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**STATISTICAL DIVISION  
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**THE CURRENT STATUS OF CIVIL REGISTRATION  
AND VITAL STATISTICS SYSTEMS  
IN NAMIBIA**

**BY**

**CENTRAL STATISTICS OFFICE**

## **Demographic profile of Namibia**

Namibia has a size of 824 295 square kilometers and is located in the southwestern part of the continent. The country shares borders with Angola and Zambia on the north, Zimbabwe in the eastern end of the Caprivi strip, Botswana to the east, and the Republic of South Africa in the south and south east.

The results from the 1991 Population and Housing Census revealed that the country had a population of 1.4 million people. Over two thirds of this population resided in the rural areas. The census data also indicated that the population was relatively young which is partly an outcome of high fertility and high but declining mortality.

The population of the country was not evenly distributed among the 13 administrative regions. A high proportion of the rural population was located in the north while the majority of the urban population were found in the central and part of the southern areas where the country's industrial activities, commercial farms and mines are located.

According to the census, Namibia had an annual intercensal growth rate of 3 percent between 1981 and 1991. Provisional estimates of crude birth and death rates are 41.5 and 10.8 respectively per 1000 population for the country.

Furthermore, provisional estimates of infant and child mortality rates indicated variations between the urban and rural areas. For the country as a whole, the infant mortality rate was 70 per 1000 live births while the child mortality rate was 29 per 1000 children aged 1 - 4 years.

The table below shows the population distribution of the country by sex for urban and rural areas. Also presented, is a list of the main demographic indicators. The fertility and mortality figures are provisional estimates from the 1991 Census while the maternal mortality rate is an estimate from the 1992 Demographic and Health Survey.

**Population Distribution for urban and rural areas by sex and by administrative regions,  
Namibia, 1991 Census**

Region	Urban			Rural		
	Both Sexes	Women	Men	Both Sexes	Women	Men
All Regions	382680	188201	194479	1027240	535392	491848
Caprivi	13377	7165	6212	77045	39192	37853
Erongo	35062	16886	18176	20408	9645	10763
Hardap	29020	14890	14130	37475	17877	19598
Karas	22732	10823	11909	38430	16416	22014
Khomas	147056	70859	76197	20015	8506	11509
Kunene	8769	4546	4223	55248	27112	28136
Ohangwena	0	0	0	179634	99469	80165
Okavango	19366	9956	9410	97464	51111	46353
Omaheke	8340	4164	4176	44395	21259	23136
Omusati	0	0	0	189919	106296	83623
Oshana	35726	19032	16694	99158	54308	44850
Oshikoto	16211	7396	8815	112534	59370	53164
Otjozondjupa	47021	22484	24537	55515	24831	30684

## Main Demographic Indicators

### Population Size

Total	1 409 920
Men	686 327
Women	723 593
Sex Ratio (men/100 women)	94.8

### Urban/Rural Population

Population in Urban areas	382 680
Percent	27
Population in Rural areas	1 027 240
Percent	73

### Area and density

Area (sq. Km.)	824 269
Density (persons/Sq.Km)	1.7

### Age Composition (percent)

Under 15 years	42
15-64 years	53
65+ years	5

### Marital Status

Number	821 533
Percent Never married	50
Percent married	42
Percent Divorced/Seperated	3
Percent Widowed	5

## Households

Number of Private Households 254 935

Average Household Size 5.2

Percent of men headed Households 60.7

Percent of women headed Households 39.3

## Fertility

Crude Birth Rate

(Births/1000 population) 41.5

Total Fertility Rate 6.1

(Average number of children/women)

## Mortality

Crude Death Rate 10.8

(Deaths/1000 population)

Infant Mortality Rate 70

(Infant deaths/1000 live births)

Child Mortality Rate 29

(Child deaths/1000 children aged 1-4 years)

Life Expectancy at Birth 60

Maternal Mortality Rate 225

(Maternal deaths per 100,000 live births)

## Growth

Rate of Natural Increase 3.1

(The rate of natural growth  
per 1000 population)

# **CIVIL REGISTRATION AND VITAL STATISTICS SYSTEM IN NAMIBIA**

## **Executive Summary**

Civil registration in Namibia is carried out by the Department of Civic Affairs in the Ministry of Home Affairs while the vital statistics are compiled by the Central Statistics Office under the National Planning Commission. There exist legal mechanisms which empower the two institutions to undertake these responsibilities. However, the existing regulations for both institutions are currently under review.

The registration of vital events is neither complete nor timely. The extent of the coverage cannot be assessed at present. The registration of the events can take place any time within twelve months and even later, as late registrations. These registrations cover births, deaths and marriages. Divorces and annulments are not part of the current system.

The procedures for registration are rather cumbersome, involving a number of forms and bureaucratic redtape. Loopholes exist for duplication of registration of births as it is easier and faster to obtain a new birth certificate than to apply for a duplicate copy. This is partly because the whole system is manually operated.

Statistics on vital events are not well developed. These have to be extracted from the registration records which themselves suffer from a lot of limitations. However, these are compiled and published in the annual Statistical Abstract of the country.

In this report, recommendations have been made on the improvement of the whole system. These recommendations can be summarised by stating that the whole system needs to be overhauled.

# **CIVIL REGISTRATION SYSTEM**

## **I. LEGAL FRAMEWORK OF THE SYSTEM**

1. During the colonial era the registration of births, marriages and deaths was administered by the Republic of South Africa, the colonial master of the then South West Africa - now Namibia. The first legal mechanism for the registration of these events in South Africa was the Births, Marriages and Deaths Registration Act, Number 17 of 1923. After repeated amendments, this Act was repealed by the Births, Marriages and Deaths Registration Act, Number 81 of 1963.

2. The registration system in the then South West Africa was a replica of the system in South Africa itself. This resulted in the application of the Apartheid system in the country. As a result, "Whites" were registered separately from Blacks or "Bantus" as they were legally referred to.

3. In the mid-1980s, it was becoming obvious that the independence of the country was imminent. Measures were being taken by the South African Government to begin repealing some of the most obvious regulations relating to the system of Apartheid in the country. Proclamation R 101 of 1985 resulted in the establishment of the South-West African Legislative and Executive Authority which led to the creation of a National Assembly with a Government of National Unity. Subsequently, the country was to manage its own affairs, unlike before when South Africa managed everything. This new direction also affected the system of vital registration. A new bill, the Marriages, Births and Deaths Amendment Act, Number 5 of 1987, was passed. The current system of the registration of births, marriages and deaths is legally regulated by the Marriage Act of 1961 as well as the Births, Marriages and Deaths Registration Act of 1963, both as amended by the Marriages, Births and Deaths Amendment Act of 1987. It should be noted that this regulation does not cover the registration of divorces, nor that of annulments.

4. The existing regulation is being examined with the purpose of drafting a new bill which will address some of the problems currently being faced. However, until such a new bill is passed, the registration system will continue to operate under the present one.

5. For the purpose of clarity, the three vital events which are registered in the country will be discussed separately below.

### **BIRTHS**

6. In Namibia, a birth covers the birth of any viable child whether such a child is living or dead at the time of birth. This implies that even still births are treated in the same manner as live births.

7. Regarding the registration of a birth, Section 19 of the Act mentioned above reads as follows:

**"Duty to notify birth of child**

In the case of any child born alive it shall be the duty of the father of the child, and, in the event of the death or absence or other inability of the father, then of the mother of the child, and then of any person, present at the birth, or of the occupier of the dwelling in which the child is born, and, in the event of the death or absence or other inability of such occupier, then of the person having charge of the child, within fourteen days after the birth, to give the prescribed notice or information thereof either to the registrar or assistant registrar concerned, or (if the child was born outside an urban area), to any justice of peace or police officer. Provided that if the father or mother of the child is resident in an area other than that in which the birth occurred, that father or mother may give the prescribed notice or information to the registrar in whose area his or her residential address is.

The justice of the peace or police officer to whom notice or information is given under subsection (1) shall forthwith transmit such notice or information to the registrar or assistant registrar of the area in which the birth occurred".

8. It is clear that every birth must be registered within fourteen (14) days either at the office of the registrar of the area in which the birth occurred or through a notice to be given to a justice of the peace or police officer who then transmits such notice to the registrar of the area in which the birth occurred.

9. It should also be noted that the registration of a birth takes place in the district in which it occurs and not necessarily in the district in which the parents reside.

10. Although the Act provides that a birth must be registered within fourteen (14) days from the date thereof, the practice has been that a birth must be registered within a year of the actual date of birth. This implies that the deadline of fourteen days has not been strictly adhered to, as long as the event is registered within a year. This does not, however, relieve the informant from liability of prosecution for the failure to report the event within the prescribed period, although no such measures have ever been taken in the history of the registration system.

11. In terms of section 7 of the Act no birth may be registered after the expiry of one year from the date of such birth except upon the written authority of the Permanent Secretary. At present, the Permanent Secretary has delegated this authority to the registrar/assistant registrar of births.



## **DEATHS**

12. The Act does not define the event death.

13. The registration of a death is covered in Paragraph 22 of the Act:

"Notification of death and issue of burial order:

It shall be the duty of every adult relative of a deceased person present at his death or in attendance during his last illness or at his dwelling with him and, if there are no such relatives, of every adult person present at the death of any person, and, if there was no such adult person present, then of the occupier of the dwelling in which the death occurred, and, in the event of the death or absence or other inability of such occupier, then of every adult inmate of the dwelling or of the undertaker or other person causing the body to be buried, to give to the registrar or assistant registrar notice in the prescribed manner of the death

(a) if the death occurred in an urban area, within twenty-four (24) hours thereafter, or the receipt of the certificate referred to in section 13 A(2) (as the case may be);

or (b) if the death did not occur within an urban area, within fourteen (14) days thereafter or the receipt of the certificate referred to in section 13 A(2) or 26 (as the case may be)."

14. Section 7 of the Act also makes provision for the registration of a Death after one year subject to approval of the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Home Affairs.

## **MARRIAGES**

15. A Marriage can only be solemnized by either a Marriage Officer who has been duly authorised by the Minister of Home Affairs or a Magistrate who is an ex officio marriage officer. Under the Marriage Act of 1961, the Minister of Home Affairs may designate a minister of religion or a person holding a responsible position in a religious denomination or organisation to be a marriage officer.

16. In accordance with Section 40(2) of the Marriages, Births and Deaths Amendment Act of 1987,

"The said marriage officer shall keep the copy of the register with his records and shall, within three days from the date of marriage, transmit the original register to the Secretary for record".

17. Every marriage officer must send the marriage record after conducting the marriage to the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Home Affairs to check and register the marriage.

18. It should be noted that marriages which are conducted through traditional or customary ceremonies are not registered unless the ceremonies have been conducted by official marriage officers.

## II. ADMINISTRATIVE ARRANGEMENTS OF THE SYSTEM

19. The registration of births and deaths has been done on the basis of the old districts, where the registration office was located at the district headquarters. Initially, these events used to be registered by the District Magistrate on behalf of the Ministry of Home Affairs. However, since 1992 the country has been demarcated into 13 administrative regions. Thus, in terms of official government business, the districts no longer exist. As a result of this, 13 regional offices and one sub-regional office have been opened for registration purposes. Some of the old district offices are still in existence, but are now under the jurisdiction of the regional offices within their respective regions. Likewise, some magistrate offices still register births and deaths on behalf of the ministry in areas where a registration office does not exist. It is worth noting that, despite the opening of the regional offices, current registration of the events still relates to the old districts.

20. Two of the main hospitals in Windhoek, the nation's capital, provide assistance informally by issuing birth notifications to the mothers of new born babies. It is expected that such notifications will then be used for the registration of the births.

21. The registration offices in the regions are as follows:

Region	Registration Office
Karas	Keetmanshoop
Hardap	Mariental
Omaheke	Gobabis
Khomas	Windhoek (Northern Industrial)
Erongo	Swakopmund
Oshikoto	Tsumeb
Otjozondjupa	Otjiwarongo
Kunene	Opuwo
Omusati	Outapi
Ohangwena	Eenhana
Oshana	Oshakati
Okavango	Rundu
Caprivi	Katima Mulilo
Ondangwa	Ondangwa - Sub-regional office

22. The Department of Civic Affairs in the Ministry of Home Affairs has the over-all responsibility of the registration system. Its head office serves as the Central Registration Point. All registrations which are undertaken in the regions have to be forwarded to the head office for checking, central registering and safe-keeping.

23. It should be pointed out that marriages can only be registered at the head office. The regional offices have no mandate for registering marriages.

24. It is the policy of the Ministry of Home Affairs and, indeed that of the Government of the Republic of Namibia, to ensure that the registration system is utilised by a great proportion of the public. For this reason, mobile teams have been made available to cater

for special demands in the rural areas. Such demands are usually dictated by other events. For example, a voter registration exercise creates a demand for birth certificates which are now a prerequisite for identity cards. Primary school registration may require birth certificates as a proof of both age and citizenship. However, because of limited resources, it has not always been possible to provide these mobile teams.

25. The thirteen Regional Offices are manned by 6 officials as follows:

Chief Clerk:	Officer-in-Charge and Registrar of Births and Deaths
2 Clerks:	Assistant Registrars of Births and Deaths
3 Record Clerks:	Assistant Registrars of Births and Deaths

In the case where some district offices are still in existence, there is only one official who deals with the registration of both births and deaths.

### **III. PROCEDURES FOR REGISTRATION**

#### **BIRTHS**

26. (a) Whenever a birth occurs the person responsible for the registration completes a "notification of birth" form at the nearest district or regional office. Once this form has been found to be properly and correctly completed, the registering officer then records the birth in the "Birth Register" as well as in the "Index Book". The Birth Register is a book in which all the births are recorded. The Index Book is a record guide to the Birth Register. The registering officer allocates an entry number which serves as an identification code to both the notification of birth form and the Birth Register. Finally an "abridged birth certificate" is issued.

27. Before a registration of a birth, the person responsible for registration is expected to provide some evidence that a birth actually occurred. The evidence required is either a health passport, a document relating to the new-born and issued at the time of the birth, or a declaration from the health official who attended the birth. The health passport is a medical document which is later used for other purposes, e.g. post-neonatal care, immunizations, etc. It should be noted that since most births in the rural areas are not attended by medical health personnel, such documentary proofs as evidence of an occurrence of a birth cannot be provided. In such situations, documentary evidence of the occurrence of a birth is not necessary.

#### **(b) LATE REGISTRATION OF A BIRTH**

28. A late birth registration relates to a birth which was not registered within one year after the time of birth. If the registration is for a person below the age of 21 years, then the parents must submit a late registration application. If, on the other hand, the person is aged 21 years and above, then the submission of the late registration application can be made by the applicant.

29. In addition to completing the application form for the late registration of the birth, documentary evidence to prove that the applicant was born in Namibia must be presented. Such documents are a Namibian identity document, a passport, or a baptismal card from a church. Prior to 1991, identity cards and passports could be issued without the presentation of birth certificates. Currently, these documents are issued only after the submission of a birth certificate.

30. Beside the documentary evidence, the applicant should also provide detailed particulars of two relatives or acquaintances who can be contacted for further information if the case seems to be suspicious. These particulars include

- (a) Name
- (b) Identity number
- (c) Address
- (d) Telephone number and
- (e) Relationship to the applicant.

31. Once the late registration application form is approved, the normal procedures for birth registration are then followed.

32. It should be noted that under this procedure, the risk of duplicate registrations is rather high. It is usually faster to get a birth certificate than to get a duplicate of a lost one. Therefore, people are more likely to apply for the former than for the latter.

## **DEATHS**

33. The prerequisite for registering a death is a "medical certificate" of death from the doctor who last attended the deceased. If the death occurred in a rural area where there was no doctor available, the relatives would have to report the death to the nearest police station. A police officer would then have tried and established the cause of death, whether it was due to natural causes or otherwise. If foul play was suspected, then further investigations would be conducted, otherwise the police officer would issue a "declaration of death" which would serve as a medical certification of death.

34. The relative then completes a "notification of death" form and submit it with either the medical certificate of death or the declaration from the police. Once the particulars relating to the deceased are complete, the registering officer will then register the death by recording the details on the "Death Register" as well as in the "Index Book". After registering the death, the registering officer then issues a death certificate and a removal order, i.e. a burial permit. It should be noted that no removal order is issued in the case of a still birth.

35. The registration of deaths is divided into two categories. One is the death due to natural causes while the other deals with deaths from unnatural causes (accidents, murder, ect.)

## **MARRIAGES**

36. It is the duty of the Marriage Officer, after conducting the marriage, not only to issue a marriage certificate, but also to forward the "marriage register" to the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Home Affairs for registering. At the receipt of the "marriage register" the registrar then ensures that the "marriage register" has been completed properly and that the marriage was conducted according to existing legislation. Once all the particulars are found to be correct, this "marriage register" is finally entered into the registrar's Marriage Register for the formal registration of the marriage. If a duplicate of the marriage certificate is requested, it is only the head office which has the mandate to issue such a duplicate.

#### **IV. PROBLEMS EXPERIENCED WITH THE SYSTEM**

37. The greatest problem with the system is that it is entirely dependent on human resources. All registration activities are performed manually at all stages. Because everything is done mechanically, a lot of time is spent locating an old record in order either to be able to issue a duplicate copy or to make sure that an event was not registered before. As a result of this, the chances of duplicating birth certificates are rather high.

38. The coverage is also a problem. Although the events are expected to relate to the place of occurrence, it is difficult to assess whether this is adhered to during registration. Likewise, the time reference on when the event occurred may not be correct. Events can be reported at any time after their occurrence. Since the fourteen days period for registering an event is not followed, and since there have not been any penalties imposed for late registration, there is no way the actual date of the occurrence of the event can be checked. This is even more so with late registrations of births.

39. The risk of double registration of births is very high. It is much easier to get a new birth certificate than it is to get a duplicate. This makes people who have lost or misplaced the original to opt for a late registration, which happens to be a "re-registration", rather than go through the trouble of applying for a duplicate copy.

40. In the case of deaths, their chance of not being registered is likely to be rather high, particularly in the rural areas where medical and police facilities are not as accessible as in the urban areas. There does not seem to exist an obvious incentive or benefit for taking the trouble to register a death, unless there are legal issues relating to the estate of the deceased.

41. The coverage of the registration of marriages is also questionable. Although the marriage officer is required to submit all the completed marriage registers to the head office, there is no way of knowing whether this is really being done.

42. Since divorces are not registered by the same agency, there is a possibility of registering a person twice, without the first one having been annulled.

43. Customary and traditional marriages are not registered because they are not covered in the current laws relating to marriages. However, customary laws are accepted in other situations!!!!

44. The procedure for the registration of vital events is too cumbersome. There are too many forms to be filled in order to register an event. Besides creating a heavier workload for the registration staff, the long process is likely to discourage the public from registering the events.

45. In order to improve the current system, the Ministry did start in 1990 to work on the computerization of Civil Registration. The Namibian Population Registration System (NAMPOS) was recommended by a consultancy firm and accepted, in principle, by the Ministry. The main functions of the new system were to be the registration and provision of identity documents and the registration of births, deaths, marriages and divorces as well as the voters roll.

46. The first phase, which catered for the identity cards, was implemented in July 1994. The next phase, to cater for the vital events, may be implemented in the forthcoming financial year.

47. This system is wholly centralized, which implies that the registration of each and every event can take place only in Windhoek, the nation's capital.

48. At the moment it is not possible to comment in detail about a system which is not yet in operation. However, because of its centralized system of operation, it will be possible to maintain a good security system. On the other hand, the registration services might not reach the rural population.

## **V. NATIONAL VITAL STATISTICS SYSTEM**

49. The main task of compiling and publishing information relating to vital events in Namibia rests with the Central Statistics Office (CSO) which is under the National Planning Commission. The collection of vital statistics is undertaken in accordance with the Statistics Act which was first passed in 1957 in South Africa. At the time, Namibia, then South West Africa, was subjected to all laws and ordinances which were passed in South Africa. This Act has undergone various amendments, the last one having been in 1976. The main tasks are

"Collection of statistics and taking of census.

(1) Subject to the provisions of this Act and the directions of the Minister-

Statistics may be collected relating to economic, financial, demographic and social matters and any other matter determined by the Minister from time to time by notice in the Gazette."

50. Demographic and social matters include vital statistics which therefore implies that there exists a legal mechanism which empowers the CSO to collect these data. It should, however, be emphasized that the registration of the vital events is not the responsibility of the CSO, but rather the Department of Civic Affairs (DCA). At the same time, the DCA is not obliged to compile the statistics relating to these events.

51. The Act (Section 4) further states that the Chief of the Central Statistics Service is to administer the Act, subject to the directions of the minister charged, in this case the Director-General of the National Planning Commission.

52. There also exist other Government institutions which generate information on vital statistics. One of the main ones is the Ministry of Health and Social Services. A substantial proportion of births and deaths in the country takes place in hospitals and clinics. One of the prerequisites for the registration of a birth is evidence from a medical personnel if the birth was attended by one. Similarly, the registration of a death has to be preceded by a medical certification of the death by a doctor. Although these activities are all regular administrative procedures, some of these records are compiled and published by the Ministry.

53. The Registrar's Office under the Ministry of Justice maintains a record of all legal divorces which can only be granted by the High Court in Windhoek, the nation's capital. These divorce records are kept for administrative purposes only. They are not compiled for publication.

54. It should be noted that the Divorce Act of 1979 relates only to divorce proceedings and does not cover the compilation of divorce statistics. But then, like the other vital events, the Statistics Act embraces this. However, there have not been any efforts by the CSO to compile such information.



55. The production of vital statistics in Namibia is therefore entirely the responsibility of the CSO, which is still in its infancy. This is done in a very limited manner. The registration of births and deaths is undertaken by the DCA. The CSO then compiles the information relating to these events from the records kept by the DCA for publication in the Statistical Abstract. This has been done for the last three years.

56. The CSO has no direct, or otherwise, control of the registration of the vital events. The registration system is completely under the jurisdiction of the DCA who have the legal mandate for it. There has not been any formal dialogue between the CSO and DCA regarding the registration system. Although the DCA participated in a statistics user-producer workshop in the second half of 1993, the preparation of this report has been the first real opportunity for all parties to get together.

57. While the CSO compiles the statistics on births, deaths and marriages from the records kept by the DCA, the extent of the coverage of these events is not known. There have not been any efforts to assess the extent of the coverage of these events either by the DCA, nor by the CSO.

58. The contents of the various registers are briefly described below.

### **REGISTER OF BIRTHS**

59. Information in this register covers:

#### **Particulars of the child/applicant**

- full names
- date of birth
- district and country of birth
- sex and
- identity number (if applicable)

#### **Particulars of parents**

- full names
- identity number
- place of birth
- the mother's maiden name (if different from the current name) and
- if the parents are married: date of marriage
- place of marriage
- name of the Assistant Registrar (if any)

## **REGISTER OF DEATHS**

60. The register of death contains the following information about the deceased:

- identity number
- full names
- sex
- place of birth
- age and date of birth
- marital status
- date of death and
- causes of death

## **MARRIAGE REGISTER**

61. Information on the marriage register is divided into five (5) sections.

A. **PARTICULARS OF HUSBAND:** Information required on this section is

- names
- date of birth
- country of birth and
- marital status

B. **PARTICULARS OF WIFE:** The same information as in section A above, but relating to the wife is recorded.

C. **PARTICULARS OF MARRIAGE**

- date of marriage
- place where the marriage was solemnized and
- in the case of minors the names of person(s) who gave consent to the marriage

D. (i) **DECLARATION BY MARRIED COUPLE**

- signatures of both husband and wife
- signatures of two witnesses who were present at the ceremony

D. (ii) **DECLARATION BY MARRIAGE OFFICER**

- date of marriage
- full names of marriage officer
- signature of marriage officer
- address of marriage officer

F. **CERTIFICATE BY MARRIAGE OFFICER**

The section consist of the declaration of the marriage officer that he/she was empowered, in terms of the Marriage Act of 1961, or prior law, to solemnize the marriage.

62. The CSO then compiles the published data from these registers. There are no other statistical forms prepared for this exercise.

## **VI. DEFINITIONS OF TERMS AND CONCEPTS, MONITORING OF THE SYSTEM AND DISSEMINATION**

63. It should be noted that the definitions and concepts of the vital events do not conform to the set principles and recommendations for a Vital Statistic System.

64. In the field of monitoring, there are no procedures set up to control, receive and classify statistical reports forwarded from the registration units. This is partly because the Central Statistics Office is still in its infancy, whereupon many of the data collection systems in the various areas are in the process of being established.

65. The Central Statistics Office is the main institution in Namibia that publishes and disseminates vital statistics. Publication of vital statistics is done once a year in the Statistical Abstract, of which the latest issue relating to 1993 was published late this year.

66. The information on vital events in the Abstract covers births, deaths and marriages registered in the whole country. The information about these events is given by months and covers the period from 1988 to 1992.

67. There are two additional tables which relate to births and deaths that are registered in Windhoek, the nation's capital. The table on births is categorised by the age of the mother as well as the sex of the birth, while that on deaths is presented by age and sex of the deceased.

## **VII. RECOMMENDATIONS**

68. Registration of vital events, although required by law, favours the urban areas where all the registration offices are currently located. A system to cater for the rural areas should be devised. Primary schools in the rural areas could be used as registration centres with the headteachers of such schools being appointed as registrars. At the same time, since a sizable proportion of births takes place in the clinics, the medical personnel there could be appointed registrars. Such a system may work well with proper and regular monitoring. This will lead to a relatively big improvement on the coverage, both in space and in time.

69. The current period of 14 days within which an event has to be registered, should be extended to 90 days in order to provide enough time for events occurring in rural areas.

70. At present the registration of an event relates only to the place of occurrence of the event. The usual place of residence of the mother in the case of a birth, or of the deceased in the case of a death, or of the marriage couple in the case of a marriage, is not covered. Information on the place of occurrence of an event will provide rather limited data for planning and policy formulation purposes. Therefore, both the place of occurrence of the event and the place of usual residence for the relevant parties should be recorded.

71. Apart from the legal requirements for the registration of the vital events, the general public is not aware of the many uses of the vital registration documents either to them personally or to other institutions, like the ministries of education and health. The loss of coverage which is caused by ignorance of the public on the importance of registering such events is likely to be minimised through the participation, at the grassroot level, of the local leadership itself in the registration system. Such local leadership includes, among others, local chiefs and leaders of religious organizations which play a major role in the daily lives of a significant size of the population.

72. The local chiefs, with sufficient moral and material incentives, are in a position to certify the occurrence of most, if not all, of the events taking place in their communities due to their closeness to, and influence on their people. Apart from their physical involvement in certifying the occurrence of the events, they can be important vehicles in promoting the importance of registering the events so that people will finally reach a point where they feel morally obliged to do so.

73. Primary schools are also important avenues for capturing unregistered children during their first enrollment at the schools. In the case of a child not producing a birth certificate, then he/she should automatically be a candidate for late registration.

74. Since not all the births take place in hospitals or clinics, traditional birth attendants who play a significant role in deliveries could be used to promote the registration of births.

75. The bureaucratic procedures used in the current registration system should be streamlined. At present there are too many forms required to be filled for the registration of one event. New forms should be designed to reduce the number of forms which are currently in use.

76. It should be borne in mind that Namibia is only four years old. A number of Government departments were established around the independence time and are therefore still relatively in their infancy. Most of these departments are ill-equipped and understaffed. The majority of the staff engaged in the technical departments are not professionally trained for these jobs. The Department of Civic Affairs and the CSO are no exceptions. The need for training in the area of civil registration and vital statistics should be given a priority. There is therefore an urgent need for the establishment of a training programme in civil registration and vital statistics.

77. At the same time, the need for modern equipment, like micro-computers and their relevant software, for the registration system should be given due consideration. This will minimise the heavy dependance on human resources and is likely to lead to a more efficient and effective system. In addition, vital statistics will be produced at a faster pace which will make them more timely and up to date.

78. While the current system suffers from a number of setbacks, it is believed that there exists a lot of room for improvement. This will require, not only additional resources, but the cooperation and commitment of various institutions as well as the public itself. The main institutions which are involved are:

Ministry of Home Affairs  
Ministry of Health and Social Services  
Ministry of Education and Culture  
Ministry of Regional, Local Government, and Housing  
Office of the Prime Minister  
Ministry of Justice  
National Planning Commission