



Distr.: Limited

AW/CRVS/94/25
28 November 1994

**UNITED NATIONS
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL**

Original: ENGLISH

**AFRICAN WORKSHOP ON STRATEGIES FOR ACCELERATING THE IMPROVEMENT
OF CIVIL REGISTRATION AND VITAL STATISTICS SYSTEMS
ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA, 5 TO 9 DECEMBER 1994**

**STATISTICAL DIVISION
UNITED NATIONS**

**ECONOMIC COMMISSION
FOR AFRICA**

**USES OF VITAL STATISTICS FOR
EDUCATION PLANNING WITH
SPECIAL REFERENCE TO SOUTH ASIAN
COUNTRIES^{1/}**

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**1/ -For reference purposes. Presented in the 1993
workshop in Beijing, China**

**-The views in this paper are those of the author and
not necessarily reflect those of the Economic
Commission for Africa.**

-Issued without formal editing.

USE OF VITAL STATISTICS FOR EDUCATIONAL PLANNING WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO SOUTH ASIAN COUNTRIES

Introduction:

1. Education is the basic right of every child notwithstanding the poverty status of families and the resource constraints of low income countries. The cost of denial of this right is high both for the child and the nation. UNICEF whose primary function is ensuring child survival and providing services for the overall development of the child in its State of World's Children report prepared in December, 1988 put forward a proposal for a World Summit for Children (WSC) which was later endorsed by 100 governments in 1989. The aim of the Summit was to discuss the unprecedented range of practicable and affordable opportunities which now exist for making drastic improvements in the lives of the world's children - their survival and well being, their nutrition and normal growth, their health and education, their rights and their futures. A number of child related goals were considered to be technically feasible and financially affordable. Apart from goals related to health and nutrition of children, education for all children and completion of primary education by at least 80% over the course of 1990-2000 were some of the important goals.
 2. The World Summit for Children was held in United Nations at New York on September 29 & 30, 1990. In a document prepared on the occasion of the World Summit for Children held on September 30, 1990, UNICEF had emphasised among other things the need to achieve three basic educational goals by the end of the 1990's, namely, (i) basic education for all, bringing literacy, numeracy and essential life skills to the great majority of the 1990's; (ii) reducing adult illiteracy rate to half its 1990 level, and (iii) ending the great disparities in education between boys and girls.
 3. The World Summit for Children was preceded by the World Conference on Education For All (WCFA) held in Jomtien, Thailand in March 1990. This was sponsored by the World Bank, UNDP, UNESCO and UNICEF. This Conference brought together almost 2,000 education leaders from over 150 countries to try to find ways and means of re-accelerating progress in education. The WCFA also emphasised that "education for all must be achieved. Failure is disabling both the individual and the society. Not to be educated, not to acquire at least basic literacy and numeracy, is a serious disability for any child and a society's failure to invest in education will disable in some degree all other development efforts whether it be the effort to increase agricultural production or the effort to reach people with new knowledge about health like child care". The conference adopted a goal of universal basic education and completion of primary education by at least 80% of the children by the year 2000. This was later on adopted by the World Summit for Children as one of the important goals.
- South Asian countries emphasis on basic education for children**
4. The conference on South Asian Children held in October 1986 in New Delhi with UNICEF support set in motion the "South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC)' process for children". The report of this conference was considered by the Bangalore SAARC Summit the next month. The Summit expressed the commitment of the South Asian countries to the goals of universal child immunization by the 1990's, universal primary education, maternal and child nutrition, provision of safe drinking water and shelter by the year 2000. The summit also set up a Standing Committee to undertake annual review of the situation of children in the SAARC countries, monitoring of the programmes and exchange of experience. The Kathmandu SAARC Summit (1987) urged for intensified action. The Islamabad Summit (1988) declared 1990 as the 'SAARC year of Girl Child'. The Male SAARC Summit of 1990 (November 1990) held soon after the WSC directed that "guidelines be prepared for a plan of action in the South Asian Context and progress be reviewed annually". The Summit also designated the 1990's as the "SAARC decade of girl child". The Colombo SAARC Summit 1990 endorsed this and reaffirmed the aim of primary education for all children by the year 2000. The Heads of

the States/Governments also welcomed the offer of Sri Lanka to host a Conference on children in South Asia in 1992 to consider implementation of the regional plan of action.

5. The Colombo conference on children in South Asia was preceded by intensive consultations among member countries on achieving the goals of 1990's for children development with participation of at least one eminent person from each of the seven countries. In all there were eleven such consultations from mid March to early June, 1992. The consultations were on i) Girl child; ii) The Rights of the Child; iii) Child Health and Nutrition; iv) Basic Education; v) Communication; vi) Social strategy; vii) Economic Planning; viii) The Urban Child; ix) Parliamentarians for Children; x) Inter religious group and xi) Social statistics.

6. The report on basic education had noted that the South Asian region has made progress towards achieving this goal but no country in the region has achieved universal primary education. In five of the seven countries the girl child is particularly disadvantaged and there are wide gender disparities in educational participation. In 1990 the SAARC countries had declared 1991-2000 as the Decade of the Girl Child and efforts were to be made to reduce the gender gap in education. Nevertheless it recognised of an arduous task ahead, as the percentage of girls of the total enrolment in primary schools and female literacy rates are relatively low in several countries. In countries with low enrolment many parents do not see an economic or social value in educating girls. In all the countries, children in the most economically disadvantaged families, in remote villages, settlements and plantations, disabled children and children in especially difficult circumstances such as "street children" and refugee children are often outside the ambit of the education system.

7. The report of the South Asian consultations on Social Statistics held at Murree near Islamabad during June, 1992 to assess the progress so far in achieving the goals, strongly emphasised that all the countries in the South Asian region should strengthen their statistical machinery so that the progress can be measured on a continuous basis. One of the observations of this group was that all the countries in the South Asian regions have statutory arrangements in one form or other for registration of births, deaths and other vital events - apart from the periodic, usually decennial census. Unfortunately the civil registration system is not effective except in Sri Lanka and to a lesser extent in the Maldives. Therefore, key indicators like the infant mortality rate (IMR) are obtained through demographic or health surveys. Sometimes the survey techniques are combined (as in the case of the sample registration system in India) with the principles of continuous but limited enumeration. The results have been uneven. Even when indicators appear reliable, the delay is considerable, one or two years, if not more. Often there are year to year fluctuations to an extent which is difficult to explain. Consequently, their usability as tools of planning or community awareness is reduced. This group reiterated that the time has come for South Asia to revive serious interest in a proper and complete civil registration system like in industrialised countries. The group felt that the cost factor which is often cited as a deterrent cannot be an argument because of the higher costs and poorer results of organising special surveys, as well as the social costs involved in not generating regular information required for social planning. Further initial and recurring costs of bureaucratic establishments in support of civil registration can be limited by:

- a) restoring the traditional practice of designating part time village level registrars for statutory vital registration against a reasonable fee per registration;
- and
- b) using computer capacity which is increasingly becoming part of the government system, any way even at the district level.

8. The Group pointed out that both these measures are working fairly well in Sri Lanka. In these circumstances, it was felt that compulsory and complete vital registration can no longer be postponed. It will immensely help the monitoring of the goals of this decade for children, necessarily in a manner disaggregated by gender, age group and area. The paramount aim of the proposed fine tuning of the statistical system would be to decentralise the statistical process without compromising technical

standards. This concern is central to the integrated planning and in particular to achieving the goals for children and development.

9. The second SAARC conference on Children held in Colombo between 16-18 September, 1992 reiterated the commitment to achieve all the major goals and the cluster of essential goals for South Asia as contained in their national plans of action. Deeply conscious that primary education is the cutting edge in the struggle against poverty and the promotion of development, the Heads of States/Governments reaffirmed the importance of attaining the target of providing primary education to all children between the ages of 6-14 years by the year 2000. One of the important goals was access to and enrolment in primary education for at least 80% of the boys and 75% of the girls; and completion of primary education by at least 50% of the girls as well as boys by 1995 - reduction of adult and adolescent illiteracy from the 1990 levels by 25% by 1995. The goals for 2000 to be achieved and the 1990 levels for individual countries are shown in Annexure I.

10. The Colombo Conference on children identified a number of strategies to achieve the goals. Important among them is the need to strengthen the national information systems. It emphasised the need for effective compulsory registration of births, deaths and marriages in all SAARC member countries.

Vital Statistics required for educational planning

11. In view of the recent emphasis on the goals relating to education, it would be necessary to examine the statistics that are needed for educational planning in general and primary education in particular. Educational Planning is a systematic process in which data from a number of sources are integrated to understand the current situation, formulate programmes to achieve specific goals, monitor and evaluate the programmes. For this purpose educational planning requires different types of data including:

- (1) Data on trends and distribution of population including social and economic characteristics. These data are required by sex, age groups, social and economic groups
- (2) Indicators useful for monitoring educational progress.
- (3) Data on other services/infrastructure required like building, manpower, its availability at particular location etc.

Underlying all these is a demographic input without which it is virtually impossible to start. The most common ones are the population in different school going ages. This is usually obtained from population projections. Projections are often made at national and sub national levels, rarely at lower levels like district/sub-district planning units.

Use of vital statistics to estimate the school age population at macro levels:

12. One of the important uses of vital statistics is to project the population at macro level. Different assumptions regarding fertility and mortality are used to project the population by age and sex, by component methods. In many countries migration become very insignificant when the projections are prepared at macro level. Such projections often are termed as high, medium and low based on the population size/levels of fertility assumed. The United Nations has been preparing such projections for all the countries of the world. Such projections are very useful in finding out the likely impact of the various fertility and mortality assumptions on the size of the school age population and as a consequence on educational planning. For example according to 1992 projections of the United Nations, by the year 2020 the population in the age group 6-11 is likely to be around 156.2 million in India if the high fertility assumption holds good whereas it is likely to be 114.4 million, if the low fertility assumption holds good i.e. the difference of 41.8 million in a period of 30 years. The most likely estimate, of the population in

the age group 6-11, represented by medium projection estimate is about 135.3 million. Such projections help the government in prioritising the issues of population control and plan for the school education accordingly. In particular the resources required for educational planning are allocated based on such projections. Often based on the resource availabilities the goals set up are modified; the target dates postponed or preponed. Usually such projections do not take into account the variations by ethnic groups. Even rural urban projections by age group are difficult because of the migration factor.

13. Preparation of such population projections needs reliable data on a number of demographic parameters, particularly fertility, mortality and migration. Projection of fertility involves calculating level of fertility at base period, analysing of trends in fertility in the recent past and predicting the future course of fertility. This in turn requires knowledge about the changes in the age at marriage and contraceptive adoption by the population at risk. In many countries, there are laws regarding minimum age at which marriage can be contracted. Registration of marriages can provide invaluable data for studying the rate of marriage and changes in age at marriage in the recent period. The registration of marriage in such countries would necessarily involve production of birth certificate to verify the age at the time of marriage.

14. Deaths classified by age at death, provides the basic data for construction of life tables used for population projections. In addition data on death classified by age, provides a number of other measures of mortality like infant mortality, neonatal and post neo natal mortality, child mortality and mortality at old ages. Study of the trends in such indicators is the basis for projecting the mortality trends.

Regional dimensions of educational planning and the role of vital statistics In identifying regional variations:

15. Educational planning in developing countries involves mostly preparing enrolment projection and the related requirement projection. These projections are made at macro levels. In the absence of vital statistics at micro levels, the estimated requirements at district or lower administrative levels are often prorata adjusted on the basis of population, assuming the same ratio of school going age population to total population in different regions.

16. One of the most important consequence of not having proper vital statistics is that the regional dimensions of educational planning are often lost sight of. New schools particularly elementary schools are to be located at places where children will find it convenient to attend. If the equity of the educational system is to be kept in view, regional dimensions cannot be ignored. Educational planners have pointed out that often schools and facilities are concentrated in urban areas and in the wealthiest parts. This enables the urbanites and wealthier sections of the population to take better advantage of the system. The rural poor and the illiterate sections of the population who need education most are left out of the scheme. Often the standard plea of the planners is that in the absence of data on regional variations, the same ratio has been assumed for all areas. It is in this context that vital statistics together with Census data can play a powerful role in identifying the localities where more children live. The census statistics can be tabulated to identify localities where more people are illiterate. Areas where the poor and the illiterates are concentrated can be ideal places for location of elementary schools.

17. As already pointed out, one of the important uses of civil registration statistics is to identify variations at micro level so that equalities in educational planning at micro level can be taken care of. For example, the state of Kerala in southern India has a complete registration of births. The birth rate in 1989 was 19.8 (per thousand population) at state level as compared to 20.0 estimated by the SRS - a dual registration system. At the district level the birth rate based on civil registration varies from 14.8 in Alappuzha to 26.2 in Malappuram followed by 22.2 in Kozhikode. In fact 13.8% of the births in Kerala occur in one district, namely, Malappuram which has about 10.6% of the population. The 1991 census also shows that this district is the most backward in literacy among all the districts of Kerala and the male female gap is very wide in this district. Tabulating the civil registration based data at lower area levels on

a priority basis would go a long way in identifying villages/habitations with high birth rate within Malappuram district.

Inequalities among different socio economic groups and the role of Vital statistics:

18. Similarly within a region, the variation in the sex age composition due to differential fertility and mortality among different socio economic groups is often ignored. One of the main reasons for ignoring such variations is again the lack of data on school age population at small area level. It is well known that fertility and mortality levels are lower in areas where richer and educated sections of the population live and they are higher in areas where poor and illiterate population live. One consequence of the prorata allocation of resources is that schools are often located at places where there are fewer children. At places where poor and illiterate live schools are over crowded and the quality of education suffers. In such areas the enrolments are poor and drop outs higher. In particular, the education of the girl child is often affected in such a situation. In areas where registration is complete careful appraisal of the number of births that has occurred in each locality in the last few years (say, five years) tabulated by the socio economic particulars of parents would go a long way in providing educational services particularly primary education at the door steps of the community and removing the existing disparities in provision of services.

19. As pointed out earlier if the statistics are available at micro level based on civil registration system it would be possible to find out the regional differentials at local levels in fertility and plan the location of the schools and other facilities required for each small administrative unit. For such local area level estimation, sample surveys often fail to provide reliable estimates. Wherever civil registration is complete such micro level data based on vital records can provide valuable data. In many countries there is a provision in the civil registration system for collecting data on births and deaths separately for different groups/communities. In civil registration system of most of the SAARC countries there is a provision to collect information on literacy or educational level of father/mother and occupation of father/mother. Number of births tabulated by these social/educational groups would be helpful in identifying areas where more births occur to illiterate parents. These will be the ideal places for setting up primary schools.

Some special problems of estimating future school enrolment in developing countries:

20. Preparation of estimates of future enrolment in developing countries involves a number of problems specific to these countries. Some of these problems are less frequently encountered or not encountered at all in developed countries. Firstly, reliable educational data are much more scarce in developing countries than in developed countries. Secondly, the educational priorities are different in two groups of countries. For example, projecting future enrolment at primary level is a function of

1) The population of admission age

2) The proportion of this population entering school and

3) The holding power of the educational system (i.e., development of promotion, repetition and drop out rates)

21. In developed countries the proportion of children repeating a grade or dropping out of a grade are generally negligible and all children of admission age are automatically enrolled at school. This is not the case in developing countries where all the three factors listed above play a role. In many countries admission ages may not be strictly adhered to. Sometimes the age of entry to primary education is lowered or increased by administrative orders. In view of the variations in fertility levels, impact of these may not be uniform at different regions. A reliable civil registration where births registration is complete, can help to quantify the likely impact of such orders on the enrolment at local area levels, so that resources can be allocated to meet the demands.

22. To sum up, typical planning for education continues to be exclusively focussed on preparing school enrolment projections along with related resource requirement projections. Demographic input play an important role in the preparation of these projections. It is well recognised that changes in fertility could have significant impact on school going age population. Grade transition methods and age grade transition methods are two popular methods used for enrolment projections. One of the important inputs in these methods is the number of students in the first grade. This can be estimated with more accuracy at small area levels, if statistics on births and deaths based on civil registration are available. Sample surveys are poor substitutes in this area.

Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in South Asian countries:

23. It is in this context of a renewed interest and emphasis on health and educational goals for children set up by the Governments of the region and endorsed by the Heads of States/Governments and the need to monitor the goals on an annual basis that the civil registration system has to be examined and revamped if necessary. Civil registration records are well recognised as an invaluable legal and administrative instruments and extremely useful source for vital statistics which are a basic input in measuring the impact of socio-economic development including improvement in health, housing conditions, education etc. With this end in view the civil registration and vital statistics systems of the SAARC countries are reviewed briefly in the following paragraphs.

24. In the South Asian region laws exist for registration of births and deaths in Sri Lanka, India, Maldives, Nepal and Bangladesh. In Pakistan and Bhutan centralised Acts do not seem to be in existence. In Sri Lanka marriages are also required to be registered.

25. The Sri Lankan civil registration system has been evaluated from time to time by means of special surveys. Three evaluation surveys were conducted in 1953, 1967 and 1980. These indicate that births and deaths registrations in 1953 were complete to the extent of 88.1 and 88.6 per cent. In 1980 the coverage increased to 98.8 and 94.0 percent for births and deaths respectively. There seems to have been a slight deterioration in the coverage of vital events particularly in urban areas. A well developed medical and health care network covering all the parts of the country and delivery of more than 80 percent of the births in medical institutions have ensured high coverage of registration. Another important factor ensuring high coverage of registration is education. In Sri Lanka education is provided free of charge upto university level and parents irrespective of their social status have great concern about the education of their children. (Gamaniratne 1989) For school admission production of birth certificate is essential. Birth certificate is essential for national identification, issue of driving licenses, inheritance, tax related schemes, voting rights etc. These measures tend to promote the coverage of registration. Similarly no person can bury, cremate or otherwise dispose of the corpse of a person dying in proclaimed areas without a proof of registration and the cemetery keepers insist on proof of registration before the burial or cremation permit is issued. Further, the funeral undertakers require a copy of death certificate to transport a corpse.

26. Major problems seem to have cropped up during the last five to six years. There is considerable time lag in the availability of vital statistics due to difficulty in collecting statistical returns from registration areas. The latest year for which IMR is available is 1990 and is provisional. The disruption of services in the northern and eastern parts of the country has resulted in non availability of data for those areas for several years. As a consequence vital statistics at national level are incomplete. Tabulation of data by place of occurrence rather than place of residence of the individuals, results in urban rates being much higher than rural rates due to the location of institutions in urban areas. This also leads to higher birth rates and mortality rates in districts which are more urban or in which more institutions are located.

27. At macro level, the education planning process has received considerable attention recently. A special Education Commission has been set up to make recommendations to the Government on the present system of education. The Commission has sought quantitative information such as age-sex structure of the population and the projections for the future years.

28. Such projections could be made available by the Department of Census and Statistics because of the availability of data from the vital statistics to complete the age specific fertility and mortality rates. Such projections have not yet been possible to make at sub-national levels. Neither the vital statistics nor the population age-sex structure is available in sufficient detail and level of accuracy for this purpose. A major problem Sri Lanka now faces is the absence of a recent population census. The last census was in 1981. The one planned for 1991 could not be taken because of the prevailing unrest in the northern and eastern parts of the country. In the absence of a population census, the data from the civil registration system cannot be fully utilised. The numbers of vital events cannot be converted to rates of mortality, fertility etc. without population data.

29. A school census is taken annually by the Planning Division of the Ministry of Education. It uses births and deaths recorded in civil registration system to estimate the number of school age population in the country which are then used to compute the primary school enrolment ratios. Again this is only possible at national level at present.

30. In India, the civil registration is incomplete for the country as a whole. Roughly 52% of births seem to be registered in 1987. However, there are states/union territories like Goa, Kerala, Chandigarh, Delhi and Pondicherry where birth registration coverage is over 95 percent in 1990. Roughly 41 million persons or 4.84% of the India's population live in these territories. In a number of other states like Gujarat, Haryana, Punjab, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu birth registration is over 75 percent complete. The combined population of these territories is 212 million or 25.1 percent of India's population. The death registration however is relatively less complete even in these areas. In recent years a number of states have followed the guidelines for compulsory production of birth certificate at first school admission and for addition of a new born in ration card in urban areas. Care has been taken not to deny admission to any child for non production of birth certificate. Birth certificate is also compulsory for passport, in case of all births after 1989. There is a regular sample survey called Sample Registration System (SRS) which provides data annually on a number of fertility and mortality indicators for each state separately for rural and urban areas. The SRS is a dual registration system in which an enumerator registers vital events continuously in selected units. Every half a year an independent retrospective survey is conducted by a supervisor. The records of these two are matched to provide reliable estimates. All unmatched events are reverified in the field. Evaluation of the SRS conducted during the 80's has indicated that the System provides very reliable estimates of birth and death rates.

31. In India, population projections are prepared regularly by an Expert Committee appointed by the Planning Commission for preparation of population projections. The SRS data provide base level vital statistics. As part of the projections, the school age population at national and state levels are estimated. No such estimates are available at levels below the state.

32. All India Educational surveys are conducted regularly once in 5 years to obtain various statistics required for educational planning. One of the schedules used for the survey has a provision to obtain hamlet wise data on population. This is expected to be useful to estimate children of school going ages at local area levels. However, the data collected based on this schedule are recognised to be approximate, as these are not based on house to house enquiry but are based on the local enquiry from knowledgeable persons.

33. One of the activities proposed in the National Plan of Action, 1992 is the opening of new primary schools according to norm in unserved habitation and the provision of non-formal educational programmes for smaller habitations and for children who cannot benefit from the school system. It is also proposed to improve the existing ratio between primary and upper primary schools to 1:2. This is felt necessary as the existing norm of providing an upper primary school within 3 Km. walking distance for all practical purposes denies education at this level to a large section of girls.

34. In Maldives, the registration has been made compulsory by introduction of a law in 1978. Each birth must be reported at the place of its occurrence. A still birth is considered as a birth as well as death. For each birth a registration form is expected to be filled by the attendant at birth. Similarly each death must be reported. Burial can only be made with the permission of the concerned authorities. There is no inbuilt evaluation mechanism in the system. Comparison of the total population estimated on the basis of registration data confirms closely to the total population leading to the conclusion that registration is complete.

35. School data is maintained for the whole country by the Ministry of Education. All the schools in the 200 inhabited islands are covered in this data collection. However, there are gross distortions in enrollment statistics according to field observations. There are discrepancies between the size of the school age population and numbers enrolled. There are also problems of definition and standards in terms of literacy and basic education. The Ministry of Education is now working to develop a good statistical unit with the necessary manpower to maintain it.

36. In Nepal, a vital registration system was initiated in 1977 with assistance from UNFPA. The system was introduced progressively in 40 densely populated districts during 1977-81. These districts account for two thirds of Nepal's population. There is a rising trend in registration over the years and this points to growing popularity of vital registration among the people. However, only 25% of the expected births are registered. Birth rates are estimated on the basis of adhoc demographic sample surveys which are conducted from time to time by different agencies. Analysis of census age data is another source of vital statistics. Most of the estimates based on the surveys are available at national and natural division levels.

37. In Pakistan, there appears to be two parallel systems of vital registration: one flowing from the household to the Ministry of Health through the Rural Union Councils and Urban Local Bodies under the local government Ordinance 1979 and the other from the household to the office of the Director General of Registration through a network of local population registration offices under the National Registration Act 56 of 1973 as amended by Act 53 of 1975. Though the registration is compulsory in both the channels the supervisory mechanism is poor so that the systems are virtually left to run by themselves. Duplication and overlapping responsibility seems to have led to poor coverage and quality. There is no fixed penalty for non reporting. A sample survey on vital registration was launched in 1985 to provide reliable and timely vital statistics. This was a dual registration system.

38. In Bangladesh, Local Government Ordinance 1976, the Municipality Ordinance 1977 and the Amendment issued in 1979 to the Birth and Death Registration Act of 1873 govern the registration system in the country. The civil registration system provides unsatisfactory data. In the absence of a sound civil registration system, the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics(BBS) initiated a sample demographic and vital registration project to provide at the national level vital rates and population growth rates. A programme called Bangladesh demographic survey and vital registration system (VRS) is being implemented since 1980. This was expanded in 1983 and covers approximately 52,000 households spread over 210 Primary Sampling Units(PSU) - 150 in rural areas and 60 in urban areas. Each PSU consists of approximately 250 households and a part time local registrar is responsible for monitoring the activities. This is followed by a quarterly survey for recording births, deaths, marriages and migration by the staff from BBS's headquarters. Since 1991, this has become a regular activity of BBS. This sample is expected to provide estimates at a more disaggregated level and to assess regional differentials for various socio economic groups.

39. In Bhutan, the census continues to be the main source of demographic data. The registration is very poor in the country. During June-August 1984 an adhoc demographic sample survey was conducted by the Central Statistical Organisation covering the entire country. This was a single round retrospective survey based on a two stage sample design.

40. On the whole it appears that civil registration is still weak in most of the countries. Increasing need for vital statistics has been felt by all the countries of the region and sample surveys have been initiated to fill in the gap. However, as pointed out earlier such surveys have their own limitations in providing estimates at sub national and small area levels. One of the main reasons for non registration of births is the lack of insistence of birth certificates, in administrative organs of the Government. Insistence on the production of such certificates as in case of Sri Lanka, urban areas of India and in Maldives can improve the registration system and enable it to provide reliable estimates at micro levels.

Summary and conclusions:

41. In the South Asia region the Governments have set up educational goals relating to children which are time bound and directed that the achievements should be monitored on an annual basis. One of the important data required to measure the achievements and to take remedial action is the population at different ages. Since the goals have been fixed at macro levels sample surveys conducted at national level can make it a point to measure these goals each year or at intervals of a few years. The constant monitoring year-wise would help in taking remedial action. Implementation of programmes at micro level would however, require statistics at micro and local area levels. Unfortunately in all the countries of South Asia, except Sri Lanka & Maldives, the required statistics based on civil registration are not available. Even in Sri Lanka and Maldives, the vital statistics are not published at micro levels. Keeping in view the different levels of development of vital statistics in various countries of the region, the following action programme is suggested.

(i) In countries like Sri Lanka and Maldives where the civil registration system is complete efforts must be made to tabulate the civil registration data by communities and by local area so that the regions/communities which are educationally backward can be identified and action plan initiated to improve the levels of school attendance. Such tabulations must be confined to few items like births and child deaths and must be compiled locally in a decentralised manner for use of educational planners.

(ii) In countries like India where civil registration system is reasonably good in certain states, efforts should be made to improve the civil registration quickly so as to ensure complete registration. Even in those states where birth registration is more than 75% complete, special efforts should be made to identify the districts/blocks where registration is complete and tabulate the civil registration data quickly by district/development blocks. This should mean setting up a special machinery for quickly collecting the data from local registrars and tabulating it. As and when completeness of registration improves in more and more areas, the tabulation areas must be expanded. In the areas where the tabulation is being attempted, this should be done by place of usual residence of the parents. Presently tabulations are being done by the place of occurrence. Present tabulation give unacceptably high birth rates in urban areas where hospitals are located and more and more births take place. In all such towns the births which relate to the same area must be tabulated by occupation/literacy status of the parents. This should give enough statistics for use in the educational planning. In the meanwhile at national level, the sample surveys like National Sample Survey should collect data on school attendance by children so that evaluation can be done at state level.

(iii) In countries like Bangladesh and Pakistan where demographic sample surveys have been established recently, sample surveys should attempt to measure the achievement of the goals. Specifically these sample surveys should ask all children their educational level to ensure whether they have completed the primary education or not.

(iv) In countries like Bhutan and Nepal, regular household sample surveys must be established to monitor the progress. Efforts must be done to tabulate the survey data quickly. Such surveys should attempt to evaluate the other goals set up by their respective governments.

ANNEXURE I
TOWARDS THE GOALS
1990 LEVELS WITH THE GOALS FOR 2000 SHOWN IN BRACKETS

	IMR	USMR	MMR	Primary School Completion Rate (%)	Adul Literacy Rate (%)			Access (%) to Safe		Populrion		No. of Children < 15 years (millions)
					Male	Female	Total	Drinking Water	Sanitary facility	growth rate(%)	in poverty (%)	
Bangladesh	110(50)	184(70)	700(350)	35(60)	43	22	35(45+)	80(95+)	6(80)	2.2	60	51.4
Bhutan	134(30)	215(50)	770(200)	35(80)	38	10	30(65-)	25(80)	62(90+)	2.5	na	0.2
India	80(60)	146(70)	400(200)	49(80)	64	39	52(70+)	84(95+)	10(20+)	2.1	29	301.3
Maldives	38(20)	55(42)	400(170)	95(95+)	98	99	98(99)	50(95+)	32(90+)	3.2	na	0.1
Nepal	107(50)	165(70)	850(400)	27(70+)	55	25	35(68)	37(77)	6(31)	2.1	49	7.7
Pakistan	113(50)	162(80)	500(250)	50(80)	41	22	32(65)	64(80)	28(50)	3.1	30	44.3
Sri Lanka	19(17-)	35(24-)	50(30-)	89(95+)	87	82	84(95)	67(95+)	61(90+)	1.5	39	5.6

Number of children in South Asia: 410.6 mn

Source: South Asian Consultations on achieving the goals of the 1990's for children and development - UNICEF 1992

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