

**A COUNTRY REPORT
ON THE CURRENT STATUS OF
CIVIL REGISTRATION AND
VITAL STATISTICS SYSTEMS
IN THE PHILIPPINES**

24 February 1993

National Convention on Civil Registration
Quezon City, Philippines

"From its traditional work of documenting acts and events concerning the civil status of persons, civil registration must begin to play a larger role in our goal of attaining national solidarity and progress. Civil registration expresses an individual's will to become a part of national society. Civil registration does not inquire into an individual's political affiliation or religious belief, nor into the customs and traditions to which he or she subscribes. None of these is made a condition for compliance with the law. Hence, the enforcement of civil registration strengthens the solidarity of the community and the unity of the nation."

- President Fidel V. Ramos -

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Section	Page
Part I	
Current Status of the Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems	1 - 11
I. General Background	1
II. Demographic and Basic Information of the Country	4
III. The Civil Registration System	8
A. History and Legal Frame of the System	8
B. Administrative Arrangements of the System	14
C. Procedures for Registration	22
D. The Local Registrars	43
E. The Informant	52
F. Civil Registration Archives	54
G. Assessment of the Civil Registration System	68
H. Uses of Registration Records	87
IV. The National Vital Statistics System	89
A. The Legal Frame of the System	89
B. Administrative Arrangements of the System	91
C. Procedures for Reporting and Monitoring	93
D. Procedures of Statistical Processing	95
E. Publication and Dissemination of Vital Statistics	97
F. Assessment of the Vital Statistics System	99

G. Uses of Vital Statistics	102
V. Coordination Among Government Institution	104
VI. Conclusion and Recommendations	111

PART I

STATUS OF CIVIL REGISTRATION AND VITAL STATISTICS SYSTEMS IN THE PHILIPPINES; 1993

Office of the Civil Registrar General

I. GENERAL BACKGROUND

The Philippines is one of the largest island groups in the world. It is composed of 7,100 islands but only 3,144 are named. The archipelago is bounded in the west by the South China Sea, Pacific Ocean in the east, Sulu and Celebes Seas in the south, and the Bashi Channels in the north. Its northernmost islands are approximately 240 kilometers south of Taiwan, and the southernmost islands lie approximately 24 kilometers from the coast of Borneo.

The total land area of the Philippines is approximately 300,000 square kilometers. It is divided into three major island groups: Luzon, with an area of 141,395 square kilometers; Visayas, with an area of 56,606 square kilometers; and Mindanao, with an area of 101,999 square kilometers.

As of 30 September 1993, the Philippines has 15 administrative regions, 77 provinces, 60 cities and 1542 municipalities. Cities and municipalities are divided into barangays (villages).

The Philippines has presidential form of government consisting of three branches, namely, executive, legislative and judicial.

The chief executive is the President, assisted by the Vice President who is a member of the Cabinet, and the department secretaries. The President and the Vice President are elected by direct vote for a term of six years. The President is not eligible for reelection but the Vice President may serve for two consecutive terms. The President is the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces.

The legislative power is vested in the Congress of the Philippines, consisting of the Senate and the House of Representatives. The Congress convenes once a year, but a special session may be called by the President anytime.

The judicial power is vested in the Supreme Court which exercises control and supervision over all lower courts. The Supreme Court is composed of the Chief Justice and fourteen (14) Associate Justices. Next to the Supreme Court is the Court of Appeals which is composed of a Presiding Justice and fifty (50) Associate Justices. The Court of Appeals exercises powers, functions and duties through seventeen (17) divisions, each composed of three (3) members, namely, the chairman, senior member and junior member. There are fifteen (15) judicial regions, and each region has several branches of the Regional Trial Court. Every city and municipality has Municipal Trial Court.

There are two special courts. One is the "Sandiganbayan" which tries and hears criminal cases committed by public officials particularly graft and corruption. The other is the Court of Tax Appeals which reviews the decisions of the Bureau of Internal Revenue, Bureau of Customs, and the Board of Assessment Appeals.

In the Philippines, there are four (4) types of local government units, namely, the "barangay", the municipality, the city and the province. The barangay (village) is the basic unit of the Philippine political system. It consists of not less than one thousand (1,000) inhabitants residing within the territorial limit of a city or municipality, and administered by a set of elective officials headed by a chairman. The barangay performs both political and developmental functions under the Local Government Code of 1991. It serves as the primary planning and implementing unit of government programs, projects and activities and also as forum in which the collective views of the people in the community may be crystallized and considered.

The municipality is a political corporate body which is endowed with the facilities of a municipal corporation, exercised by and through the municipal government in conformity with law. A municipality is composed of several barangays. The elective officials of the municipality are the Mayor, Vice Mayor and members of the Sangguniang Bayan (municipal council).

Cities in the Philippines are of two (2) classes: the highly urbanized cities which are administratively independent of the province, and the component cities which are part of the provinces where they are located and subject to the latter's administrative supervision. The elective officials of the city government are the Mayor, Vice Mayor and members of the Sangguniang Panlungsod (City Council). Like a municipality, a city is composed of several barangays.

The province is the largest unit in the political structure of the Philippines. It consists, in varying numbers, of municipalities and in some cases, of component cities. Its functions and duties in relation to its component cities and municipalities are generally coordinative and supervisory. The elective officials of the province are the Governor, Vice Governor and members of the Sangguniang Panlalawigan (provincial council).

Foreign trade in 1991 showed that the country's transactions continued to expand registering \$20.89 billion, an increase of 2.45 percent over 1990's \$20.39 billion. The expansion may be attributed to the growth of exports which at \$8.84 billion, posted a gain of 7.98 percent from the previous year, and a decrease in imports, which for the first time since 1986 registered a decline of 1.27 percent from \$12.21 billion in 1990 to \$12.05 billion in 1991.

The country's top twenty exports in 1991 earned an aggregate of \$6.53 billion to account for almost three fourths (73.90 percent) of the total export earnings for the year. This represented a 16.09 percent increase from 1990. Garments and electronics, both of which included exports on consignment basis, accounted for 55.29 percent of the total principal exports and 40.86 percent of the total exports in 1991.

For the first time since 1986, the Philippines experienced a decline in imports in 1991 and this worked favorably for the country's economy as it meant less foreign exchange withdrawal from its treasury reserves. From \$12.21 billion in 1990, imports went down to \$12.05 billion in 1991 or a minimal decrease of 1.27 percent.

The Philippine economy in 1991 was heavily burdened by the extent of damages caused by natural calamities, political uncertainties and disturbances in the Persian Gulf. The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) which measures the aggregate output of goods and services of the economy, declined by 1.02 percent from P715.15 billion in 1990 to P707.86 billion in 1991 at constant 1985 prices. However, net factor income from the rest of the world which quintupled from the previous year's level contributed significantly to the real Gross National Product (GNP) at constant 1985 prices which was almost drawn into a standstill at P716.46 billion in 1991 from last year's figure of P716.81 billion. The GNP at current prices was valued at P1,253.83 billion or 16.47 percent more than the 1990 level.

With the population growing at a rate of 2.46 percent in 1991, real per capita GNP was recorded at P11,396, down by 2.26 percent from P11,659 a year ago. (Note: US\$1.00 = P29.00).

II. Demographic and Basic Information of the Country

The 1990 Census of Population and Housing counted a total population of the Philippines at 60,703,206, an increase of 12,612,746 persons over the 1980 population. This places the annual geometric growth rate between 1980 and 1990 at 2.35 percent. Its growth rate decreased by 0.36 percentage points compared to the intercensal period between 1975 and 1980.

The total number of households as of May 1, 1990 was 11,407,262. The average household size was

computed at 5.3 persons, 0.3 persons lower than the 1980 figure of 5.6 persons. The decrease in household size may be attributed to the break-up of the extended family; couples bearing fewer children; and increase in one-person households.

The level of urbanization or the proportion of urban population to the total population indicates the concentration of the population in urban areas. In 1980, a total of 17,943,897 population was counted in urban areas but this rose to 29,550,351 in 1990 or 64.68 percent increase as compared to the period between 1970 and 1980 when the increase was only 53.68 percent. In 1980, only around 37.3 percent of the total population were counted in urban areas but this proportion increased to 48.7 in 1990. The increase in the proportion of urban population may be attributed to natural increase (births minus deaths) in population, migration from rural to urban areas, or a reclassification of rural to urban areas.

Population distribution by region indicates that the most populous regions are Region IV - Southern Tagalog (8,263,099); National Capital Region (7,948,392); and Region III - Central Luzon (6,199,017). On the other hand, the least populated regions are the Cordillera Administrative Region (1,146,191); Region II - Cagayan Valley (2,340,545); and Region VIII - Eastern Visayas (3,054,490). These regions make up only a little over ten percent of the total population of the country.

Of the 60,559,116 household population of the Philippines, 30,443,187 are males and 30,115,929 are females. This indicates a sex ratio (number of males for every 100 females) of 101.1 which is slightly higher than the recorded 1980 figure of 100.7.

Like most developing countries, the age-sex pyramid for the Philippines shows an expansive structure indicating a young population. Broken down into three broad age groups, the population less than 15 years old constitutes 39.5 percent (24,004,586; the productive age group or 15 to 64 years old, 57.1 percent (34,629,959); and the elderly or the 65 years old and over, 3.4 percent (2,063,449). This

places the dependency ratio (the number of dependents 0-14 years and 65 years and over for every 100 persons in the productive age group 15-64 years) at 75.3. Dependency ratio decreased significantly as compared to the 1980 figure of 83.3.

"Mother tongue" is the language or dialect spoken at home or at birth of the child or the language of the child if only he has the power of speech that early. It also refers to the language or dialect spoken most of the time by members of the household. Mother tongue determines the size of the various cultural or ethnic groups in the country.

Tagalog is the mother tongue of 27.9 percent of the total household population of the country, followed by Cebuano at 24.3 percent. Ilocano ranks third at 9.8 percent. Household population with a foreign language as mother tongue accounts for 0.3 percent only. There are 988 dialects in the Philippines. Pilipino is the national language, but the official language and medium of instruction is English.

The 1990 census shows that 82.9 percent of the Filipinos are Catholics, 4.6 percent are Muslims and 3.9 percent are Protestants. Others belong to smaller religious sects or denominations.

Literacy refers to the ability to read and write a simple message in any language or dialect. In 1990, the proportion of the population (10 years old and over) who are able to read and write registered 93.5 percent. For the urban residents, literacy rate was placed at 97.2 percent; while the rural population had a lower rate of 89.9 percent. Higher literacy in urban areas can be attributed to the presence of more learning institutions and their accessibility to the populace. Males and females posted almost the same literacy rates, 93.7 percent and 93.4 percent, respectively.

In 1980, live births reached 1,456,860 indicating a rate of 30.3 births per thousand population. An increasing trend in the number of live birth was shown in the 80's with its peak registered in 1987 at

1,582,469 with a rate of 27.6 births per thousand population. In 1990, a much higher number of live births registered at 1,631,069 with a corresponding birth rate of 26.9.

In 1990, there were 848,275 male births against 782,794 female births or a sex ratio of 108 males to 100 females.

The Philippines has continuously exhibited a stable death rate from the seventies to the early part of eighties, thus attributing an increasing birth rate for the country's fast population growth. In 1983, national death rate was recorded at 6.3 deaths per thousand population, the highest since 1980. It declined to 5.5 in 1988 and 5.4 in 1989. In 1990, there were 313,890 total deaths bringing down further the death rate to 5.2 per thousand population.

In 1989, a total of 43,026 infant deaths, that is, deaths of persons aged under one year, was recorded, accounting for 13.21 percent of the total deaths for the year. Infant death was observed to be declining annually during the period 1984-1990 from a high 56,897 in 1984 to 39,633 in 1990. Age group 1-4 years registered a 7.34 percent decline from the 32,456 in 1988 to 30,073 infant death in 1989. Death at the ages 70 years and over comprised 27.67 percent or a total of 90,084 in 1989.

Among the ten registered leading causes of death, pneumonia remained the number one killer, taking the heaviest toll of 46,268 in 1989 or 14.21 percent of total deaths. All forms of tuberculosis was the secondary cause numbering 26,300 or 8.08 percent. Diseases of the heart followed which caused 7.15 percent of total deaths. Accidents caused 7,540 deaths representing 2.32 percent. However, in 1990, diseases of the heart was the primary cause of death taking 14.74 percent of the total deaths. Pneumonia came second taking only 13.14 percent of total deaths. Likewise, pneumonia continued to be the leading cause of death among infants numbering 9,383 in 1990 or 23.67 percent of the total for the year.

The registered number of marriages in the Philippines reached its peak in 1990 posting a total of 422,041. The largest percentage of 13.19 (55,650) occurred during the first month of the year, January, followed by the month of May with 11.44 percent (48,291) of the total number of marriages. June, the traditional wedding month, ranked third with 10.09 percent (42,586).

Nearly all marriages in the Philippines are first marriages. In 1990, a total of 418,566 single females or 99.18 percent of total number of brides entered the matrimonial ties, whereas bachelors numbered 413,787 accounting for 98.04 percent of the total number of grooms.

III. The Civil Registration System

A. History and Legal Frame of the System

The development of the system of civil registration in the Philippines started immediately after the Philippine Revolution (against Spain) in 1898 which brought about the separation of Church and State. One of the early actions of the new administration was the promulgation on 18 June 1898 a the decree reorganizing the towns under its control. Section 3 of this decree mandated the election of a Delegate of Justice and Civil Registration whose duty was to assist the Town Chief in the initiation of court proceedings and the preparation of the record books of births, deaths, marriages and the census. A set of rules and regulations for the proper observance of the above decree was also promulgated and published.

The Philippine Commission of 1901 enacted Act No. 82 (The Municipal Law), Section 20 of which required that the municipal secretary shall keep the civil registers of his locality. Thus, under Act No. 82, the municipal secretary became the ex-officio local civil registrar (LCR) in the municipality.

On 21 October 1901, the Bureau of Archives was created by Act No. 273. This bureau became the official depository of important documents, including civil registry records which were then known as the old Spanish documents. This function of the Bureau of Archives was later incorporated in the Administrative Code of 1916 (Act No. 2659), and subsequently in the Revised Administrative Code of 1917 (Act No. 2711).

On 8 March 1922, the Administrative Code of 1917 was amended by Act No. 3022 which made the Bureau of Archives as one of the divisions of the National Library. The same law required all LCRs (municipal secretaries) to submit quarterly reports on all registration matters to the chief of the Archives Division of the National Library. Thus, centralization of civil registry records began. Records available in the Archives Division are those of births, marriages and deaths pertaining to the period from 1 January 1922 to 31 December 1931.

On 26 November 1930, the Civil Registry Law of the Philippines (Act No. 3753) was enacted and it took effect on 27 February 1931. This law instituted significant reforms in the system of civil registration in the Philippines such as the following:

1. Enumeration of acts and events concerning civil status of persons which shall be recorded in the civil register: births, deaths, marriages, annulment of marriage, divorce, legitimation, adoption, acknowledgment of natural children, naturalization, and change of name.

2. The Director of the National Library was designated as the ex-officio Civil Registrar General (CRG).

3. Except in the City of Manila where civil registration function was continued to be performed by the City Health Officer, civil registration function in the other cities and all municipalities was performed by city/municipal treasurers. Thus, it was implicit that the municipal secretaries who were designated as LCRs under Act No. 82 should transfer the

function to the city/municipal treasurers, who under the new law, should be the LCRs.

4. All LCRs were placed under the direction and supervision of the CRG.

5. General instructions on the registration of births, deaths, marriages, court decrees and legal instruments concerning civil status of persons were provided.

6. Under the new law, civil registration was made compulsory. Section 17 provides that "Any person whose duty is to report any fact concerning the civil status of persons and who knowingly fails to perform such duty, and any person convicted of having violated any of the provisions of this Act, shall be punished by a fine of not less than ten nor more than two hundred pesos."

7. Lastly, the new law provided administrative sanction to erring local civil registrars under Section 18 thereof which states that "Any local civil registrar who fails to perform his duties in accordance with the provisions of this act and of the regulation issued hereunder, shall be punished, for the first offense, by an administrative fine in a sum equal to his salary for not less than fifteen days nor more than three months, and for a second or repeated offense, by removal from the service."

Since then, civil registration system in the Philippines has undergone significant changes which were, principally, brought about by subsequent legislations, namely:

1. On 19 August 1940, Commonwealth Act No. 591 created the Bureau of the Census and Statistics (now, National Statistics Office). Section 2(f) of this law provides that one of the powers, functions and duties of the National Statistics Office (NSO) is "to carry out and administer the provisions of Act No. 3753."

Thus, the civil registration function which was placed by Act No. 3753 under the National Library was transferred by Commonwealth Act No. 591 to the NSO whose Director (now, Administrator) became the new CRG.

2. On 30 August 1950, the Civil Code of the Philippines (Republic Act No. 386) took effect. Title XVI of Book I of this Code pertains to Civil Register and it amended Act No. 3753, the basic law on civil registration in the Philippines. This law increased the number of court decrees and legal instruments which shall be recorded in the civil register. Furthermore, Article 412 of the code provides that *"no entry in the civil register shall be changed or corrected without a judicial order."*

3. On 31 January 1975, Presidential Decree No. 651, as amended by Presidential Decree No. 766, was issued by President Marcos in consideration of the fact that every year, around twenty five to forty percent of all births and deaths occurring in the Philippines are not reported for registration in violation of Act No. 3753. The Decree, therefore, authorized without any fee or fine the registration within sixty days from 17 March 1975 of all unregistered births and deaths that occurred from 12:01 A.M. on 1 January 1974 up to and including 12:00 midnight on 31 December 1975. This decree also provides that registration of birth and death is free if made within the reglementary period.

4. On 10 February 1983, the Local Government Code of 1983 was passed by the National Assembly. This law transferred the civil registration function from City/Municipal Treasurers to the City/Municipal Planning and Development Coordinators. In highly urbanized cities, such as the City of Manila, Quezon City and Kalocan, the civil registration function was performed by a full-time and regular city civil registrar.

5. On 6 July 1987, President Corazon C. Aquino issued Executive Order No. 209 which is popularly known as the Family Code of the Philippines. The Code took effect on 3 August 1988 and it amended Book I (Persons and Family Relations) of the Civil Code of the Philippines. It also impliedly amended Act No. 3753 and Title XVI, Book I of the Civil Code by adding more registrable court decrees and legal instruments concerning civil status of persons, such as judicial declaration that an absent spouse is presumptively dead, parental ratification of artificial insemination, marriage settlement, and others.

6. The Local Government Code of 1983 was repealed by the Local Government Code of 1991 which took effect on 1 January 1992. One of the amendatory provisions of the new Code is Section 479 which provides for the appointment of a full-time and regular civil registrar in all cities and municipalities. Specifically, Section 479 provides that *"No person shall be appointed civil registrar unless he is a citizen of the Philippines, a resident of the local government unit concerned, of good moral character, a holder of a college degree from a recognized college or university, and a first grade civil service eligible or its equivalent. He must have acquired experience in civil registry work for at least five (5) years in the case of the city civil registrar and three (3) years in the case of the municipal civil registrar. The appointment of a civil registrar shall be mandatory for city and municipal governments."*

Other laws on civil registration can be found from the following statutes:

1. Commonwealth act No. 625 with regard to reacquisition of Philippine citizenship and recording thereof in the civil register;

2. Presidential Decree No. 856 (Health and Sanitation Code) with regard to issuance of certificate of deaths in the absence of medical

attendance, and its registration with the local civil registry office;

3. Presidential Decree No. 603 (Child and Youth Welfare Code) with regard to registration of adoption and confidentiality of records of birth of persons; and

4. Revised Rules of Court with regard to registration of court decrees concerning civil status of persons.

As to rules and regulations governing the implementation of laws on civil registration, the first set was promulgated and published in 1898 in connection with a decree issued on 18 June 1898 by the Philippine Revolutionary Government reorganizing the controlled towns and requiring the election of a Delegate of Justice and Civil Registration.

When civil registration function was transferred from the National Library to the Bureau of the Census and Statistics on 19 August 1940, the Director of the latter office in his capacity as the CRG issued Administrative Order No. 3 on 4 November 1942 prescribing rules and regulations governing the application and enforcement of the civil registry law (Act No. 3753). This Administrative Order No. 3, Series of 1942, was later amended by Administrative Order No. 1, Series of 1975. Eight years after, the Administrative Order No. 1, S. 1975 was amended by Administrative Order No. 1, Series of 1983.

Because of the latest developments in civil registration system in the Philippines such as the mandatory appointment of civil registrar in every city and municipality, expanded scope of civil registration, revision of registration forms, introduction of new concepts like "out-of-town reporting", and others, a new Administrative Order No. 1 was promulgated and issued by the CRG on 18 December 1992 which took effect on 26 January 1993. As the need arises, the CRG issues instructions to city/municipal civil registrars (C/MCRs) in the form of memoranda and circulars. From time to time, the

CRG also renders legal opinion in connection with civil registration.

B. Administrative Arrangements of the System

1. Name and physical location of the primary registration units

The registration unit is either the city or municipality where only one registration center exists. The registration center is called the local civil registry office (LCRO) which is located at the city/municipal building. At the national level, the Office of the Civil Registrar General (OCRG) is constituted as a registration center but only for solemnizing officers who are authorized by their church and religious sect or denomination. It does not register vital events, court decrees and legal instruments.

For births, deaths, and marriages of citizens of the Philippines occurring abroad, these are reported to the Philippine foreign service establishment where the Philippine consular official acts as civil registrar in the country of assignment.

2. Number of primary registration offices

As of 30 September 1993, there are 1,602 LCROs in the country corresponding to the total number of cities and municipalities in the Philippines.

3. Number of secondary registration units

The Philippines does not have secondary registration units. However, in the Philippines, there are two LCROs which have extension offices in far flung and remote barangays where transportation to and from the LCRO is a problem. One extension office is located in Tacloban City while the other is in Zamboanga City. This

extension office is neither regarded as a separate registration unit nor registration center because it remains part of the LCRO of the city.

The hospitals, clinics, rural health units and similar institutions, including barangay secretaries, practicing physicians, midwives, nurses and traditional midwives assist in civil registration activities but they are not constituted as registration centers. Their assistance is limited to reporting the vital events for registration at the LCRO. They are trained by the OCRG to accomplish the various registration forms. The hospitals, clinics, and rural health units have their own stock of registration forms which they purchase from the provincial offices of the NSO. Other individual medical practitioners get the registration forms from the LCRO.

In the case of marriage, the various religious churches, sects and denominations buy the certificates of marriage from the provincial office of the NSO. The solemnizing officers who are public officials (mayors, judges and justices) get the certificates from LCRO. All these assist in registering the marriages by reporting the same to the LCRO for registration.

4. Boundaries of the primary registration unit

In order to avoid confusion among the general public as to where they should report a registrable event or document, the boundary of the geographical coverage of a particular LCRO is impliedly fixed by law, and this boundary corresponds to the fixed boundary of a city or municipality where the LCRO is located.

5. Average population served per primary registration unit

Based from 1990 census which counted a total household population of 60,559,116 each of the

1,602 LCROs serves on the average a total population of 37,802.

Table 1 (below) shows the average number of population served per LCRO. The highest is registered in the National Capital Region (Metro Manila) at 465,140/LCRO, while the lowest is in Cordillera Region at 15,015/LCRO. At the National Capital Region, the highest average of 465,140/LCRO is not much a problem, because the cities and municipalities therein are generally highly urbanized. The LCROs are adequately supported by their LGUs.

Table 1. Average Number of Population Served Per LCRO by Region: 1990.

Region *	1990 Population	No. of LCROs	Average No. of Population Per LCRO
National Capital	7,907,386	17	465,140
Cordillera	1,141,141	76	15,015
Ilocos (I)	3,547,269	125	28,378
Cagayan Valley (II)	2,336,350	93	25,122
Central Luzon (III)	6,188,716	122	50,727
Southern Tagalog (IV)	8,247,120	222	37,149
Bicol (V)	3,904,793	115	33,954
Western Visayas (VI)	5,385,222	131	41,108
Central Visayas (VII)	4,582,529	132	34,716
Eastern Visayas (VIII)	3,048,854	143	21,320
Western Mindanao (IX)	3,150,906	106	29,725
Northern Mindanao (X)	3,502,674	124	28,247

Table 1. (Cont'n)

Region *	1990 Population	No. of LCROs	Average No. of Population Per LCRO
Southern Mindanao (XI)	4,448,616	87	51,133
Central Mindanao (XII)	3,167,540	109	29,060
Total	60,559,116	1,602	37,802

* Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao was not considered as a separate region during the 1990 Census of Population. The data for the region are still with the mother regions.

6. Problems of accessibility to the public, especially to the rural population

Generally, the LCRO which is located at the city or municipal building is accessible from both urban and rural areas. There are only few rural areas where access to the city/town proper is a problem due to distance, lack of transportation, poor condition of or no road at all, and flood which, especially during rainy season, isolates the town proper from other parts of the town. All these problems are aggravated by poverty.

As a remedy to this problem, two of the cities (Tacloban City and Zamboanga City, supra) have already extended their respective offices in remote areas of the locality in consonance with the principle attending a public service-oriented office such as the LCRO, which principle states that "if the people cannot go to the LCRO, then bring the office to the people".

Another remedy is offered by the Local Government Code of 1991 which imposes it as a duty of the barangay secretary to assist the C/MCR in civil registration activity. The barangay secretary is required to report to the

C/MCR all births and deaths which may occur in his barangay especially in cases where the people themselves cannot go individually to the LCRO to register a birth or death.

7. Staffing and office hours

The LCRO is headed by a city civil registrar in the city or by a municipal civil registrar in the municipality. Under the organizational structure of the local government units, the office is a department consisting of several divisions, the number of which depends upon the volume of work. There may be Birth Division, Marriage Division, Administrative Division, Death/Court Decree/Legal Instrument Division, and such other units as may be necessary in carrying out the objective of the office. Each division is headed by a Registration Officer, and supported by registration clerks.

However, in an extreme case as when the local government unit (LGU) is financially handicapped, the LCRO is virtually a one-man office, that is, the office is manned only by the municipal civil registrar (MCR). When the MCR goes on vacation or sick leave, or could not perform his function due to certain physical or legal causes, the office is closed or left with no one to attend to the needs of the public. As a remedial measure, the provincial statistics officer acting upon the authority of the CRG may appoint one member of his staff to act as OIC Municipal Civil Registrar in case the incumbent would be absent, leaving the office without nobody to perform his function. This arrangement is subject to two conditions: (1) that there is no available employee of the LGU who can be designated by the Mayor as acting municipal civil registrar, and (2) the designation made by the CRG is with the consent of the concerned Mayor.

The LCRO is open on Mondays to Fridays, except holidays, from 8:00 AM to 12:00 noon and from 1:00 to 5:00 in the afternoon. In some cities and municipalities, the office is open on

Saturdays, but only from 8:00 AM to 12:00 noon. Under Philippine condition, this schedule is the most effective in public service and the most convenient for the people to transact business with the government.

8. Number of events registered annually per primary registration unit

In 1990, there were 1,631,069 live births recorded in the civil register; 313,890 deaths; 39,633 infant deaths; and 422,041 marriages or a total of 2,406,633 vital events. As there are 1,602 LCROs all over the country, the total number of events registered per LCRO is more or less 1,502 events annually, broken down by type of event as follows: 1,018 for births; 196 for deaths; 25 for infant deaths; and 264 for marriages.

9. Surveillance of the local civil registration offices

The CRG who is also the Administrator of the NSO directs and supervises local civil registration activities through the Regional Administrators and Provincial Statistics Officers of the NSO. These field officers are vested with visitorial power by the CRG to spotcheck any LCRO within their respective regional and provincial jurisdictions. They have the authority to inspect the civil registry books and to find out or inquire whether or not local civil registry personnel adhere and strictly implement civil registration laws, rules and regulations. When a local civil registry personnel is found violating any law on civil registration, he is reported to the Mayor for disciplinary action pursuant to Section 18 of Act No. 3753 which provides:

***"Sec. 18. Neglect of Duty with Reference to the Provisions of this Act.
- Any local civil registrar who fails properly to perform his duties in accordance with the provisions of this Act and of the regulation issued***

hereunder, shall be punished, for the first offense, by an administrative fine in a sum equal to his salary for not less than fifteen days not more than three months, and for a second or repeated offense, by removal from the service."

The Philippines has no independent national registration office to administer and technically guide a civil registration in the country. In lieu of the independent office, the NSO whose Administrator is also the CRG is mandated by Section 2(f) of Commonwealth Act No. 591 "to carry out and administer the provisions of Act. No. 3753 (Civil Registry Law)". The NSO has fifteen (15) regional offices and seventy-seven (77) provincial offices through which the CRG directs and supervises local civil registration activities in the country.

C. Procedures for Registration

There is only one authority on civil registration in the Philippines, and this is the Office of the Civil Registrar General (OCRG), which under Section 2 of Act No. 3753 is empowered to prepare and issue implementing rules and regulations of laws on civil registration. These rules and regulations provide standard procedures which every LCRO in the country should strictly follow in registering all vital events, court decrees and legal instruments. The CRG also prescribes the uniform and standard registration forms and prepares and issues manual of instructions on the proper accomplishments of these forms. Just recently, these registration forms were revised. The new revised forms have been implemented since 1 September 1993 but those cities and municipalities which still have stock of the old forms (1983 revision) were allowed to continue using them until 31 December 1993. Effective 1 January 1994, all cities and municipalities shall be required to use only the registration forms as revised in 1993.

1. Methods of recording

The civil register consists of the certificates and the registry books. It also includes the actual copies of the registrable court decisions and legal instruments (affidavits and other notarial instruments) concerning civil status of persons.

The certificates are loose-leaf forms in a set of four copies, except Certificate of Foundling which is in a set of three copies. The certificates are identified by form number, name and color, although the copy intended for filing in the archives of the CRG is white for all kinds of certificates. The following certificates are used in registering vital events:

1. Municipal Form No. 102, Certificate of Live Birth, yellow
2. Municipal Form No. 103, Certificate of Death, blue
3. Municipal Form No. 103-A, Certificate of Fetal Death, pink
4. Municipal Form No. 97, Certificate of Marriage, white
5. OCRG Form No. 101, Certificate of Foundling, green

Each certificate consists of two parts, namely, the entry portion and the coding portion. The entry portion contains the items of information required by law to be recorded in the civil register and other items needed in generating vital statistics. The coding portion is for statistical use. It contains the alpha-numeric codes of various entries which facilitate computerization and generation of vital statistics. The certificate measures 10.5 X 17.5 inches, except Certificate of Foundling which is 10.5 X 14 inches.

The registry books consisting of 150 pages are bound with hard cover. Each page contains twenty five (25) entry lines with appropriate columns for the items of information legally required to be entered in the register. These books are the following:

1. Municipal Form No. 25, Register of Marriages
2. Municipal Form No. 26-1, Register of Births
3. Municipal Form No. 27, Register of Deaths
4. Municipal Form No. 100, Register of Applications For Marriage License
5. Municipal Form No. 109, Register of Foundlings
6. Municipal Form No. 110, Register of Court Decrees
7. Municipal Form No. 111, Register of Legal Instruments
8. OCRG-S.O. Form No. 5, Register of Solemnizing Officers (This register is used only at the Office of the CRG.)

In the Register of Births, for example, the following information, which are copied from the Certificate of Live Birth, are entered:

1. Registry number (Col. 1)
2. Date of registration (Col. 2)
3. Name of child (Col. 3)
4. Sex (Col. 4)
5. Date and time of birth (Cols. 5-8)
6. Place of birth (Col. 9)
7. Type of birth (Col. 10)
8. Order of birth (Col. 11)
9. Mother:

- 9.1. Maiden name (Col. 12)
- 9.2. Age (Col. 13)
- 9.3. Nationality/citizenship
(Col. 14)
- 9.4. Religion (Col. 15)
- 10. Father:
 - 10.1. Name (Col. 16)
 - 10.2. Age (Col. 17)
 - 10.3. Nationality/citizenship
(Col. 18)
 - 10.4. Religion (Col. 19)
- 11. Date and place of marriage of parents
(Cols. 20-23)
- 12. Remarks (Col. 24)

In the Register of Deaths, the following information are entered:

- 1. Registry number (Col. 1)
- 2. Date of registration (Col. 2)
- 3. Name of the deceased (Col. 3)
- 4. Sex (Col. 4)
- 5. Age (Cols. 5-8)
- 6. Fetal death, yes/no (Col. 9)
- 7. Civil status (Col. 10)
- 8. Nationality/citizenship (Col. 11)
- 9. Usual residence (Col. 12)
- 10. Usual occupation (Col. 13)
- 11. Date and time of death (Cols. 14-17)
- 12. Place of death (Col. 18)
- 13. Cause of death:
 - 13.1. Immediate (Col. 19)
 - 13.2. Underlying (Col. 20)
- 14. Certifying officer:
 - 14.1. Name (Col. 21)
 - 14.2. Title/Position (Col. 22)
- 15. Remarks (Col. 23)

When a vital event occurs, a certificate in a set of four copies is prepared and submitted to the C/MCR. The civil registrar examines the document whether it is filled up correctly and completely. When there is an error, he returns it to the registrant for correction, otherwise, he accepts it and assigns to it a registry number. The four copies are distributed by the civil registrar to the following: (1) first copy to the registrant; (2) second copy to the CRG; (3) third copy to his file; (4) and the fourth copy to the attendant at birth, at death or solemnizing officer, as the case may be. Before inserting the certificate in the appropriate folder, the civil registrar transcribes the entries therefrom to the appropriate registry book.

The copies of the certificate intended for submission to the CRG are compiled and coded by the C/MCR on a monthly basis. These are submitted to the OCRG through the provincial office of the NSO not later than ten (10) days following the month of registration. The provincial office compiles the reports of all the cities and municipalities within its jurisdiction and submits the same to the OCRG not later than twentieth day of each month.

The copies of the certificates and other registrable documents are foldered and prepared for processing by the Vital Statistics Section (VSS) which is under the Social and Demographic Statistics Division of the NSO. After using them for generating vital statistics, the documents are microfilmed, and after which, the documents are deposited and preserved at the archives of the OCRG. From time to time, the documents are used in issuing certifications to the interested parties.

The National Printing Office which is a national government agency is the only printer and official supplier of all registration forms (certificates and registry books). All orders or requisitions of registration forms are submitted

by the C/MCRs to the provincial offices of the NSO and consolidated by the CRG who orders the printing of the forms. The CRG distributes the forms to the LCROs through the provincial offices. With this arrangement, the use of standard registration forms by all LCROs is ensured.

2. Place for registration of vital events

As a general rule, the place of registration is the city or municipality where the event occurs. A birth is registered in the place of birth; death in the place of death; marriage in the place where it was officiated; court decrees in the place where it was issued; and legal instruments where it was executed. Exceptions to this rule are the following:

a. For Birth

- (1) When a child is born aboard a vehicle, vessel or airplane while in transit within the Philippine territory and the exact place of birth cannot be determined, the birth shall be recorded in the civil register of the city or municipality where the mother is destined, or where she habitually resides, whichever is more convenient to her.
- (2) When the child is born aboard a vessel or airplane enroute to the Philippines and the exact place of birth cannot be determined, the birth shall be recorded in the civil register of the city or municipality where the mother habitually resides if she is a resident of the Philippines, and if either the father or mother or both parents are citizens of the Philippines. If the parents are both foreigners, but resident of the Philippines, the birth shall be

recorded in the civil register of the city or municipality where the mother habitually resides. If the parents are both foreigners and not residents of the Philippines, the birth may be recorded in the civil register of the City of Manila, if they so desire.

- (3) When the child, whose mother or father or both parents are citizen of the Philippines, is born aboard a vessel or airplane enroute to another country from the Philippines, or from any other country, the birth shall be recorded in the Philippine foreign service establishment (embassy or consulate) of the country of destination of the mother.

In any of the foregoing exceptional cases, the place of birth to be entered in the civil register shall be the following:

- (1) If the birth occurred aboard a passenger vehicle, the place of birth is the officially registered company name of the vehicle, further described by its route, plate number and other relevant information about the vehicle. If it is a private vehicle or automobile, the place of birth is the brand name of the vehicle with its relevant description.
- (2) If the birth occurred aboard a vessel, the place of birth is the officially registered name of the vessel further described by its route, voyage number, registry number and other relevant information about the vessel.
- (3) If the birth occurred aboard an airplane, the place of birth is the officially registered name of the airplane, further described by its route, flight number and other

relevant information about the airplane.

b. For Death

- (1) When a person dies aboard a vehicle, vessel or airplane while in transit within the Philippine territory and the exact place of death cannot be determined, the certificate of death shall be issued by the local health officer of the nearest city or municipality where the vehicle's driver can make his report to the authorities, or by the local health officer of the nearest port of disembarkation of the vessel or airplane, and the death shall be recorded in the civil registry of the city or municipality where the deceased habitually resided before his death, if a resident of the Philippines, or where the burial/cremation was made, whichever is more convenient to the nearest relative of the deceased. If the deceased is not a resident of the Philippines, the death shall be recorded in the civil register of the city or municipality where the certificate of death was issued.
- (2) The foregoing rule shall also apply to a case where a citizen of the Philippines dies aboard a vessel or airplane enroute to the Philippines. In case the deceased is a foreigner who is not a resident of the Philippines, the certificate of death shall be issued by the local health officer of the port of disembarkation in the Philippines and the death shall be recorded in that city or municipality.

- (3) When a citizen of the Philippines dies aboard a vessel or airplane enroute to other country from the Philippines or from any other country, and the exact place of death cannot be determined, the death shall be reported to the Philippine foreign service establishment of the country of destination of the deceased.
- (4) When a person aboard a vehicle, vessel or airplane dies as a result of the vehicular accident, airplane crash or shipwreck within the territory of the Philippines, and the site of the accident cannot be determined, the certificate of death shall be issued by the local health officer of the place where the body was found if such place is identifiable with a particular city or municipality, otherwise, the certificate of death shall be issued by the local health officer of the place of burial. In any case, the death shall be recorded in the civil register of the city or municipality where burial or cremation shall take place.
- (5) If the person was buried or drowned in the high seas, or for any other reason, the body was not recovered, the certificate of death shall be issued by the local health officer of the city or municipality which has jurisdiction over the place where the person is believed to have been buried or drowned, if such place is determinable, otherwise, the certificate shall be issued by the local health officer of the city or municipality nearest to the place where the person is believed to have been buried or drowned. In any case, the death shall be recorded in the civil register of the city or municipi-

municipality where the deceased habitually resided before his death.

As to the place of death that will be entered in the civil register, the rule governing the place of birth under the exceptional cases shall also apply.

c. For Legal Instruments

The following legal instruments should be recorded, not in the place where they were executed, but in other specific place:

- (1) Affidavit of reappearance of an absent spouse who was previously declared by court as presumptively dead (in the place where the parties to the subsequent marriage are residing);
- (2) Marriage settlement (in the place where the marriage shall be registered);
- (3) Affidavit of admission of paternity, affidavit of acknowledgment, affidavit of legitimation, voluntary emancipation of minor, and parental ratification of artificial insemination (in the place where the birth of the child was registered).
- (4) All legal instruments executed abroad shall be registered in the LCRO of Manila.

3. Time allowance for registration

The following rules govern the period within which registration shall be made:

- a. Live birth shall be reported for registration to the C/MCR not later than thirty (30) days after the date of birth.

- b. Death or fetal death shall be reported to the local health officer (LHO) within twenty-four (24) hours from the time of death. The LHO shall direct or cause the registration of the death or fetal death not later than thirty (30) days after the date of death.
- c. Ordinary marriages shall be reported for registration to the C/MCR not later than fifteen (15) days after the date of marriage. However, marriages which do not require a license for their validity such as marriage at the point of death, marriage in a remote place, marriage between members of ethnic cultural community (tribal marriages), and marriage between a man and a woman who have lived together as husband and wife for a period of at least five (5) years, shall be reported for registration not later than thirty (30) days after the date of marriage.
- d. Court decrees or orders such as legal separation of the husband and wife, annulment of marriage, declaration that a marriage is void from the beginning, adoption/recission of adoption, change of name, and others shall be reported for registration to the C/MCR not later than thirty (30) days after the date when the court decree or order becomes final and executory.
- e. Legal instruments such as affidavit of acknowledgment, affidavit of admission of paternity, marriage settlement, affidavit of legitimation, affidavit of reappearance by the spouse who was previously declared by a court as presumptively dead, and others shall be reported for registration to the C/MCR not later than thirty (30) days after the date of execution.

- f. Foundling shall be reported for registration to the C/MCR within thirty (30) days from the date of finding, if the finder is awarded the custody of the foundling. If the foundling is committed to the Department of Social Welfare and Development or to any of its accredited orphanage or charitable institution, the period within which registration shall be made is thirty (30) days from the date when the foundling was committed to it.
- g. Authority of Solemnizing Officers shall be registered with the OCRG within a reasonable time after the solemnizing officer is authorized by his church, religious sect or denomination and prior to officiating any marriage.

Under Philippine conditions, considering the land terrain and not so good roads in the rural areas, and the people's temperament, culture and values, the period within which registration shall be made is fairly adequate and may not be a factor in the incompleteness of registration in the Philippines.

Any report made to the LCRO beyond the reglementary period is considered late, and can be entered only in the civil register after the registrant complies with the requirements for delayed registration. Under Section 17 of the Civil Registry Law as amended by Presidential Decree No. 651, the penalty of nonregistering an event within the prescribed period is not less than 500 nor more than 1,000 pesos which is to be imposed by the court after conviction. For humanitarian reason, however, the penalty clause of the law is not strictly enforced. Nonregistration of vital event is not a crime against an individual but against the policy of the State, and in such a case, the State is always compassionate to its citizens.

4. Registration Fees

Under Act No. 3753, nonregistration of vital event is a crime. Section 17 of the law provides:

"Section 17. Failure to Report - Other Violations. - Any person whose duty is to report any fact concerning the civil status of persons and who knowingly fails to perform such duty, and any person convicted of having violated any of the provisions of this act, shall be punished by a fine of not less than ten nor more than two hundred pesos."

The above-cited law proclaims a State policy that to register a vital event is a duty, and it is neither a right nor privilege. It is not a right because if it were so, then registration would be left to the discretion of the people. It is not a privilege because if it were so, registration would be only for a few. It is a duty because the law says so, and the law imposes a penalty to one who fails to perform such duty.

That to register a vital event is a duty is a legislative will or decree which has been embodied in the Civil Registry Law. A citizen who fails or neglects to perform such duty stands to suffer a penalty which the court may impose as a result of inevitable conviction. That it is a duty is a compelling reason why it should be performed without any onerous condition such as payment of registration fees. As long as the citizen is able to perform such duty conformably with the law which requires him to obey, the LGU should not make any such attempt to prevent one from the performance of an act which is not only lawful but necessary and obligatory.

In spite of the foregoing arguments, all LGUs continue to collect registration fees as

high as thirty (30) pesos (US\$1) for timely registration and as high as one thousand (1,000) pesos (US\$35) for late registration.

The act of the LGUs of imposing registration fees runs counter to the legislative will of securing obedience from the citizenry in registering vital events. This imposition is an obstacle to the objective of the CRG to have at least ninety five (95) percent of registration because it limits registration of vital events to only those who can afford to pay the fees and charges.

About 40 percent of the population are in or below the poverty line, and considering that registration is not a choice between life and death, one would opt to spend something for his food rather than paying much amount of pesos for registering a vital event. Imposing the registration fees, the LGU has provided unnecessary option to the people who will then be obliged to select between paying registration fee and spending for his basic necessities.

In addition to the precept of Section 17 of Act No. 3753, Presidential Decree No. 651, is also very clear and leaves no room for interpretation. Section 6 of the Decree provides:

"Sec. 6. No Registration Fee. -
No fees of any kind shall be imposed for the registration of births and deaths within the prescribed period. However, for the issuance of a certified copy of any birth or death document, or transcript of the entries from the civil register, upon the

request of the interested party, a certification fee shall be collected in accordance with existing law."

The continuous collection of registration fees by the LGUs is indeed a problem that contributes to the low level of registration in the Philippines.

5. Other requirements for registration.

The basic requirement for registering a vital event is the use of the standard and prescribed certificate which must be accurately and completely filled up and signed by all parties who are required by rules and regulations to sign the document.

In the case of live birth, the following persons should affix their signatures on the certificate of live birth: (1) the attendant at birth who may either be a physician, nurse, licensed midwife, traditional midwife or other person who attended the delivery in emergency cases; (2) the informant who may either be the attendant at birth, either parent of the child, any relative of the child or any interested party who has full knowledge of the occurrence of the birth; (3) the person who prepared the certificate of live birth who may either be the attendant at birth, medical records officer or clerk of the hospital or clinic, local civil registry personnel, or anybody who has knowledge on the correct or proper preparation of the certificate; and (4) the C/MCR or any member of his staff who is authorized to receive the document for registration.

In the case of fetal death, the signatories of the certificate of fetal death are the same as in the certificate of live birth. However, in the medical certification portion, the attendant at birth further certifies that the fetus was born dead, and that the LHO to whom the fetal death is reported should also sign his name on the appropriate space.

In the case of the certificate of death, the following persons are required to affix their respective signatures on the document: (1) the attendant at death who may either be a private physician, public health officer, hospital authority or any other person who might have attended the deceased in emergency cases; (2) the LHO to whom the death was reported; (3) the informant; (4) the one who prepared the certificate; and (5) the local civil registry personnel authorized to receive the document for registration.

In the case of marriage, the certificate should be signed by the following: (1) the husband and the wife; (2) the solemnizing officer; and (3) all witnesses to the marriage.

There are no other separate documents or materials to be submitted for the purpose of registering the four vital events. Each certificate contains substantially all information required by law including supporting affidavits which are printed at the back page of the certificate.

6. Late registration procedures

When the event is reported to the C/MCR for registration beyond the prescribed period, the event may be registered under the rules and regulations governing delayed registration.

As a rule, the applicant shall file his application with the concerned C/MCR, except when the event is death in which case, the application should be filed first with the concerned LHO. The application is in the form of an affidavit or sworn statement where the applicant declares clearly and completely the facts of birth, death or marriage, as the case may be. The applicant should support his application by attaching to it relevant documents.

In the case of birth, the supporting papers may consist of certificate of baptism; school records; certification of the hospital or clinic where the child was born; affidavit or sworn declaration of the attendant at birth; authenticated copy of approved application for membership of either parent or both parents with the Government Service Insurance System or with the Social Security System which shows parent and child relationship with the latter as the beneficiary of the former; employment records of the parents; and other documents which are sufficient to establish the facts of birth of the child, his filiation and other information which are required by law to be entered in the civil register.

In the case of death, the applicant who in most cases is the nearest relative may support his application with a copy of the burial or cremation permit; a certificate of burial or cremation issued by cemetery caretaker or crematory official; certification from the attendant at death or from the hospital or clinic where the person died; police blotter report in case the death was due to accident; certificate of embalmer or medico-legal; or other documents which are sufficient to establish the identity of the deceased person, the date and place of death, the cause of death, and other information required by law to be entered in the civil register.

In the case of marriage, the applicant who may either be the husband or the wife or any one of their children or relatives shall establish the existence of the marriage by means of the following documents: certification from the solemnizing officer; affidavit or sworn statement by at least two witnesses to the marriage ceremony; employment records of either spouse showing the facts of marriage with the other spouse; or other documents which are sufficient to establish who are the parties to the marriage, the date and place of the marriage and other information required by law to be entered in the civil register.

In any case, the application should state the reason or reasons why the event was not reported for registration within the prescribed period.

The C/MCR with whom the application is filed shall examine the supporting papers. If he is convinced of the facts shown by the documents, and he believes that the event should be recorded in the civil register, he prepares or cause the preparation of the certificate of live birth or certificate of marriage, as the case may be, and he shall post a notice in his bulletin board regarding said application. The notice shall remain posted for ten (10) consecutive days. The purpose of posting is to afford an opportunity to everyone to raise his opposition, if any, against the application.

If the event which is applied for delayed registration is death or fetal death, the application and all supporting papers should be submitted to the LHO who shall prepare or cause the preparation of the certificate of death. Having been convinced of the occurrence of death especially with regard to the identity of the deceased, the cause of death, the place and the date of death, he directs or orders the C/MCR to proceed with the registration processes.

While the application is posted, the C/MCR submits his report to the office of the Public Prosecutor regarding the pending application. The prosecutor shall conduct the investigation, if necessary, in order to find out whether or not there was violation of the Civil Registry Law pursuant to Section 17 (supra). If there is "prime facie" evidence of the violation, the prosecutor files a criminal case with the proper court against the offender, otherwise, the prosecutor dismisses the report. The filing of a criminal case against the offender by the prosecutor does not stop or prevent the registration processes. The event shall be

registered even if a criminal case is filed because the registrability of the event is not an issue to be resolved in the criminal case.

If within ten (10) days of posting, no one raises opposition to the application, the C/MCR shall assign a registry number to the certificate and transcribes the entries therefrom in the appropriate registry book in red ink. The C/MCR annotates on the certificate that the event was registered late.

On the other hand, if an opposition was filed during the posting period, the C/MCR shall take the oral and written testimonies of the concerned parties and witnesses. He shall forward all documents, including the application and his recommendation to the OCRG, which after review and proper evaluation of the documents presented to him, may either deny or authorize the C/MCR to register the event.

As provided for under Section 17 of Act No. 3753 (supra) the penalty for nonregistration of vital events is a fine of not less than ten nor more than two hundred pesos. The amount of the fine was legislated in 1931 when the daily wage was less than a peso. The penalty was raised in 1975 by Presidential Decree No. 651 to not less than five hundred nor more than one thousand pesos, or imprisonment of not less than three months nor more than six months, or both in the discretion of the court. (Note: As of October, 1993, the exchange rate is P29 to a US\$1.)

As clearly stated in the law, the penalty shall be imposed upon the offender after conviction by the court. However, in actual practice, the LGUs illegally impose the penalty through a city or municipal ordinance. Inasmuch as every local government unit has its own legislative council (Sangguniang Bayan), the amount of penalty varies. There are LGUs whose ordinance imposes a penalty of ten pesos for every month of delay. Others have a flat

rate of, for example, two hundred pesos or five hundred pesos, regardless of the period of delay.

As much as possible, the CRG avoids the filing of criminal case against the offender as long as he is willing to comply with the requirement of registration even if delayed. However, the LGUs illegally and arbitrarily impose the penalty even in the absence of court decision which convicts the offender. They do this through an ordinance which according to the Secretary of Justice is presumed valid and constitutional until such ordinance is declared invalid or unconstitutional by a competent court.

The CRG strongly believes that the collection of registration fees and the penalty for nonregistration of vital events by the LGU is improper, much more, illegal. To resolve the issue, the CRG reported the matter to the Office of the President sometime in May this year (1993) and requested the President to issue an order reiterating the State's policy of free registration of births, deaths and marriages, and demanding all LGUs to suspend indefinitely or repeal their respective ordinances imposing the collection of registration fees and penalty. The report of the CRG is presently being studied by the Presidential Management Staff.

7. Possibility of duplication of registration

From time to time, the OCRG discovers from the records in its archives a case of double registration of the same event. The discovery is facilitated by the national indices of births, deaths and marriages generated by means of computer. Double registration, however, is not a consequence of unclear guidelines for registration. There are various causes of double registration of the same event in the Philippines, but it is not because of unclear guidelines.

One cause is the strict implementation of the provisions of the Civil Code of the Philippines with regard to correction of entry in the civil register and change of name. According to the law, no entry in the civil register shall be changed or corrected without a judicial order. Judicial authority to change one's name is also needed. Filing a petition with a competent court for an authority to correct an entry in the civil register or to change one's name is very expensive. The cost of publication in a newspaper once a week in three consecutive weeks, attorney's fees, court fees and other miscellaneous expenses can reach an amount as high as fifteen thousand pesos (15,000), or more than US\$500. The high cost of obtaining judicial authority discourages a concerned party to avail of the legal means. As a result, the concerned party will find ways and means by registering again the same event under the rules of delayed registration, with a hope that the error in the first registration can be corrected in the second registration.

This case is exemplified by Margarita Veloso Agbuya whose birth on 2 January 1992 was actually recorded in the civil register on 7 January 1992. Her date of birth as recorded was, however, 2 January 1991 which even the civil registrar did not notice. The mother complained against the medical records clerk of the hospital why the certificate of live birth of her daughter shows the date of her birth as 2 January 1991 when in fact her child was born on 2 January 1992. It was found out that since it was the first working day of the new year, the clerk, who had been typing "1991" for the whole past year, unknowingly and without malice, typed "2 January 1991" as the date of birth of the child. It was a costly mistake as it required the mother to go to court to get authority to correct it. The mother did not have the means to file petition in court. Since it was the fault of the hospital clerk, the mother was able to persuade her to prepare

again a new set of certificate of live birth of her daughter and submitted it to the same civil registrar who recorded it in his civil register on 27 January 1993. Thus, in less than a month, the same birth was recorded twice in the civil register of the same place.

Another cause of double registration of the same event pertains Filipinos who migrate to U.S.A. or to Canada. A Filipino whose parents are naturalized American citizens can also migrate to U.S.A. if his parents will file a petition for his visa to enter the country. The chance of his being given a visa by the U.S. Embassy in Manila is greater and processing of his documents would be faster if he is single. Thus even if he is married and has children, he declares himself fraudulently as single. When he succeeds in entering U.S.A. as single, he returns to the Philippines after some years, and marries again his lawful wife. His second marriage with the same woman means another recording of the marriage in the civil register. Another necessary consequence of the second marriage of the same parties is the change of status of their children from legitimate to illegitimate. Because of the second marriage, the children would now appear to have been born prior to the marriage of their parents, hence, they are illegitimate. The parents will now apply for the late registration of their children as illegitimate, and in most cases, the attempt to make the second registration of birth is successful.

Another cause of double registration arises from migration to another place which is far from the place of birth. When there is a need for a certificate of live birth, it would be expensive for the migrant to return to the place of his birth only for that purpose. Actually, the migrant does not need to physically return to his place of birth. He may authorize one of his relatives to get the certification of his birth or may write directly to the concerned civil registrar.

However, this process may take more than a month. If the need for the certification is urgent, then the migrant resorts to falsifying his own facts of birth by applying for delayed registration of his birth in the city or municipality where he now resides and which he declares as his place of birth. He supports his application with papers which are also fake. In many instances, the registrant succeeds in his application for delayed registration of his birth which actually results to double registration.

There may still be some causes of duplication of registration, but so far, the causes which are discussed in this section are the major ones.

This problem of duplication of registration has a negative effect on the quality, integrity, and efficiency of the system. The rule on late registration is obviously abused by some sectors of the society. Most end-users of the certifications of birth, death or marriage, such as Department of Foreign Affairs in connection with the issuance of passports, different foreign embassies in connection with the granting of visas, insurance companies in connection with claims, and others, are now aware of the problem arising from the duplication of registration. As a consequence, these end-users rarely accept certifications based from the late registration without these certifications being authenticated first by the OCRG.

At the city or municipal level, the records of the civil registrar are limited to those events that actually occurred within the boundary of the city or municipality. When someone who was actually born outside the city or municipality applies for delayed registration of his birth, the civil registrar, especially in big cities and municipalities, has no means of ascertaining the truth. His decision is based merely from the documents

presented to him, but most likely, these documents are fake. When he verifies from his records, and finds that the applicant has no record of birth in his file, the tendency is to accept the application, not knowing that the same event was previously registered elsewhere. When the civil registrar issues certification of birth based from the late registration, the interested party submits the certification to the OCRG for authentication, otherwise it will not be accepted by the end-user.

Prior to authenticating the certification, the OCRG conducts verification in its archives as to the possible existence of previous registration by means of national computer indices of births. When previous registration is discovered, the certification issued by the civil registrar is not authenticated. Instead, the CRG issues to the same party a machine copy of his original certificate of live birth. At the same time, the CRG notifies the civil registrar who issued the certification and instructs him to desist from issuing any certification based from the late registration of that particular birth. With this measure, the CRG gradually reduces the incidence of duplication of registration. The OCRG has also national computer indices for deaths and marriages; hence, duplication of registration can also be detected for these vital events.

D. The Local Registrars

1. Type of personnel appointed as civil registrar

The Philippines has started to have regular and permanent C/MCRs since 1 January 1992 when the Local Government Code of 1991 took effect. Section 479 of this Code provides that the appointment of a civil registrar shall be mandatory for city and municipal governments. As of 30 September 1993, there were 562 new C/MCRs already appointed under the present law.

This means that 1,040 cities and municipalities have yet to comply with the mandate of Section 479 of the Local Government Code of 1991. Under the law, the minimum qualifications for a civil registrar are the following:

- a. Citizen of the Philippines;
- b. Resident of the local government unit concerned;
- c. Of good moral character;
- d. Holder of a college degree from a recognized college or university;
- e. First grade civil service eligible or its equivalent; and
- f. Experience in civil register work for at least five (5) years in the case of the city civil registrar, and three (3) years in the case of the municipal civil registrar.

Prior to the effectivity of the Local Government Code of 1991, the following local government officials acted in ex-officio capacity as LCRs.

- a. Delegate of Justice and Civil Registration (Section 3 of June 18, 1898 Decree issued by the Philippine Revolutionary Government of 1898);
- b. Municipal Secretary (Section 20, Municipal Law or Act No. 82, enacted by the Philippine Commission of 1901);
- c. City Health Officer (Section 3, Civil Registry Law or Act No. 3753 which took effect on 27 February 1931);
- d. City/Municipal Treasurer (Section 3, Civil Registry Law)

- e. City/Municipal Planning and Development Coordinators (Section 137. Local Government Code of 1983).

The 1,040 cities and municipalities which do not have yet a permanent and regular civil registrar are understood to still have ex-officio civil registrars who may either be city/municipal treasurers, city/municipal planning and development coordinators or city health officers. The CRG expects for a one hundred percent compliance by the LGUs with the mandate of the Local Government Code of 1991 within the next two years.

The Local Government Code of 1991 and the plantilla of itemized positions of the LGUs do not provide for the appointment of assistant civil registrar. In practice, however, and upon instructions from the CRG, the C/MCR designates the most ranking member of the local civil registry personnel to act as assistant civil registrar. In extreme cases, the CRG through the provincial statistics officer of the NSO designates one of the latter's staff to act as civil registrar in the municipality where the incumbent civil registrar who is the lone civil registry personnel is on vacation or sick leave or physically or legally unable to perform his function.

2. Type of appointment

The appointment to the position of C/MCR made by the Mayor may be approved by the Civil Service Commission as either permanent or temporary. A permanent appointment is issued to the appointee who meets all the requirements for the position of civil registrar, including the appropriate eligibility prescribed, in accordance with the provisions of law, rules and standards promulgated in pursuance thereof. In the absence of appropriate eligible and it becomes necessary in the public interest to fill a vacancy, a temporary appointment is issued to the appointee who meets all the

requirements for the position of civil registrar except the appropriate civil service eligibility. The temporary appointment does not exceed twelve months, and the appointee may be replaced sooner if a qualified civil service eligible becomes available.

Whether the appointment is permanent or temporary, all employees in the LGUs including the full-time or regular civil registrars and those other local government officials who perform the function of LCR, inspite of the security of tenure guaranteed under the law, are uncertain how long can they hold on to their position. Election for local government officials is held every after three years, and everytime there is a change in the administration of the LGUs, those appointive employees and officials especially if they do not belong to the political party of the winners are either reassigned to less important or uninteresting work until they are forced to resign, or immediately removed merely on the basis of loss of trust and confidence. The winners in the election have to find employment for their supporters, hence, a civil registrar, especially if visibly identified with the losing party, cannot escape the risk of being replaced.

There was no previous study made on the effect of local election to civil registration in terms of the number of local civil registry personnel who were replaced as a consequence of election. Experience, however, shows that many are replaced as soon as the winners assumed their post. The next election will be in 1995, and hopefully, the OCRG can make a study regarding the matter, so that the problem which hampers the career development of local civil registry personnel may find its solution either administratively or through legislation.

3. Full-time or part-time registrars

Considering the provision of Section 479 of Local Government Code of 1991 which mandates the appointment of a full-time and permanent civil registrar in every city and municipality, this portion of the paper is no longer applicable in the Philippines. However, there are still cities and municipalities which have not yet reorganized in accordance with the Local Government Code of 1991, where a city health officer, city/municipal planning development coordinator or city/municipal treasurer is still performing in ex-officio capacity the function of LCR. Inasmuch as civil registration is merely an additional workload to them, their priority attention or preference would be the performance of their principal function. Therefore, to a health officer, treasurer or planning and development coordinator, civil registration is secondary or less important function. These ex-officio LCRs have the following primary functions and duties:

a. City Health Officer

The health officer shall take charge of the office on health services and shall supervise the personnel and staff of said office, formulate program implementation guidelines and rules and regulations for the operation of the said office for the approval of the mayor in order to assist him in the efficient, effective and economical implementation of a health services program geared to implementation of health-related projects and activities. He shall formulate measures for the consideration of the local legislative council and provide technical assistance and support to mayor in carrying out activities to ensure the delivery of basic services and provision of adequate facilities relative to health services. He shall develop plans and strategies and upon approval thereof by the mayor, implement the same, particularly those which have to do with

health programs and projects which the mayor is empowered to implement and which the local legislative council is empowered to provide for under the Local Government Code of 1991. He shall be in the frontline of the delivery of health services, particularly during and in the aftermath of man-made and natural disasters and calamities.

b. Planning and Development Coordinator

He shall formulate integrated economic, social, physical, and other development plans and policies for consideration of the local government development council; conduct continuing studies, researches, and training programs necessary to evolve plans and programs for implementation; integrate and coordinate all sectoral plans and studies undertaken by the different functional groups or agencies; monitor and evaluate the implementation of the different development programs, projects, and activities in the local government unit concerned in accordance with the approved development plan; prepare comprehensive plans and other development planning documents for the consideration of the local development council; analyze the income and expenditure patterns, and formulate and recommend fiscal plans and policies for consideration of the finance committee of the local government unit; promote people participation in development planning; exercise supervision and control over the secretariat of the local development council; and exercise such other powers and perform such other functions and duties as may be prescribed by law or ordinance.

c. Treasurer

The treasurer shall advise local government and national officials concerned regarding disposition of local government funds and on such other matters relative to public finance; take custody and exercise proper management of the funds of the local government unit

concerned; take charge of the disbursement of all local government funds and such other funds the custody of which may be entrusted to him by law or other competent authority; inspect private commercial and industrial establishments within the jurisdiction of the local government unit concerned in relation to the implementation of tax ordinances; maintain and update the tax information system of the local government unit; and exercise such other powers and perform such other duties and functions as may be prescribed by law or ordinance.

4. Training and suitability for the post

As provided under Section 479 of the Local Government Code of 1991, a C/MCR must be a holder of a college degree from a recognized college or university. This means four or more years of education in college or university.

The training programmes for civil registrars consist of quarterly conferences with the provincial statistics officers of the NSO, annual seminar/workshop in the province or region, and national convention every after two years. All these programmes are conducted by the OCRG.

a. Quarterly Meeting/Conference

As part of the regular activities of the provincial offices of the NSO, the provincial statistics officer calls all C/MCRs within his jurisdiction for a one day meeting/conference every quarter. Any of the following matters may be discussed during the meeting: (1) new circulars/memoranda/legal opinion/instruction concerning civil registration; (2) problems encountered by the C/MCRs; (3) status of submission of reports; (4) and other matters.

b. Annual seminar/workshop

A seminar/workshop is conducted annually by either the provincial or regional office. The participants are the local civil registry personnel who are new or newly appointed and who have never undergone formal training in civil registration, local health officers, rural health physicians, nurses and midwives, and selected barangay officials. When the number of participants is small, the seminar/workshop is conducted at the regional level where every province within the region send their participants. When the number is big, each province conducts its own seminar/workshop.

During the seminar/workshop, which is usually conducted for two days, the following matters are taken up: (1) administrative matters such as records management, duties and function of local civil registry personnel, issuance of certifications and disciplinary measures; (2) technical matters such as registrability of an event, proper filling up and coding of civil registry documents, and registration procedures.

A certificate of participation is awarded to every participant of the seminar/workshop.

c. National Convention

Every after two years, all C/MCRs gather together for a national convention which is called by the CRG, usually in February which is a "Civil Registration Month" as proclaimed by the Office of the President through Proclamation No. 682, S. 1991. This year (1993), the national convention was held in Quezon City from February 24 to 26 and was attended by more than 1,200 local civil registry personnel. The President of the Philippines is always a guest speaker during the convention.

The main thrust of the national convention is discussion of the government policy concerning civil registration; development of plans and formulation of strategies, to improve the system of civil registration; automation of the system; contribution of the system to the overall goals and objectives of the government; and other matters which are of interest not only to civil registry personnel but to all sectors of the society. Speakers who are authority on their respective subject matters which are relevant to civil registration are invited to present their papers. These papers are reproduced and distributed to all participants of the national convention.

5. Remuneration

The salary of the C/MCR and other local civil registry personnel is dependent on the classification of the city or municipality where such classification is based on the average annual revenues of the LGUs. Thus, municipal civil registrar in one place may receive a salary higher or lower than a municipal civil registrar in another place, although they perform the same type of work, and probably have the same degree or responsibility. Within the same LGU, the municipal civil registrar has the same amount of salary as that received by a treasurer, assessor, accountant, planning and development coordinator, budget officer and other appointive officials under the office of the mayor.

The local legislative council (Sangguniang Bayan) determines the positions and the salaries, wages, allowances and other emoluments and benefits of officials and employees paid wholly or mainly from municipal funds and provide for expenditures necessary for the proper conduct of programs, projects, services, and activities of the LGU.

6. Availability of handbooks for local registrars both for legal and statistical matters

The CRG provides handbooks for all LCROs. The handbooks consist of two books, namely, "*Implementing Rules and Regulations of Civil Registration Laws*" and the "*Manual of Instructions*". The first book contains legal procedures and requirements of registration, while the second book deals primarily on registration procedures, proper filling up of forms and coding of selected information. As supplement to these two books, the CRG issues, from time to time, circulars and memoranda to all LCROs.

E. The informant

An informant is one who reports an event to the LCRO for registration, and who gives the information to be recorded in the civil register. For every type of registrable event or document, the law requires different group of informants.

For birth, the law requires the hospital or clinic administrator or his representative to report the live birth to local civil registry office for registration, if the birth occurred in the hospital or clinic. If the birth occurred elsewhere, the attendant who may either be private physician, nurse, licensed or traditional midwife makes the report. In default of the hospital authority or attendant, the responsibility of reporting the birth for registration devolves upon either or both parents, or upon a person who has full knowledge of the facts of births and filiation of the child.

For death, the report shall be made by the hospital or clinic administrator if the person dies in the hospital or clinic. If the person dies elsewhere, the report shall be made by the attending physician. In default of the hospital or clinic authority or attending physician, the report shall be made by the nearest relative or by interested party who has knowledge of the occurrence of the death. In any

case, the report shall be submitted to the local health officer who shall direct or order the civil registrar to enter the death in the civil register.

Based from the 1989 Vital Statistics Report, around 57.2 percent of the total births were attended to by either a physician, nurse or midwife while 42.8 were attended to by traditional midwives and others who have no appropriate medical training. As to death, only around 40.3 percent were medically attended while 59.7 had no medical attendance.

Obviously, in the case of birth, those which were attended to by a physician, nurse or midwife in the hospital/clinic or elsewhere yield more accurate data especially with regard to weight of the child at birth, than those which were attended to by traditional midwives who have no medical training. In the case of death, the type of attendance definitely affects the cause of death. For those without medical attendance, the cause of death may not be as accurate as those with medical attendance. The number of deaths with medical attendance is lower than those without medical attendance due probably to financial difficulties.

In the case of marriage, the solemnizing officer is required by law to report the marriage. In default of the solemnizing officer, the duty of reporting the marriage devolves upon the contracting parties themselves or one of the witnesses to the marriage. In the case of court decrees concerning civil status of persons like adoption, annulment of marriage and others, the clerk of court which issued the decision or order shall make the report to the C/MCR. In default of the clerk of court, the report shall be made by the successful petitioner or by any interested party.

For legal instruments or sworn declarations concerning civil status of persons and which the law requires it to be entered in the civil register, the executor or affiant or interested party has the obligation to make report to the civil registrar.

F. Civil Registration Archives

1. The local civil registration archives

The establishment of an archival system at the LGU is mandated by Section 374 of the Local Government Code of 1991 which provides:

"Sec. 374. Establishment of an Archival System. - Every local government unit shall provide for the establishment of an archival system to ensure the safety and protection of all government property, public documents or records such as records of births, marriages, property inventory, land assessments, land ownership, tax payments, tax accounts, and business permits, and such other records or documents of public interest in the various departments and offices of the provincial, city, or municipal government concerned."

Accordingly, under Section 447 (a)(1)(x) of the Local Government Code, the local legislative council shall provide a mechanism and the appropriate funds for the establishment of the local government archives.

The quality of the archiving system of the civil registry documents depends upon the financial support of the concerned LGU. There are LGUs which can afford bookbinding of the certificates but majority can afford only the use of loose-leaf folder with ordinary paper fastener to bind the certificates. In any case, the certificates are bound or fastened together in a set of not more than three hundred documents per folder. The binding is by type of document and the arrangement of the documents in the folder is by sequential order of the registry number without regard to the date of occurrence. Thus, the folder's label contains information only concerning the folder number, type of document, period of registration and the registry numbers.

Example: "Folder No. 106, Births, January 1 to March 15, 1991, Registry Nos. 1 to 300".

Some LGUs have steel filing shelves especially made for the purpose of filing the certificates, but others can afford only wooden bookshelves. These filing shelves are usually installed in one corner or section of the LCRO, which place is relatively separate and far from the part of the office where transaction with the public is made.

The registry books, however, are not filed in the bookshelves with the foldered certificates. The registry books are kept inside the steel filing cabinets. Almost all LCROs have this kind of cabinets where not only the registry books are kept but also blank registration forms and other files (memoranda, circulars, letters) of the office.

There are no sophisticated safety measures of preserving the documents at the LGUs against aging, climate, fire and other hazards. The technology of preserving the documents is so expensive that not even the most highly urbanized City of Manila can afford. The least that an LCRO can do is to preserve the documents from being eaten or destroyed by insects and rats, and to minimize wear and tear due to frequent use of the documents.

For the purpose of issuing certifications to the interested parties, the particular certificate from where the information shall be extracted must be retrieved from the archives. In the case of certification of birth, for example, the interested party is required to give information to the local civil registry clerk regarding the name of the child, date and place of birth and the names of the child's parents. With these items of information, the particular certificate of live birth cannot be easily located because the certificates are not arranged according to the alphabetical order of names or dates of occurrence but by sequential order of

the registry numbers. For this reason, the use of index cards is a must for every LCRO. In fact, Section 12 (f) of the Civil Registry Law considers it as one of the duties of the C/MCR to prepare index to facilitate search and identification in case any information is required.

The index cards show the following information:

For birth: Name of the child, date of birth, names of parents, folder number, registry number and page number.

For death: Name of the deceased, date of death, folder number, registry number and page number

For marriage: there are two sets of index cards, one for the groom and one for the bride. These cards are used not only for the purposes of retrieving a copy of the marriage contract but also in issuing a certification to an individual that he or she has no records of marriage in that city or municipality for a particular period. The index cards have the following information: Name of the groom (or bride); date of marriage, folder number, registry number and page number.

At present, there are cities and municipalities already equipped with micro-computers. The OCRG with the assistance from the Information Resources Division of the NSO is developing a software which will be used by the LCROs. The software which is called "Civil Registration Information System" shall facilitate retrieval of information, issuance of certification, and generating vital statistics at the city/municipal level.

Under Philippine law (Article 410, Civil Code of the Philippines), the books making up the civil register and all documents relating thereto shall be considered public documents. As such, these documents are open to public scrutiny under

certain limitations such as filing of the application specifying therein the document to be searched and the purpose for which the information shall be used, and payment of the prescribed certification fees to the treasurer.

Exception to the rule is the record of birth which under Article 7 of the Child and Youth Welfare Code is confidential. The law provides:

"Art. 7. Non-disclosure of Birth Records. - The records of a person's birth shall be kept strictly confidential and no information relating thereto shall be issued except on the request of any of the following:

(1) The person himself, or any person authorized by him;

(2) His spouse, his parent or parents, his direct descendants, or the guardian or institution legally incharge of him if he is a minor;

(3) The court or proper public official whenever absolutely necessary in administrative, judicial or other official proceedings to determine the identity of the child's parents or other circumstances surrounding his birth; and

(4) In case of the person's death, the nearest of kin.

Any person violating the prohibition shall suffer the penalty of imprisonment of at least two months or a fine in an amount not exceeding five hundred pesos, or both, in the discretion of the court."

Thus, while almost everybody has access to the information from the civil registry, the LCRO cannot give information as to the records of an individual's birth except to those who are enumerated under the above-cited law.

2. The Central Archives

There are two official archives of the government at the national level. One is the Records Management and Archives Office which is the official depository of the government of all public documents such as laws and statutes, employment records, land titles, court records and decisions, government contracts, and such other records of interest to the public. The other is the Civil Registrar General's Archives where more than 70 million civil registry documents are deposited. Civil registry documents prior to 27 February 1931, and marriage contracts of recent years numbering more or less 2 million are deposited at the Records Management and Archives Office.

The Civil Registrar General's Archives came into existence by necessity or as a necessary consequence of Section 12 (e) of the Civil Registry Law where it is provided that all LCROs shall send to the CRG, during the first ten days of each month, a copy of the entries made during the preceding month for filing. At present, the CRG receives from all LCROs around 2.5 million documents annually.

The principal purpose of the archives is to provide a central depository where records of status of persons can be preserved and kept for future use by both the government and the general public. Accordingly, the documents deposited in the archives are used in issuing certifications to interested parties who may need them in transacting business with the Department of Foreign Affairs in connection with the issuance of passports; with the Professional Licensing and Regulatory Board in connection with conduct of government board examinations; with the foreign

embassies in connection with the granting of visas to Filipinos; with the courts in connection with cases involving civil status of persons; and with other agencies, both private and government.

The filing system in the central archives is different from the local government archives. While the local government archives arrange the documents by type of documents and registry numbers, the central archives sort the documents by date and place of occurrence without regard to the sequential order of the registry numbers.

The documents are bound using a hard board loose-leaf folder with an ordinary metal fastener. A folder contains approximately 300 to 350 documents. For identification, the folders are labeled with the following information: folder number, type of document, name of the province, names of cities/municipalities, months and years of occurrence. Thus, a folder is labeled as follows: "Folder No. 8, Birth, Zambales, Candelaria and Castillejos, March to May, 1991." According to sequential order of the folder numbers, the folders are arranged in the steel filing shelves by province. For late registered events, the documents are arranged according to month and year of registration, and they are filed separately from other documents.

The retrieval system makes use of computer-generated indices. At present, the OCRG has national indices of births covering the period 1975 to 1991; marriage indices covering the period 1973 to 1991; and death indices covering the period 1975 to 1991. These indices are very useful as they facilitate verification and retrieval of a particular document in the archives in just few minutes. The birth index for example shows the name of the child, name of parents, date and place of birth, folder number and page number. For the periods not covered by the computer-generated indices, the search is manual and is done by actual examination of the documents in the folder page by page.

With regard to preservation of documents, the only technology available and which the OCRG can afford is by means of microfilm. The first documents to be microfilmed were the marriage contracts, and this started sometime in 1983. While the marriage contracts were being microfilmed, the CRG entered into a Memorandum of Agreement with the Genealogical Society of Utah in 1988 whereby the latter agreed to microfilm all records of births and deaths in the archives and to furnish the OCRG with copies of the microfilms without any cost except office space and electricity.

Certifications issued to the interested party based from documents which were already microfilmed are actually true photocopies reproduced by means of microfilm reader/printer. Certifications based from documents which are not yet microfilmed are reproduced by means of machine copier (xerox) and are issued as certified machine copies of the originals. At present, the OCRG issues on the daily average 3,000 certifications, and authenticates around 2,000 certifications which are issued by LCRO.

It should be noted at this point that an interested party can request a certification of an event either from the OCRG or from the LCRO. If the party gets the certification from the LCRO, the same is still submitted to OCRG for authentication. If not authenticated, the certification may not be accepted by the end-user. The reason for the authentication is to assure the end-user that the certification really came from the right source (LCRO) and was issued based from the entry in the civil register. Authentication was resorted to in order to check the abuses done at the LCROs where certifications are issued even when there is no entry in the civil register, or if there is an entry, the certification is not based from it, especially when there is political pressure to change a name or other information already recorded in the civil register.

When there are changes in the original records arising from court orders/decisions such as change of name or correction of entry, the original entries in the certificates are not physically erased, altered or modified. A copy of the court order is filed in the archives, and the decision of the court is merely annotated on the certification for the information of the end-user. For example, the name "*Jaime*" was ordered by the court to be changed to "*Jimmy*". The interested party should bring a copy of the court order to the LCRO for recording in the Register of Court Decrees, and the C/MCR assigns registry number to the court decision. After the entry in the Register, the C/MCR annotates on the records of birth of "*Jimmy*" the following remarks: "*The name Jaime is hereby changed to Jimmy upon the order of Judge Viroya of the Regional Trial Court of Manila on 5 February 1988 in Special Proceedings No. M-45670.*" The concerned C/MCR sends a copy of the registered court decree to OCRG. The OCRG files in its archives the court decree, and everytime *Jimmy* requests for a certification of his birth which may be in the form of microfilm photo copy, the OCRG makes the annotation of the documents the fact of the change of name based from the court order.

Correction of entries in the civil register rarely happens and does not affect the generation of vital statistics. Furthermore, such correction or amendment comes many years after the event was recorded in the civil register.

The issuance of certifications by either the OCRG or LCRO is governed by certain rules and regulations. Each LCRO has either a dry seal or wet seal, and uses a standard certification form designed and imposed by the OCRG. These forms are LCR Form 1A for birth, LCR Form 2A for death, and LCR Form 3A for marriage. The certification is signed by the C/MCR as issuing officer and by the clerk who verified and prepared the certification. Some LCROs issue true machine copies of the certificate which is also acceptable. The OCRG, on the other hand, issues

two types of certification, one by microfilm photo copy and the other by machine copy (xerox).

Microfilmed documents are not disposed of. They are preserved in the archives. However, some of these documents which cannot be accommodated at the OCRG archives are deposited at the Records Management and Archives Office. In fact, around 2 million marriage certificates are presently deposited in that archives.

The archives is a restricted area and only authorized personnel are allowed to enter. This is to safeguard the documents from being stolen or tampered with. To protect the documents from being eaten or destroyed by insects and rats, the archives is regularly cleaned and the personnel are not allowed to bring foods and eat inside the archives. Smoking inside the archives is strictly prohibited and it may result to severe disciplinary action against any employee who wilfully violates this rule.

6. Assessment of the Civil Registration System

As established by Act No. 3753 (Civil Registry Law) on 27 February 1931, the system of civil registration in the Philippines is centralized in the sense that all policies and instructions enforced at the city/municipal level emanate from central government through the OCRG. In fact, all C/MCRs are placed by the Civil Registry Law under the direction and supervision of the CRG.

However, the power to direct and supervise local civil registration activities is sometimes illusory because the loyalty of C/MCRs belong to LGUs where they derived their appointment and where they draw their salary. The C/MCRs are technically under the OCRG, but administratively, they are under the Office of the Mayor.

The selection, recruitment and appointment of C/MCR are matters exclusively belonging to the LGUs. The CRG does not even have the power to recommend as

to who will be appointed as C/MCR, otherwise, if he recommends, he may be accused of interfering or meddling in matters which are purely local government affairs. Thus, the CRG has to be contented with those who will be appointed by the Mayor as C/MCR who is sometimes not qualified, and if ever qualified, is not inclined to or has no interest in civil registration work. This arrangement renders it difficult for the CRG to exercise his power to direct and supervise local civil registration activities and much more, to discipline an erring local civil registry personnel.

When a local civil registry personnel commits or omits an act in violation of civil registration laws, rules and regulations, the CRG cannot impose any disciplinary action against him, because the power to discipline a local government employee is an administrative matter vested by law only upon the local chief executive. The CRG refrains from forcing the Mayor to impose disciplinary action against the erring local civil registry personnel if the Mayor opts to ignore the recommendation of the CRG because as the Administrator of the NSO, the latter office needs the Mayor in its censuses and surveys, hence, unnecessary friction or misunderstanding should be avoided.

Since the C/MCR is an appointee of the Mayor, and local civil registration is funded wholly from local government funds, there are times when the Mayor dictates how the C/MCRs should act in some situations that results to violation of civil registration laws, rules and regulations. When it comes to his work, the C/MCR is supposed to receive instructions only from the CRG, but then, he could not disobey the Mayor, otherwise, he may find his chair and table occupied by another person on the next day.

For more than sixty (60) years, the system had mere ex-officio civil registrars in the person of either health officer, treasurer, secretary or planning and development coordinator. This previous arrangement was contributory to the retarded growth or development of civil registration in the Philippines in terms of coverage and quality of registration. With the effectivity of the Local Government Code of

1991 mandating the appointment of full-time and permanent civil registrar in every city and municipality, the CRG strongly believes and expects that a positive result leading to improved coverage and quality of registration will be achieved in the next two years or less, especially when all LGUs shall have reorganized themselves in accordance with the new Code.

One weakness of the system is its failure to provide benefits to the registrant immediately after the registration of births and deaths. The beneficial effects are enjoyed by the concerned parties only after lapse of several years when the need to use the document arises. The issue therefore to be resolved is what benefits can the mother and child enjoy immediately after the registration of the child's birth? The system does not offer any benefit or incentive for the timely registration. The benefit will come only after seven years when the child will need his certificate of live birth for enrolling in Grade One; or after twenty-one years when he will take board or other government examinations; or after many years when he will need passport; and so on.

Another weakness of the system is its apparently Christian-based without it considering the members of ethnic cultural communities who are generally non-Christians. These members of ethnic cultural communities have their own customs, practices and rites which are unique and are very different from the Christian way of life. In the naming of person alone, the Christians have first name, middle name and last name (surname), but for the members of the ethnic cultural communities, only a name suffices. Because of its apparently Christian-based, the members of the ethnic cultural communities, feel that the system excludes them. This is obvious because almost all of them could not show any evidence of documentation of their births, deaths and marriages.

In sum, the strong points of the system are: (1) It is a creation of law, hence, it is stable and well-managed; (2) There is only one authority on civil registration matters, hence, it is centralized; (3) The C/MCRs are full-time and permanent, hence, civil

registration is fully attended to; (4) The system provides clear instruction and procedures of registration by means of manuals, circulars and memoranda to ensure uniformity of compliance; (5) The system provides standard registration forms; and (6) Registration under the system is compulsory.

On the other hand, the system has the following weaknesses: (1) The system gives the primary responsibility to attendants at birth or death and to solemnizing officers in registration of vital events. These persons have no interest in registering the vital events because they do not receive any benefit therefrom. Since the parents in the case of birth, nearest relative in the case of death, and the parties themselves in the case of marriage, are direct beneficiaries of registration, they should be primarily responsible in reporting the event. (2) The OCRG does not operate independently. Its budget depends upon what NSO allocates, which in many cases, is not adequate for its operation and projects. (3) The C/MCR is a Mayor's appointee and therefore owes loyalty to the LGU. This makes difficult for the CRG to supervise local civil registration activities. (4) The system does not provide incentive which will encourage the people to register vital events on time. Thus, it promotes delayed registration, that is, people register vital events only at the time they need certifications. (5) The system fails to assimilate members of the ethnic cultural communities because it is Christian-based.

For the past years, the following actions were undertaken by the government for the general purpose of improving the system of civil registration in the Philippines:

1. The Child Monitoring Project

In 1987, the National Statistical Coordination Board (NSCB) initiated a project to systematize and institutionalize an integrated information system on children and women. Known as the Child Monitoring Project, it aims to develop a data base system of children and women focused indicators, designed to monitor child survival and development in the country

and in areas where child-directed programs are being implemented.

As its initial activity, the Project undertook a detailed assessment of existing data at the local level, particularly in areas covered by the Area-Based Child Survival and Development Program. The assessment was conducted primarily to determine the present state of statistics that are being generated at the provincial level in term of accuracy, reliability, relevance and timeliness.

Among the various data collection systems assessed was the civil registration system which is considered a rich source of statistics essential to the child monitoring system. The infant mortality rate, child mortality rate and maternal mortality rate are three leading indicators of the child monitoring system which measure the prevailing health condition among infants, children and pregnant women, and these statistics should ideally be sourced from the civil registration system.

Accordingly, a technical working group was formed to conduct a preliminary assessment of the problems and issues related to the registration of vital events in the province of Basilan which was one of seven provinces covered by the project. The study covered three out of the seven municipalities in Basilan. These municipalities were Lantawan, Isabel a and Lamitan which were chosen on the bases of peace and order situation and accessibility.

The objectives of the study were: (1) to determine the extent of underreporting of births, deaths and marriages in the three municipalities of Basilan; and (2) to identify the causes of underregistration of vital events and to recommend measures for the improvement of vital registration.

The study adopted a "triple recording system" approach in attempting to capture all possible births, deaths and marriages within the pilot municipalities for the whole duration of the study (January to June 1991 for Isabel a and Lamitan, and September 1990 to March 991 for Lantawan). These three recording

systems were: (1) civil registration system; (2) recording system of the rural health units; and (3) recording system of barangay (village) chairmen/secretaries.

The barangay chairmen/secretaries were instructed to record all births, deaths and marriages occurring within their respective localities. They gathered the data occasionally on a house-to-house visit during the period of the study. On the other hand, the municipal civil registrar and the municipal health unit midwife simply transferred their respective records for the same period to the appropriate forms provided by the project.

The study showed the following results; (1) for births, the percentage of underreporting in Lantawan was 93.3; in Isabela, 88.0; and in Lamitan, 83.0; (2) for deaths, 98.3 in Lantawan; 80.2 in Isabela; and 80.0 in Lamitan; and (3) for marriage, 87.1 in Lantawan; 90.8 in Isabela; and 87.1 in Lamitan.

The causes of underregistration in the three municipalities of Basilan as identified by the project are the following:

- a. **Poor transportation facilities.** - Residents from the ten island-barangays of Lantawan find it hard to register in their municipality because of poor transportation, and prefer to register in Isabela due to greater accessibility and better transportation facility.
- b. **Lack of advocacy on civil registration.** - The majority of the populace are ignorant of the relevance/importance of vital registration. This is due to the lack of an information campaign on civil registration.
- c. **Financial restrictions.** - The registration fee, which varies from one municipality to another, plus the transportation expenses incurred to reach the place of registration are heavy on the pockets of the people in far-flung barangays and serve as deterrent factor to registration.

- d. **Muslim customs and traditions.** - Basilan is one of the provinces where greater portion of the population is Muslim. Among Muslims, the dead is buried within 24 hours from the time of death. This gives the relatives of the deceased very little time to obtain a certificate of death and burial permit prior to burial. To a Muslim, a certificate of death is not a requirement for burial not like among Christians. Also, a certificate of birth is not required for baptism of a child in the Muslim community, and a marriage among Muslims is oral without certificate of marriage documenting it.
- e. **Non-enforcement/lack of sanctions on non-registration of vital events.** - There are no sanctions or there is no strict enforcement of the sanctions on non-registration of vital events. For instance, certificate of death is not required for burial by a Muslim religious leader. Submission of certificate of live birth is not strictly enforced as a requirement for enrollment in schools.
- f. **Lack of municipal cemeteries.** - There are no public cemeteries. Muslims bury their dead in their backyards or just anywhere, hence, they do not bother to obtain certificate of death and burial permit.

The following were the recommendations of the Project:

- a. **Designation of barangay Secretary as Registrar.** - The recording system introduced by the project at the barangay level should be maintained. The barangay secretary should be designated as barangay civil registrar, in line with the Local Government Code of 1991 which stipulates that barangay secretaries should assist the municipal civil registrar.
- b. **Continuous advocacy on the civil registration system.** - People should be made aware of the existence and importance of civil registration. The merits of a good system and the benefits that

can be derived from it should be made clear to the people. The municipal civil registrar should take an active part in the information campaign on civil registration.

- c. Introduction of some sanctions on the non-registration of vital events. - Muslim religious leaders should be briefed on the importance of civil registration in order to get their support in enforcing sanctions against non-registration of vital events. A certificate of birth should be strictly required prior to the child's baptism, and certificate of death should be made as a requisite for burial. Schools should impose certificate of birth as enrolment requirement.
- d. Construction of public cemeteries. - Public cemeteries should be constructed in the municipalities so as to facilitate the enforcement of registration of death as a requisite for burial.

2. Creation of Inter-Agency Committee on Vital Statistics

The National Statistical Coordination Board (NSCB) on 30 October 1987 created the Inter-agency Committee on Vital Statistics (IAC-VS) by issuing Memorandum Circular No. 1-87. The objective of the Committee was to review methodologies and existing systems adopted in generating vital statistics with focus on fertility, mortality and natality.

In July 1988, the Committee divided itself into two technical working groups. The first group was called Technical Working Group on Vital Registration System (TWG-VRS) which was assigned to review the existing vital registration system, assess its strengths and weaknesses, and draw up recommendations to upgrade the present level of registration. The other group was the Technical Working group on Vital Indicators (TWG-VI) which was assigned to review and assess the different estimates of vital indicators and the corresponding methodologies employed and to recommend the levels of situations in data and data generation adopted for each of these indicators.

The TWG-VRS was composed of seven members who represented the following agencies: (1) Office of the Civil Registrar General; (2) Department of Local Government ; (3) Department of Health; (4) National Economic and Development Authority; and (5) National Statistical Coordination Board.

On the other hand, the TWG-VI was composed of fifteen members representing the following agencies: (1) University of the Philippines Population Institute; (2) National Statistics Office; (3) Department of Health; (4) National Economic and Development Authority; (5) Philippine Health Association; (6) Commission on Population; (7) and National Statistical Coordination Board.

After several meetings and consultations, the TWG-VRS identified the following problems affecting the efficiency of the vital registration system:

- a. The ex-officio nature of the civil registrar's function results to the following: (a) No direct CRG's supervision and control over the civil registrars, thus, causing delayed submission or non-submission of vital documents to the OCRG. (b) Indifference of planning and development coordinators (ex-officio civil registrar) to civil registration function which is part of their regular job as spelled out in the Standard Organizational Structures and Staffing Patterns Manual for Local Governments. Civil registration function is incorrectly perceived as additional responsibility of planning and development coordinators. (c) With every change of administration at the local government units, these planning and development coordinators who have already been trained as civil registrars are removed and replaced by untrained personnel.
- b. Underreporting of vital events is due to the following: (a) Lack of awareness on the importance of civil registration and/or lack of motivation among the general population to report vital events. (b) Unlawful collection of registration fees by the LGUs. In spite of the existence of a law providing free registration of

vital events, LGUs have their respective ordinances and resolutions imposing registration fees in order to generate funds. (c) The absence of registration units or centers at the barangay level makes it difficult for the public to register vital events.

- c. Inadequate logistic support to the local civil registry office by the LGUs. Some LCROs find difficulty of requisitioning funds for the purchase of registration forms and registry books.
- d. People abuse the rules on delayed registration resulting to double registration. Rules and regulations governing delayed registration have predisposed many people to resort to double registration in the following examples: (a) a person who was born somewhere in Mindanao and presently residing in Manila does not go back to his place of birth to get his certificate of live birth if he can apply for late registration in Manila. (b) double registration is done with underhanded motives of changing one or more entries in originally registered documents.

The recommendations of the TWG-VRS were classified as short-term and long-term. The short-term recommendations were:

- a. Conduct quarterly conference of civil registrars with the representative of the CRG to avoid delayed submission or non-submission of vital documents to the latter's office.
- b. Issuance of joint circular by Department of Local Government and the OCRG stressing that civil registration should be made part of the planning and development coordinators regular accomplishment report and performance evaluation.
- c. Conduct of continuing intensive public information and educational campaign on the importance of civil registration, especially in the rural area.

- d. Propose to the secretary of Finance the suspension of the implementation of ordinances which are contrary to law in so far as the collection of registration fee is concerned.
- e. Request LGUs to appropriate funds for the use of the LCRO in procuring registration forms and other supplies/materials/equipments needed by the office.
- f. Creation of an ad-hoc committee on vital registration to draft a bill amending the Civil Registry Law.

The long term recommendations were the following;

- a. Creation of an independent National Civil Registration Office (NCRO) which can handle the job on the full term basis.

Senate Bill no 532, authored by Senator Sotero Laurel and endorsed by the Philippine Statistical Association, contains a provision on the elevation of the Civil Registry Division of the NSO to National Civil Registration Office. This has been approved by the Senate and is now pending in the House of Representatives. Under this bill, however, the civil registrars will continue to be appointed by the Mayors. In effect, the proposed set-up will not solve the problem related to the supervision by the CRG.

The Technical Staff of the NSCB, however, recommends the elevation of the CRD to a Civil Registration Department still under the NSO. Furthermore, it supports the House Bill 20094 which provides for the civil registrars to be appointed by the Government Statistician, instead by the Mayor.

Still another bill proposes the creation of the NCRO under the administrative supervision of the Secretary of Justice. Prepared by the CRD of the NSO, the bill provides that civil registrars shall be appointed by the Civil Registrar General.

While the last two proposed legislative measures both answer the need to transfer the administrative supervision of the civil registrars to the OCRG, setting up a totally independent office as proposed under the latter bill would entail greater costs. In view of the financial constraints in the government, the TWG-VRS supports the substitute bill prepared by the NSCB, that is, elevating the CRD to Civil Registry Department but still with the NSO.

- b. Processing the vital statistics at the provincial level.
 - c. Standardization of registration fees to keep them to a minimum; formulation of an appropriate legislative measure in order to avoid excessive fees exacted by LGUs.
 - d. Maximizing government personnel's presence in the field or those already in place, such as those of the Rural Health Units and the Barangay Health Stations of the Department of Health to assist in civil registration.
 - e. Request LGU to include in its regular budget the appropriation of funds to be used solely for civil registration purposes.
3. Measurement of the Level of Registration of Vital Events in Region I (Ilocos Region)

On 17 May 1989, the CRG entered into a Memorandum of Agreement with the Regional Statistical System Development Projects of Region I whereby the latter shall undertake to measure the level of registration of vital events in the area.

The population census is the principal source of demographic statistics. Population census may provide basis for estimating vital rates and may also provide benchmark check on the coverage of birth and death registration.

However, population census is taken only every after ten years. The interval between censuses is a period characterized by absence of information about the dynamics of the demographic processes.

An alternative source of demographic data is the civil registration. Complete birth and death registration can provide accurate information on the level of fertility and mortality. Proceeding with this premise, the project aimed to provide decision makers with data on the extent of underregistration in Region I by means of dual recording system. The system required house-to-house gathering of information which were later compared or matched with civil registration records. To estimate the number of events missed by both systems which were independent of each other, the Chandrasekar- Deming formula was used.

Unfortunately, this paper could not present the results of the project. The writer's copy of the findings and recommendations of the project was apparently misplaced, and there was no time to get another copy from the agency that implemented the project.

4. Study on the Factors of Infant Mortality Based on Vital Registration

This study made by Tan, Valerio and Ocaya was the second phase of the project undertaken by the Statistical Research and Training Center in April 1990 as contribution to the development of an integrated data system for monitoring the situation of children and women, spearheaded by the NSCB. Descriptive analysis of infant mortality was performed utilizing the vital registration records in 1983. The population considered were infants with available death records which were matched with birth certificates. Important factors extracted from the data and found to be associated with infant mortality were birth weight, sex, birth order, age of mother and occupation of father. Relevant information on age and causes of death among infants below one year provided explanation to a major health concern on child mortality. In view of the potential use of a vital

registration records in assessing the status of children, a more organized system can be initiated for efficient retrieval of data for in-depth analysis of characteristics and causality of births and deaths.

The study on infant mortality demonstrated the great value of vital registration records for a wide range of studies particularly on the status of children and women. The distribution of birth weight by sex, infant death by age, cause of death by occupation of father, and infant mortality ratios for several demographic variables such as age of mother, occupation of father and birth order can very well contribute to understanding the problems of the outcome of pregnancy and infant mortality. The data can be introduced into health programs as primary health care is extended to all.

Matching infant death records with certificate of live birth and analyzing infant mortality by birth weight and other recorded data proved worthwhile. They contribute a fine method for studying the relationship between the conditions at birth and survival. There are many more studies that can be explored out of the data. Comparisons of underlying and associated causes of deaths in different parts of the country may reveal surprising differences and indicate clues for further investigation. Such analysis will require relatively large numbers of matched certificates of births and deaths for significant results which the present data cannot provide. Hence, actions should be continuously undertaken to improve the civil registration system to enhance the data base in monitoring the situation of children and women.

5. Declaration of February of Every Year as the Civil Registration Month

On 28 January 1991, President Corazon C. Aquino issued Proclamation No. 682 declaring February of every year as Civil Registration Month. The Proclamation authorized the CRG to promulgate necessary implementing rules and regulations which all LCROs in the country must observe in connection with the activities and programs that may be held locally.

All agencies and instrumentalities of the national government and LGUs, including government-owned or controlled corporations, the private sector and the citizenry are enjoined to support actively the activities and programs for the Civil Registration Month.

6. Study on Factors Affecting the Under-registration of Vital Events in the Province of Ifugao

In 1992, the NSCB has initiated a replication of the Basilan Study in the province of Ifugao in connection with the Child Monitoring Project. In Ifugao, however, the study was undertaken by the Anthropological Studies, Inc. or in short, ANTHROPOS. The objectives of the study were: (1) to collect and review existing literature on the factors that affect the underregistration of vital events; (2) to generate data on correct knowledge, attitudes and practices regarding registration of vital events in Ifugao and to identify those that may have influenced non-registration/late registration of vital events; and (3) to recommend measures on how the civil registration system could be improved.

A purposive, non-probability sampling method was used in the selection of sample areas based on the following criteria: (1) income class of the municipality; (2) ethnolinguistic composition of the municipality; (3) urban and rural barangays; and (4) distance of the barangays from the town center. In the process, five barangays were selected from the municipalities of Banaue and Aguiñaldo.

The following approaches were utilized in the conduct of the research: (1) Review of existing literature on the factors affecting underregistration of vital events and other relevant information on the characteristics and attitudes of the Ifugaos pertaining to birth and death registration; (2) Analysis of the extent of underregistration of the vital events using the result of the accomplished triple recording system forms; (3) Household interviews of heads of families in households where vital events have taken place during the period of

study on the matter of why they have availed of or have not availed of the services of the LCRO; (4) Key informant interviews of traditional village leaders about their knowledge/ attitudes and practices concerning births and deaths; (5) Participant observation of family and village life and rituals and practices related to births and deaths.

The complete results of the study for the period of April to December 1992 indicated a 62.9 percent underregistration of births. Unfortunately, the figures for deaths in the sample areas were very much incomplete. Only thirteen deaths have been accounted for in three barangays and all of which were unregistered.

An analysis of the available figures revealed the presence of several factors that affect the underregistration of vital events. These factors were categorized into two: (1) general factors or those which are not culture-specific and would thus be true for most, if not all, areas in the Philippine; (2) cultural factors or those which are unique to the specific ethnolinguistic group.

The general factors affecting the under-registration of vital events are the following: (1) low income class of the municipality; (2) rural character of the barangay; (3) remoteness of the barangay from the town center; and (4) high illiteracy rate.

The cultural factors affecting the underregistration of vital events are the following:

- a. **Absence of sense of urgency.** - All of the household respondents knew about the need to register births and deaths. However, 96.2 percent of the respondents said that vital registration is unimportant unless there was an immediate need to do so. The lack of sense of urgency in registering vital events is consistent with the Ifugao values system whereby things are only dealt with when there is an immediate need in doing so. Such frame of mind reflects in the everyday life of the Ifugaos. For

example, rice grains are only pounded before cooking time but never for storage purposes.

- b. **No tradition of written records.** - Unlike other Philippine groups which have adopted a syllabic form of writing, the Ifugaos never had their own script. Thus, a writing tradition, including the maintenance of written records, has not really developed. This situation has resulted in the unfamiliarity of Ifugaos with systems of registration. Because of the unfamiliarity with documentation, the Ifugaos are not too keen on the need to register vital events with the LCRO.
- c. **Lack of sanctions.** - Ifugao policy is marked by several sanctions for violation of mores and custom laws. There are sanctions for a variety of behaviour deemed to be deviant, ranging from disrespect toward elders to cases of murder. Many of these sanctions may be considered as "too harsh" for modern standards. Unfortunately, however, non-registration of vital events is one type of behaviour which does not carry corresponding traditional sanctions. This only means that such behaviour is not deviant and could ever be considered as the norm in Ifugao culture.

Even people in the government are quite lax in enforcing the laws on civil registration. Certificates of live birth are not usually required in enrolment in schools. Since everyone knows almost everybody in the barangay, there is no need for proof of one's birth or death. A local civil registry personnel in one municipality mentioned that she herself finished schooling until college without any school or office requiring her to submit her certificate of live birth.

- d. **Preference for home deliveries.** - A significant number of respondents preferred home deliveries of births. Around 32.2 percent of births in the sample area have been delivered at home. Since most of home deliveries were attended to by family members themselves or by traditional birth

attendants, these are not monitored by field personnel of the Department of Health. Thus, there is a lesser chance that such events will be reported for registration.

- e. **Post-partum taboos.** - In Ifugao culture, there are certain taboos upon the delivery of the child which may deter the parents from registering the birth. The mother is prohibited from leaving the house for three days after birth, and five days for the father. From a functionalist point of view, these taboos may be meant to guarantee the care of the infant by his parents for the crucial first five days. These taboos also mean, however that it would be impossible for the parents to report the event within three to five days from the birth of the child. From the sixth day, the parents shall be preoccupied with their respective chores and shall have no more time to report the birth for registration.
- f. **Practices and taboos regarding naming of the child.** - Ifugaos do not normally name a child upon birth. Traditionally, a name is given to a child only when there is something significant or extra-ordinary event that occurs as the child grows up. Thus, there are cases where the child is given a name only after a leaf of a certain tree accidentally fell on the child. This delay in naming a child means a delay in registering the birth.
- g. **Absence of cemeteries.** - There are no government nor church cemeteries in Ifugao villages. The Ifugaos bury their dead near their houses or in a family burial grounds in man-made caves along mountainsides. Because of the absence of official cemeteries, the need to register the death which is a requisite in getting burial permit becomes unnecessary.
- h. **Burial taboos.** - The taboos consists of confining the nearest relative of the deceased in the house. The nearest relative may be the surviving spouse of the deceased, or the parents of the deceased if the latter is unmarried. The

confinement is for the whole duration of the wake, the period of which varies according to social standing: three days for a poor person; five days for a middle-class person; and seven days for the wealthy. This taboo means that the nearest relative could not immediately register the death.

1. **Treatment of the dead.** - The Ifugaos practice worshipping of ancestors. The Ifugaos believe that the spirit of the dead wanders around with the living. During the conduct of participant observation in the sample barangays, the researchers found it difficult for the respondents to mention or to admit that certain family members are now dead. The deceased persons are just mentioned as "*being away*" or "*not here*". Because of this treatment of the dead, it is difficult to ask information about the deceased member of the family.

For the purpose of improving the coverage of civil registration system in Ifugao, the Project recommended the following:

- a. Develop a registration system that suits the culture of the Ifugaos, in particular, and the Cordillera, in general. (Note: Cordillera is an administrative region inhabited by members of ethnic cultural communities, and Ifugao is just one of these communities.) This registration system should incorporate features of the indigenous system of recording, such as respecting traditional names, recognition of native domains, tapping of indigenous recorders, and others.
- b. A pro-active registration system should be encouraged where the civil registrars seek out potential registrants instead of merely waiting for people to register vital events. This could be done through extension offices in the barangays or through periodic outreach campaigns for registration.

- c. Village volunteers can be tapped in seeking out potential registrants and accompanying or assisting them to report to the nearest local civil registry office.
 - d. A continuing information-education campaign on the civil registration should be conducted within the villages. These campaigns should be conducted through village assemblies where the relevance of civil registration could be explained to the people.
 - e. The requirements for certificates of live birth in schools, and for other purposes, should be more strictly enforced. Also, the possibility of providing non-cash incentives to those who register deaths should be considered.
7. Excerpt from the Speech of President Fidel V. Ramos during the National Convention on Civil Registration (24 February 1993;

"To carry out my government's priority programs, I need the help of a civil service that is attuned to the needs of our people and our country. To raise our civil service to its utmost effectivity, we must streamline its organization and its instrumentalities. We need to shift our human resources in government to priority programs, projects and activities.

What does this all mean for civil registration?

From its traditional work of documenting acts and events concerning the civil status of persons, civil registration must begin to play a larger role in our goal of attaining national solidarity and progress.

As we know, civil registration is meant for all Filipinos. But the system has not, until now, assimilated our cultural communities. Although the so-called non-Cristian areas are accessible to civil registers, we have not reached them yet.

Until the birth, death, and marriage of every Filipino, regardless of his or her religion, customs and traditions, is properly documented by civil registration, our vision for national solidarity and progress will remain just a dream.

In a way, civil registration expresses an individual's will to become a part of national society. Civil registration does not inquire into an individual's political affiliation or religious belief, nor into the customs and traditions to which he or she subscribes. None of these is made a condition for compliance with the law. Hence, the enforcement of civil registration laws strengthens the solidarity of the community and the unity of the nation.

I appreciate the problems that have slowed down the development of civil registration in our country. They are the lack of budget support and defects in organization and administration of the civil register groups. And there are also the negative perceptions of individuals and social groups, as well as the inaccessibility of civil registries to people from the more remote and least-developed portions of our archipelago.

These problems account, in part, for the low coverage of civil registration in our country. While our neighboring countries have reached more than ninety percent coverage, our country is still at the level of seventy to seventy-five percent.

We obviously need to step up the development of our civil registration system. I assure you that my administration shall support whatever programs and projects the Civil Registrar General may consider necessary to improve the quality and level of registration, and to ensure fast and effective delivery of your services to the public."

8. Issuance of Administrative Order No. 1, S. 1993

On 27 January 1993, the Administrative Order No. 1 which was promulgated by the OCRG took effect. This Order contains the implementing rules and regulations of all laws on civil registration, and it amended Administrative Order No. 1, S. 1983. Added to the new Order were the legal opinions of the Secretary of Justice, precepts of circulars and memoranda issued by the CRG, new concepts developed by experience and study, and other matters that were not embodied in the previous Order. Copies of this new Order were recently distributed to all LCROs and to all others who are involved in the registration of vital events.

9. Revision of Registration Forms and Preparation of Manual of Instructions

To conform with the automation of civil registration system in the Philippines, and in line with Administrative Order No. 1, S. 1993, the OCRG, in consultation with the Department of Health, Department of Justice, Department of Interior and Local Governments, National Economic and Development Authority, National Statistical Coordination Board, University of the Philippines Law Center, National Federation of Local Civil Registry Offices, and other involved government agencies, revised the following registration forms: (1) Certificate of Live Birth; (2) Certificate of Death; (3) Certificate of Fetal Death; (4) Certificate of Marriage; (5) Certificate of Foundling; and (6) Application for Marriage License.

To assure the proper filling up of these forms, a corresponding Manual of Instructions was prepared. Some LCROs have already started using the new forms as early as July, 1993. All LCROs are, however, expected to use the new forms effective 1 January 1994.

10. Training of Local Civil Registry Personnel, Hospital's Medical Records Officers/ Clerks, Rural Health Midwives, Solemnizing Officers, and other Concerned Parties.

With the promulgation of new implementing rules and regulations, introduction of new registration forms, and revision of coding scheme, it becomes necessary for the OCRG to conduct series of trainings of all parties who are directly or indirectly involved in civil registration activities especially the local civil registry personnel.

The training program consisted of three levels. The first level which was done in March, 1993 was attended by the staff of the CRD and the 14 Regional Administrators of the NSO. The second level in April 1993 was conducted by the Regional Administrator in the region, and attended by the provincial statistic Officers. The last level which is the most important was conducted in the province by the provincial statistics officers. The last level is considered very important because the participants of the training were the very persons who are expected to implement the various changes and development in civil registration. Actually, the last level training is still ongoing, and perhaps, all provinces shall have finished training all local civil registry personnel by 31 December 1993.

11. Establishment of Civil registration System for Muslim Filipinos

As early as 1986, the OCRG conceived the idea of establishing a system of civil registration which will consider the unique customs, practices and rites of Muslim Filipinos. However, due to lack of resources, the final conceptualization was made only during the middle part of 1992. Series of consultations were made with authorities of Islam and of Islamic culture of Muslim Filipinos, and two seminar/workshops were conducted.

The first seminar/workshop was held in Cagayan de Oro City (Mindanao) on July 14-16, 1992. The participants of this seminar/workshop were Regional Adminis-trators, provincial statistics officers and other personnel of the NSO who are Muslims themselves or to where their respective jurisdictions the Muslim Filipinos are residing. The objective of the workshop was to develop plans, formulate strategies, and outline procedures for the establishment of the system of civil registration for Muslim Filipinos.

The second seminar/workshop was held in Zamboanga City, also in Mindanao, on October 21 and 22, 1992. The participants of this seminar/workshop, aside from the personnel of the NSO, were religious, political and traditional dignitaries of Muslim community in the Philippines such as Judges of the Shari'a Courts, Assemblymen of the Government of Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao, Muslim Datus, Imams, local government officials, representatives from the Mindanao State University, Department of Foreign Affairs, Office of Muslim affairs, and other agencies having interest in Muslim affairs. The output of the first seminar/workshop was introduced during the second seminar/workshop. The main objective of the second seminar/workshop was however to determine items of information not contained in the standard registration forms and which the Muslim community would like to be entered in the civil register.

On the basis of these consultations, seminars and workshops, the CRG drafted the Administrative Order No. 2 S. 1993, and the corresponding registration forms for exclusive use of Muslim Filipinos. The drafts are yet to be finalized, and hopefully the system of civil registration for Muslim Filipinos can be formally introduced during the first quarter of 1994.

Learning about the project, President Fidel V. Ramos said during the National Convention on Civil Registration on February 24-26, 1993:

"A project of the CRG that has my wholehearted support is the establishment of civil registration system for Muslim Filipinos.

This religious grouping is the only one in our country governed by a separate law on persons and family relations, Presidential Decree No. 1083, or the Muslim Code of the Philippines.

I know that Muslim Filipinos find it hard to deal with the Government Service Insurance System and Social Security System, with insurance companies and agencies such as the passport division of the Department of Foreign Affairs. They have problems even when they take government examinations because their births and marriages, and the deaths of their parents and spouses are not documented.

Civil registration for Muslim Filipinos, is therefore a big step toward fulfilling our vision of one nation with one purpose one secular spirit.

No matter how small a cultural community may be, it deserves the attention of the civil registry. I ask the CRG to devise a system that will bind all Filipinos in a common interest and responsibility of registering births, deaths and marriages."

As to the coverage of registration, there was no study made to measure directly the extent of underregistration of vital events at the national level for the last twenty years. A national survey for this purpose is too expensive for the Philippine government to undertake. Some studies, as earlier discussed in this section of the paper, were at the most conducted at the regional level, and yet the sample area is small. These were foreign-assisted projects which indicates that the government could not really

afford to conduct the survey even at the regional or provincial level.

The least that the OCRG can do is to estimate the coverage of registration from the results of the census of population through indirect technique (Brass Growth Balance Method). By means of indirect estimation technique, the level of death registration was placed at 81.3 percent in 1980, but ten years after, or in 1990, the percentage of completeness of death registration went down to 72.7 percent. For birth, the level of registration in 1980 was estimated at 80.0 percent, and made a little improvement in 1990 at 84.8 percent.

Regarding the factors that hamper full coverage of civil registration, the same were earlier discussed in this section of the paper. Although the factors or causes of underregistration were determined from regional studies, they are generally applicable to almost everywhere in the Philippines.

H. Uses of registration Records

In the Philippines, the records of births, deaths and marriages are considered public documents and are "*prima facie*" evidence of the truth of the facts they contained. Their uses to the individual and to the society are classified into three, and these are the following:

1. Legal and Protective

Birth records are sources of important information on the individual. The individual's certificate of live birth or the entry of his fact of birth in the Register of Births is his lifetime identification document, even after his death. By means of his birth records, he can prove the fact of his birth for the determination of his parentage or filiation, tracing ancestry, establishing his identity, inheritance rights, legal dependency, and others; the date of his birth for proof of age required for entrance to

school, the exercise of the right to vote or to enter civil service, and of legal age for marriage, issuance of professional licenses, pension benefits, military allowances, as well as proof for request of additional personal tax exemptions, and others; and place of birth, for obtaining passport, establishing citizenship, determining basis for immigration and naturalization.

The death records provide legal evidence relevant to claims for inheritance, insurance purposes, settlement of decedent's estate, dissolution of marriage, extinguishment of liability, and others.

The marriage record is useful to the individual to prove the fact of marriage in establishing proof of right to insurance benefits, pensions, military allowances, proving parentage to confer legitimacy and right to inheritance, for obtaining passports, for immigration and naturalization purposes, tax deductions, provision and allocation of specific types of government housing and numerous other facilities that relate to a married man and his wife, including claims to a change of nationality on the basis of marriage.

2. Administrative

The significance of civil registration to the improvement of public health administration has been increasingly recognized.

Birth records are the bases for public health programs like postnatal care of mother and child, vaccination and immunization, premature baby care, assistance to the physically handicapped, and generally used by the Department of Health and Department of Social Welfare and Development for effective delivery of certain health and social services.

The death records are used as indicators of the existence of infectious and epidemic

discoveries and the need for immediate control measures, public safety, accident prevention and eradication programs; in the clearing of files such as disease case registers, social security, military service files, electoral rolls and tax registers.

Marriage records are used administratively as proof of establishment of a family or household and hence, to initiate family-benefit programs related to housing, health and other social services. Marriage records also serve to clear administrative files on programs, dependent on the never-married status. Human Resources Management Division whether in government or private office, requires submission of marriage record in support of application for maternity leave by a pregnant woman.

3. Statistical

Vital statistics derived from the civil registry records are used in the preparation of intercensal estimates of the population and in forecasting requirements for housing, goods and services. They are needed in planning and evaluating the needs for more social services like hospitals, clinics, schools, and other needs. Demographers and sociologists and health related professions depend on vital statistics to measure fertility and mortality of the various social groups of the country and use them as bases for numerous studies on population change.

IV. THE NATIONAL VITAL STATISTICS SYSTEM

A. The Legal Frame of the System

The scientific treatment of the vital statistics in the Philippines commenced during the last quarter of the 19th century when the Central Office of Statistics was created as a dependency of the Bureau of Civil Administration. Using the vital records of births, deaths and marriages submitted by all parish priests, the Central Office of Statistics came out with the first monthly publication of vital statistics on 1 July 1895.

With the advent of the American occupation, the activities of the Central Office of Statistics with regard to the production of vital statistics were placed under the control of the Board of Health, later superseded by the Bureau of Health, and finally, by the Philippine Health Service. Among the duties of the Philippine Health Service was "to make investigations and collect statistical data or other information on the general vital statistics of the Philippine Islands, the causes of diseases especially those of epidemic or communicable character and the sources of mortality".

On 19 August 1940, the Bureau of the Census and Statistics was created by Commonwealth Act No. 591. The Bureau of the Census and Statistics, now known as the National Statistics Office, is empowered under Section 2 of the law creating it "to compile and classify all such statistical data and information and to publish the same for the use of the Government and the people", and "to carry out and administer the provisions of Act No. 3753 (Civil Registry Law)". Section 7 of the law further provided that "the powers, functions, and duties of the Director of the National Library under the provisions of Act No. 3753 are transferred to the Bureau of the Census and Statistics".

Subsequently, on 1 January 1941, the President of the Philippines issued Executive Order No. 314 which transferred the Vital Statistics Section of the Bureau of Health (formerly, Philippine Health Service) to the Bureau of the Census and Statistics. After the transfer, the former Vital Statistics Section was formed into a regular division (Division of Demography) of the Bureau of the Census and Statistics whose chief was tasked to perform the following duties: (1) General supervision over the personnel and activities of the division; (2) Plan, organize and conduct investigations in the incidences of birth rates, infant mortality, morbidity, mortality, calculation of expectations of life, trend of mortality from specific causes, seasonality of birth, and others; (3) Interpret vital statistics; (4) Test the adequacy of birth registration; (5) Supervise the classification of live births, stillbirths, legitimate

and illegitimate births; and (6) Prepare estimates of population.

In sum, the legal basis of the present vital statistics system in the Philippines is the Commonwealth Act No. 591 which created the Bureau of the Census and Statistics on 19 August 1940.

B. Administrative arrangements of the system

In the Philippines, there is only one authority with regard to the production and publication of vital statistics and that authority is the NSO. Within its organizational structure is the Civil Registry Division (CRD) through which the Administrator of the NSO in his capacity as CRG carries out and administers the provisions of the Civil Registry Law. This Division however deals strictly with the legal and administrative aspects of civil registration.

The function of generating and interpreting vital statistics is a task of Vital Statistics Section (VSS) of the Social and Demographic Statistics Division, also under the NSO. The VSS is composed of well-trained statisticians and coding clerks. The Section Head is a professional statistician.

The generation of vital statistics is centralized at the NSO, although the LGUs are not prevented from generating their own. Normally, however the LGUs depend much on the vital statistics produced by the NSO. This is so because the vital statistics produced by the NSO are not purely at the national level but also by region and province.

Processing of civil registry documents starts at the LCRO where the documents are compiled and coded. The documents are submitted to the CRD by the LCROs within the first ten days of the month following the month of registration. The Field Operations Section (FOS) of the CRD records the documents, sorts them by type, date and place of occurrence, and bind them in a set of 300 to 350 documents. With appropriate label of the folders, the documents are forwarded by the CRD to the Social and Demographic Statistics Division through its VSS. The latter examines the

coding made by the LCROs and makes corrections when necessary. The documents are then forwarded to Information Resources Division (IRD) where data are encoded in the mainframe computer. The IRD produces the statistical tables needed by the Social and Demographic Statistics Division, and the national indices of births, deaths and marriages which are needed by the CRD. From the IRD, the documents are deposited at the Archives Management Section (AMS) of the CRD. While the documents are in the Archives, they will be subsequently microfilmed and from time to time, be retrieved for issuing certifications to interested parties.

The accuracy of data encoding depends much on the accuracy of coding the documents, that is why although the documents were already coded by the LCROs, the same documents are reviewed by the VSS. The coding clerks of the VSS are well-instructed and have already acquired the necessary skill by having long period of experience with the same type of work. In fact, some of the coding clerks have already memorized almost all the codes. The VSS uses the Philippines Standard Geographic Codes, Philippine Standard Occupational Classification, and the International Classification of Diseases, Injuries and Causes of Deaths.

In reviewing the coding work done by the LCROs, the VSS discovers some errors in the use of codes but these are easily corrected by the coding clerks before the documents are brought to IRD for data encoding. Some of the problems in coding are the unspecified occupation such as when the entry is only "employee" or "government worker" or "public servant", and others. In the certificates of death, the personal handwritings of the attendants at death with regard to causes of death cannot be read. There are documents also, although very few, which have incomplete entries like sex, birth order, age at death, and others. In cases like these, the VSS imputes the data according to established rules on imputation. If imputation is not possible, which is an extreme case, the VSS through the CRD, makes verification with the concerned LCRO by means of telegram.

For the purpose of generating vital statistics, all documents registered during the year should reach CRD not later than March 31 of the following year. This is the general rule. There are years, however, when the cut-off date is moved to a later date. This happens during times when the IRD has priority work to do such as data processing of censuses and surveys which by their nature should be given priority in the use of computers. In this case, the CRD continues to follow up unsubmitted documents from the LCROs and includes as many documents as received in generating vital statistics until such time when the IRD is ready to accommodate the documents for data processing. Sometimes, the period of waiting for availability of computer extends to almost a year or more after the reference period.

C. Procedures for Reporting and Monitoring

1. Monitoring statistical reporting

In the Philippines, there is no separate form from which vital statistics are derived. The same standard registration form is used for legal and statistical purposes. These forms are the following:

- Certificate of Marriage (Mun. Form No. 97)
- Certificate of Live Birth (Mun. Form No. 102)
- Certificate of Death (Mun. Form No. 103)
- Certificate of Fetal Death (Mun. Form No. 103-A)

The forms have uniform layout. Generally, the forms have the following parts: (1) Form number and identification; (2) Geographic identification and registry number; (3) Remarks/Annotation; (4) Entry Portion; and (5) Coding portion.

The entry portion which occupies two-thirds lengthwise space contains the items of information required by law to be entered in the civil register, and those items which are needed

for statistical purpose. On the right side of the form occupying one-third lengthwise space is the coding portion where alpha-numeric codes are entered for selected items of information from the entry portion.

These forms are used countrywide. No LCRO is allowed to use registration forms other than those prescribed by the CRG.

The Philippines subscribes to the principles and recommendations of United Nations for vital statistics system especially with regard to concepts and definitions of live birth, death and fetal death. For marriage, the legal definition provided by Article 1 of the Family Code of the Philippines is used, although it may be regarded as further elaboration of marriage as defined by United Nations.

The vital events as defined and used in the vital statistics system are the following:

1. Live birth is the complete expulsion or extraction of a product of conception from its mother, irrespective of the duration of pregnancy, which after such separation, breathes or shows any other evidence of life, such as beating of the heart, pulsation of the umbilical cord, or definite movement of voluntary muscles, whether or not the umbilical cord has been cut off or the placenta is still attached; each product of such birth is considered alive.

2. Death is a permanent disappearance of all evidence of life at any time after live birth has taken place. It is a postnatal cessation of vital functions without capability of resuscitation.

3. Fetal death is a death prior to the complete expulsion of a product of conception, irrespective of the period of pregnancy. The death is indicated by the fact that after such separation, the fetus does not breathe nor show any other evidence of life, such as the beating

of the heart, pulsation of the umbilical cord or definite movement of voluntary muscles.

4. **Marriage** is a special contract of permanent union between a man and a woman entered into in accordance with law for the establishment of conjugal and family life. It is the foundation of the family and an inviolable social institution whose nature, consequences, and incidents are governed by law and not subject to stipulation, except that marriage settlements may fix the property relations during the marriage within the limits provided by the Family Code of the Philippines.

2. Monitoring of statistical reports

As earlier said in this Section of the paper, there is no separate statistical reports submitted by the LCROs. What they submit only are duplicate copies of the registered documents from where statistical data are extracted for the production of vital statistics. For this reason, monitoring of statistical reports from the LCROs is not applicable.

D. Procedures of Statistical Processing

1. Availability of manuals and guides for data processing

A manual of instructions provides procedures on how to fill up the registration forms and how to code the items of information which are required for generating vital statistics. Every LCRO is provided with this manual. Before sending the documents to the CRD, the documents are coded by the LCRO. To be sure that the documents are properly or correctly coded, the VSS of the Social and Demographic Statistics Division reviews one by one the documents before the same are forwarded to the Key punch Operations Section of the IRD. Documents which are found to have no codes are coded and those with wrong codes are corrected. Each employee in the VSS is provided with the

same manual used by the LCROs to ensure uniform understanding on how the registration forms should be filled up and coded. The manual contains all possible alpha-numeric codes needed in coding the documents such as Philippine Standard Geographic Codes, Philippine Standard Occupational Classification, International Classification of Diseases, Injuries and Causes of Deaths, and others.

2. The Tabulation Plan

Data entry and preparation of statistical tables are done at the IRD. Data encoders in this Division are also well-trained on how to operate computers and are provided with appropriate manual on data entry instructions and field descriptions.

There are two types of machines for data entry. They are microcomputers which use the CENTRY subsystem of Integrated Microcomputer Processing System, and the IBM 5280 machine running on Data Entry/Report Program Generator.

The data are stored in diskettes, and later transferred to tapes readable by an IBM 4341 machine. Editing and updating of computer reject listings are done to ensure the correctness and completeness of the contents of the tapes. All tapes are merged and sorted into just one file. Editing of data items and imputation of erroneous entries are done next. At this stage, the file for generation of national indices for a particular type of vital event is produced, as well as, the imputation listing which contains the percentages of data items that were subjected to imputation at provincial level.

Cities are then recoded and the rest of the erroneous geographic codes are corrected in the tabulation file. The output file is subjected to further sorting by region, province and municipality, and recorded further to fit into COCENTS program.

Vital statistics are tabulated using COBOL, COCENTS and CENTS IV programs. An IBM 4341 mainframe computer is utilized for this purpose. The statistical tables generated by the computer undergo consistency checking at the VSS prior to analysis.

For documents which are received after the cut-off date, these are no longer tabulated. They are just filed and deposited at the archives.

3. Training in connection with vital statistics

Coders and data entry personnel are well-trained with respect to their individual work. However, local civil registry personnel do not have specialized training in connection with vital statistics except in the aspect of coding the documents. This is so because there is no separate statistical reporting system. The training of local civil registry personnel with regard to proper accomplishment and coding of the registration forms is adequate.

E. Publication and Dissemination of Vital Statistics

The VSS publishes annually the Vital Statistics Report which contains 27 statistical tables with corresponding analyses. These tables by type of event are the following:

1. Marriage

- a. Marriages by month of occurrence and by region, province and city
- b. Marriages by type of ceremony and by age of bride and groom
- c. Marriages by nationality of bride and groom
- d. Marriages by age of bride and groom

2. Birth

- a. Live births by month of occurrence, by sex, and by region, province and city
- b. Live births by usual residence of mother, by month of occurrence and by sex
- c. Live births by attendant at birth and by region, province and city
- d. Live births by age of mother and by number of living children
- e. Live births by age of mother and by live birth order
- f. Live births by nationality of father and mother
- g. Live births by sex, occupation and age of father

3. Death

- a. Deaths by month of occurrence, by sex, and by region, province and city
- b. Deaths by sex, by age, and by region, province and city
- c. Deaths by attendance and by region, province and city
- d. Deaths by usual residence, by month of occurrence, and by sex
- e. Deaths by age and by nationality
- f. Deaths by cause, by age and by sex
- g. Deaths by cause and by attendance
- h. Deaths of 10 years old and over, by civil status, by sex and by region, province and city
- i. Deaths of 15 years old and over, by sex, by occupation and by age
- j. Infant deaths by age, by sex and by region, province and city
- k. Infant deaths by cause, by age and sex
- l. Foetal deaths by month of occurrence and by region, province and city
- m. Foetal deaths by type of attendance and by region, province and city

- n. Late foetal deaths by age of mother, by birth order and by legitimacy
- o. Maternal deaths by month of occurrence and by region, province and city
- p. Maternal deaths by age group and by region, province and city

The latest issue of the Vital Statistics Report is for 1989 vital events (birth, death and marriage) which was published and released during the early part of 1993. However, preliminary statistical tables for 1990 and 1991 vital events in computer printouts are made available to researchers, and interested parties, minus the official analyses of the VSS. The 1990 Vital Statistics Report will be released before the end of the 1993 or early part of 1994.

The formal publication of the Vital Statistics Report in book form is sometimes delayed due to budgetary constraints, and sometimes due to delay in data processing, as when the NSO has censuses or surveys which need priority action of the IRD.

In addition to the annual Vital Statistics Report, the Vital Statistics Section publishes in the "Quarterly Journal of the Philippine Statistics" and in "Special Releases" certain write-up and information on vital statistics. These are regular publications of the NSO.

F. Assessment of the vital statistics system

As far as the writer knows there has not been a study to evaluate the coverage and quality of vital statistics derived from the civil registration system. The users of the vital statistics, however, are warned about the limitations of the raw data that were used. These limitations are: (1) The data were extracted from the civil registry documents submitted by the LCROs to the OCRG within a given period; (2) data from delayed registrations and unregistered events are excluded in the tabulation; (3) The data were not adjusted with respect to underregistration. Depending on where the vital statistics will be used, the users are given options to make the necessary

adjustments or accept the vital statistics as presented by the VSS.

Due to the limitations of the data such as low percentage of registration aggravated by failure of some LCROs to submit duplicate copies of all documents recorded in their respective offices, the vital statistics generated therefrom could not competently be used in estimating vital rates, unless proper adjustment is made. Estimation of vital rates using indirect method is done by a party who needs it. The VSS just provides the unadjusted number of registered births, deaths and marriages. There are times when the vital rates are indirectly estimated in the basis of the census of population, like what the University of the Philippine Population Institute does. The Commission on Population, in connection with its Family Planning Program releases vital rates from time to time but it is not explained how and on what basis the estimates were arrived at. Same is true with the Department of Health.

**Table 2. *Number of C/MCRs Not Regularly Submitting
Civil Registry Documents to the OCRG by
Number of Months of Delinquency: 1988-1992***

No. of Months Not Submitted	Number of Delinquent C/MCRs				
	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992
1	22	8	6	10	17
2	1	1	2	10	8
3	4	1	3	4	2
4	2	1	1	3	4
5	1	1	4	2	0
6	0	2	2	4	5
7	2	2	0	3	0

Table 2. (Cont'n)

No. of Months Not Submitted	Number of Delinquent C/MCRs					
	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	
8	1	1	0	1	2	
9	1	2	1	3	0	
10	0	0	0	0	3	
11	0	2	0	1	3	
12	43	42	40	53	41	

Table 3. *Number of Documents Submitted to OCRG
C/MCRs By Type of Events: 1988-1992*

Events	YEAR OF SUBMISSION				
	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992
BIRTH	1,576,689	1,576,935	1,618,621	1,717,467	1,741,046
DEATH	265,483	277,769	261,381	260,041	284,407
FETAL DEATH	5,301	5,703	5,906	4,494	4,281
MARRIAGE	311,467	317,448	335,631	356,589	384,148
TOTAL	2,158,940	2,177,855	2,221,539	2,338,591	2,413,882

Also, there has not been any study yet on the extent of losses in terms of statistical data which might have resulted from the failure of the LCROs to report all events that were recorded in the civil register. Table 2 does not show the number of documents which the LCROs might have failed to submit to the OCRG but it does show the number of delinquent civil registrars and number of months they failed to submit the reports. Table 3 shows the total documents submitted to

OCRG from 1988 to 1992. An effort was exerted to estimate the unsubmitted documents by pinpointing the cities and municipalities and the monthly average number of documents submitted during the previous months or years, but due to lack of time, the results were not ready or available at the time when this paper was finalized.

As mentioned earlier in this paper, documents for late registration and those which were submitted beyond the cut-off date are not included in the vital statistics report, and no effort has ever been made to include them in the tabulation. In fact, the OCRG has no record or estimate on the number of cases of late registration by period of delay and by type of event. Also, there is no record or estimate on the number of documents submitted by LCROs beyond the cut-off date.

So far, there has not been any programme in the country to strengthen or improve the vital statistics system. If ever there was such programme conducted in the past, the primary consideration was undoubtedly the strengthening or improvement of the civil registration system. This is based on the theory that no effort of strengthening or improving the vital statistics system could succeed if the civil registration system from which the vital statistics are derived is defective or incomplete.

G. Uses of Vital Statistics

Generally, vital statistics derived from civil registration are needed for population estimation, population projection and other analytical studies which are important and useful to planners and policy-makers. They also provide the bases for forecasting requirements for food, housing, medical facilities, education and other needs of the population. In short, vital statistics are essential in planning for social and economic development.

The frequent users of vital statistics in the Philippines are the following:

- (1) Department of Health
- (2) National Economic and Development Authority
- (3) National Statistical Coordination Board
- (4) Medical practitioners and students
- (5) Professional demographers and sociologists
- (6) Students in Demography, Sociology and Statistics
- (7) Insurance companies

For the purpose and exclusive use of the Department of Health, the VSS makes special tabulation of causes of death at the provincial level and some other tabulations in addition to the regular vital statistics produced by the office.

The United Nations Statistical Office is also considered one of the users of the Philippine vital statistics. Every year, this Office gets vital statistical data from the VSS.

As to how these users actually use the vital statistics data, the VSS is no longer concerned with it. The VSS has the duty to provide the data to whoever needs them but does not inquire anymore, much more, follow up how and where there data are used. Further to this, the users do not have active participation in deciding what and when to produce vital statistics, except in the case of Department of Health and the U.N. Statistical Office. The Department of Health actively participates in the generation of vital statistics by sometimes requiring the VSS to make special tabulations for its purpose. In fact, the Department of Health was the principal partner of the OCRG in devising the Certificate of Death presently used in the Philippines. The present certificate of death contains data on perinatal deaths (for ages 0 to 7 days) because of the needs of the Department of Health. The United Nations, on the other hand, provides new concepts and development in vital statistics system which facilitate comparison of data with other countries.

V. COORDINATION AMONG GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS

The only government agency which is legally mandated to enforce laws, rules and regulations on civil registration is the NSO through its CRD (or the Office of the Civil Registrar General, as popularly known). However, in the enforcement of these laws, rules and regulations, the OCRG has to coordinate and cooperate with other government agencies in some particular aspects. The degree, manner and the aspect of coordination and cooperation, as well as the time and need of such coordination and cooperation depend greatly on whether the agency's involvement is direct or indirect. The involvement is direct when the civil registration system cannot effectively and efficiently function without them. It is indirect when the agency is merely an end-user of the system's output.

Among the agencies (private and government) which have direct involvement in civil registration system and whom the OCRG should coordinate and cooperate with are the following:

A. Department of Interior and Local Government Through the Various LGUs,

It is important to note that the C/MCRs and other local government officials who perform civil registration function are appointees of the local chief executives. These civil registrars are the frontline implementors of laws on civil registration but the CRG has no involvement with their recruitment, selection and appointment. To fill in the gap between the civil registrars and the CRG, the latter should have a strong coordination network with the former.

B. Department of Health Through the Local Health Officers, Rural Health Units, Hospitals and Clinics,

The OCRG should coordinate with the Department of Health for various reasons. Firstly, births and deaths occur in the hospitals and clinics which under the law are

under the supervision of the Department of Health. If the births and deaths occur outside hospitals and clinics, these are taken care of by the rural health units. Under all these conditions, the duty to prepare certificates of live birth or the certificates of death, as well as reporting the same for recording in the civil register, is imposed by law upon the hospital/clinic authorities and the attendants at birth or death, as the case may be.

Secondly, the civil registrar has no authority to register a death unless the certificate of death is reviewed by the local health office especially with regard to the cause of death. Lastly, the Department of Health, because of the nature of its function, has interest in the occurrence of births and deaths, as well as, their registration.

C. Philippine Medical Association

The association is a private group composed of physicians and other medical practitioners. The OCRG coordinates with this association with regard to the handwriting of those physicians who certify on the cause of death in the certificate of death. Some doctors type the entry but others just make the entry in their own handwriting which could not be read by the civil registrars and coders. The coordination by the civil registrars, with the local chapters of the association is working well as evidenced by the fact that the number of doctors who typewrite the entry for cause of death is increasing.

D. Barangay Secretaries

Under the Local Government Code of 1991, the Barangay Secretaries should assist the civil registrars in registering vital events that may occur within their respective localities. The OCRG coordinates with them by defining clearly the form of assistance that

they should render pursuant to the law. The OCRG will surely tap their assistance in case the mobile registration project will be pursued.

E. The United Nations and the International Institute of Vital Registration and Statistics

These international agencies regularly provide the OCRG of their publications which are very useful in improving the system of civil registration in the country. Through their publications, new concepts and strategies for improving the system, especially those based from the experience of other countries, are adopted in the Philippine with or without modifications. This is certainly within the concept of coordination and cooperation.

F. The Catholic Church and other religious groups.

There are many cases in the Philippines where the facts of birth recorded in the civil registry are not the same as those recorded in the Church. There are occasions when a child enrolls in grade one in a sectarian school where the certificate of live birth and certificate of baptism are required. The parents of the child encounter problem when there is inconsistency of entries in the two documents. Because of complaint from many parents, the OCRG obligates itself to coordinate with all religious groups in the Philippines whereby the church, before baptizing a child, should require the presentation of the certificate of live birth where the facts of birth should be extracted for the purpose of making entry in the church register of baptisms.

6. Department of Justice

The OCRG coordinates with the Department of Justice in matters related to the proper interpretation of laws on civil registration. In most cases, the legal opinions rendered by the Secretary of Justice are incorporated with the rules and regulations governing civil registration system in the country.

Other agencies whose involvement in civil registration is limited to being end-users of the system's output include the different foreign embassies, passport division of the Department of Foreign Affairs, Professional Regulatory Commission, Government Service Insurance system, Social Security System, private insurance companies, and others. the coordination of the CRG with these agencies is informal and is limited to the proper appreciation of the civil registry documents submitted to them, as to whether the documents are genuine or fake. These agencies normally do not accept certificates of live birth, certificates of death and certificates of marriage unless the same are authenticated by the OCRG. In case an agency doubts the authenticity of the document, the same is submitted to the OCRG for verification.

With regard to vital statistics system, there is no visible and formal coordinative and cooperative work between or among agencies which may have interest in the vital statistics. Inasmuch as the reliability and integrity of the vital statistics greatly depend on the effectiveness, efficiency and quality of the civil registration system, almost all efforts are geared toward improving the latter.

However, in the absence of coordination effort which specifically focuses on vital statistics system, there is a government agency which is tasked of coordinating all statistical activities in the country. This is the National Statistical Coordination Board (NSCB) which was created under Executive Order No. 121 on 30 January 1987. This Board is the highest policy-making and coordinating body on statistical matters. It is composed, of the

following agencies represented by their respective, heads: (1) National Economic and Development Authority; (2) Department of Budget and Management; (3) Central Bank; (4) National Statistics Office; (5) Secretary General of the Board; (6) Statistical Research and Training Center; (7) League of Governors and City Mayors; (8) Representative from the private sector; (9) All Departments under the Office of the President.

The powers and functions of the Board are the following: (1) Promote and maintain an efficient statistical system in the government; (2) Formulate policies on all matters relating to government statistical operations; (3) Recommend executive and legislative measures to enhance the development and efficiency of the system, including the internal structure of statistical agencies; (4) Establish appropriate mechanism for statistical coordination at the regional, provincial and city levels; (5) Approve the Philippine Statistical Development programs; (6) Allocate statistical responsibilities among government agencies by designating the statistics to be collected by them, including their periodicity and content; (7) Review budgetary proposals involving statistical operations and submit an integrated budget for the Philippine Statistical System to the Department of Budget and Management; (8) Review and clear, prior to release, all funds for statistical operations; (9) Develop, prescribe, and maintain appropriate framework for the improvement of statistical coordination; and (10) Prescribe uniform standards and classification system in the government statistics.

In view of the powers and functions and the very purposes for which the Board was created, it is the belief of this writer that the generation or production of vital statistics as part of the Philippine statistical system is properly coordinated. It is worthwhile mentioning that the decision of the Board on statistical matters is final and executory.

In pursuance to the objective of Executive Order No. 121, the Board created an Inter-Agency Committee on Vital Statistics in 1987. This was mentioned in the earlier portion of this paper (Item III, 7.

Assessment of the Civil Registration System) where the findings and recommendations of the Committee with regard to civil registration system were discussed. In this portion of the paper, the findings and recommendations of the committee with regard to vital statistics system are discussed hereunder.

For easy reference, it is worthwhile mentioning again that the committee was divided into two groups, to wit: Technical Working Group on Vital Registration System (TWG-VRS) and Technical Working Group on Vital Indicators (TWG-VI). The overall objectives of the TWG-VI is to review and assess the different estimates of vital indicators and the corresponding methodologies employed and to recommend the levels of indicators that may be adopted, given current situations in data and data generation adopted for each of these indicators.

The TWG-VI came up with a "state-of-the-art of vital indicators" which is a compilation of the various levels of indicators, the data sources and the estimation methodologies that are being utilized in the computation. The following vital indicators were considered:

A. Fertility

1. Crude birth rate
2. Total fertility rate
3. Age-specific fertility rate

B. Mortality

1. Crude death rate
2. Infant mortality rate
3. Life expectancy

C. Nuptiality

1. Marriage rate
2. Average age at marriage
3. Singulate mean age at marriage

In addition to the matrix on methodologies, other supporting tables were prepared containing the estimated levels of each of the identified vital indicators which resulted from the application of the methods included in the matrix. It was recognized that an in-depth analysis of the various methodologies cannot be done without looking into and analyzing these actual estimates and levels.

The TWG-VI had specific recommendations on the three major indicators for planning needs, namely: Fertility, Mortality and Nuptiality based on current realities in data availability and stage of data development in the country:

- A. On the indicator of fertility, it is recommended that direct estimation using pregnancy history data from surveys (e.i. series of National Demographic Surveys and National Health Surveys) be employed. Moreover, analysis of fertility trends should use comparable methodology and data sources particularly in the instrumentation and sampling design.
- B. Given the present condition/state of our data, indirect mortality estimates provide more reliable and realistic levels of mortality compared to those of the direct estimates. Available direct estimates particularly crude death rate and infant mortality rate are clearly underestimated but nonetheless exhibit smoother and more defined trend/pattern. It was therefore suggested that direct estimates, corrected by the percentage completeness of registration/enumeration (to be provided by the NSO) be employed to validate the results derived by the indirect techniques. It is also recommended that the NSO prepares a revised estimates based on the results of 1987 National Health Survey.
- C. On the indicator of nuptiality, the recommendation is to adopt better indicator and correct the table on the estimates of average age at marriage based on 1968 and 1973 National Demographic Surveys, and 1978 Republic of the Philippines Fertility Survey. It is recommended

that the singulate mean age of marriage (SMAM) be used instead because the average age at marriage does not capture recent shifts in nuptiality. SMAM can be attained from both census and survey data. Nevertheless, average age at marriage remains a useful parameter in the analysis of differentials of nuptiality.

- D. Unfortunately, the Committee was dissolved after it rendered its final report to the Board in March, 1990. With regard to its being revived or reorganized, that depends solely on the decision of the Board. Every now and then, the Board creates an inter-agency committee for a specific purpose, and once the purpose is achieved, the committee is dissolved. Possibly, when there will be matters pertaining to vital statistics that will be included in the agenda during the Board's regular monthly meeting, and these matters will necessitate research and in-depth study before the Board can make an appropriate decision, the Inter-agency Committee on Vital Statistics may be revived.

VI. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The vital statistics system in the country, in real sense, does not have a problem which is particularly arising from it or caused by it. If ever there is a problem in connection with the vital statistics system such as concerning its reliability and timeliness of its publication, the problem is not caused by the system itself but by other factors such as the various defects of the civil registration system from which the vital statistics are derived. In view of this assertion, the problems that are discussed hereunder are principally related to civil registration system. It is the civil registration system that is really saddled with various problems which tend to stagnate or retard its growth and development. For clarity, the problems are categorized into the following: (1) due to administrative and legal factors; (2) due to technical factors; (3) due to the public; and (4) due to negligence of LCROs. The corresponding recommendations are also classified as short-term and long-term.

A. Problems

1. Due to administrative and legal factors

a. The provisions of the Local Government Code of 1991 which mandate that C/MCR shall be appointed by the mayor, and the provision of the Civil Registry Law placing all civil registrars under the direction and supervision of the CRG are inconsistent with the true concept of effective management. The arrangement gives rise to a situation where there is no employer-employee relationship. The civil registrars are local government employees while their supervisor (Civil Registrar General) is an agency head of a national government office. The civil registrars owe loyalty to the LGUs and none to the CRG.

b. As an offshoot to the problem whereby the supervisor (Civil registrar General) and the subordinates (city municipal civil registrars) do not belong to the same office, the C/MCRs have the tendency to disregard or ignore orders and instructions from the CRG in order to please their respective mayors from whom they owe their appointment and their continued employment. The mayor knows that the civil registrars cannot say no to him even at the point of violating civil registration laws, rules and regulations. This is exemplified in the case of Alberto Corpuz Ignacio whose school records, baptismal certificate and all his other documents show the mentioned name. However, when he applied for the certification of his birth which he needed for the Bar Examination, he discovered that his true name as recorded in the civil register is Roberto Corpuz Ignacio. Since he was not able to persuade the civil registrar to issue to him a certification that will show his name as "Alberto", he approached the Mayor. It had become for the civil registrar a case of obedience to the Mayor and continued employment against being true to the provisions of the Civil Code and a reprimand, if not termination, by the Mayor.

2. Due to technical factors

a. There are LCROs which are overstaffed and there are also LCROs which are understaffed. Both situations are considered problems arising from technical factors. The size of local civil registry staff depends generally upon the revenue classification of the LGU concerned, and not upon the volume of work. The revenue classification system classifies the LGUs from first class to sixth class in accordance with the local government's annual revenues. The Local Government Code of 1991 authorizes the local government units to use not more than forty percent of the total revenues for personnel wages and salaries. Thus, without regard to the volume of work, there are municipalities whose number of local civil registry personnel exceeds that which is ideal or necessary, as long as the "forty percent rule" is not violated. Contrastly, there are municipalities whose LCROs are considered undermanned. This situation arises because the number of employees in the local government unit is determined by its financial capability and not by the volume of work.

For a local civil registry office which is overstaffed, there is obviously a wastage of manpower and funds. The funding of the excess number of personnel could have been used for other purposes in connection with civil registration such as information dissemination or educational campaign, or for the purchase of office equipments such as microcomputers, typewriters and for other needs of the office.

The problems associated with understaffed local civil registry office are also obvious such as poor filing and retrieval system, failure to submit reports to the CRG, delayed transcription of entries from the certificates to the registry books, and others.

b. The system does not offer incentives to timely registration. In some registration processes, like registration of vehicles,

immediately after registration, the owner enjoys the privilege of possessing and driving his car along public thoroughfares. In the registration of solemnizing officers, a priest is deemed authorized to officiate a marriage immediately after his registration. This beneficial effect is delayed in the case of civil registration.

For example, in the registration of birth, what benefit can the mother and the child enjoy immediately after registering the latter's birth? The system does not offer anything, and is not capable of providing it. At the least, the mother and the child may enjoy the benefit of registration only after seven years when the child shall need his certificate of live birth in his enrollment for grade one, or 21 years after when he takes Board and other government examinations, or some years later when he needs a passport, and so on. Thus, we find people conveniently availing of the rules on delayed registration of birth only at the time when the need of the certificate of live birth arises.

c. Another problem of the system is the imposition of registration fees by the LGUs for the timely registration. The Civil Registry Law authorizes the collection of registration fees only with regard to court decrees and legal instruments concerning the civil status of persons, and Presidential Decree No. 651 expressly provides that registration of births and deaths is free. However, through an ordinance or resolution, the LGUs insist of collecting registration fees for all acts and events. Some municipalities say that they do not collect registration fees. This is true, but if someone registers a birth or death, said municipalities collect fees in the nature of miscellaneous fee or donation. In short, the municipalities still collect fees in connection with civil registration. This illegal imposition of registration fees tends to drive away the people, especially the poor, from registering their births, deaths and marriages.

d. Under Section 17 Act.No. 3753, nonregistration of vital events is a crime. It provides that "Any person whose duty is to report any fact concerning the civil status of persons and who knowingly fails to perform such duty, and any person convicted of having violated any of the provisions of this act, shall be punished by a fine of not less than ten nor more than two hundred pesos." The fine was increased by Presidential Decree No. 651 to not less than 500 nor more than 1,000 pesos.

Inasmuch as the LGU insists of imposing the fine through ordinance or resolution, the CRG referred the matter to the Secretary of Justice to construe the law, and the latter said: "After close perusal of this and other penal provisions of the same statute, I am convinced that a local civil registrar may not impose the penalty provided in Section 17 on the persons referred to in the first clause of said Section. The power belongs to the courts alone, for unless clearly authorized by statute, executive officials have no power to impose fines especially or against private individuals."

The legal opinion of the Secretary of Justice is very clear and leaves no room for interpretation. However, the LGUs continue to disregard or ignore it.

e. While the Civil Registry Law itself is meant for all Filipinos, the system is obviously a Christian-based. It fails to consider the members of the several ethnic cultural communities who are non-Christians. These cultural minorities have customs, rites and practices which are not compatible with the Christians and which do not fit into the system established under the Civil Registry Law such as naming of the person, polygamous marriage, divorce, place of burial, and others. Because of this reality, the cultural minorities have the perception that the system of civil registration is not meant to include them.

f. There is only one registration center in the city or municipality and is located at the city/municipal building which houses the local government offices. This registration center is intended to serve all people in the city or municipality, but there are barangays which are situated too far from the city or town proper. People from far-flung barangays do not have immediate access to the registration center because there are no roads, no transportation facilities and the distance is too far. From this far-flung barangays, sometimes the residents can reach the city or town proper by means of horse or carabao ride or by hiking for a period ranging from one day to three days. This situation discourages the people from registering their births, deaths, and marriages. In fact, they just bury the dead along mountain sides, in their backyards or anywhere else without any burial permit.

3. Due to the public

a. The importance of civil registration to the public is measured by how, when and where the individual may use the certificate of live birth, certificate of death, certificate of marriage and other registrable documents. In the absence of such need, the individual also considers civil registration as not important to him. He can live a normal life like others do even without his birth being recorded in the civil register. With this indifferent attitude of the people, the coverage of civil registration suffers. While the individual may feel the need of his certificate of live birth many years after his birth and can avail of the rules governing delayed registration of his birth, that late registration of his birth cannot in any way repair the damage it caused to the vital statistics generated from incomplete registration.

b. Adoption is an expensive legal process, and a childless couple, as much as possible, does not want to spend a single centavo

for it. In an effort to circumvent the law on adoption, the couple resorts to simulation of birth. The child is then baptized and registered not under the names of the natural parents but under the names of the surrogate parents. Simulation of birth, although considered a crime against civil status of persons, is practiced especially when the mother is unwedded whereby the child is registered as the child of the mother's married sister, or in rare cases, the birth is registered by the child's grandparents as their child, in which case, the mother and child appear in the civil register as sisters. Simulation of birth definitely renders vital statistics defective and unreliable.

c. The people tend to abuse the rules on delayed registration. As a general rule, the place of occurrence of the event is the place where it should be registered. There are cases where an individual migrates to a place very far from his place of birth. When he needs his certificate of live birth, it is very expensive in terms of time and transportation cost to return to his place of birth. As a remedy, he applies for the delayed registration of his birth in the place where he presently resides, making it appear on record that he was indeed born in that place. It may happen therefore that an individual's birth could be registered not only twice but as many times as the number of times he migrates from one place to another.

d. In the Philippines, marriages may be classified into civil and religious. Civil marriage is one which is officiated by a public official who is authorized by law to do so, like a mayor or any member of the judiciary. Religious marriage dignitary is one which is officiated by a religious solemnizing officer under an appropriate ceremony of the church. Civil marriage is generally private affair in the sense that only the parties themselves and their witnesses may appear before the public official. Religious marriage on the other hand is generally open to the public.

In practice, a couple after certain period ratifies their civil marriage by marrying again in a church. This is called religious ratification of the civil marriage. As a rule in registration, it is the civil marriage (or the first marriage) which is registered. However, inspite of the fact that the first marriage has already been registered, the couple registers again their religious marriage. This results to double registration of the marriage between the same parties, and somehow to a certain extent, overstates the number of recorded marriages.

4. Due to negligence of local civil registry offices

a. Before accepting a document for entry in the civil register, the civil registrar is required to examine it for completeness and correction of entries. If a document is found to have incomplete or inconsistent information, the same is returned to the registrant for completion or correction. There are many instances however when defective documents are accepted for registration. Some are not even signed by the parties who are supposed to affix their signatures on the document. While these omissions may not have negative effect on the generation of vital statistics, the probative value for legal purposes is diminished.

b. There are cases also when the certificates are lost or misplaced at the LCRO prior to transcribing the entries therefrom to the registry book. It is a rule that mere preparation of the certificates, for example, certificate of live birth, is not registration. Registration process is deemed completed when the proper entry is made in the Register of Births. Thus, a certificate of live birth duly accepted by the LCRO but was not recorded in the civil register because it might have been lost or misplaced is not considered registered. In this case, due to the negligence of the LCRO, the registrant suffers for he is made to apply again

for registration. The vital statistics system also suffers for the understatement of data.

B. Recommendations

1. Short-term;

a. Inasmuch as the CRG and the C/MCRs belong to different government organizations, the CRG should strengthen his position by resorting to the following strategies: (i). Enter into a Memorandum of Agreement with the Secretary of Interior and Local Government in order to define exactly the extent of the supervisory power of the CRG over the C/MCR, and to get commitment of the LGUs in assisting the CRG in the enforcement of civil registration laws, rules and regulations especially those pertaining to disciplinary action against an erring local civil registry personnel; (ii). Enter into a Performance Contract with all C/MCRs who shall, under oath and under the pain of penalty, swear before the CRG to perform their duties and functions faithfully, diligently and in accordance with law; and (iii). The CRG should have constant dialogue with the local government officials for better understanding of one's responsibility over civil registration activities.

b. The CRG should request the Secretary of Interior and Local Government, as an alter-ego of the President, to issue memorandum or letter of instruction to all local chief executives not to interfere with the work of the C/MCR or with any matters that pertain to civil registration activities, especially if such interference would result to violation of civil registration laws, rules and regulations. The Secretary should impose disciplinary measures against any mayor who exerts political pressure or undue influence over C/MCR to commit or omit an act constituting an infraction of laws.

c. The OCRG should study the staffing pattern of each LCRO in order to pinpoint which

is overstaffed or understaffed, by relating the present size of the staff with the volume of work. The volume of work at the local civil registry office is determined by the number of population, presence of hospitals and clinics, churches of various sects and denominations and judicial courts. For the overstaffed LCROs, the CRG should advise the LGUs to shift its resources to more productive endeavors such as information dissemination and educational campaign for civil registration in rural areas, or establishment of extension offices in far-flung barangays. For the understaffed, the CRG should explore the possibility of extending assistance to the LGU concerned by detaining one or two emergency employees whose wages may be drawn from the budget of the NSO.

d. In order to encourage the people to register the vital events within the reglementary period, the CRG should explore the following possibilities:

(1) When the registration of births is done within the reglementary period of thirty (30) days, the mother and the child, upon presentation of the certificate of live birth of the child, shall be entitled to free medical care, vitamins, and essential medicines for a period of at least three months in any government hospitals or clinics, and if there be none in a particular municipality, a discount of at least fifty percent of the medical expenses be allowed by private hospitals, clinics or physicians. The CRG should coordinate with the Secretary of Health for the issuance of the appropriate directives.

(2) Strict enforcement of the law requiring the taxpayer to attach to his income tax return a copy of the certificate of live birth of his newly born child to support the additional personal exemptions. The CRG should

coordinate with the Bureau of Internal Revenue for the issuance of appropriate directives to the revenue collection agents.

(3) Submission to the personnel section or division of government and private offices of the certificate of live birth of the child by the mother immediately upon her return to the office from a maternity leave. The CRG should coordinate with the Civil Service Commission and the Department of Labor and Employment for the issuance of appropriate directives to the concerned parties.

(4) Discounted rate of plane or boat fare, if travel is within the Philippines, shall be extended to the parents travelling with their child within a period of one year from the date of birth of the child upon the presentation by the parents of the child's certificate of live birth. The CRG should coordinate with the Department of Transportation and Communication for the issuance of appropriate directives to all concerned parties.

(5) Introduction of "Mother and Child Care Loan" by both Government Service Insurance System and Social Security System which may be availed of by the working mother or working father during the first year of the child upon presentation of the child's certificate of live birth. Since both offices are government owned and controlled corporations, the CRG should request the Office of the President to issue an order to this effect.

e. Section 186 of the Local Government Code of 1991 provides: "Local government units may exercise the power to levy taxes, fees or charges on any base or subject not otherwise

specifically enumerated herein or taxes under the provisions of the National Internal Revenue Code, as amended, or other applicable laws: Provided, That the taxes, fees, or charges shall not be unjust, excessive, oppressive, confiscatory or contrary to declared national policy: Provided, further, That the ordinance levying such taxes, fees or charges shall not be exacted without any prior public hearing conducted for the purpose." (Underscoring supplied.)

That registration of births, deaths, and marriages is free has long been declared a national policy, first by the Civil Registry law and second by Presidential decree No. 651. The CRG should request the Office of the President to reiterate this national policy by issuing a directive to all LGUs to amend, modify or suspend indefinitely their respective ordinance regarding collection of registration fees.

f. Inasmuch as the Secretary of Justice has already rendered a legal opinion that the power to impose the penalty under Section 17 of the Civil Registry Law belongs to the courts and the executive officials have no power to impose it, the CRG should also request the Office of the President to issue directive to all LGUs not to usurp the power of the courts.

g. The OCRG should review the present system of civil registration and should study how the system can assimilate the members of the cultural communities. The cultural communities who have customs, rites and practices which are not incompatible with the present system should be encouraged to register births, deaths and marriages by conducting information dissemination and educational campaign in their areas. Those cultural communities which could not be readily assimilated by the system should be further studied in relation with how the system could be modified or adjusted to suit their customs, rites and practices.

h. The OCRG and the concerned LGUs should study jointly the possibility of establishing additional registration centers in far-flung barangays as extensions of the LCRO. An alternative will be a mobile registration team which will go from one barangay to another on a monthly basis to register births, deaths, and marriages. The team may be composed of the municipal civil registrar, municipal health officer, clerk/typist, barangay secretary and a representative from the OCRG. Available vehicle from the LGU may be used for this purpose.

i. As to the problem of civil registration caused by or due to the public, the short-term recommendation is for the OCRG to conduct educational campaign which must be focused on the legal consequences of nonregistration, multi-registration, giving false information for entry in the civil register, simulation of births, and other commissions and omissions of acts which, unknown to the concerned parties, are damaging civil registration system. In coordination with the Secretary of Education and Culture, the OCRG may conduct seminars, conferences, symposiums or similar gatherings in schools, colleges and universities, where teachers, students and parents may attend and learn the values of timely registration. Such gatherings, with the support of the LGUs, can be extended to the barangays where everybody is free to attend.

j. As to the negligence of LCRO in accepting documents with incomplete or wrong entries, or to loss of documents which were accepted for registration but not entered in the appropriate registry book, it is recommended that the Regional Administrators and Provincial Statistics Officers of the NSO who are field representatives of the CRG shall frequently spotcheck LCROs within their respective jurisdictions.

2. Long-term;

a. With regard to the problems of civil registration due to administrative, legal and technical factors, the solutions thereof can only be provided by appropriate legislations, namely: (i) Creation of National Civil Registration Office (NCRO) to be headed by the CRG who can attend to problems of civil registration on full-term basis. The NCRO may be placed under the administrative supervision of either Department of Justice or Department of Interior and Local Government, or in its present situs, the National Statistics Office, but it should operate independently. The C/MCRs and all local civil registry personnel shall be transferred from the LGU to NCRO. Supervision will be tight since the civil registrar will be directly under the CRG. Chances are greater that they will be above the pressure of politics at their level since they will become permanent, career and national government employees; (ii) The staffing pattern and the number of personnel to be deployed in the LCRO should depend not on the revenue classification of the city or municipality but on the volume of work. For this purpose, the implementing guidelines of the Local Government Code of 1991 or the law itself should be amended so that cases of understaffed or overstaffed LCROs can be avoided; (iii) The various incentives for timely registration as enumerated under the short-term recommendations should be institutionalized by congressional act of amending the Civil Registry Law or other laws where appropriate amendments or modification could be made; and (iv) With regard to local government ordinances and resolutions imposing registration fees and penalties for late registration, Congress should pass a law that will compel local legislative councils to repeal or revoke their ordinances and resolutions and to prevent these councils from passing the same ordinances or resolutions in the future.

b. The short-term recommendation for assimilating the members of the ethnic cultural communities within the beneficial folds of the system of civil registration which consists of

reviewing the present system can actually extend beyond the terms, conditions and other aspects of the review, and hence, may be converted to long-term recommendation. To study and review the present system on how it can assimilate these cultural minorities may be easy, but as to how it will be implemented is something that will require further planning and strategies. Implementation of whatever action as a result of the review of the system shall entail myriad of problems and difficulties such as the following: (i) where to find and how to reach them; (ii) how to educate them or how to introduce the system to them; (iii) how to clear their perception of being invaded by Christians; (iv) are they ready and willing to comply with the requirements of registration; (v) can the government promise something material to them in exchange of their willingness to be assimilated, and so on. All of these problems and doubts could not be solved and cleared overnight. This must be a good project of the OCRG and the project's success will be a turning point of civil registration system in the Philippines from its state of low coverage to a high level under the standard set by United Nations. Surely, this will be a long-term project with a duration which may exceed five years.

c. With regard to the problem on accessibility by the people situated in far-flung or remote barangays to the city or town proper where the registration center is located, the proposed solution of establishing the registration centers in these areas should be institutionalized through legislation by amending the Civil Registry Law in such a way that the CRG will be empowered to determine and decide, after consultation with the concerned local government officials, where and when the additional registration centers should be established. The law should also empower the CRG to extend financial assistance to these additional registration centers in case the LGUs could not afford to maintain the centers.

All these recommendations whether short-term or long-term, are meant to solve not only the specific problems herein enumerated but the real problem which is underregistration of vital events. The Philippines is looking forward to the year 2000 as a newly industrialized country, and all government efforts for political stability, sustained economic growth, unity and solidarity, peaceful society and effective means of wealth distribution are geared toward that vision of Philippines 2000. Along that line, civil registration system gradually but surely follows the path of development. The year 1990 was a time of take-off of the system, and along the way to year 2000, it has already revitalized itself with full-term and regular civil registrars; modernized registration forms adaptable to automation; automated records management; expanded coverage; and improved delivery of public service.

Hopefully by the year 2000, civil registration system in the Philippines shall be at-par with the world's best systems in terms of coverage and quality of registration that can produce vital statistics devoid of any iota of doubt as to reliability and timeliness.

-- oo0oo --

REFERENCES

Anthropological Studies, Inc., *"A Study on the Factors Affecting the Underregistration of Vital Events in the Province of Ifugao"*, (Submitted to the National Statistical Coordination Board), Quezon City, 1992.

Inter-agency Committee on Vital Statistics, *"Final Report"* (Submitted to the National Statistical Coordination Board), Makati, 1990.

Lalicon, Carlito B., *"Status of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in the Philippines"*, A paper presented at the Asian Seminar on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics, Bangkok, 1985.

Lalicon, Carlito B., *"Why No Fee or Any Charge Shall be Collected For Registration of Vital Events"* A position paper circularized to all city/municipal civil registrars, Manila, 1991.

Marquez, Melia R., *"Weaknesses of Civil Registration System"*, Speech delivered during the First Regional Congress of Civil Registrars of Region X, Butuan City, 1993.

National Statistical Coordination Board, *"Measurement of the Level of Registration of Vital Events in Region I"*, Project Information Summary, Makati, 1989.

National Statistics Office, *"1992 Philippine Yearbook"*, Manila, 1992.

National Statistics Office, *"Report No. 3: Socio-economic and Demographic Characteristics"*, 1990 census of Population and Housing, Manila, 1992.

National Statistics Office, *"Vital Statistics Report 1989"*, Manila, 1992.

Nolledo, Jose R., *"The Local Government Code of 1991 with Introductory Features"*, Phil., Graphic Arts Inc., Caloocan City, 1991.

Office of the Civil Registrar General, *"Implementing Rules and Regulations of Act No. 3753 and other Laws on Civil Registration"*, Administrative Order No. 1, S. 1993, Manila, 1993.

Office of the Civil Registrar General, "Instructions Manual: Accomplishment and Coding of Civil Registry Forms", Manila, 1993.
Office of the Civil Registrar General, "Manual on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics", Bureau of Printing, Manila, 1957.

Office of the Civil Registrar general, "Manual on Civil Registration", Manila, 1975.

Office of the Civil Registrar General, "Manual on Civil Registration", Manila, 1983.

Office of the President, "Proclamation No. 682: Declaring February of Every Year as the Civil Registration Month", Manila, 1991.

Office of the President, "Reorganizing and Strengthening the Philippine Statistical System and for Other Purposes", Executive Order No. 121, Manila, 1987.

Oreste, Ana Ma. Teresa L., "A Pilot Study on the registration of Vital Events in Basilan: A Triple Recording System Approach", (Paper read during the National Convention on Civil Registration), Quezon City, 1991.

Speech of the President, National Convention on Civil Registration, Quezon City, 1993.

Tan, Winecito L., et al, "Factors of Infant Mortality Based on Vital Registration Records", Statistical Research and Training Center, Quezon City, 1990.