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IMPROVEMENT OF CIVIL REGISTRATION AND VITAL STATISTICS SYSTEMS
BEIJING, 29 NOVEMBER - 3 DECEMBER, 1993

STATISTICAL DIVISION UNITED NATIONS	STATE STATISTICAL BUREAU, CHINA
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**CIVIL REGISTRATION AND VITAL STATISTICS SYSTEM
IN BANGLADESH**

Under the provisions of the Bengal Births and Deaths Registration Act, 1873, the Deputy Commissioner was the authority to appoint Sanitary Inspectors of the Directorate of Health Services and the Chairmen of Pourashavas as registrars of births and deaths in rural and urban areas respectively (Annexure-A). Such registrars in rural areas have to collect particulars of births and deaths in specified form from mahalladars and Dafadars of rural areas and submit monthly consolidated statement in the specified form to the District Health Officer who sends a consolidated statement to the Director of Health Services. On the other hand, the registrars in urban areas have to collect particulars of births and deaths from burial grounds, burning ghats and hospitals in municipal areas and submit a consolidated statement to the Director of Health Services once a month.

2. Registration of births and deaths is one of the compulsory functions of Union Parishads and Pourashavas within their respective areas under section 30 of the Local Government Ordinance, 1976 (Annexure-B) and under section 67 of the Pourashava Ordinance, 1977 (Annexure-C). But the functions of registration of births and deaths under the Local Government laws being contrary to the provisions of the Bengal Births and Deaths Registration Act., 1873 of which the Ministry of Health is the administrative Ministry, could not be undertaken by Union Parishads and Pourashavas under the Local Government laws referred to above.
3. To overcome this legal problem the Bengal Births and Deaths Registration Act, 1873 was amended in 1979 (Annexure-D) by which the Chairmen of Union Parishads and Pourashavas and

Chairmen of Cantonment Boards were made Registrars of Births and Deaths. Since then they are the proper authority to register births and deaths legally and they have been discharging the same function. To make the functions effective an instruction circular was issued to all Sub-Divisional Officers. In the latest Local Government (Union Parishad) Ordinance, 1983, Chittagong Municipal Corporation Ordinance, 1983 and Dhaka Municipal Corporation Ordinance, 1983, the Chairman and Mayors have also been given the powers to act as registrars.

4. As per provisions of Bengal Births and Deaths Registration Act, 1873 the sanitary Inspectors had been registrars of Births and Deaths as well as collectors of reports from Union Parishads and Pourashavas and with subsequent amendment in 1979 Chairmen, Union Parishads, Pourashavas and President Cantonment Boards were given the powers to act as registrars and their reports are being collected and consolidated by sanitary Inspectors. this system is not working well due to lack of co-ordination. Health Division Being administrative Ministry has failed to supervise the activities of registrars and collected reports of births and deaths. The purpose of maintaining vital statistics has thus frustrated.
5. Although Bangladesh has more than a century old system of registration but its functioning is very unsatisfactory. It could not function and evolve as a system capable of serving both legal and statistical requirements. The past performance of the vital registration system is characterised by gross under reporting of events. Factors such as illiteracy of the primary reporting agents, multiple duties of sanitary inspector, lack of motivation and incentive for people to register vital events, non-requirement of birth and death certificates for affairs of life viz; for school admission, marriages, passport, inheritance of property etc., non-

application of penalty for not registering the events, have been among other factors, responsible for the ineffective implementation of the system.

6. National Implementation Committee for Administrative Reforms (NICAR) decided in 1983 to entrust the responsibility for registration of births and deaths with the Upazila Statistical Officer (Thana Statistical Officer) of Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) (Annexure-E). The implementation of the NICAR decision was started in 1985 under the control of Thana Executive officer. Thana Executive officers are from Local Government and Rural Development (LGRD). LGRD controls Local Government Institutions like Thana Parishad, Union Parishad, Municipality etc. An insignificant proportion of Thana development budget was allocated for collection of particular of occurrences of birth and deaths through the payment of a token amount of honourarium per month to the village police man (Chowkidar) of Union Parishad. The allocation of fund for the registration of births and deaths has not been uniform and regular over all the thanas. Thana Statistical offices of Bureau of Statistics have been maintaining Bound Book for registration births and deaths. The items of information maintained in the Bound Book for registration of birth and deaths are:

Particular of birth							
District.....		Thana....		Union/Word..		Date.....	
Date of birth	Place of birth (Village Para and Post office to be given)	Sex of baby	Parent's name and address	Signature of father or mother	Signature of the village police man collection information	Signature of Local Union members verifying occurrence of birth	Signature of the Union Parishad Chairman verifying registration of birth

Particular of death									
District.....		Thana....		Union/Word..		Date.....			
Date of death	Place of death (Village Para and Post office to be given)	Causes of death	Name of deceased and address (with name of father or husband)	Sex of deceased	Age of deceased	Signature of guardian	Signature of the village police man collecting information	Signature of ward member verifying occurrence death	Signature of U.P Chairman verifying registration of death in the <u>Bound Book</u>

Although the coverage of reporting of events from the above registration system is far from satisfactory as can be seen from the level of crude birth rate (CBR) and crude death rate (CDR) per 1000 population in the Table , it provides an indication that the system can be made more and more effective through proper supervision, control and providing adequate regular funding for all thanas, municipality etc. for the purpose of registration.

Number of population, Births and Deaths and Crude Birth Rate (CBR) and Crude Death Rate (CDR) per 1000 Population for selected thanas

Year	Thana *	Estimated population	Birth	Death	CBR/1000	CDR/1000
1990	Mymensingh**	566368	5136	2207	9.07	3.90
1990	Dinajpur**	357888	1337	586	3.74	1.64
1988	Aditmari	176760	3105	792	17.57	4.48
1987	Paba**	213379	839	304	3.93	1.42
1988	Mahanpur	126396	1036	330	8.20	2.61
1988	Alamdanga	245524	3533	1158	14.39	4.72
1988	Mirzapur	337496	2043	1099	6.05	3.26
1988	Borua	310778	2604	1184	8.38	3.81
1988	Savar	378034	1850	784	4.89	2.07

* Thana - Police Station ** Municipality

For implementation of NICAR decision, the following aspects are in the active consideration of the government for evolving an effective and efficient system of collection and maintenance of vital statistics in the country:

- Administrative Ministry/Division
- Co-ordinating agencies
- Registration Process
- Registrars
- Formulation of Laws and by Laws
- Issues of Penalty & Publicity
- Compilation and dissemination
- Evaluation
- Remuneration of Local informants/reporters
- Reporting time
- Maintenance of records

7. The development of an efficient civil registration system is a longtime project. Its success depends on the level of accomplishment made in socio-economic advancement. Experiences gained in endeavour to introduce a civil registration scheme by some countries in this region evince intractable problems associated with the process of its successful execution though laws or ordinance has failed to bring into the system majority people as literacy rate of population is low, most people are self-employed having virtually no obligation to get registration documents for earning a living, and vital events certificates are hardly used as legal requirement to enjoying civil rights and privileges. The implementation of registration system has, therefore, to be carefully designed with full-time persons provided for such a system. The full-

fledged development of the system will take time and, as such, the scheme of implementation should be phased-over within a longer time-frame with procedure of post-registration quality check of vital events data followed up regularly on sampling basis.

8. In light of problems encounter in the past for proper registration, documentation, compilation and dissemination of vital statistics sit is suggested that, whatever procedure is adopted for registration of vital events the following measures ought to be provided within the framework of civil registration act for proper and effective implementation of registration of vital events;

i) Determination of reporting time of vital events. There should be the legal binding for parent/guardian to report the events to the registrars within the 7 days of occurrence of the events. Failure of reporting within the stipulated time will liable to monetary punishment.

ii) In the context of present state of socio-economic development and social values and norms to achieve spontaneous participation of general mass for registering particulars of occurrences of vital events, the use of registration number provided in the union parishad registration book at the time of registration of births and particulars thereof should be made compulsory for the following affairs of life.

- a) Admission in educational institutions
- b) Certification of citizenship
- c) Certification of births and deaths
- d) Issuing of passport
- e) Registration of marriages
- f) In-heritance of property
- g) Employment
- h) Opening a bank account
- i) Judicial and criminal cases
- j) Issuing different forms of lisences
- k) Construction of houses in urban areas
- l) Sale, purchase and tranfering of fixed and movable assets
- m) Membership in co-operatives, political parties and other socio-economic establishments
- n) Population and Agriculture Census and Surveys
- o) Participation in food for works programme
- p) Receiving relief materials and other assistance from the government
- q) Obtaining public facilities like electricity, gas, telephone etc.

- iii) Similarly the use of registration number given in the union parishad registration book for deaths should be made compulsory for division of fixed and movable assets of the deceased to the decedent and performing death related formalities.
- iv) Clear-cut principle of certification of births, deaths, citizenship etc.
- v) Provision of penalty for fraudulent certification of date and registration number of births and deaths.
- vi) Determination of principle of reporting i.e. whether the events will be recorded on de-jure or de-factor basis.
- vii) Documentation of particulars of events at local level in a bound book to facilitate meeting judicial/legal requirements such as certification of births, deaths, marriages, divorces etc.
- viii) Establishment of greater Co-ordination among the Various Ministries and agencies involved in the vital registration whether as producers or users.
- ix) Provision for continuous evaluation of completeness of registration to improve vital statistics for meeting statistical needs through sampling.
- x) Study ways and means of improving population estimates used as denominators in computing demographic measures.
- xi) Establishment of sufficient control over the orderly, timely and efficient flow of forms, bound books and other materials to the local registration offices.
- xii) Standardization of forms, questionnaires, tabulation sheet, concepts and definitions etc.
- xiii) Establishment of chancel of registration and compilation of vital statistics for timely publication.
- xiv) Publicizing the vital registration system through nation press, radio, television and talks by government official etc to overcome public suspicion and apathy about government actions regarding registration.
- xv) Until and unless there is public awareness for the necessity of registration of births, deaths and marriages, there should be a provision of remuneration to the registrars.
- xvi) It should be made compulsory for the officer incharges of hospitals, Clinics, government and non-government maternity centres, graveyards Crematoriums etc. to report births and deaths particulars occurring in their respective institutions to the registrars of the concerned areas within 7 (seven) days of occurrences of the events.

- xvii) The Ministry of Local Government, rural development and co-operative should be entrusted with the responsibilities for ensuring proper registrations of births and deaths. To meet this end the ministry should take proper measure for timely supply of registration forms, bound book, Stationeries etc.
 - xviii) There should be provision of training to the registrars at the local levels.
 - xix) The Statistics Division, on the other hand, should be given the technical responsibility i.e evaluation of the completeness and quality of registration, Computation and dissemination of vital statistics.
 - xx) A national level committee should be constituted comprising members from related Ministry/Division responsible for implementation of civil registration and experts from the field of population and demography for regular monitoring and evaluation.
9. The Marriage and Divorces registration is a subject matter of the Ministry of Law and P.A Division. These registrations are guided by the Muslim Marriage and Divorces (Registration) Act, 1974. The Law and P.A. Division appoints "Kazis" for proper registration of marriages and divorces in their respective areas. Under the existing Law there is no scope of Transferring the responsibility of registration of marriages and divorces etc. to elsewhere. However, in conformity with the decision taken in the meeting of NICAR, Law and Parliamentary Affairs Division may be asked to direct the Nikah (marriage) Registrars to supply the number of registration of marriages, divorces etc. to their respective Administrators, Municipal Corporation, Chairman, Union Parishad/Paurashavas/Cantonment Board.

Though there is Law for registration of Muslim Marriages, many marriages taking place without formal registration. Hindu and Buddhist Marriages need not be registered with any authority. They do not keep any record of marriages. Christian Marriages are performed in Churches/missions and clergyman maintains a register for all such marriages. There is no system of compilation and dissemination of marriages, divorces etc. Statistics. Efforts should be taken to promote complete registration of marriages, dissolution of marriages in the country.

10. The nation-wide vital events registration system is a very large-scale operation which the Bureau of Statistics/Statistics Division is not capable of undertaking with its existing staff strength. For efficient function of such a system a wide spread set-up is a precondition. The crucial element of the system is the picking up of each and

every vital event and reporting the event for recording by registrar. This necessitates that an informant or reporter must visit with regular frequency (at least one a week) every household within the registration area assigned to him. Such area for an informant must not have a large number of households since in such case visit to every household once a week will be impossible.

11. Data processing is another aspect of the system that has to be meticulously planned and executed. With current population size, birth events for the country as a whole are estimated to be near about 3.5 million, death events 1.2 million and marriages 1.0 million a year. Beside, a few million data points quantifying selected basic identifying characteristics of households have to be integrated and collected along with vital events collection operation. Compilation of these huge number of vital events an households identifying records will be an easy task and can take much time unless adequate data processing equipment support and trained data processing manpower are made available.
12. The registration work if to be evolved as a functionally operative system attention is to be paid to assign the registration task to a organisation which can satisfactorily execute the project on a continuing basis. Before mounting the registration scheme nation-wide, a pilot study in 4 Thanas may be conducted to identify appropriate approaches concerning what procedural steps are to be taken to warrant uniformity and coverage in vital events collection, who are to be appointed informants and supervisors, what registration area size is to be assigned to and informant, how many informants a supervisor will supervise, what staffing pattern is to be set up at higher levels, what types of logistic backstopping are to be appropriated, what design is to be adopted for post-registration quality check, what facility is to be made available pursued for nation-wide coverage of the system.
13. The vital events rates and population growth rates at the aggregate level are estimated on annual basis by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics/Statistics Division through its sample demographic and vital registration survey project. This sample study project is not a costly undertaking and generates estimates of vital events rates and population growth rates which are used for policy programming and development planning. The sample size of the survey study is small and capable of making available estimations of national rates with urbanrural break-up. For sub-national estimates, if desired, the sample size should be increased with support of adequate funding. The BBS/Statistics Division effort will be continued to improve further and institutionalise the survey activity in order to meet aggregate data needs of users in the demography area.

**EXTRACT OF THE RELEVANT PROVISIONS OF THE BENGAL
BIRTHS AND DEATHS REGISTRATION, ACT, 1873**

Magistrate may divide area into districts, and say appoint registrars.	Section	2. The Magistrate of the district may, for the purpose of such registration, divide any such area into touch and so many districts as he may think fit, and may appoint one or more persons to be registrars of births or of deaths, or of births and deaths, within such district, and may at any time for sufficient reason dismiss any such registrar, and may fill up any vacancy in the office of registrar.
Magistrate to publish list of registrars.		The Magistrate shall cause to be published a list containing the name and place of office of every registrar in the area, and specifying the hours of the day during which such registrar shall attend at his office for the purpose of registration.
Every registrar to have an office within his district.		3. Every registrar shall have an office within the district of which he is appointed registrar, and shall cause his name, with the addition of registrar of births (or of deaths or of births and deaths, according to his appointment) for the district for which he is so appointed, and notice of the hours during which he will attend for the

purpose of registration, to be fixed in conspicuous place on or near the outer door of his office.

Municipality
under Bon.Act
III of 1864
may arrange
for keeping
register of
births, or
both.

II. In any place to which the District Municipal improvement Act (2) shall have been extended, the Municipal Commissioners may, if at a meeting specially convened for considering such question they shall so determine arrange for keeping a register of all births, or of all deaths, or of all births and deaths occurring within the Municipality. (Bon.Act.III of 1864).

On and after a date to be fixed at such meeting, the Commissioners shall in such case be authorised to provide out of the municipal fund for the employment of a sufficient number of registrars, and for the expenditure necessary for the maintenance of such registers and shall exercise al the powers of a Magistrate under this Act; and all the provisions of this Act shall be deemed to apply to such place.

ANNEXURE-B

Extract of the relevant provisions of the Local Government Ordinance, 1976 as referred to the working paper.

Section 30.-Civic functions of Union Parishads-Subject to rules, and such directions as the Government may from time to time give, and within the limits of the funds at its disposal, a Union Parishad may undertake all or any of the functions enumerated in Part I of the First Schedule, and such other functions:-

- (a) as are declared by the Government to be appropriate matters, for administration by Union Parishads generally or by any particular Union Parishad in the district; or
- (b) as are delegated by the Zilla Parishad, with the previous approval in writing of the Commissioner, to Union Parishads generally or to any particular Union Parishad in the district; or
- (c) as are entrusted to Union Parishads under any other laws time being in force.

FIRST SCHEDULE

Item (24)- Registration of births and deaths, and the maintenance of such vital statistics as may be prescribed.

Extract of the relevant provisions
of the Poursheva Ordinary, 1977.

Section 67-Births, deaths and marriage- (1) A pourashava shall register all births, deaths and marriages within the limits of the municipality and information of such births, deaths and marriages shall be given by such persons or authorities, and shall be registered in such manner, as the by-laws may provide.

(2) The by-laws made under sub-section (1) may exempt any class of marriages information in respect of which is not deemed necessary for registration under this section.

ANNEXURE-D

Extract of the relevant provisions of the Births and Deaths Registration (Amendment) Ordinance, 1979

2. Substitution of section II. Bon. Act IV of 1873. In the births and Deaths Registration Act, 1873 (Bon. Act IV of 1873), for section III the following shall be substituted, namely:-
 1. Pourashavas, Union Parishads and Cantonment Boards to register births and deaths.-(1) In any place where Pourashava has been constituted under the Pourashava Ordinance, 1977(Ord.XXVI of 1977), the Pourashava shall register all births and deaths occurring within the limits of the Pourashava and, for that purpose arrange for keeping register of all births and of all deaths.
 2. In any place where a Union Parishad has been constituted under the Local Government Ordinance, 1976(Ord.XC of 1976), the Union Parishad shall register all births and deaths occurring within the limits of the Union and, for that purpose, arrange for keeping registers of all births and of all deaths.
 3. In any place where a Cantonment Board has been constituted under the Cantonment Act, 1924(II of 1924) the Cantonment Board shall register all births and deaths occurring within the limits of the cantonment and , for that purpose, arrange for keeping registers of all births and of all deaths.
 4. The Chairman of the Pourashavas, the Mayor of the Corporation, the Chairmen of the Union Parishads and the President of the Cantonment Board shall be the ex-officio registrars of births and deaths under this Act; and such registrars may delegate their powers and functions under this Act to any commissioner, Pourashava, Union parishad and Cantonment Board.

Extract of the decision of NICAR Conference
held on 7.7.1983

ITEM 5. REGISTRATION OF BIRTHS AND DEATHS AT THE THANAS.

10. Decision. The following shall be added in item 15 of the Charter of Duties of the Thana Statistical Officer. He will be responsible for registration of births and deaths in the Thana.