



UN Statistics  
Division



Organization of  
American States



NACIONES UNIDAS  
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# SESSION 2A. GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF THE VITAL STATISTICS SYSTEM

## UNITED NATIONS STATISTICS DIVISION

Workshop on the Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics  
System, Revision 3 for Central American and Caribbean countries

Guatemala City, 30 August - 2 September 2016



## Definition of a vital statistics



- ❑ Vital statistics constitute the collection of statistics on vital events in a lifetime of a person as well as relevant characteristics of the events themselves and of the persons(s) concerned
- ❑ For statistical purposes vital events refer to life and death of the individuals as well as their family and civil status
- ❑ Reading material: *Principles and Recommendations, paras 1 - 57*



## Vital events



- Vital events proper
  - Live births
  - Deaths, including foetal deaths
- Dual events – occurring simultaneously in the lives of two individuals which cannot occur again in the life of either individual without a previous change
  - Marriage (legal partnership, where appropriate)
  - Divorces (legal dissolution of partnership, where appropriate)
  - Annulment
  - Judicial separation
- Vertical family events involving a descendant
  - Adoption
  - Legitimation
  - Recognition



## Uses of vital statistics



- Knowing size and characteristics of the population – prerequisite to socio-economic planning and informed decision-making
- Monitoring programmes on health care, social security, family planning, maternal and child care, education, nutrition ...
- Estimating size and growth of population
  - Particular emphasis on small areas
- Use in implementing and evaluating the success of programmes
  - Mortality
  - Life births by weight and place of occurrence
  - Age of mother in terms of family planning programmes
  - Fertility
  - Use in producing development indicators



### **The original version in 1953**

- ❑ vital statistics system was defined as including the legal registration, statistical recording and reporting of the occurrence, and collection, compilation, analysis, presentation and distribution of statistics pertaining to vital events, which in turn include live births, deaths, foetal deaths, marriages, divorces, adoptions, legitimating, recognitions, annulments and legal separations
- ❑ essentially civil registration was defined as a part of vital statistics system



## The first revision - 1973

- ❑ vital statistics system, irrespective of how it is organized, is defined as the total process of (a) collecting by registration, enumeration or indirect estimation, of information on the frequency of occurrence of certain vital events, as well as characteristics of events themselves and of the person(s) concerned, and (b) compiling, analysing, evaluating, presenting and disseminating these data in statistical form
- ❑ introducing enumeration and indirect estimation – recognizing the reality of the lack of civil registration in many countries



## The second revision - 2001

- ❑ vital statistics system as the total process of (a) collecting information by civil registration or enumeration on the frequency of occurrence of specified and defined vital events, as well as relevant characteristics of the event themselves and of the persons or persons concerned, and (b) compiling, processing, analysing, evaluating, presenting and disseminating these data in statistical form
- ❑ omits indirect estimation – as *ad hoc* and temporary methods



## **Initiative for revising the current set based on:**

- The need to restructure the current principles and recommendations along the lines of distinguishing between vital statistics and its sources
- The need to update and elaborate on:

Population registers

Core topics

Health institutions records and causes of death

Align with current versions of international classifications and definitions





### Major recommendations from the EGM:

- Sharpening the distinction between vital statistics and its sources
- Elaborating on population registers
- Re-visiting core topics
- Addressing the role of health institutions within the vital statistics system
- Aligning the principles and recommendations with current international classifications
- Updating and upgrading all the parts with contemporary approaches to producing quality official statistics



## Three parts

- Part One: The Vital Statistics System
- Part Two: Sources of Vital Statistics
- Part Three: Key Elements of the Vital Statistics System
  
- Annexes
  - Recommended tabulations
  - Index, glossary
  - References



## Definition of a vital statistics system



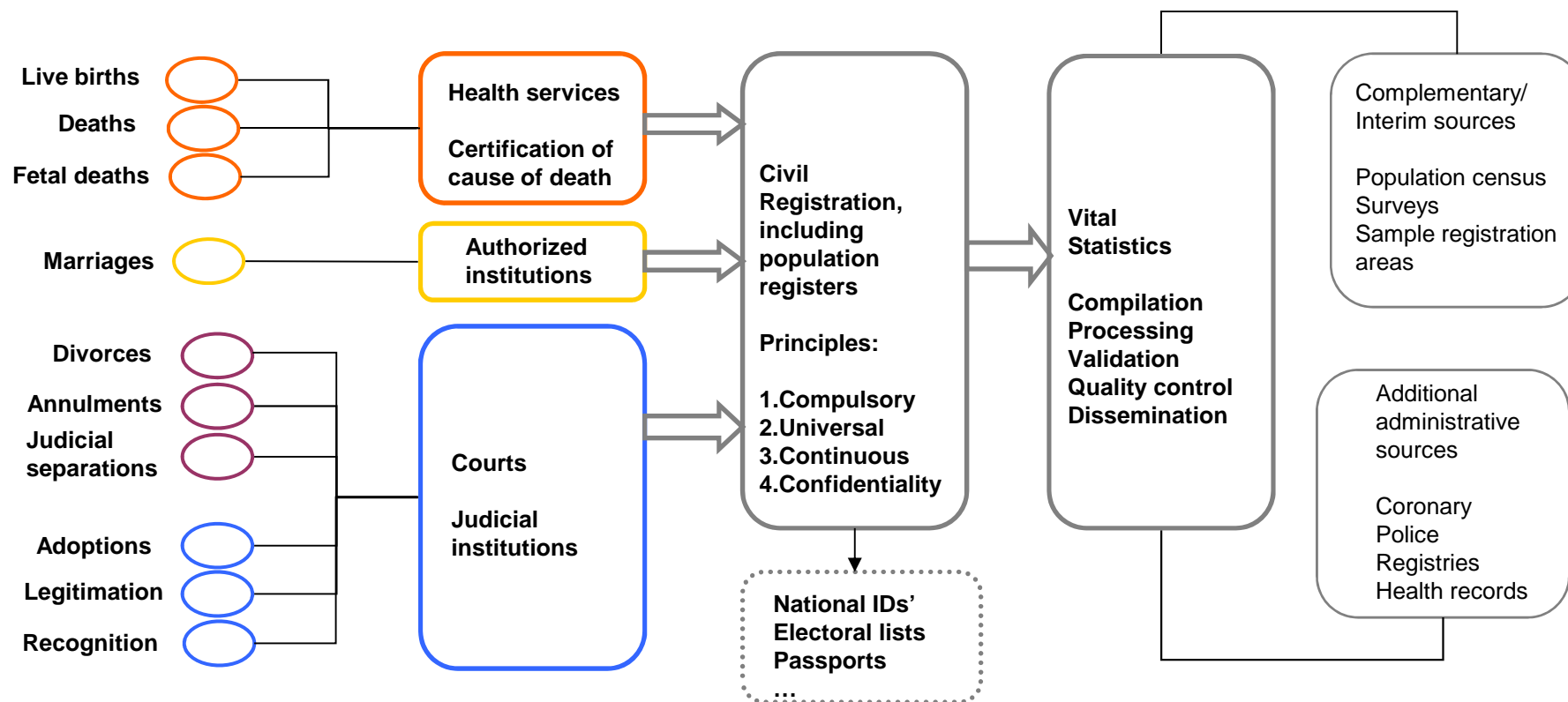
- ❑ A system – set of interacting or independent components forming an integrated wholesome
  - ❑ Legal registration
  - ❑ Statistical reporting
  - ❑ Collection, compilation and dissemination of statistics pertaining to vital events



# Definition of a vital statistics system



## Vital Statistics System



Workshop on the *Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System, Revision 3*, for Central American and Caribbean countries  
30 August to 2 September 2016, Guatemala City



## Sources of vital statistics



- ❑ Critical source – records of vital events derived from civil registration
  
- ❑ Complementary sources – for evaluation and enrichment of statistics
  - ❑ Population censuses
  - ❑ Household surveys
  
- ❑ Additional sources – used in the absence of civil registration and in combination with indirect techniques
  - ❑ Questions in population censuses
  - ❑ Household surveys
  - ❑ Sample registration and health records



## Priority in data collection



- First priority**
  - Births
  - Deaths (including causes of deaths)
  - Foetal deaths
- Second priority**
  - Marriages
  - Divorces
- Third priority**
  - Annulments
  - Judicial separations
  - Adoptions
  - Legitimations
  - Recognitions

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## Principles of a vital statistics system



### **Continuity**

- Short-term fluctuations
- Seasonality
- Long-term patterns

### **Confidentiality**

- Fundamental principles of official statistics
- Personal information used only for statistical purposes

### **Regular dissemination**

- Monthly/quarterly
- Comprehensive annual tabulations



### Legal framework should

- Assign the function of establishing and operating the system
- Provide clear designation of duties and responsibilities for
  - Registration
  - Recording
  - Reporting
  - Collection
  - Compilation
  - Analysis
  - Evaluation
  - Presentation
  - Dissemination





### **Legal framework should**

- Establish the organizational structure for
  - Management
  - Operation
  - Maintenance
- Link the production of vital statistics to the civil registration system
- Designate a central government agency for maintaining the standards for the design and conduct of various operations



- Depending on national circumstances ...**
  - Centralized and decentralized structure
  - Vital registration part of official statistics
  - Vital registration separate from official statistics
  - Role of courts
  - Role of health institutions
  - Protocols for ensuring quality of statistics



## **Principles for coordination**

- Uniform legislation and regulations
- Identical definitions of vital events
- Statistical concepts, classifications and definitions
- Consistency between the numerator and denominator
- Implementation of international standards

## **Inter-agency coordination committee**

## **Coordination within the system**

- Communication (conferences, workshops, training courses ...)
- Evaluation
- Professional association (statisticians/registrars/health workers)



## Quality assurance and assessment



- Strategies and procedures for ensuring the quality of vital statistics
- At each operational stage
- Regular and routine
- Quality of vital statistics is measured by:
  - Completeness
  - Correctness or accuracy
  - Availability
  - Timeliness