

**Gender Statistics and the Status of
Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Ethiopia***

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1. Introduction

Nowadays the demand for reliable and quality demographic information has become key concern of all. In most of the developing countries, the lack of reliable and current socio-economic data, specifically at the lower administrations levels is impeding the proper execution and monitoring of development endeavors. Monitoring and evaluation of the effect /impact of policy changes and intervention programs is possible only with the availability data that reflect the status or activities of the sectors under consideration.

One of the sources of this type of information is Vital Statistics. The sources of Vital Statistics are vital records from CRVS, specific questions in population census and in sample surveys, vital records from sample registration areas, records from health services and administrative records. The recommended best source of vital statistics is civil registration and vital statistics systems.

Besides, birth, death, marriage and divorce event registration is the basis for developing legal and administrative information system that protects and safeguards most rights and privileges of citizens endorsed in the numerous conventions and the Charter of the United Nations.

Now the importance of civil registration and vital registration system for legal, administrative and statistical purposes is getting recognition by the judicial bodies, policy makers and planners in Ethiopia.

Unfortunately, in Ethiopia, there is a wide gap between what is needed and what is available especially in gender statistics

2. Gender Statistics

Nowadays issues of gender equity have taken a central role in world affairs because issues of equality, peace and development are very much interconnected. All nations are striving to address these issues.

There is a growing awareness globally that development and economic crises affect women and men in different ways. Both women and men are engaged in productive

socio – economic activities. Women in addition have other equally important responsibilities such as child bearing and raising, management of the house, caring for the sick and elderly, gathering fire wood, fetching drinking water etc. Therefore, women often have to put more time and effort than men in the least developed countries. The important gender related issues are women’s poverty, insufficient food security and lack of Economic empowerment, inadequate and discriminatory access to education, training, women’s role in the family, and women’s legal and human rights, the problem of the survey girl –child etc.

The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) has declared its commitment to gender equality with the announcement of the National Policy on Women in 1993; the incorporation of gender issues in different national policies including education and Training, Health, HIV/AIDS, Population and others formulated in the same year, as well as adequately addressing women’s concerns in the Federal Constitution of 1995.

All these issues need gender disaggregated data which can be obtained from gender statistics. Gender statistics relates to subject matter areas in society, and also the needs and goals for improvement of these areas. It is also needed to show inequality/equality between the sexes; persuade policy makers/planners to change course if necessary; provided the means instruments to measure the effects/impacts of development policies and monitor /evaluate change overtime.

All these call for mainstreaming of gender disaggregated data. The best sources of data for this purpose are civil registration and vital statistics systems. Vital statistics as a source of data save time, effort and money spent recurrently and unnecessarily on alternative methods of data collection such as censuses, one- time sample surveys or special surveys and it is also the most accurate way to update population census data collected at five or ten years interval, measure overall trend, differentiate among the sexes at all administrative levels, identify geographic, social and gender disparities and also give individual data.

Gender statistics is a new field in Ethiopia and it will take some time to develop Statistics disaggregated by sex.

The process of developing gender statistics must start with identifying the need for gender statistics from different target groups in the society i.e. government at all levels of administration, international agencies, NGOs, civil society, the community, research institution, universities etc.

For this to happen the following measure must be taken more education on gender issues for all statisticians within statistical offices, close and regular contact with user producer groups on statistics related to gender problem in the country, and create a responsible body for gender statistics.

3. Attempts at Establishing Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems in Ethiopia

Ethiopia does not have a functioning CRVS. But this does not mean that no attempts were made at establishing these systems. Some of the attempts were as follows.

3.1 The 1900 Proclamation

In 1900 the then Emperor of Ethiopia, Menelik II, proclaimed the establishment of vital registration system. The Ministry of Interior was empowered to carry out annual population censuses and to establish a vital registration system by recording the number of births, deaths and marriages. But it did not become functional. It remained on paper because the proper institutions were not put in place.

3.2 The 1960 Civil Code of Ethiopia

It sets a detailed and compressive rule on civil registration. But the articles of the Civil Code on civil registration have never been operational due to a transitory provision in the Civil Code (article 34361), which specifics that provisions pertaining to civil status shall not come into force until a day to be notified by an order published in the Negarit Gazeta. However, such an order has never been issued to date. Therefore, the provisions of the Civil Code in civil registration have never been applied. The 1957 Revised Penal Codes of Ethiopia contains provisions that deal with offences related to failure to register vital events. But as there was/is no vital registration system in the country it is impossible to take of such of an offence.

3.3 Proclamations No. 104/1983 and 106/1988

These two proclamations were issued by the previous Marxist government of Ethiopia. Some articles of these proclamations specify that *kebeles*, the lowest administrative structures in the country, should keep proper registers of houses, the number of residents and records of births, death and marriages in accordance with directives to be issued. However, these directives have not come into existence and these proclamations came to no avail.

3.4 Proclamation Numbers 79 and 303 of 1980 of CSA

The Central Statistical Office has been designated with responsibility of conducting Vital Registration i.e. the basic registration of births, death, marriages and divorces. That is to say the CSA has been given powers and responsibilities to create conditions for the continuous registration of vital events by the government. It has made a number attempts to lay the foundation for CRVS by conducting surveys and sample registration. The first survey was conducted in 1977, which was carried out in selected rural and urban areas. The objective of this survey was to test whether it would be feasible to carry out civil registration by providing technical and material assistance to *kebeles*. It was also designed to test some of the expected fundamental problems involved in the methodological, administrative, legal and financial activities.

In 1986 and 1987 the CSA ran the Experimental Sample Registration system in rural areas. This exercise was discontinued because of financial difficulties. In 1998 the CSA restarted the Experimental Sample Vital Registration. This time it was devised in such a way that it would cover both rural and urban areas using dual methods of data collection, that is, the registration of vital events followed by the household surveys to verify the data obtained by sample registration.

In 1999 the CSA discontinued the Experimental Sample Vital Registration and opted for the principles and recommendations of the UN for establishing and developing CRVS in developing countries Ever since it has been working on this line.

3.5 The 1995 FDRE Constitution

Articles 3.6 of the FDRE Constitutions specify the right of the child to a name and nationality, as well as the right to know his/her parents. As there is a direct

relationship between birth registration and these two rights, it can be asserted that the FDRE constitution implies acknowledgement of birth registration as indispensable instrument for their attainment. This constitution also accepts the Convention of the Rights of the Child which stipulates the rights of the child to a name, nationality and to know his/her parents.

3.6 The National Population Policy of Ethiopia

In this document enacting laws/regulations for vital events registration is identified as one of the major areas population activities requiring priority attention. In this a document the duty of establishing a national registration system was given to the National Office of Population. This office does not exist now.

3.7 The National Plan of Action for Children

The 2004 Ethiopian NPA for children also notes the importance of vital registration - birth registration for the realization of the rights of the child.

3.8 The Revised Family Law of Ethiopia

The 2000 Revised Family Law of Ethiopia imposed a duty on the Federal Government to issue a law on civil registration and to establish the institutions needed for its implementation. But the law on civil registration has not come into effect. The family laws of different national regions governments also contain provisions for establishing civil registration. But none of them have enacted a civil registration and vital statistics systems law.

3.9 The Municipality of Addis Ababa

It started registering and issuing certificates for births, marriages, deaths in 1942, 1953, 1970, respectively. But the municipality is not following the conventional procedures of civil registration. They are part of the administrative exercise. They are not compulsory, continuous and permanent. They are done on request of individuals when they need them for administrative purposes and legal support documents.

Hospital and health centers also register births and deaths that occur there and issue certificates. But most of the births and deaths in Ethiopia occur at home. Hence, their contribution for vital statistics is not significant. Religions institutions also register baptisms, marriages and burials and provide certificates that serve as evidential

support documents for various administrative and legal services. They have no use for statistical purposes because the data is not collected and compiled by the concerned body. They also don't have legal values related to the recognition and protection of personal, socio-economic and political rights.

None of the above registration and certificate issuing administrative exercises has resulted in providing vital statistics data or led to the establishment of a countrywide civil registration system and vital statistics system.

4. On Going Practical Efforts to Establish and Develop Vital Events Registration System.

There are a number of ongoing effort by various institutions towards creating Civil Registration and Vital Statistics System in Ethiopia Notable among these include the Federal Government's effort to enact legislation on CRVS, CSA's effort to develop the necessary instruments, manuals, forms etc.. the UNICEF assisted model registration projects in three national regional states, the HMN financial assistance for Vital Statistics Sale-up vital registration and the Plan International financed National Conference on Registration of Vital Event with Particular Focus on Birth Registration in Ethiopia.

4.1 Draft Proclamation to Provide for Establishing a Central Office for Registration of Vital Events and Organization of Vital Events Registration system.

This piece of legislation was drafted by the Justice and Legal System Research Institute and submitted to the House of Representations in 2001. Therefore it can be concluded that the Ethiopian legal system recognizes vital events as one of the fundamental rights of its citizens. The draft proclamation establishes a central office, at the federal level, for the registration of vital events, which also coordinates and facilitates the registration of vital events throughout the country. It also provides for the establishment of regional offices and *Kebele* registration offices which actually carry out the registration of vital events. Consultative meetings have been held at the committee level in the parliament involving various stakeholders, ministries, CSA, the municipality of Addis Ababa, Civil society including youth and women's associations. The draft

proclamation has been pending in the House. Therefore, it is not yet operational.

4.2 Efforts by the CSA.

The CSA is one of the few organizations striving for the establishment and development of CRVS in the country. So far it has mainly focused on advocacy and educating the public and the government authorities. As part of this effort its staff members have been participating in a number of workshops and seminars conducted on the subject and explained the numerous legal, administrative and statistical uses of data obtained through the CRVS. In addition in the numerous forums organized for discussion on the Draft Family Law the CSA was invited and has made a lot of contributions by presenting a technical paper on the status and importance of civil registration and vital statistics systems in Ethiopia.

Besides, it has undertaken a series of preparatory activities for the establishment of vital registration it has prepared manuals, forms, certificates IEC materials etc. It has also carried out various researches, documentation and publications. Beginning from the first quarter of 2008 the CSA is considering starting a nationwide Sample Registration System to generate vital statistics up until CRVS Systems are established.

4.2 Model Registration Program

The model vital event registration program is a product of the study conducted by the CSA in search of effective ways and means for the development of the CRVS systems in the country. Accordingly, major drawbacks detected in the experimental sample vital registration and household survey program were taken as an input in designing the model registration program.

The model registration project was a collaborative effort of the UNICEF, CSA and three regional governments. UNICEF covered the cost of project and the CSA provided technical assistance. The three regions provided the registrars and managed the program.

The original model program project initiative has been limited to birth registration only because UNICEF is mainly concerned with Child Rights But subsequently death, marriage and divorce events registration were added. The project was run for about a year then stopped because UNICEF discontinued its financial support.

OBJECTIVES OF THE MODEL PROGRAM

The main objectives of the model registration program are to

- test and adopt civil registration and vital statistics technical instruments;
- devise a proper civil registration and vital statistics
- administration and organization that conforms to the regions' socio-cultural and geo - political set-up;
- provide certificates of vital events to registered vital events;
- demonstrate the operation the operation and maintenance of civil registration and vital statistics systems in the regional states and to establish model sites for the Federal government;
- compile and disseminate vital events statistics information on a continuous and current basis;
- establish events registration computer database;
- provide individual demographic information to health and other social service rendering government and non-government institutions at kebele administration level.

4.4 The Health Extension System

Presently, there are about 17,000 health extension workers in the country. These health extension workers are providing series of services by going from house to house and visiting places of work and disseminate health information and collect health related data.

4.5 The March 2006 National Conference on Registration of Vital Events with Particular Focus on Birth Registration in Ethiopia.

This national conference was jointly arranged by Plan International and African Child Forum. About 100 participants representing government ministries and agencies, the African Union international donor agencies,

regional government leaders, and bureau heads, medical directors of hospitals, NGOS, the civil society took part in the conference. The conference unanimously endorsed the need for establishing vital events registration in the country and it recommended the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission establish a national task force composed of major stakeholders that will be responsible for the coordinator of the various institutes that were under way at that time.

4.6 **Scale up of Vital Registration**

The HMN is helping Ethiopia financially and technically in developing its HIMS through integrating with Census Vital Events Registration, Demographic Surveillance, National Health Accounts and other source of health information. The CSA is one of the beneficiaries of the MHN Global Partnership. It is responsible for the implementation of one of the component projects, that is, "Scale-up of vital registration". With HMN financial assistance the CSA has conducted three days National Workshop on Scale-up of Vital Statistics and Cause of Death Classification. A number of participants from government offices, international organizations, NGOS etc. took part.

4.7 **Disease Surveillance Sites**

The Medical Faculties of the Universities of Addis Ababa, Jimma and Gondar have been running disease surveillance and sample registration in few rural sites in different parts of the country. But the data gathered from these sites are being used for internal consumption. But we think their experiences can be replicated and lay the basis for broader disease surveillance and thereby generate vital events data.

5. **Challenges**

As mentioned in previous pages the conventional vital events registration system is non-existent in Ethiopia. Therefore, the country has to establish and maintain Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems. But there are major barriers/challenges in bringing this about.

Some of these challenges are:-

- 5.1. absence of a comprehensive compulsory Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems law;
- 5.2. lack of sufficient experts with the necessary knowledge and experience;
- 5.3. inadequate attention and lack of focus on the part of the authorities;
- 5.4. certificate issuing is being taken as one source of income generation by municipalities which hinders the motivation to move towards the conventional system of vital registration;
- 5.5. lack of adequate technical support and initiative by health authorities in the development of methodologies in the recording of causes of death classification;
- 5.6. lack of institutionalized system that provide technical support and capacity building;
- 5.7. Inadequate support from the concerned UN agencies like UNFPA, WHO etc.

6. The Way Forward

- 6.1 Intensively working for the promulgation of the draft Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems law;
- 6.2 Advocacies through organizing national and regional workshops;
- 6.3 Involving all stakeholders i.e the international agencies, the federal regional and local governments and the community in the process of establishing and developing the system;
- 6.4 Improving the capacity of duty bearers. CRVS is a multidisciplinary issue that touches various subject areas as well as institutional mandates. It concerns the legal, administrative and a statistical agencies of the government at all levels of administration. Their capacity must be raised through training and experience sharing, providing technical and financial support to all bodies involved.
- 6.5 Increase political will:-
The government must increase political will and prioritize CRVS in its agenda for economic and social development. This should be matched by sufficient human, financial and material resources;
- 6.6 Set – up relevant institutions:-

The government should put into place the relevant institutional mechanisms that are necessary to ensure civil registration vital statistics collection.
Compilation and dissemination;

6.7 Work in partnership with civil society:

The government should create an enabling environment for the involvement of civil society institution in the establishment and development of CRVS.