marriages		
Divorces		

14. Is the information on place of usual residence (of mother for births and foetal deaths and of deceased for deaths) registered?

	Live births	Foetal deaths	Deaths
Yes			

No

--	--	--

a. If YES to at least one event, is this information used in the calculation of vital rates?

Yes

No

15. Indicate the level of accuracy of reporting of age of mother in case of Live births and of the deceased in case of Deaths and specify if any study to evaluate the age quality have been carried out.

Age of mother

--

Age of deceased

--

16. List vital statistics obtained from civil registration (use additional sheets if necessary).

--

17. Indicate if the registration coverage of vital events has been estimated in your country in the past ten years?

	Live births	Foetal deaths	Deaths	Marriages	Divorces
Yes					
No					

18. If YES for at least one event, indicate the most recent estimate of coverage for each event, the year to which this estimate refers and the method of evaluation used.

c. Level of coverage and year of reference

	Percentage of coverage	Year to which this estimate refers
Live births		
Foetal Deaths		
Deaths		
Marriages		
Divorces		

d. Method of assessment

	Live births	Foetal deaths	Deaths	Marriages	Divorces
Through retrospective questions in population census(es)		Not applicable			
Through a follow up survey					
Through retrospective questions in a single round retrospective survey					
Through a maternity history in a single round retrospective survey				Not applicable	Not applicable
Through a dual-records system					
Other (specify)					

B – Sample surveys:

1. Have sample surveys been undertaken to obtain fertility and mortality statistics in the last 10 years?

	Fertility	Mortality
Yes		
No		

If YES, please indicate the number of surveys conducted in the last 10 years and provide the following information for the last two surveys.

	Survey 1	Survey 2
2. Title of survey		
3. Date		
4. Coverage:		
a. Geographic areas		
b. Population		
5. Sample fraction percentage:		
6. Type of operation		
a. Single-round survey		
b. Multi-round survey		
c. Sample survey combined with continuous registration (dual record system)		
7. Method of sampling		

8. Is this a specialized survey on fertility and mortality?

Yes No

If No, what are the other topics covered in the survey?

9. Provide a list of fertility and mortality statistics obtained from the surveys:

	Survey 1	Survey 2
Fertility statistics		
Mortality statistics		

10. Have these estimates be evaluated? Yes No

a. If Yes, how?

	Survey 1	Survey 2
Fertility statistics		
Mortality statistics		

11. What are the technique(s) used to obtain estimates:

	Survey 1	Survey 2
a. Reverse Survival		
b. Own Children Method		
c. Reconstructed Birth Histories		
d. Children Ever Born		
e. Recent Births		
f. Birth Histories		
g. Survival of Children ever born		
h. Birth Histories		
i. Recent Household Deaths		
j. Survival of Parents		
k. Survival of Siblings		
l. Others, specify		

12. Indicate if age accuracy has been evaluated and which techniques have been used.

Survey 1	
Survey 2	

13. Have results from these surveys been published?

Yes No

a. If Yes, provide dates the results were published.

	Survey 1	Survey 2
Published dates		

14. Indicate the name of institution responsible for the collection, processing of data and dissemination of results.

Survey 1	
Survey 2	

15. Please provide us the relevant sections of the questionnaires used.

C - POPULATION CENSUSES:

1. Have population censuses been used to obtain fertility and mortality estimates?

	Fertility	Mortality
Yes		
No		

If YES, please provide date of latest census used to collect such information and answer questions 2 to 7 below:

	Fertility	Mortality
Census date		

2. Provide a list of fertility and mortality statistics obtained from the census:

Fertility statistics	
Mortality statistics	

3. Have these estimates been evaluated? Yes No

a. If Yes, how?

Fertility statistics	
Mortality statistics	

4. Select the technique(s) used to obtain estimates:

Fertility	Mortality
Reverse Survival	Survival of Children ever born
Own Children Method	Birth Histories
Reconstructed Birth Histories	Recent Household Deaths

Children Ever Born	Survival of Parents
Recent Births	Survival of Siblings
Birth Histories	

5. Indicate if age accuracy has been evaluated and which techniques have been used.

6. Have results from the census been published?

Yes No

a. If Yes, provide dates the results were published.

Published dates

7. Indicate the name of institution responsible for the collection, processing of data and dissemination of results.

8. Please, provide us the relevant sections of the questionnaire.

Pre-workshop assignment 2

Please address, in a maximum of 5 pages, the following items:

- Do current available vital statistics satisfy users' needs? If not, explain why.
- Provide a brief overview on the development of civil registration and vital statistics system in your country.
- What are the factors that hamper the production of vital statistics from civil registration in your country?
- Are there any plans to improve the civil registration and vital statistics system in your country?

The report can be in Arabic or English. Please return the completed report before **20 November 2007** at the following address by email if possible or by fax:

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