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Strategies for Improvement of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics¹

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¹ The text is presented without formal editing.

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Introduction

1. The United Nations² had enumerated a number of steps that the governments may take to improve the civil registration system (CRS)³ in their respective countries. These could be categorized under three major areas namely, operations and management, infrastructure and technical capacity. All of these recommended strategies, which by no means were meant to be exhaustive, continue to be extremely relevant even today not only for countries which are striving to achieve universal registration of vital events but also for the good performing countries so as to sustain the high levels of registration that they have already achieved. While this paper would reinforce the importance of all the recommended strategies referred to above, which have proven to be effective in improving the CRS system, it will highlight other possible strategies, including the need to make adjustments in the processes so as to keep pace with the new development in the area of governance and Information and Communication technology (ICT).
2. There obviously cannot be a single recommended pathway to achieve the goal of complete and efficient registration in a country and can vary depending on the situation existing in the country in terms of its infrastructure, administrative structure, legal framework and technical capacity. It is again not necessary for a country to traverse a linear pathway; it can always choose to work on several fronts simultaneously for accelerated progress towards achieving complete registration. For example, if a country requires fixing a legal provision to help facilitate a registration service, it can explore the possibility of finding an intermediate administrative solution for this as it may take years to achieve the former. In any case, the multi-disciplinary nature of the CRS demands supports from several institutions and experts and if a country does seek wider participation of various actors in the development of strategies, the approach is most likely to be holistic in nature.
3. The dual role of civil registration namely the legal and vital statistics is well established. More and more countries are now realizing and recognizing the intrinsic nature of linkages of the CRS with social and economic development, day to day governance and human rights. Therefore, increasingly varied types of stakeholders at national and international level are seen to be taking interest in improving civil registration, opening up opportunities not only in strengthening registration per se but also in leveraging resources for its development, which is often cited as one of the impediments. Countries need to look for strategic positioning of the CRS so to ensure that it not only remains everyone's concern but also becomes everyone's responsibility⁴.

² Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System Revision 2, United Nations Statistics Division 2001, Chapter IV pages 77-81

³ The reference to vital statistics in this paper is limited to those generated from the civil registration system. Therefore, the use of the term civil registration system (CRS) necessarily and singularly refers to vital statistics obtained through the civil registration.

⁴ Lancet Series: Who Counts? 4 – Way Forward: Carla AbouZahr, John Cleland, Francesca Cullare, Sarah B Macfarlane, Francis C Notzon, Philip Setel, Simon Szretre, on behalf of the Monitoring of Vital Events (MoVE) writing group. (Published online October 29 2007)

4. What follows hereinafter are brief discussions on each of the identified key steps that the national governments would need to take for strengthening the CRS in their respective countries. This set of suggested strategies is not necessarily exhaustive but crucial enough to deserve serious consideration.

Securing political commitment

5. The first step towards improvement of civil registration is the need to seek sustained political commitment within the country, if possible from the highest level. This will not only help secure funding for long-term strategic plan for improvement of CRS but also help garner support from various other departments and stakeholders. The recent initiatives by the UN Regional Commissions of Africa and Asia and Pacific have recognized the importance of stimulating political support at the regional level in support of CRS⁵.

Developing and Implementing of Action Plans

6. The value of developing a time-bound plan of action for the CRS cannot be over emphasized. Such a plan has to address the existing gaps and challenges in the CRS and should have clearly articulated activities with specific timelines. The nature and scope of planning however may vary in accordance with the levels of progress made by individual country. For example, a country which has achieved an overall birth registration of around 90 per cent needs to locate communities with low levels of registration and make specific plans to reach out to these marginalized groups. It can also include a plan to compile and use birth related vital statistics in a foreseeable future, if not already done.

7. A comprehensive assessment of the CRS system preceding the development of the plan will make it more meaningful – in fact the lack of is likely to make the plan inconsequential. This assessment should be a consultative process and be undertaken jointly by all stakeholders in the country⁶. The assessment will also help in setting measurable targets that the country may wish to achieve at the end of the plan period.

8. The plan should ideally cover a number of years with specific but reasonable time-frame for each activity and sub-activity. The sequencing of the activities in terms of the start date also has to be realistically decided and will be contingent upon completion of some other activities or sub-activities (which may include some preparatory work) and also on the resources available. Any plan pre-supposes a clear costing and budgeting for each activity and its source of funding. Since the plan is likely to be owned by various stakeholders it is important to identify the department/agency that will lead a particular activity and the ones which will play supportive roles in the course of its implementation.

⁵ The African Ministers in-charge of civil registration in a conference organized in August 2010 at Addis Ababa by UNECA in collaboration with the African Development Bank and African Union Commission, made categorical commitments with regard to the improvement of civil registration in Africa through a set of declaration and endorsement of a medium term regional plan. The conference of Ministers is now been instituted to be a permanent forum to monitor the progress of the CR in Africa. The Regional Forum of the Improvement of Vital Statistics and Civil Registration in its meeting held in June 2010 at Bangkok mandated the ESCAP to create a high level political commitment for civil registration and vital statistics.

⁶ The United Nations Statistics Division uses an Assessment Questionnaires for Civil Registration and Vital Statistics System, which can be self administered by a country. However, a country can and perhaps has to attempt a much more comprehensive assessment to understand the entire range of challenges faced by the CRS. Under the directions of the Ministers in-charge of Civil Registration in Africa, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa along with other partners such as the African Development Bank, African Union Commission, UNICE, UNFPA and UNHCR is undertaking an assessment of the civil registration and vital statistics systems in all African countries.

9. Finally, a mechanism of performance monitoring has to be put in place for effective and efficient implementation of the plan. The monitoring framework should indicate the objectively verifiable indicators, the means of verification and also risks and assumptions if any. The implementation of the plan may be monitored using the aforesaid instrument by a working level committee at frequent intervals (say quarterly) and by a high level coordination committee once a year.

Constituting coordination committees

10. Given the multi-faceted nature of the CRS system, it is crucial to constitute coordination committees at the national and depending on the size and polity of the country, even at regional levels. It may be a strategic choice for the country to establish a high level committee which can provide the necessary leadership and policy direction for the improvement of the CRS. Such a committee can be led by the Minister in-charge of Civil Registration and include highest level functionaries from the various departments/ministries, experts, professionals and representatives of international agencies, if required. The main functions of this committee should include among others, taking policy decisions, ensuring smooth coordination among different stakeholders, providing oversight on the implementation of the action plan that a country may be implementing and arranging for requisite funds. A country can also choose to establish coordination committee(s) at the working level whose main function will be implementing and monitoring of CRS plan and programme.

Fostering advocacy

11. It is often the case that the politicians and executives at the highest echelons of the government are not fully aware of the value of civil registration and vital statistics in national development. The CRS is most often perceived to be an instrument for providing birth, death and marriage certificates and nothing beyond. In countries, where the CRS is performing much below its par in terms of its completeness, national statistical offices may perceive it as a non-functioning statistical system and do not actively engage in improving the system. It is therefore, extremely important to step up advocacy efforts in these countries to garner support of the decision-makers through various means such as national conferences, seminar and even technical workshops that can be held at appropriate intervals. Professionals and experts in the field of administration, public health, statistics and demography should be the part of these conferences and seminars. Even civil society groups and international agencies should be invited to attend for bringing in other perspectives such as the human rights. Advocacy can also be attempted through the national level print and electronic media by inserting drop-in articles and op-eds⁷ in leading and popular newspapers and magazines and by organizing special debates and discussions in TV and radio programmes. Special advocacy documents such as brochures and leaflets can be prepared for distribution to concerned departments and organizations and even donors. The ultimate aim is to ensure that the national government and other partners including the donors are convinced about the importance of CRS in the process of national devolution of the country and see merit in making sustained investments in first developing and then nurturing the system.

Creating demand

⁷ An op-ed abbreviated from the editorial page is a newspaper article that expresses the opinions of a named writer who is unaffiliated with the newspaper's editorial board. - Wikipedia

12. There are three tangible outputs of the civil registration system namely, the registration records, the extracts of the registers issued to individuals as certificates and the statistics generated from the system. It is possible to create demand for all of these outputs either by the government for administrative, policy planning and programme implementation purposes or by the individuals for obtaining various social and economic benefits. It is for the civil registration authorities to create demands for these outputs for which they have to look for opportunities and then engage in constant dialogue with the concerned departments and organizations for establishing the necessary linkages. For example, the birth records can be used to identify beneficiaries who need various health services such as immunization and health care and post-partum care of mothers. Similarly, the death records can be used to identify women who may have died in their reproductive age and ascertain through follow up surveys, if these were due to maternal causes and then find circumstances leading to the death. These are important public health interventions and the registration authorities must work together with the concerned ministries at appropriate levels to make it operational. If necessary a pilot project may be jointly implemented which will not only help demonstrate the possibility of such use and but also help fine tune the operations and methods.

13. With increased threat perception with regard to security, more and more countries in recent years are trying to tighten their external and internal security systems and are opting to implement national identity registration systems as one of the measures towards achieving this objective. The rapidly developing ICT is playing a catalytic role in implementation of these systems. The elements of this system typically would have the following - a centralized database of individuals living in the country with their characteristics including those that uniquely identify them (such as photographs, fingerprints etc.); a unique identity number assigned to each individual; and in some countries an identity card bearing a few identity details with photograph issued to each individual⁸. These computerized identity databases are opening up new opportunities in promoting e-governance including service delivery of various government programmes such as health, old age pension etc. Some countries are working towards reforming their laws to provide legal sanctity to digitally created and maintained records. However sophisticated these systems are made to be, the primacy of a complete and fool-proof CRS in ensuring that the national identity system is complete and fool-proof, is yet to be recognized and fully understood by many of these countries. There is a need to clearly lay down the processes and protocols for a new entry into and exit of a record from the database and the only way this can be achieved is by making an organic link between the national identity database and CRS system⁹.

14. The use of birth, death, marriage and divorce certificates for individuals or for their families from the rights perspective is well documented and is not discussed in this paper for want of space. The government should consider increasing the demand of these certificates in accessing various government services. For example, the birth certificates may be required to be produced as proof of age at the time of school admission or applying for passport.

⁸ There may be different variations of national identity registration systems implemented in different countries although the overall objective may be the same. Most countries would normally distinguish between citizens and non-citizens in the database.

⁹ In a technical paper – Urgently Needed Reforms in Civil Registration in Asian Countries by the International Institute for Vital Registration and Statistics way back in 1986 had recommended that the civil registration authorities develop a system for issuing a unique birth registration serial number, which can also serve as a national identity number. In Botswana, the CRS and National Identity Registration databases are organically linked. At the time of registering the birth of the child a unique identity number is provided to the child from the National Id database. The child is also linked to its parents through their national id numbers which helps settle the citizenship issue right at the time of birth.

However, the government has to be cautious and selective in making the production of certificates mandatory for various services. For example, the government cannot deny admissions to children to school for want of birth certificates as it may infringe upon the right to education (in some countries) and in any case run counter to the universal education programme. In such cases, the production of birth certificates can be made mandatory only in urban areas and only persuasive in nature in rural areas. On the other hand death certificates can be made mandatory for claiming inheritance and life insurance policies. It should be the ultimate aim of the government to accept these vital events certificates as only legal evidentiary proof of the occurrences of such events and gradually phase out use of any alternative documents in absence of the certificates emanating from CRS. The civil and criminal laws should increasingly rely and even demand vital events certificates for settling matters that require the reference to such documents.

15. One thing is clear - while the civil registration authorities are working towards creating demands for use of civil registration records and certificates, they should prepare themselves to strengthen the supply side through the various measures, most of which have been discussed in some details in this paper.

16. The registration of vital events generates a record for the individual, and these records also serve as a basis for vital statistics. Vital Statistics is therefore, an integral and unalienable element of the CRS. Although, the usefulness of data depends on the completeness and accuracy with which vital events and their characteristics are recorded, the statistical agency responsible for compilation of vital statistics in the country should be identify regions, provinces or cities where the registration levels have reached reasonable levels of completeness¹⁰ and accuracy and begin compiling important tables and disseminate them widely in various forums, demonstrating the importance of CRS in generating vital statistics on a continuous and permanent basis. Countries which do not compile vital statistics from the civil registration records because of its incompleteness, should at the least, periodically compile the levels of registration of different vital events for different regions and sub-regions and publish them.

Creating public awareness

17. The general public occupies the centre-stage in any CRS system. They serve as informants of events occurring to them or in their families at various points of their lifetime and also benefit from the crucial piece of document provided to them by the government legally recognizing such events. The responsibility of individuals in reporting events occurring to them or their family members is clearly laid down in the civil registration laws. In countries, where the law makes registration of events compulsory, also provide for penalties for non-registration. In spite of this, the public do not come forward for registration. Undoubtedly, a large part of the problem stems from the inadequacy of the registration infrastructure and convoluted procedures that desists the people in interacting with the CRS. Some of the major reasons for non-registration of events often cited are the lack of knowledge among the public about a) the need and importance of registration; b) the place and the processes of registration. Therefore, it is extremely vital that a well planned public awareness programme is implemented in the countries on a sustained basis to inform the public about the importance and benefit of registration and the basic procedures of doing so¹¹.

¹⁰ The United Nations recommends 90 per cent completeness of registration to be the threshold for tabulation and use of vital statistics

¹¹ This has been dealt in great length in the Handbook on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems – Developing Information, Education and Communication, United Nations Statistics Division 1998

The nature, scope and extent of the awareness programme will vary from country to country and even within the country, depending on level of progress, cultural and social norms etc. For example, in countries where the registration is complete in the urban areas but much below par in rural areas or in hard to reach areas the awareness programmes should be largely concentrated in the latter. The promotional messages on registration should relate to incentives that are relevant and to which people in the area can associate with. For example, in distant rural areas, it would be pointless to convey the message to the public about the importance of birth registration in obtaining passport or even for school admission; instead it should link to a local incentive, such as the obtaining of land from the government on attaining certain age.

18. The media to be used for an awareness programme will again vary depending on the conditions existing in the country and also within the country. With the general literacy levels being low it would naturally not be advisable for a country to use the printed materials such as posters, billboards, brochures etc. for conveying messages on registration. In such situations, electronic media like television or radio can be used, provided that the network coverage of such media is widespread and reaches out to the target populations or areas. Otherwise, the countries may explore the possibility of local communication channels such as the community level announcements through mikes, and even interpersonal communications through health workers or NGOs working in the area on various government programmes.

Improving service delivery

19. Individuals are key beneficiaries of the CRS and like any other government programme; it is the primary responsibility of the government to ensure efficient delivery of registration services. Improved service delivery will not only make the CRS more efficient but will also help increase registration coverage. This can be achieved through various means such as amendment of the laws and regulations wherever necessary, improved management and operations, training of registration functionaries and use of ICT.

20. Countries may review the civil registration laws and identify existing provisions (and even absence of provisions), that seem to be hindering the smooth delivery of the registration services thereby discouraging the public in interacting with the system. They should initiate processes for amendments and additions in the laws to promote registration. For example, there are countries that charge fees from public for issuing certificates, which act as disincentive for registration and most often cited as one of the reasons for low levels registration. Steps should be taken make amendments to such counter-productive provisions of the civil registration laws.

21. The civil registration laws in most of the countries cast responsibility on the family members to report events that occur in the house, which require them to visit the civil registrar's office. The family members also have to visit the registration centres to obtain certificates, which more often than not, entails a separate visit to the registration centre. In countries where the registration centres are sparsely located, especially in rural areas, distance to registration centres becomes a serious barrier for registration. While it is not practical to set up registration sites in every single village to meet this requirement, an optimal choice is required to be made with regard to the number of registration sites keeping in view the administrative structure existing in the country and management and operational challenges. One of the possible innovative strategies that a country can adopt for improving the outreach services for registration is by establishing institutional linkages with the existing health delivery services network. Health workers provide various services such as antenatal and post

-partum care, immunization services at the doorsteps of the beneficiaries and are at the closest proximity of the events, especially in respect of births and deaths. These health workers, therefore, can function as interface between the families and the registration centres. An institutional mechanism linking the two systems with appropriately defined processes and protocols can be built for reporting of such events. Other possibilities of operational linkages for strengthening the CRS can be explored by the country depending on the situations existing in the countries, for example mobile registration units.

22. It is often the case that certificates are provided to individuals only on demand. This entails additional visit, sometimes more than one, by the family members to the registration centres. Countries can try pro-active methods to provide certificates to the beneficiaries immediately upon completion of registration. For example, in big hospitals, where a significantly large number of events occurs everyday, arrangements can be made to locate the registration centre within the hospital premises itself to not only register the events immediately after its occurrence but also deliver certificates to the parents or the family of the deceased even before the mother (in case of birth) or the body (in case of death) is discharged from the hospital.

23. One of the essential elements of a user-friendly registration service is the attitude and approach of the person behind the counter in dealing with the client. Unfriendly and inhospitable staff at the registration centres can affect the overall efficiency of the system. There is therefore, a need to recognize the importance of developing and promoting a strong customer service culture across all levels of civil registration services. The countries can consider introducing special modules on value of customer service and client orientation in the training courses to equip staff with the skills, information and support to fulfill customer service objectives.

24. ICT can play a very crucial role in improving the delivery of registration services on several fronts. The extent of automated registration service that a country would decide to provide will depend on the development of ICT in that country. The services can range from issuance of computerized certificates at the registration centre to issuance of certificates through kiosks or on-line through internet. It would be however be of paramount importance to ensure the confidentiality and security of the system as the failure to do so will amount a serious breach of public trust.

Making special efforts for death registration

25. The issue of death registration deserves special attention as most of the developing and under-developed countries are finding it to be a big challenge mainly because of the under reporting of deaths of children and youth. There is no incentive whatsoever, for a family to report a death of a child unless there is an insurance claim is to be made, which may not be very common. The death of person at young age is reported only when the incidence occurs in a medical institution and where the institution is legally responsible to submit such report. The registration of a child immediately after death is not considered or highlighted as a human rights issue, and even if it is, it has not found prominence as has the right of the child to be registered at birth¹². While the right to survival of a child is clearly articulated in Article 6 of the Convention of Child Rights, Article 24 of the Convention states – ‘States

¹² Article 7 of the Convention of Child Rights states that the child shall be registered immediately after birth and shall have the right from birth to a name, the right to acquire a nationality and, as far as possible, the right to know and be cared for by his or her parents. UNICEF programme on birth registration draws on inspiration from this article.

Parties recognize the right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health and to facilities for the treatment of illness and rehabilitation of health. States Parties shall strive to ensure that no child is deprived of his or her right of access to such health care services'. The article goes on to state that countries should take appropriate measures to diminish infant and child mortality. The question that needs to be asked is how can the state fulfil these rights unless it knows, how many, where, at what age and for what reasons are the children dying. Therefore, advocacy efforts should take this important line of argument in advocating for and creating awareness on death registration.

26. The consequence of non-registration of deaths (which, as has been stated, is largely due to non-registration of death of young populations) in countries with national identity registration or population registration can be serious. Countries maintaining population registers may find that population as obtained from these registers to be inordinately large due to non-deletion of such deaths. Countries which maintain national identity registration system may run the risk of encountering falsification of identity thus defeating the objective of strengthening security¹³.

27. There are no easy or quick-fix solutions to the problem of non-registration of deaths of younger population. Only an empowered and well informed community, which is well oriented in monitoring and oversight of social and economic development programmes at the local level, may take interest in ensuring that every death occurring in the community is duly registered with the local register. However, this may be closer to an ideal situation than a practical one. On the supply side, an administrative solution may be possible in countries where burial or cremation places are regulated, which may only be found in urban areas. In areas where these are regulated, the burial or cremation permit can be issued only after the death is reported for registration.

28. It would be important to have a larger consultation with regard death registration and look for practices in countries which have been able to successfully register deaths especially for those dying young¹⁴.

Developing human resources

29. One of the very important activities that a country needs to undertake to strengthen the civil registration and vital statistics is training of staff¹⁵. The training cannot be carried out as an ad hoc activity but should be a part of the regular programme of the civil registration and vital statistics system. The staff should be trained in all aspects of registration such as the legal aspects, registration processes, record keeping and preparation of reports. As discussed above, a special orientation module on customer service can also be included in the training module. It is important that the registration staff realizes and appreciates the value of vital

¹³ A particular situation is described here to highlight the possibility of falsification of identity. A country has linked the birth registration database with the national identity register database and at the time of registration of child provides it with a unique national identity number from the national identity database and also includes it in the latter. The national identity authorities provide cards to the individuals on attaining age 16 on production of birth certificates. A child dies at the age of five and the family does not find it necessary to register the death. Another person appears at the registration offices claiming to be the same person and even produces the birth certificate. He provides all the information that is required at the time of national identity registration including photograph and fingerprint and permanently falsifies his/her identity.

¹⁴ The UNSD may in like to work towards framing a separate set of recommendations in this regard.

¹⁵ The importance of training as one of the key strategies for improving civil registration and vital statistics has been dealt adequately in Chapter IV, page 77 of the Principles and Recommendations for Vital Statistics System Revision 2.

statistics generated from civil registration and appropriate modules on this topic can also be included. In countries where the registration function is undertaken by staff, only on part-time basis, and the turnover is high, it is essential to organize frequent training programmes so that the new staff can perform their duties and responsibilities according to the desired level of efficiency and zeal. Countries where registration functionaries have been exclusively appointed to perform registration work and have permanent status in the department, the training can be less frequent. It however, has to be borne in mind that when major changes are made in the Act/regulations or operations and process, special training sessions should be organized across the board to inform the changes. Mere issuance of circulars and notification may not be sufficient in such cases as it may lead to misinterpretation and confusion in the field.

30. Training should also be organized on a regular basis for officials and staff from departments and organizations which support or are associated with the CRS. These will include policy makers, medical and health workers, staff from the local administration etc. External training should be designed to inform groups about the needs and functions of the civil registration and vital statistics systems, and should seek improved understanding and cooperation¹⁶. For example, in countries where the law casts specific responsibility on the health and medical workers to report events that occurs in a hospital/maternity centres, it would be essential to train these staff on a regular basis so that they appreciate the need to send timely and quality information to the registrars.

31. The registrars should also be adequately equipped with reference documents such as the copies of Acts and Regulations, Registrar's manual which may contain details such as duties and responsibilities, do's and don'ts, and Frequently Asked Questions etc.

32. The awareness and understanding of the importance of civil registration as a source of vital statistics is deficient among the students of statistics, demography and public health in colleges and universities. If at all, the topic is covered in the above mentioned regular courses in a scanty manner. The countries may consider reviewing the existing courses and ensure that special modules are developed and introduced on this topic as a part of the regular curricula. The medical courses should have modules to train the budding doctors about the importance of certification of cause of death and the proper method of recoding it.

Studies and evaluations

33. The development and implementation of a time-bound action plan for CRS has been discussed in details. The necessity of undertaking a comprehensive assessment of the CRS prior to drawing up the detailed activities and the importance of setting up of a mechanism for monitoring of its performance have also been adequately dealt with. It is also essential to ensure that provisions are made for evaluation of the programme at pre-decided intervals. A mid-term evaluation should also be planned. An evaluation should necessarily include the following criteria namely, relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impacts and sustainability¹⁷. Taken together, these five criteria should provide the government the essential information and clues to understand the situation and determine if any adjustments need to be made in the programme. Normally, an evaluation of this nature, scope and magnitude is undertaken by external and independent agency.

¹⁶ Principles and Recommendations for Vital Statistics System Revision 2 – Chapter IV page 77 paragraph 513

¹⁷ DAC/OECD Evaluation Criteria for Development Assistance

34. It would also be important to undertake special studies for further in-depth understanding of various issues with regard to civil registration. These may include household surveys or focussed group discussions to elicit information about the level of knowledge among the general public about the importance and use of registration, procedure of registering event, and perception about the quality of services provided. The results of these studies will contribute significantly in making proper plans for improving quality of services, making adjustment to process including the law, developing a sound public awareness programme etc.

Mobilization of funds

35. The development and maintenance of the CRS is clearly the primary responsibility of the government. All governments should regard the CRS as a development imperative and make all efforts to ensure smooth and efficient functioning of the system. This naturally implies that governments make provision of sufficient budget to meet the core needs for running CRS on day to day basis. This should include budgets for items like printing of registration forms and stationeries, salary of registration staff, maintenance of infrastructure, public awareness programme and even regular training programme of registration functionaries etc. When a separate comprehensive plan for strengthening of system is developed (as has been suggested above) for implementation within a given time-frame the registration authorities should, apart from making efforts to garner internal support for budget, seek support from various ministries or departments who are the main stakeholders. Funding possibilities specifically for systemic improvements in CRS from international donors are limited. It may be strategic therefore, for the registration authority to look for opportunities in leveraging funds from other development activities currently being supported by donor agencies in the country and will be benefiting from a complete and efficient CRS. One of the possibilities is to tap into the donor funding of development activities in various countries in the area of governance including e-governance.

Conclusions

36. This paper has examined in details the various strategies that countries can adopt in strengthening of the CRS. These range from improving infrastructure, human resources and service delivery on the supply side to creating awareness and creating demand on the demand side. It is well recognized that there is no single pathway in achieving the goal of complete registration and the choice of strategies will depend on the condition existing in the country in terms of the administrative structure, level of development and technical capacity and even the social and cultural milieu. Countries have to adopt a holistic approach in improvement of the CRS through wider consultation and collaboration with various stakeholders. A definite plan of action with definite time-frame and clear delineation of responsibilities among different ministries and departments should be implemented. It is clear that CRS cannot survive in isolation and registration authorities have to look for new opportunities for linkages, not only for improving registration levels and the efficiency of the system but also creating possibilities of securing funds. The introduction of national identity registration system in several countries has opened up one such possibility where the CRS can organically linked to or inter-faced with the former, which if done, will be beneficial to both the systems. Stimulating and securing political commitment and seeking support from the decision makers at the highest level in the government were identified to be among the most important strategies in accelerated improvement of the CRS.