

VITAL STATISTICS AND CIVIL REGISTRATION SYSTEMS IN TANZANIAN

1. GENERAL BACKGROUND

1.1 Geographic and Political Characteristics of Tanzania

1.1.1 Geography

The United Republic of Tanzania, the largest country in East Africa, lies south of the Equator between the lakes Victoria, Tanganyika and Nyasa to the west and Indian Ocean to the east. It is bounded by Kenya and Uganda on the north, Rwanda, Burundi, Zaire and Zambia to the west, and Malawi and Mozambique to the south. It covers an area of about 940,000 square kilometers (60,000 sq.km is of inland water). Except for narrow belt of 900 square kilometers along the coast, most of its land lies above 200 meters altitude and such of the country is higher than 1000 meters above sea level. In the north, Mount Kilimanjaro rises to over 5000 meters with the highest peak, the Kibo, reaching 5,895 meters. This is the highest point in Africa.

A distinctive feature of Tanzania is a Rift Valley which is characterized by long and narrow depressions often filled with lakes. The rivers flow into the Indian Ocean or the great lakes. Only Rufiji entering the Indian Ocean and the Kagera flowing into lake Victoria are navigable by anything larger than a canoe. Lake Tanganyika drains into the Congo River, which later drains into the Atlantic Ocean. Lake Nyasa and Tanganyika are located in the Rift Valley. Lake Victoria in the Norther-western part of the country is not located in the Rift Valley and it drains into the Mediterranean Sea through Nile river.

Woodlands (miombo), bushlands and wooden grasslands are the predominant types of vegetation. The main climatic feature for the most parts of the country is the long dry spell from May to October, followed by a period of rainfall during the November/April period. The main rainy season along the coast and the areas around Mt. Kilimanjaro is from March to May with short rain between October and December. In the western part of Lake Victoria, rainfall is well distributed throughout the year with the peak between March and May.

1.1.2 Political and Administrative Structure.

Tanganyika became an independent nation on 9th December, 1961, from the British rule. One year later, on 9th December, 1962, it became a republic, severing all links with the British crown, but it retained membership in the Commonwealth. Zanzibar became independent on 12th January, 1964 after the overthrow of the rule of the Sultanate. On 26th April, 1964, Tanganyika and Zanzibar United to form the United Republic of Tanzania.

The country is divided into 20 regions on Mainland Tanzania and five regions in Zanzibar. Each region is divided into a number of districts depending on the areas and the population of the region. Again the district is divided into smaller administrative areas known as wards. Under normal circumstances, a ward constitutes a rural or urban area depending on the conditions which were set in classifying rural and urban areas (Village Act of 1975 and Urban Wards Act also of 1975).

For the last 33 years since Tanzania got independence from the British colonial power, the country has been run under one political party rule. It is only recently that the country decided to adopt multi-party politics, and elections under the new political setup have been taken for few electoral districts, and elections for the ward councilors have been held throughout Mainland Tanzania in October, 1994.

The people of Tanzania are predominantly African with a small proportion of Asians, Europeans and Arabs who constitute less than three percent of the total population. Among the African population, there are more than 120 different tribes and so with differing cultural norms. Though the bulk of the tribes belong to the Bantu group, the cultures differ tremendously between tribes found in the southern part of the country and those in northern Tanzania. The coastal areas practice cultural behaviours closely influenced by Arabic norms which differ very much with those observed in other parts of the country.

1.2 Economy

Tanzania has mixed economy in which agriculture plays a key role. The agricultural sector which comprises crops, animal husbandry, forestry, fishery and hunting is the dominant sector contributing a larger part in the gross domestic product (GDP) than any other sector.

GDP increased by 3.8 percent in 1991, compared to 3.6 percent in 1990 and 3.3 percent in 1989. Economic growth in the last 4-5 years follows the implementation of structural adjustment policies over the last 7-8 years.

The economic growth rate attained in 1991 is higher than the annual population growth rate of 2.8 percent, but as in the previous years it is lower than the targeted growth rate of 4.5 and 5.0 percent as envisaged in the second Economic Recovery Programme and the Second Five Year Development Plan respectively.

1.3 Population

The 1967 Population Census reported that Tanzania had the total population of 12.3 million. The population increased to reach 23.1 million in 1988 Population Census. Tanzania is still sparsely populated though the population density is high in some parts of the country. In 1967, the average population density was 4 persons per square kilometer, and increased to 26 persons per square kilometer in 1988.

While the population is still predominantly rural, the proportion of urban population has been increasing steadily. The urban population increased from 6 percent in 1967 to 18 percent of the total population in 1988. The intercensal growth rate between 1978 and 1988 censuses was recorded to be 2.8 percent as compared to 3.2 percent observed for the period between 1967 and 1978.

Results from the 1988 Population Census indicate that mortality has declined during the last ten year period. Crude death rate declined from 19 in 1978 to 15 deaths per 1,000 population in 1988. Likewise, infant mortality rate declined from 137 in 1978 to 115 in 1988. Tanzania Demographic Survey which was carried out in 1991/92 show that infant mortality rate dropped to as low as 92 infant deaths per 1,000 live births. Decline on the child mortality seem to have an impact on the life expectancy. Previous censuses have revealed that life expectancy has risen from 44 years in 1978 to 50 years in 1988.

For some time, fertility in Tanzania has been high and continues to be high with a total fertility rate(TFR) of 6.5, though it shows a gradual decline in the level of fertility in the country since 1967. Again, the Tanzania Demographic and Health Survey presents a level of fertility of 6.3 which confirms the observed gradual decline of fertility.

2. CIVIL REGISTRATION

Systematic registration of births and deaths by government authority entails the continuous recording of the occurrence and characteristics of such events in pursuance of legislative enactments. Vital records are made for their value as legal documents and for their usefulness as a source of vital statistics. The need for legal documents with evidentiary value arises due to the fact that society is now so complex that man is not required to prove his status in society, such as his age and nationality. The more complex the society becomes the more the need arise to produce documentary evidence of facts which in previous year may not have required any proof or at the most only verbal certification. Vital Statistics are not ends in themselves, but tools for the study and understanding of other phenomena. One of the most important uses of vital statistics is their roles in demographic analysis of the population for economic and social planning.

2.1 Historical Background

The two states forming the United Republic of Tanzania, namely Tanzania Mainland (formerly Tanganyika) and Zanzibar have had different historical developments with regard to the registration of births deaths and marriages. This paper will discuss civil registration in Tanzania Mainland.

Tanzania Mainland has had the misfortune of having her history punctuated by periods of colonial administration, hence the laws relating to the registration of births, deaths and marriages of births, date back to the colonial period. Prior to European colonisation only the coastal areas were under foreign domination, namely, the Arabic rule of the Sultan on Zanzibar. The Arab rulers had no system of registering births and deaths. However; records in Zanzibar indicate that the British Consulate in Zanzibar started keeping registers of births and deaths of British subjects occurring not only in Zanzibar but also on the coastal strip opposite Zanzibar and in the interior of Tanganyika. Such registration was effected under treaties between Britain and the Zanzibar authorities. In 1839 a treaty was concluded between Muscat and Britain giving Britain extra-territorial jurisdiction. By then the Sultan of Muscat was also Sultan of Zanzibar. A British Consulate was established in Zanzibar in 1841. Britain later decided to give legal basis to such extra-territorial jurisdiction. This was done by means of the Foreign Jurisdiction Act, 1843.

Apart from the fragmentary registration of Births and deaths of European and Asian British subjects by the British Consulate based in Zanzibar for the period 1868 to 1903, systematic registration of vital events by governmental authority in Tanzania Mainland started during the German Administration. Tanzania Mainland was under the German Colonial yoke for the period 1885 to 1918.

Registration of births, deaths and marriages during the German colonial era was done pursuant to the German Federal law of 4 May, 1870, as amended by Article 40 of the Germany Civil Code. Such law concerned marriages and documentation of legal status of German nationals

overseas. It appears, therefore, that only vital events relating to German nationals in Tanzania were a subject of registration. German nationals constituted a small fraction of the Tanganyika population. In 1913 there were only 5,336 Europeans in Tanganyika.

Separate registers of births and deaths were kept. Every register was filled in two originals according to a format provided by the Federal Chancellor. At the end of every year, the official charged with the registration of births and deaths was required to close the register and transmit a copy thereof to the Federal Chancellor.

Prescribed particulars in respect of the registration of a birth were:-

1. Place, day and time of birth;
2. Sex of the child;
3. First names of the child;
4. First and family names, nationality status or profession including the place of parent's domicile and of two witnesses;
5. Signature of the father in the event he is physically present and of the two witnesses.

Prescribed particulars required to be entered in the death register were:-

1. First and family name of the deceased, his/her nationality, age, status or profession, place of birth and domicile;
2. First and family name of his/her wife/husband;
3. First and family names, nationality, status or profession and place of domicile of the deceased's parents.
4. Place, day and time of death;
5. First and family name, age, status or profession and place of domicile of two witnesses who are volunteering information and if they are relatives of the deceased, then the degree of the relationship;
6. Signature of the witnesses.

All records connected with the registration of vital events in Tanganyika during the German administration were taken to Berlin at the end of World War 1.

When World War I came to an end, Tanganyika was made a Mandate of the League of Nations with Britain as the administering power. As soon as civil administration was set up in those areas captured from the Germans by British troops provision was made for the registration of births and deaths. This was effected under proclamation No. 15 of 1917.

Under the proclamation, the Secretary to the Administration was declared Registrar General of Births and deaths; and the District Political Officer in charge of each district or such other person as might be appointed for the purpose by the Registrar General was made registrar of Births and Deaths within that district.

The Registrar of every district was charged with the duty of keeping registers of live births and deaths taking place within his district.

The particulars required to be entered in the registers were:-

1. In the case of a birth, the sex, name, date and place of birth, names, residences, occupations and nationality of the parents, and such further particulars as the Registrar General might prescribe:
2. In the case of a death, the name, age, sex residence, occupation and nationality of deceased, and the date, place, cause of death and such other particulars as the Registrar General might prescribe.

The registration of the birth of a child was made compulsory if either one or both parents were of European or American origin of descent.

The Registrar General was empowered to extend by public notice the provisions relating to compulsory registration to any class of persons.

In 1920 the Births and Deaths Registration Ordinance was enacted. It came into force on 1 April, 1921. This Ordinance, though it made similar provisions to Proclamation No.15 of 1917, did not repeal the Proclamation, so that for some time there were two enactments regarding registration of births and deaths: Proclamation No.15 of 1917 covering those areas under British troops by August 1917 and the 1920 Ordinance covering the whole country.

The 1920 Ordinance was amended in 1922. Such amendment made provision for the repeal of the 1917 proclamation and for compulsory registration of the death of every non-native with effect from 1 January, 1923. It also provided that all registers kept pursuant to the provisions of 1917 proclamation be delivered to the Registrar General and that provision of the Ordinance relating to inspection and certified copies should apply to every such register in like manner as they apply to registers kept under the 1920 ordinance.

It was not until 11 January 1950 that the provisions of the Ordinance relating to compulsory registration were extended to all non-Africans. Registration was made compulsory for Africans living in the towns of Tanga and Arusha in 1952 and 1956, respectively. After independence, the provisions of the Ordinance regarding registration of births and deaths were extended to Africans living in 14 major urban areas.

With regard to marriages we have seen that during the German colonial era only marriages of German nationals were being registered.

The law relating to marriages and divorces during the British colonial period was the Marriage Ordinance, No.12 of 1921. It came into force on 1st July, 1921. This Ordinance was based on Marriage ordinances introduced in Kenya and Uganda in 1902. In terms of Section 3, no provision of the Ordinance was applicable to any marriage to which each of the parties was a Mohammedan, Hindu, Buddhist or being an African professed not generally recognized from

any religion. The Ordinance, therefore, applied to Christian Marriage only. By virtue of Section 4, in order to be valid, Christian marriages had to be performed in accordance with the provision of the Ordinance. Church marriages could only be solemnised after obtaining a Registrar's certificate, at a licensed place of worship and by a licensed minister of religion. This meant that no Christian religious denomination had power independently of the state to celebrate marriages. Section 39 made provision for the validation of marriages solemnised by ministers of religion before the commencement of the Ordinance.

Section 28 provided for the preparation, immediately after the marriage ceremony, of a marriage certificate in duplicate to be signed by the Registrar or minister of religion, by the parties and by the witnesses. One of the certificates to be handed over to the parties and the other to be sent to the District Registrar for filing. Section 29 required the Registrar of Marriages in each district to keep a marriage register book in which to register every certificate of marriage filed in his office.

Particulars required to be entered in a marriage register book were: Date of marriage, names and surnames of parties, whether of full age or minor, condition, occupation, residence, father's name and occupation. The District Registrar was required to send to the Registrar General each month every copy of entry in the marriage register book under his custody.

The number of christians was a small fraction of the population of Tanzania. In 1937 there were 633,648 christians out of a population of 5,182,515. In other words christians constituted 12.2 percent of the total population.

2.2 Current Status

2.2.1 Births and Deaths:

The law governing the registration of births and deaths in Tanzania Mainland is the Births and Deaths Registration Ordinance, Cap.108. This Ordinance was enacted in 1920 and

came into force on 1st April, 1921. The Ordinance makes provision for the appointment of a Registrar General of Births and Deaths. The main duties of the Registrar General are:

- (i) To have custody of all filed register books and of all quarterly returns made by district registrars;
- (ii) To compile, after the close of each year, a summary of births and deaths of such year and a report on increase or decrease of the population of the country and on any special causes appearing to affect the same.
- (iii) To provide the district registrars with such book and forms as may be required, and with such instructions as may consider necessary for the registration of births and deaths.

The Ordinance provides that the district registrar of a district should be the administrative Officer in charge of that district or such other person as the Minister responsible for legal affairs may appoint.

The district registrar of each district is required to keep registers of births and deaths occurring in his district. It is the duty of the father and mother, and in default of the parents, of the occupier of the house in which the birth occurs, and of each person present at the birth, and of the person having charge of the child, to register the birth within three months of the birth. With regard to a death, it is the duty of the nearest relatives of the dead person who were present at his/her death or in attendance during his/her last illness, and in default of such relatives of every other relative dwelling within the district, and in default of such relatives of each person present at the death, and of the occupier of the house in which the death took place, and in default of such persons, of any inmate of the house, or of any person finding or taking charge of the dead body or causing such body to be buried, to register the death within one month after the death or finding of the body.

A district registrar is required not to enter in the register any birth after three months from the date of such birth or any death unless he is satisfied of the correctness of the particulars tendered for registration; and payment is made of the prescribed fee. A birth after ten years since the date of birth can only be registered after obtaining prior approval of the Registrar General.

Every district registrar is required to make and deliver to the Registrar General quarterly returns of births and deaths in the registers in his custody. Every register of births and deaths when filled up is required to be sent to the Registrar General for custody.

Registration of births and deaths of non-Africans is compulsory. Up to 1981 registration of births and deaths of Africans was compulsory only in those urban areas which are regional administrative centers. Hence for the major portion of Africans registration was optional.

2.2.2 Re-organization and Expansion of the Registration of Births and Deaths

Although registration of births and deaths started in Tanzania at the beginning of this century, so far very few births and deaths are being registered and hence statistics from such records are so defective that they are unsuitable for any practical use. The major factors militating against complete coverage are the facts that registration has long been optional for Africans who constitute more than 90 percent of population. Another factor is the fact that there was only one registration center in each district, situated at the District Commissioner's Office and lack of motivation on the part of the population to register births and deaths.

The Government specified the needs in this regard when a United Nations Needs Assessment Mission visited Tanzania immediately after the 1978 Census. The Mission examined the Government development strategies and recommended, among other things, that affective planning requires knowledge of the size and structure of the population. To get such data it is essential to improve the civil registration system in order to register all births and deaths taking place in the country. Hence, with UNFPA financial assistance, the Government embarked upon the re-organization and expansion of the civil registration project with effect from July, 1981.

The longtime objective of the project was to establish an efficient system for the registration of births and deaths with the aim of registering all births and deaths occurring in the country. The immediate objectives were to establish an experimental compulsory civil registration system in selected districts and to use lessons from the experiment to establish a civil registration system in sample registration areas from which data could be used to estimate vital rates. Such lessons were also intended to be used to extend the project to cover the whole country stage by stage.

In the project areas the registration of births and deaths has been made compulsory and the registration facilities have been taken to the door steps of the people. If a birth or death takes place in a health institution it is the duty of the authorities of such health institution to record it on prescribed forms. Such forms are then sent to District Registrar who retains one copy and sends the original to the Registrar General. In the 9 pilot districts if vital events take place at home it is the duty of the village authorities to record them and send the forms to the District Registrar.

For the period 1981 to 1988 the project was tested in 9 districts. The result was encouraging. Coverage of events in the 9 districts improved remarkably. However coverage was much better in a district with more health institutions than in districts with fewer health institutions. For instance, in Dar es Salaam region, coverage was 84 percent for births and 47 percent for deaths in 1988. In the same year coverage in Bagamoyo district was about 30 percent for births and much less for deaths. Dar es Salaam region has more health institutions than Bagamoyo. More than 90 percent of vital events registered in the 9 project districts for the period 1981 to 1988 were recorded in the health institutions. The performance of village authorities was not encouraging. Due to financial constraints the idea of establishing sample registration areas was abandoned.

Using the experience gained in the experimental district the project was extended to more districts with effect from 1989. But in the districts to which the project was extended with effect from 1989 registration centers were established in health institutions only. No registration facilities were made available with regard to vital events taking at home.

As of now the new registration system has been extended to 54 out of 90 districts. The 54 districts have a total of 1697 health institutions. In the 9 pilot districts where there are registration centers in the village for vital events taking place at home there are 838 villages.

Due to financial constraints the new registration system is being extended to new districts at the rate of 2 districts each financial year. The coverage of events even in the project districts has tended to deteriorate in recent years due to erratic supply of registration forms as a result of financial problems.

2.2.3 Marriages and Divorces

Marriage and divorce records are a source of statistics which are useful in the investigation of the interaction between socio-economic and demographic factors. For instance the age of which people marry, the forms which marital unions take and the prevalence of polygamy, divorce and separation are important in estimating fertility.

The law now in force regarding registration of marriages and divorces is the Law of Marriage Act. 1971. The Act has, to a certain extent, unified the law relating to marriage and divorce in Tanzania, and at the same time has preserved the right to religious forms of marriages. Some uniformity has been achieved by the introduction of certain basic standard provisions to all forms of marriages. These are, inter alia, freedom of consent, minimum age, prohibited relationships, requirement of the presence of two witnesses at the marriage ceremony, the introduction of a single system of registration of marriages and divorces and the requirement of a court decree for a valid divorce on the basis of irretrievable breakdown of marriage.

The Act makes provision for the documentation of all marriages, by whatever form they are contracted, in a single system of registration under the control of the Registrar General. In terms of Section 6, every district registrar and every Kadhi and Minister of religion licensed to celebrate marriages according to rites of a specified religion are designated registrars of marriages. The Area Commissioner and the Manpower Management Officer in charge of Manpower Management in the District are the official District Registrars. Section 7 empowers the Minister for Legal Affairs to designate registration officers for such areas as he may decide to perform duties as may be prescribed and generally to assist district registrars in the registration of marriages. In exercising such powers, the Minister has appointed divisional secretaries to be Registration Officers in their respective divisions. Section 8 empowers the Minister to appoint any member of the diplomatic staff of the United Republic to be registrar of marriages in that country. In pursuance of this provision the Minister has appointed head of the mission and every officer holding the post of Counsellor or First Secretary in certain Tanzanian Embassies to be registrars of marriages.

Section 42 (1) requires every registrar to maintain a register of marriages in the prescribed form. Section 43 specified the persons whose duty is to record marriages. The District Registrar is required to register civil marriages immediately after they are contracted in his presence. When a marriage is celebrated by a minister of religion in accordance with the rites of a specified religion it is his duty to record it immediately after celebrating it. A marriage contracted in Islamic form in the presence of a Kadhi is required to be registered by the Kadhi concerned. A registration official is required to take necessary steps to register an Islamic marriage contracted in his presence (no Kadhi being present) with the District Registrar or Kadhi. It is also his duty to register customary law marriages contracted in his presence with the District Registrar. When a marriage is contracted in accordance with customary law rites and there is no registration officer present, it is the duty of the parties to such marriage to apply within 30 days to the registration officer for the registration of marriage. For a marriage to be contracted in a Tanzanian Embassy, High Commission or Consulate, at least one of the parties must be a citizen of the United Republic of Tanzania and the registrar must be satisfied as to certain requirements. The procedure for the contracting of such marriage is similar to that for contracting a civil

marriage and the provisions of the Act relating to the issue of marriage certificate and to the registration of marriages are applicable as if the registrar appointed for that foreign country were a district registrar and the marriage is valid for the purposes of the Act accordingly. Such marriage is treated as if contracted in Tanganyika.

Particulars required to be entered in a marriage register are the date and place of marriage, full names of parties, age, status, residence, father's name, form of marriage, whether monogamous or polygamous.

Section 46 requires every registrar to send to the Registrar-General every month copies of all entries of marriages registered by him during that month. Under section 47 completed registers of marriages are sent to the Registrar-General for safe keeping.

Every person who, immediately before the coming into force of the Law of Marriages Act was a registrar of marriages under the Marriage Ordinance was required to send all registers of marriages in his possession to the Registrar General immediately after the commencement of the Act.

Section 48 requires the Registrar General to maintain an index showing the names of all parties to registered marriages, and provides for searches to be made in the marriage records.

Table I indicates the numbers and types of marriages registered for the period between May, 1971 and April, 1994. Coverage is not complete due to shortage of registration material as well as lack of motivation especially with regard to customary law marriages.

Section 44 provides for the registration of subsisting unregistered marriages. Either party to a subsisting marriage contracted prior to the commencement of the Law of Marriages Act which has not been registered under the provisions of any written law by then in force, may apply to the district registrar, Kadhi or registration officer for the registration that of marriage.

Few people have taken advantage of this precision. For the period between May, 1971 and October, 1994, only 393 subsisting unregistered marriages have been registered.

Section 42 (2) requires the Registrar General to maintain a register of foreign marriages. In terms of section 43 when a citizen of the United Republic has contracted a marriage outside Tanganyika otherwise than in a Tanzanian Embassy, he or she or his or her spouse may apply to the Registrar General for the Registration of that marriage and if the Registrar General is satisfied that the marriage should be recognized as valid under the provisions of section 36 will register it. Section 36 provides that a marriage contracted outside Tanganyika otherwise than in a Tanzanian Embassy or consulate is to be recognized as valid for all purposes of the law of Tanganyika, if:

- (a) It was contracted in a form required or permitted by law of the country where it was contracted;
- (b) each of the parties had, at the time of marriage, capacity to marry under the law of the country of his or her domicile;
- (c) both parties freely and voluntarily consented to the marriage or where either party did not freely and voluntarily consent to the marriage, the parties have freely and voluntarily consummated the marriage; and
- (d) Where either of the parties is a citizen of Tanzania or is domiciled in Tanganyika, both parties had capacity to marry according to the Law of Marriages Act. Up to October, 1994, only 201 foreign marriages have been registered.

2.2.4 Registration of Divorces and Annulments

For the first time in the legal history of Tanzania, termination of marriage by divorce or annulment is by law required to be registered in a central register. The Law of Marriages Act makes provision for the recording of divorces and annulments under the control of the Registrar General. Section 49 requires the Registrar General to maintain a register of annulment and

divorces; and section 50 requires every court which grants a decree of annulment of divorce to send a copy thereof to the Registrar General for registration. The particulars required to be entered in the register of annulments and divorces are; name of court, cause number, title of proceedings, date and place of marriage, kind of decree, date of decree and the date of registration and registrar's signature.

The number of registered divorces is small. For the period of May, 1971 to April 1992 only 18,392 divorces were registered, an average of about 1209.4 divorces per year. There appears to be a gross underregistration of divorces. Since the 1973 Demographic survey indicated a high marriage instability in Tanzania one would expect a much greater number of divorces than those registered. Reasons for under registration are many. It appears that most courts do not comply with the provisions of section 50. Parties to decrease of divorce or annulment do not press the courts to send copies of decrees to the Registrar General for registration because they are not aware of such legal requirement and in any case proof of termination of marriage can be provided by the court decree. Hence there is no motivation for the parties to see to it that their divorces are registered. Another reason is the fact that despite the provisions of the act requiring a court degree for a valid divorce, most customary law marriages and some of the Islamic marriages are terminated by traditional methods without seeking a court order.

2.2.5 Civil Registration Archives

Traditionally all registers of births, deaths and marriages when filled up are sent to the Registrar General's Office for safe custody. This is still the situation with the exception of births and deaths records under the new system which now covers about half of the country. Under the new system registration forms are completed in duplicate with the original being sent to the Registrar General and a copy remaining at the District Registrar" Office. Such records are yet to be computerized. Hence retrieval is manual.

2.2.6 Assessment of the Civil Registration System

The Civil registration system in Tanzania is not yet efficient enough to be able to produce reliable data which may be used for planning purposes. In the case of registration of births and deaths the new system which has the objective of establishing an efficient registration system has so far covered about half of the country and even in the areas already covered, not all births and deaths are registered due to erratic supply of registration forms and lack of motivation to register vital events. With regard to marriages coverage is equally not satisfactory because of insufficient supply of registration material and lack of motivation especially with regard to customary law marriages.

2.2.7 Uses of Registration Records

Because registration of births, deaths, marriages and divorce is incomplete, statistics from such records are not good enough for planning purposes. Registration records are used mainly as legal records for proof of age, place of birth, cause of death and marital status.

2.2.8 Coordination Among Government Institutions

In order to facilitate effective civil registration a number of institutions are required to co-operate. Such co-operation and coordination is indicated below. As the Project was being implemented there was formed in 1981 the National Committee on Vital and Health Statistics.

The Committee was comprised of the following:

- (i) The Registrar General, Chairman
- (ii) Representative of the Prime Minister's Office
- (iii) Representative of the Treasury
- (iv) Representative of Ministry of Planning
- (v) Representative of Government Statistician

- (vi) Representative of Ministry of Education
- (vii) Representative of Ministry of Home Affairs
- (viii) Representative of Ministry of Health
- (ix) Representative of Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare.

It was envisaged that the committee should be a governing body comparable to a Board of Directors. The main objective of the Committee was to monitor and Co-ordinate the implementation of the re-organization and expansion of the civil registration system; and in particular to initiate measures and activities aimed at setting up an efficient and effective system for the registration of births and deaths in the country.

Incidental to this objective are the following duties related to vital and health statistics:-

- (a) To identify areas for which vital statistics are needed and to recommend ways to meet the needs;
- (b) To ensure adequate and timely publication and dissemination of vital statistics information and periodically review the vital statistics system for its effectiveness and efficiency.
- (c) To help achieve uniformity in vital statistical methods, records, and tabulations, with a view to both national and international uses;
- (d) To ensure free flows of information and adequate exchange of views concerning needs and preference of producers and users of vital and health records at all levels;
- (e) To relate the activities and functions of diverse agencies or organizations that produce vital statistics by working as a coordinated whole, avoiding both wasteful overlapping of effort and important gaps in essential aspects of vital statistics;
- (f) To enhance the practical use and awareness of vital and health statistics;
- (g) To stimulate needed vital statistics studies by expert persons or groups;
- (h) To stimulate the training and supply of adequate number of skilled workers in the field of vital and health statistics, and to encourage the interest of the medical profession in statistical approaches to medical problems.

In 1986, proposals were made to reconstitute the National Committee on Vital and Health Statistics with a view to strengthening it. It was envisaged that the reconstituted Committee be composed of Ministers from the relevant Ministries with the Prime Minister as Chairman. The Committee was to be assisted by the Technical Co-ordinating Committee composed of Principal Secretaries from the Ministries concerned. The proposal were never implemented. At the same time the existing committee ceased functioning though efforts are being made to revive it.

The Law requires that a birth or death be registered in the district in which it occurred. Apart from the 9 pilot districts where district registrars of birth and deaths are officers of the Registrar General's Office, in the rest of districts the District Administrative Officers are district registrars of births and deaths and make quarterly returns to the Registrar General. The District Commissioners and District Administrative Officers are District Registrars of Marriages taking place in their districts. They register civil as well as customary marriages and forward copies of certificates of marriages to the Registrar General for custody.

Births and deaths occurring in health institutions in the project areas are recorded by authorities in much institutions. Health institutions are under the Ministry of Health. Registration forms are sent to the Bureau of Statistics for data analysis. The Bureau of Statistics has its employees stationed at the Registrar General's office to deal with coding of the registration forms.

Table 1: Marriages registered under the law of Marriage Act 1971 from May, 1971 to April, 1994

Year	Christian	Islamic	Civil	Customary	Others	Total
1971/72	8,776	2,023	768	210	153	11,930
1972/73	14,046	5,180	1,478	357	325	21,386
1973/74	12,340	7,713	1,856	411	120	22,440
1974/75	12,720	6,405	1,681	150	214	21,170
1975/76	12,777	5,524	2,030	127	113	20,571
1976/77	9,229	6,014	1,880	274	23	17,420
1977/78	11,539	7,419	2,963	247	79	22,247
1978/79	11,729	8,569	2,247	305	43	22,893
1979/80	10,695	7,391	1,645	133	133	19,997
1980/81	14,924	10,306	4,754	165	31	30,180
1981/82	15,453	11,619	4,033	87	59	31,251
1982/83	15,229	11,533	4,131	170	79	31,142
1983/84	14,447	17,714	2,788	62	25	35,036
1984/85	16,843	10,166	3,241	83	92	30,425
1985/86	13,724	6,347	1,941	75	9	22,096
1986/87	28,782	13,218	6,146	138	112	48,396
1987/88	18,776	10,924	2,240	62	75	32,077
1988/89	15,526	6,775	2,231	53	45	24,630
1989/90	6,485	5,064	2,061	46	19	13,675
1990/91	11,066	3,287	1,862	102	2	16,319
1991/92	9,990	4,213	361	18	56	17,889
1992/93	10,893	4,698	3,793	51	68	19,503
1993/94	11,883	3,797	5,015	-	107	20,802
Total	307,872	175,899	64,397	3,325	1,982	553,475

3. VITAL STATISTICS SYSTEM IN TANZANIA

3.1 Administrative Arrangement

As it has been stated in the previous sections of this paper, the law that governs the registration of births and deaths in Mainland Tanzania is the Births and Deaths Registration Ordinance, Cap. 108 which was enacted in 1920 and came into force on April 1, 1921. However, this Ordinance concerned itself with the registration of births and deaths but did not address itself to how vital statistics would be handled. As a result, there is no legal frame which lays down the responsibility to a government institution to process, produce and disseminate vital statistics.

Under the present arrangement, but with no legal obligation, the Bureau of Statistics was entrusted with the task of handling vital statistics since it is the sole body which, by law, has the mandate to carry out a population census. Within the Bureau of Statistics, the Population and Tourism Section which handles all population related activities is the body that is handling the vital statistics. All vital statistics are processed by this Section for Mainland Tanzania while the Department of Statistics in Zanzibar is responsible for the vital statistics in Zanzibar only.

3.2 Reporting and Monitoring Procedures

Under an agreement that was made between the Registrar General's Office and the Bureau of Statistics, a set of forms were designed to provide information that would be of use for legal and statistical purposes. The Registrar General administers the registration process in all the districts where the programme is presently operating by using standardized forms throughout the country. The forms are collected and sent to the Registrar General's Office where they are bound together by following a specified order before they are submitted to the Bureau of Statistics.

Coders who are stationed at the Registrar's Office enter the required codes for certain questions and take them to the Data Entry Unit for processing. However, data entry operations have not started for various reasons. It suffices to state that this has not been possible due to lack of data entry equipment, particularly micro computers. The registration of births and deaths which covers about 66 districts out of 103 districts and has reached a convincing stage but the data entry has not yet started even with the little information that has been collected.

Efforts are being made to acquire data entry equipment so that work can begin. Computer programs which will be used for data entry and tabulation have been prepared and tested. Presently, contacts are being made with members of the Inter-government institutions to determine the operational arrangements that will be followed, and the dissemination programme so that by June, 1995, a report covering 1993 and hopefully 1994 will be presented to the members of the Coordinating Committee.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Registration of births and deaths is facing many problems which are mainly operational in nature. At the beginning, when the registration of births and deaths was being reorganized and expanded to cover the entire population, it was intended to establish an experimental compulsory civil registration system in selected districts and use the lessons gained from the experiment to establish a civil registration system in sample areas from which data could be used to estimate vital rates. However, the project has faced a series of problems which have hampered the smooth running of its activities. Below are some of the pertinent problems which have been encountered:-

1. The supply of registration forms has, during the last few years, been erratic. In some instances, forms were not delivered to the affected areas in time. This was brought about by lack of adequate funds to meet expenses of printing registration forms.

2. In maintaining civil registration archives, registration forms are filled in duplicate with the original copy being sent to the Registrar General and a copy remaining at the District Registrar's Office. Unfortunately, the Office of the Registrar General is lacking computer facilities, hence retrieval of the records is done manually.
3. At the beginning when the project was started, a coordinating committee was formed and was comprised of different institutions. This committee was required to monitor and coordinate the implementation of the registration system, but presently, the committee is no longer functioning, though efforts are being made to revive it.
4. Processing and hence the analysis of the vital statistics has not been initiated by the Bureau of Statistics which was entrusted with this task. The main problem has been lack of computers which would be used for data entry and later analysis of the data.

Definitely, with the prevailing problems, the vital registration and vital statistics systems have failed to achieve the desired end results. The following recommendations are only some of the ideas which will help to solve some of the problems being faced. Some of the recommendations are given below:-

1. Efforts must be made for the government to provide adequate funds which will be used to print forms and distributed to all the areas where the registration exercise is in operation.
2. Though efforts are being made to revive the coordinating committee, it has discovered that the committee had no powers to coordinate the activities effectively, hence the idea of forming the Ministerial committee and a technical committee of Principal Secretaries. There is urgent need to form these two committees so that the project gets the required political will and hasten decision making mechanism that will facilitate the implementation of the project.

3. Since the Registrar General's Office is keeping the registration archives and manually retrieves them, and the Bureau of Statistics has failed to start keying into the computer the vital statistics, the government and the donor community should strive to acquire computers which will be used to process the vital statistics. This should be given an immediate attention so that data entry begins soon.

It may not be easy to raise all the problems which are facing the project particularly those which are being faced at the site, such as lack of transport to collect the filled in forms and human resource management. Likewise, some of the problems are within the capability of the government, but some of these problems such as the acquisition of computers cannot be tackled by the government because of lack of hard currency to purchase them. The formation of the ministerial committee as well as the technical committee of the Principal Secretaries will definitely assist in solving some of the problems which are facing vital registration in Tanzania.