

**United Nations Expert Group Meeting on  
International Standards for Civil Registration  
and Vital Statistics Systems  
27 - 30 June 2011, New York**

## **Organization of Work**

Prepared by

United Nations Statistics Division

**Monday, 27 June 2011**

**Registration of participants (9:00 – 10:00)**

**Morning session (10:00 – 13:00)**

**10:00 – 10:30**

**Opening**

Opening statement - *Paul Cheung, Director, United Nations Statistics Division*  
Selection of Chair and Rapporteur  
Administrative matters

**10:30 – 13:00**

**1-1. Reviewing international standards on civil registration and vital statistics – overall discussion on the needs for revision and on the proposed table of contents**

The session discusses in general the needs for a review of the *Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System, Rev. 2*; and areas that need to be revised, updated or further elaborated. The session will also review the proposed table of content for the new revision of the Principles and Recommendations.

**Presentation:**

- *Revising Current International Standards on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics: Proposed Outline*, United Nations Statistics Division (ESA/STAT/AC.233/1)

**Discussants:**

- Ghana
- India

**General discussion**

**1-2. Definition and use of vital statistics**

The session covers the Chapter 1 of the newly proposed structure for the revision. The discussion includes definition of vital statistics, uses of vital statistics and potential users of vital statistics at national, sub-national and local level.

**Presentation:**

- *Proposals for Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System, Rev. 3 - Chapter I: Definition and Uses of Vital Statistics*, United Nations Statistics Division (ESA/STAT/AC.233/2)
- *The uses of vital statistics in the work of the United Nations Population Division*, United Nations Population Division (ESA/STAT/AC.233/23)

**Discussants:**

- Jamaica
- PAHO

**General discussion**

**Lunch break (13:00 – 14:30)**

**Afternoon session (14:30 – 17:30)**

**1-2. Definition and use of vital statistics (continued)**

### **1-3. The vital statistics system**

The session reviews the definition of a vital statistics system and four principles for the collection and compilation of vital statistics – universal coverage, continuity, confidentiality and regular dissemination. Core topics to be collected (or core data output to be produced) in a vital statistics system will also be discussed. The session also covers principles for compiling and processing of vital statistics as well as those for data dissemination. Participants will be asked to focus on further elaborations that are necessary to be included in the revision.

#### **Presentation:**

- *Proposals for Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System, Rev. 3 - Chapter II: the Vital Statistics System*, United Nations Statistics Division (ESA/STAT/AC.233/3)

#### **Discussants:**

- Thailand
- United Kingdom

#### **General discussion**

**Reception (17:30 – 18:30)**

**Tuesday, 28 June 2011**

**Morning session (10:00 – 13:00)**

### **1-4. Sources of vital statistics**

Civil registration system, population register, population censuses and surveys as well as other administrative records are all possible sources of vital statistics. The session discusses advantages and disadvantages of each data source in terms of type of information provided, whether able to meet the data requirements identified in the last session, timeliness of data, coverage, accuracy and etc. The session will also cover how multiple sources can be integrated to generate reliable vital statistics.

#### **Presentations:**

- *Sources of Vital Statistics in Ethiopia*, Ethiopia (ESA/STAT/AC.233/4)
- *Sources of Vital Statistics*, Mexico (ESA/STAT/AC.233/5)

#### **Discussants:**

- WHO

#### **General discussion**

### **1-5. Civil registration system**

The civil registration process covers registering, preparing and storing vital registration record, indexing and releasing of records, adding and amending records, issuing certified copies, recording and reporting registration data for statistical purposes. The session discusses recent developments in civil registration process and their impact on international standards. Any areas that need to be elaborated in the corresponding chapter will also be covered.

#### **Presentations:**

- *The Civil Registration System in Ghana*, Ghana (ESA/STAT/AC.233/6)
- *Civil Registration System*, AfDB and ECA (ESA/STAT/AC.233/7)

#### **Discussant:**

- Australia

#### **General discussion**

**Lunch break (13:00 – 14:30)**

**Afternoon session (14:30 – 17:30)**

### **1-6. Population register as source of vital statistics**

In a number of workshops conducted by the United Nations Statistics Division in the past ten years the issue of differentiating civil registration and population registers, as sources for vital statistics, emerged often. It was also noted that in some cases the installation and functioning of population registers is regarded as the ultimate solution and a replacement of the registration of births, deaths and other vital events, which may not be necessarily the case. The session covers information on elaboration in the manual regarding how different types of population registers could be used to generate vital statistics as well as the limitations of using population registers for statistical purposes. Discussion will also cover guidelines to be provided on the use of regular-interval sample surveys to complement information obtained from population registers.

#### **Presentations:**

- *The Population Register as a source of Vital Statistics*, United Kingdom (ESA/STAT/AC.233/9)

#### **Discussant:**

- Germany
- ECA

#### **General discussion**

### **1-7. Use of health services records for vital statistics**

Health institutions records are sometimes used to generate and, much more frequently, to complement vital statistics. This is especially true in the case of causes of death, which is a crucial component of comprehensive national health statistics, as the certification of the causes of deaths is the primary responsibility of health services. The current principles and recommendations do not elaborate on the advantages and limitations of health services records as sources for vital statistics. Additional guidelines might be provided in regard to certifying causes-of-deaths, coding and training of medical personnel on providing information related to causes-of-death, as well as integrating the health service system into the civil registration system in a country.

#### **Presentations:**

- *Using health care service administrative data to improve national vital statistics: Thailand experiences*, Thailand (ESA/STAT/AC.233/10)
- *The Contribution of the Health Sector to Civil Registration and Vital statistics Systems: Uses of Records from Health Services*, WHO (ESA/STAT/AC.233/11)

#### **Discussant:**

- United States

#### **General discussion**

**Wednesday, 29 June 2011**

### **Morning session (10:00 – 13:00)**

### **1-8. Other administrative records for vital statistics**

Besides population register and health records, other administrative records might be used as a source for vital statistics. The session discusses country practices in using the other administrative records such as court, insurance, police, labour department and education department to generate vital statistics, including the coordination mechanisms established between agencies, quality of data, advantage and limitations of using this source.

#### **Presentations:**

- *Other Administrative Records for Vital Statistics - the Indian Experience*, India (ESA/STAT/AC.233/12)

- *Other Administrative Records for Vital Statistics - The Jamaican Experience*, Jamaica (ESA/STAT/AC.233/13)

**Discussant:**

- Oman
- ESCAP

**General discussion**

**1-9. Population censuses and sample surveys**

In countries where civil registration is lacking, deficient or insufficiently reliable, population censuses, household and demographic sample surveys, sample registration areas can be used to gather information on the incidence of vital events and to estimate or calculate vital rates. Where civil registration is well established and maintained, these other sources of demographic data are useful for providing independent estimates of demographic parameters which can be used to evaluate the level of completeness of civil registration and vital statistics, and are also useful as complementary sources of demographic and health data. The session discusses how censuses and surveys can be used for vital statistics, how they meet the core vital statistics requirement and how they can complement register-based statistics.

**Presentations:**

- *Population Censuses and Surveys*, Hungary (ESA/STAT/AC.233/14)
- *Because Everyone Counts, everyone should be counted—Elusive Population, Gender-based Violence, and Maternal Death, “Counting those who should be counted”*, Oman (ESA/STAT/AC.233/8)
- *Use of population censuses and household sample surveys for vital statistics in South Africa*, South Africa (ESA/STAT/AC.233/15)

**Discussant:**

- China

**General discussion**

**Lunch break (13:00 – 14:30)**

**Afternoon session (14:30 – 17:30)**

**1-10. Strategies for improving civil registration and vital statistics systems**

Various strategies in improving civil registration and vital statistics systems are included including in the current Principles and Recommendations. They include: (1) periodic training of staff and others involved with civil registration and vital statistics systems; (2) outreach and communications with government officials, professional groups and the general public; (3) continuous performance monitoring and (4) maximum use of current and new information technologies as they pertain to the operation of the systems. The session discusses those strategies as well as new activities that were taken by the Government in recent years that have proven to be effective in improving the civil registration and vital statistics systems.

**Presentations:**

- *Strategies for Improving Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems: The Canadian Experience*, Canada (ESA/STAT/AC.233/16)
- *Strategies for Improvement of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics*, ECA (ESA/STAT/AC.233/17)

**Discussants:**

- Australia
- Ethiopia

**General discussion**

### **1-11. Computerization**

The development of technologies in the past decades has brought in many possibilities in facilitating the operation within the civil registration and vital statistics systems. New technologies were used in countries in registration of vital events, data management, archiving, data storage, data transfer and exchange as well as protection of privacy and data confidentiality. The session explores the success stories of computerization in various countries and discusses the risks and benefits in taking advantage of new technologies in civil registration and vital statistics systems.

#### **Presentation:**

- *How Can Vital Statistics Remain Vital for Measuring Health Status in the U.S.?*, United States (ESA/STAT/AC.233/18)

#### **Discussants:**

- Canada
- Mexico
- ECA

#### **General discussion**

**Thursday, 30 June 2011**

### **Morning session (10:00 – 13:00)**

#### **1-12. Evaluating the quality of civil registration information and register-based vital statistics**

Both direct and indirect methods can be used to evaluate the quality of civil registration information and derived vital statistics, in terms of completeness, accuracy, availability and timeliness. The session discusses methods used in countries for evaluation purposes and pre-conditions to use different method or a combination of methods.

#### **Presentations:**

- *Evaluating the quality of vital statistics: paper for discussion*, Australia (ESA/STAT/AC.233/19)
- *The Vital Statistics System in China*, China (ESA/STAT/AC.233/20)

#### **Discussants:**

- UNSD

#### **General discussion**

### **2. Round table discussion – international and regional initiatives**

The session offers a platform for countries, United Nations Regional Commissions as well as regional and international organizations to share recent initiatives that have been taken to improve civil registration and vital statistics systems at national level.

#### **Background document:**

- *Towards a regional programme for the improvement of civil registration and vital statistics in Asia and the Pacific*, ESCAP (ESA/STAT/AC.233/22)

### **Lunch break (13:00 – 14:30)**

### **Afternoon session (14:30 – 17:30)**

### **3. Improving the collection and dissemination of vital statistics through the *Demographic Yearbook***

The United Nations collects vital statistics annually from national statistical offices through the *United Nations Demographic Yearbook Vital Statistics Questionnaire*. There are currently 35 tabulations on the questionnaire, covering live births, deaths, infant deaths, foetal deaths, life tables, marriages, divorces and abortions. The session will review the questionnaire for relevance and adequacy and discuss data dissemination channels.

**Presentations:**

- *Collection, compilation and dissemination of official vital statistics at the international level*, United Nations Statistics Division (ESA/STAT/AC.233/21)

**Discussants:**

- Hungary
- PAHO

**General discussion**

**4. Conclusions and recommendations; adoption of the outline for the *Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System, Rev. 3***

**Closing**