NAMIBIA

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Acknowledgements

Acronyms

ACRONYM	NAME
BNN	Birth Notification Number
CRVSID	Civil Registration Vital Statistics and Identity
DCR	Department of Civil Registration
ICT	Information Communications technology
MGEPESW	Ministry of Gender Equality, Poverty Eradication and Social Welfare
MHAISS	Ministry of Home Affairs, Immigration, Safety and Security
NAMPOS	Namibia Population System
NID	National Identification Document
NPC	National Planning Commission
NPRS	National Population Registration System
NSA	Namibia Statistics Agency
SWA ID	South-West Africa ID
UIN	Unique Identity Number (connects all the modules in the NPRS (births, identity, marriages/divorces, deaths)
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

Objectives and Methodology for Individual Country Reports

OBJECTIVES

This represents one of six case studies initiated by the UN Legal Identity Agenda (UNLIA) Task Force, examining the experiences of six nations: Bangladesh, Bhutan, Colombia, Kenya, Namibia, and Rwanda. The primary aim is to draw lessons from these countries, considering their diverse experiences and perspectives, regarding integrating their Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) systems with their population register/ ID systems. While this may be a relatively small sample size, these case studies offer valuable insights that can benefit other countries embarking on a similar journey. By doing so, they contribute to the overarching goal of UNLIA and help propel progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and their associated targets.

The study seeks to answer three fundamental questions:

1. How was the stock built? This pertains to the establishment of the initial population register.

2. When was the civil registration data linked to the population register/identity database? This explores the timeline of integrating civil registration data into the population register.

3. How long did the system transition from a transient to a steady state? This examines the duration required for the system to achieve a stable and sustainable state.

This case study and the others also aim to assess how the enabling environment and the organizational capabilities, including their legal and institutional frameworks, supported these countries in their efforts to develop their CRVSID systems.

METHODOLOGY

The approach to developing the case studies included desk review and country-specific questionnaire-based interviews. This study and the others were done remotely, which proved to be a limiting factor in efficiently accessing information through interaction with key stakeholders.

The desk review attempted to access normative and guidance documents and literature from global and regional organizations. Documents on legal frameworks, in-country assessment reports, assessments conducted by global and regional organizations, and other relevant documents were also reviewed. Information gaps were identified, and country-specific questionnaires were developed and distributed to the relevant individuals for their responses. Focused interviews were subsequently conducted with country officials and/or local focal points from organizations actively involved in supporting the Government in CRVSID activities. All interviews were recorded with the interviewees' permission.

Namibia at a Glance

Total population (2021)	2.6 million	World Bank 2021
Percentage of urban population (2021)	54%	World Bank 2021
Estimated number of births (2021)	68 thousand	World Bank 2021
Estimated number of deaths (2021)	28 thousand	World Bank 2021
Birth registration completion level (2017)	80%	World Bank 2015
Namibia Vital Statistics Report 2016-2017	80%	World Bank 2015
Death registration completion level (2017)	76%	Namibia Vital Statistics Report 2016-2017
Coverage of ID among population (15 + years)	91%	World Bank 2021

The Journey Towards an Integrated CRVSID System

KEY MILESTONES

YEAR	MILESTONE EVENT
1963	*Birth, Marriages, and Deaths Registration Act*
1979	*Identification of Persons Act, 1979* – issuance of first IDs to all persons permanently residing in the territory of South-West Africa, today's Namibia
1993	The government launched nationwide campaigns to register births for all citizens
1996	*Identification Act 1996* - compilation and maintenance of a population register in respect of the population of Namibia and issuance of identity card
2000	Design and development of the National Population System (NAMPOS) building on the South-West Africa -ID (SWA ID) database
2010	Scanning of old registration records as PDF documents for verification initiated
2011	Established an electronic National Population Registration System (NPRS), a new multi-tiered enterprise web-based system
2012	The death registration module deployed in NPRS
2013	The birth registration module deployed in NPRS
2014	The marriage module of NPRS is designed and deployed. 18-month "Turn Around Project" begins.
2017	Piloting and deployment of the e-birth notification system
2018	Piloting and deployment of the e-death notification system
2020	First ever Vital Statistics Report published for the year 2016-2017

Namibia's Birth, Marriages and Deaths Act of 1963 did not provide for civil registration of all the population in the country.[1] In 1970, the Identity Documents in South-West Africa Act was enacted, following which fingerprints were captured and verified manually from 1978 onwards. The first National ID card was issued in 1978. With the Identification of Persons Act of 1979, SWA-IDs were issued to persons permanently residing in Namibia. The government issued SWA-IDs to whoever sought these.

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1   The Act was not implemented in all parts of the country.

The Identification Act of 1996 provided a clear road map for the development and maintenance of a population register for Namibia, along with the issuance of identity cards. This included provisions for registering those who qualified as citizens of Namibia. It also included provisions for registering non-citizens holding permanent residence permits. The Identification Act of 1996 repealed and replaced the previous laws, namely Identity Documents in South-West Africa Act of 1970 and the Identification of Persons Act of 1979). Nonetheless, identity documents issued under these previous acts remained valid and effective.

Despite the limited scope of coverage for SWA IDs, they served as one of the foundational components for initializing the population register. After 1996[2], individuals aged 16 years and above could come forward to enrol themselves in the population register in order to acquire the Namibian Identity document[3]. Those who already possessed SWA IDs could use them to obtain the new Namibian Identity Card, subject to a comprehensive verification process that included deduplication, among other procedures.

In 2000, the Namibia Population System (NAMPOS) was developed to provide National IDs to people registered in the population register. An Automated Fingerprint ID System was introduced in 2004. Technology advancement and the changing needs of the Ministry of Home and Immigration (MHAI) led to the establishment of an electronic National Population Registration System (NPRS) in 2011. The NPRS Person Profile Data Architecture Model is a unique approach to creating a vital events life cycle aggregation of information that links to both civil and identity registration.

Old birth registration records were captured in a filing and record management system called M-files, which was designed to store a large number of scanned documents in a single database. It continues to be used for the purpose of validation and verification of birth records before identity registration. The birth records from M-files are transferred to NPRS only after a person applies for an identity document, duplicate identity document or requests to amend their birth record. The marriage and death records were scanned and captured directly in the NPRS[4].

The introduction of death, birth, and marriage modules in the NPRS from 2012 through 2014 helped establish interoperability between civil registration and identity systems. Through the implementation of the Turn Around Strategy[5], a significant change management effort was started in 2014 with the objective of improving service delivery to the public. The issuance of a national identity card took 100 days in April 2014, and by October 2015, it was reduced to 16 days.

The e-birth and e-death notification components were developed and introduced between 2016 and 2018 using the NPRS. The implementation of these notification modules ensures that public and private health facilities throughout the country, as well as police mortuaries responsible for reporting unnatural deaths and deaths occurring outside health facilities, are promptly notified.

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2   It would be important to note that the 1996 Act came into force in May 2001

3   Although the 1996 Identity Act provided for establishment of population register, it set 16 as the minimum age for obtaining an identity card There was no system of updating the population register through the registration of births, deaths and marriages. Therefore, it essentially was initiated as an identity register starting from age 16 years.

4   The birth records from the M-files database could not be migrated to the e- NPRS as many people have two birth records and also because the birth records and ID records did not have a unique identifier.

5   The Turnaround strategy was implemented in 2015 in response to complaints from users of the CR and ID systems through re-design- of some business processes and improving communications and messaging.

Civil Registration System

LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The Constitution of Namibia, in Article 15, confers the right to a name from birth and the right to acquire nationality. Several other Laws also exist to safeguard the right to identity in Namibia. These include:

- The Births, Marriages, and Deaths Registration Act of 1963.

- The Identification Act 21 of 1996. [The purpose of this Act is to provide for the compilation and maintenance of a population register for Namibia and to issue identity documents to persons in the population register and for related matters].

- The Marriage Act of 1961 *(as amended)*

- The Aliens Act of 1937.

Additionally, Namibia ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1990.

Births, marriages, and deaths are registered under the 1963 Act, which provides for compulsory registration of these vital events. However, there has been no serious application of penalty for non-reporting within the specified time limit, leading to many delayed registrations.

It should be noted that although the Identification Act had repealed and replaced previous legislation on the identity of persons, any documents issued under those acts remain valid. Some people issued with SWA IDs still reside in Namibia with the SWA ID as their only form of identification. Before independence, not all population groups were required to register births; SWA ID was the first and only legal document for most of the indigenous population at the time of independence. Although the Namibian government started a campaign to phase out the SWA ID in 2016, this has not happened yet. A large section of people have not been able to obtain a Namibian Identity document. During 2020-2021, the conversions from SWA ID to Namibian National ID reduced from 4,452 in 2017-2018 to 1,561 in 2020-21.[6] This shows that conversions are still in progress and may continue for some more time.

There are legal challenges related to the status of foreigners who were issued SWA IDs but do not meet the statutory requirements for Namibian citizenship and, therefore, are not eligible for Namibian identity documents. The Namibia Inter-censal Demographic Survey of 2016 showed that 0.8% of the population over 16 years still had SWA IDs in November 2016, but many were over 85 years.

Recently, Namibia has taken a significant step by introducing the Civil Registration and Identification Bill in Parliament. This new bill aims to amalgamate the existing scattered pieces of legislation related to civil registration and identity management into a comprehensive law. Once implemented, the bill will transition Namibia from its current Population Register, which is limited to citizens and permanent residents, to a more inclusive Civil Register that will encompass all vital events (including those of refugees) occurring in Namibia.

6   This is based on Annual Report of the Ministry of Home Affairs, Immigration, Safety and Security and prepared for every financial year.

INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

In Namibia, the Department of Civil Registration (DCR) under the Ministry of Home Affairs, Immigration, Safety and Security (MHAISS) oversees the management of the CRVSID system, which stores records of significant life events, such as births, adoptions, marriages, divorces, and deaths in the NPRS. The department is also responsible for issuing relevant vital event certificates and identity documents.

At the local level, birth and death registration take place in 62 registration centres, comprising:

- 14 regional offices;

- 24 Category I (for all civil and ID registration services) and

- 21 Category II offices sub-regional offices (that provide birth and death registration only)

There are also 24 health facilities and hospitals offering birth and death registration services.

All the local registration centres are connected to the NPRS, enabling real-time electronic registration of births and deaths into the system. Marriages are only entered in NPRS at Head Office. The NPRS electronically captures all vital events occurring in an individual's life, including identification (ID) registration, consolidating them under a single demographic profile through the different respective modules using the Unique Identity Number (UIN) that connects all the modules in the NPRS (births, identity, marriages/divorces, deaths).

During the Comprehensive Assessment and Strategic Plan formulation period in 2014-15, a Technical Working Group was formed with representatives from all government agencies involved. After the Cabinet approved the Strategic Plan, a national Civil Registration And Vital Statistics Technical Committee with multi-stakeholder representation was put in place to implement the Plan. The Ministry of Home Affairs chairs the Committee with membership drawn from the Ministry of Health and Social Service, Namibian Police, Namibia Statistics Agency, Office of the Judiciary and UN developmental partners. The Committee remains in place to date.

BIRTH REGISTRATION

The law in Namibia mandates that births should be registered within one year of occurrence, but delayed registrations are not uncommon. During 2018-2019, approximately 65% of births were registered within one year of their occurrence, while the remaining 35% were delayed registrations. Interestingly, 25% of these delayed registrations occurred between one and two years after the birth event. Registration of births is free for both timely and delayed registration, and the first copy of birth certificates is also provided free of charge. Birth and death certificates are issued locally and on the spot from NPRS.

Remarkably, the completeness level of birth registration has seen significant improvement, surging from a mere 16% in 2011 to 76.9% in 2017[7]. Furthermore, the estimate for 2018-2019[8] shows a further increase to 87%. This phenomenal rise in both the volume and timeliness of birth registrations can be attributed, in part, to the establishment of birth registration facilities within 24 health facilities and hospitals

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7   Namibia Inter Censal Demographic Survey

8   Compiled from Annual Report 2018-2019, MHAISS

across the country. As evidenced by the fact that 61% of total births in 2018-2019 were registered within health facilities and hospitals, this initiative has played a pivotal role in achieving higher registration rates. Additionally, a substantial number of births were recorded during general mobile registrations conducted in various regions. This concerted effort has contributed to substantial progress in ensuring birth registrations are completed promptly and efficiently.

Since 2017, health facilities and hospitals across Namibia have been equipped with e-birth notification platforms, enabling them to verify the identity of mothers and promptly notify the e-NPRS about births in real time. This technology allows health workers to validate the mother's identity against the NPRS as soon as a pregnant woman is admitted to the health facility.

When a birth is notified on the birth notification system, the notification system generates a Birth Notification Number (BNN). This BNN becomes crucial when the family visits the registration office. Presenting the BNN at the registration office allows the notification system to retrieve the mother's information from the NPRS. The birth record is then considered complete by adding the child's name and the father's name. Marriage certificates have to be submitted if parents indicate that they are married to each other. The parent's certified Birth Certificate, ID or Passport for each parent are required for the birth registration of their babies.

The notification process also aids in following up with families who may not initially turn up for registration. This proactive approach significantly facilitates registering births within the legally prescribed timeframes, ensuring efficient and accurate record-keeping.

It is important to note that the NPRS generates a UIN for the child, which is not disclosed to the parents but remains securely stored in the NPRS database. In future, when Namibia introduces UIN from birth, the child will be provided with this UIN upon applying for a National ID. This process ensures the accurate and secure management of vital identity information for each individual in Namibia[9].

Approximately 2.7 million birth records, including amendment records, have been captured and quality-checked in the M-files. The records can be traced from all offices with a network connection across the country. Today, M-files[10] are an essential tool for the validation of the country's birth records. Services can be delivered faster and more efficiently compared to the period before digitalization[11].

In Namibia, the demand for birth registration has significantly increased due to the mandatory requirement of birth certificates for obtaining identity documents, passports, and access to social and educational services. Moreover, individuals are incentivized to register births as birth certificates are linked to child maintenance and orphan and vulnerable grants provided by the Ministry of Gender Equality, Poverty Eradication and Social Welfare (MGEPESW). Another crucial factor in improving birth registration rates is the integrated service provision approach between MHAISS, MOHSS (Ministry of Health and Social Services), and MGEPESW. This approach streamlines access to these three services, making it easier for people to complete the birth registration process.

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9   Most countries that provide unique identity number to a newborn immediately after registration share the identity number to the parents.

10 All historical birth records were scanned in PDF format and stored in a database called M-Files.

11 Namibia Identity Management Systems Analysis Report, World Bank, April 2016.

DEATH REGISTRATION

In Namibia, death registration is mandatory under the Births, Marriages and Deaths Registration Act of 1963. Deaths are registered free of cost, and the first copy of certificates is also not charged. Documents required to be produced for death registration are as follows

    a. Notification of Death Form;

    b. Original ID, Full Birth Certificate[12] or Passport of deceased; and

    c. Original ID, Full Birth Certificate or Passport of the informant registering the death.

It is interesting to note that the completeness levels of death registrations consistently exceeded those of birth registrations until 2015, after which the trend reversed. In 2011, the level of birth registration was a mere 16%, while death registration levels were estimated to be 64%[13]. However, by 2017, the scenario had changed significantly. The death registration levels had improved by 12 percentage points from the 2011 levels, reaching 76%, while there was a remarkable increase of 64 percentage points in birth registration during the same period, bringing it up to 80%. Another noteworthy point is the timely manner in which deaths are registered, in contrast to birth registration. In 2017, the registration of deaths within one year of occurrence was estimated to be around 88%.[14]

There are two plausible reasons for the higher levels of death registration in Namibia compared to other countries in Africa. Firstly, in cases where deaths occur at home, the police must be immediately informed. They take charge of the body, which is then taken to the mortuary for examination by a medical professional before issuing a police report. A burial order is issued for all deaths only after the death is registered. This process serves as a strong motivation for families to diligently adhere to the prescribed procedures for death registration. Secondly, the government provides additional incentives for death registration. There is a financial benefit of N$1,500 (US$104) offered for the death of a pensioner and some private insurance coverage that includes a death benefit. Despite the strict regulations related to the disposal of bodies and incentivization, the death registration level remains incomplete. Detailed analysis will be required to identify the type of deaths that escape registration.

Namibia's e-Death notification system provides real-time information on deaths and their causes. This online system is linked to the NPRS via the same platform used for the e-birth notification system. The e-notification and registration of death are connected to the population register through a unique death record number. Once a death is registered, the identity of the deceased is validated, resulting in a change of status from "live" to "deceased." The relevant records of the deceased in the population register are then made inactive and archived. This streamlined digital process ensures the accuracy and currency of death records in the country.

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12 Between 1995 and March 2013 children born were issued "abridged Birth Certificates as was the norm in South Africa. These carried only the Surname of the mother. Birth Certificates issued thereafter – known as "Full Birth Certificates" carry details of both parents.

13 Namibia is among a very few countries in Africa that has achieved high levels of death registration.

14 Namibia Annual Vital Statistics Report for 2016 and 2017.

MARRIAGE REGISTRATION

In Namibia, 5.9% of the population aged 15 years and over are married under customary law, 16.4% are married with a certificate, and 63.5% have never been married . Civil marriages are solemnized by marriage officers designated by the Minister of Home Affairs and Immigration under the Marriage Act of 1961 and registered under the Births, Marriages and Deaths Registration Act of 1963. Registration of civil marriages is integrated with the population register and done by the DCR. Customary marriages performed under customary law are not covered by the above registration law. However, the Constitution recognizes customary marriages because no law is regulating the registration of customary marriages yet.

DIVORCE REGISTRATION

The High Court can grant a divorce under civil law, and a divorce can also take place under customary law. The dissolution of a marriage under the customary laws of Namibia is not well documented and is not recorded in the NPRS. For divorce under civil law, although there is no legal requirement on courts to send the divorce record to the MHAISS for registration, the High Court sometimes sends the divorce orders to the MHAISS for registration. The legal framework is under review to address challenges to registering customary marriages and divorces and integrating these into the NPRS.

IDENTITY SYSTEM

In Namibia, the identity system is governed by the Identification Act of 1996. Every individual is required to possess an identity document with an assigned 11-digit unique identification number (UIN) once they reach the age of 16. Identity registration can be done at 14 Regional Offices and 24 Category I Sub-regional Offices. To complete the registration process, applicants need to provide the following documents:

a. Application form (pink form);

b. Original Birth Certificate (which is not submitted) or Citizenship Certificate (original + copy) or Permanent Resident Permit (PSP) (original + copy).

At the enrolment centres, fingerprints and a photograph are taken and sent along with the application to the head office in Windhoek for further processing. These fingerprints are matched with those already recorded in the Automated Fingerprint Identification System, which is part of the Population Register, to ensure there are no duplicate entries. Once the application is verified and approved, the ID card is printed and forwarded to the local office for distribution to the applicant. The cards are colour-coded: blue for citizens and pink for permanent residents, and the first card is provided free of cost. Refugees are also issued yellow ID cards. Those who already have an SWA ID must submit a copy of their SWA ID cards in addition to the requirements listed above. The applications undergo comprehensive verification and approval before the Namibian ID is assigned and the card is issued. It is important to note that the SWA ID number, consisting of 13 digits, and the UIN (11 digits) are internally linked within the NPRS.

Understanding the complex journey of building a population register (the 'stock') is crucial. As mentioned earlier, the 1996 Act aimed to create the national population register using existing SWA ID records. The SWA ID was introduced in 1979 following the Identification of Persons Act 1979. At that time, all people who resided in Namibia (formerly South-West Africa) were given SWA ID upon application, and ink-based fingerprints were collected during the registration process. However, a significant number of indigenous people and rural residents were not able to obtain SWA IDs. Meanwhile, all vital events, such as births, deaths, and marriages, were recorded in physical civil registries, and hand-written certificates were issued for each event.

The Identification Act of 1996 marked the initial step towards establishing a population register and issuing identity documents to eligible citizens and permanent. The first attempt to build a population register for identity management was the NAMPOS, an electronic population register. However, it was organized in silos based on civil registries, with each registry (birth, marriage, identity, and death registries) having its own database. This setup posed significant challenges in terms of interlinking data, complexities in verification processes, and poor scalability.

All individuals seeking to obtain the new generation of the National ID card had and still have to undergo a fresh registration process in the newly constructed population register. This requirement applies even to those who already possess SWA ID. Registration is not automatic and involves a stringent verification procedure, including manual matching of fingerprints. Additionally, individuals with SWA ID have to ensure their births are registered if not already done. Another essential requirement for those holding SWA ID is to provide supporting documents to prove their Namibian citizenship or permanent residency. It is important to note that the SWA ID numbers of individuals were not always recorded in the death registration records. When they are recorded, the names recorded in the SWA ID do not always match those provided during death registration. Although the M-file database is used to verify the birth registration of applications, the challenge encountered is that many of the applicants had multiple birth registrations. Many people who held SWA ID were unable to obtain a Namibia Card as they could not provide proof of citizenship or permanent residency.

In 2011, the new NPRS was established with the primary goal of enhancing interoperability among various systems within the realm of civil registration and identity management. The NPRS creates profiles for individuals through different civil registration and civil identification processes. These profiles encompass the entire vital event life cycle a person goes through from birth to death, thus covering civil and identity registration. At the core of the NPRS is the CRVSID system, which uniquely integrates identity management with the population register, considering identity an integral part of the system. As a result, identity cards are legally issued directly from the national population register, setting it apart from separate identity management systems found in other countries.

In 2016, an initiative was launched to encourage all individuals with SWA ID to come forward and obtain Namibian ID cards. However, the conversion process did not yield the expected results. A number of people who held SWA IDs had already passed away. SWA ID holders who do not meet the requirements for citizenship are at risk of statelessness. The government is in the process of enacting a law with the support of UNHCR for the regularization of SWA ID holders who have not been able to obtain citizenship in the normal course[15].

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15 The Bill is called the Regularization of Status of Certain Residents of Namibia, their Spouses and their Descendants Bill.

Vital Statistics System

The Namibia Statistics Agency (NSA) serves as the central statistical authority for the State. It is a statutory body established under the Statistics Act, 2011 (Act No. 9 of 2011). The Agency's mandate includes collecting, producing, analyzing, and disseminating official and other statistics in Namibia to support planning and decision-making processes. Additionally, it ensures the implementation, monitoring, and periodic evaluation of statistical data. The NSA published the country's maiden Vital Statistics Report in 2020, covering 2016 and 2017.

Lessons Learnt and Challenges

Namibia's Vision 2030[16] gave a clear strategic direction to the establishment of an overarching, integrated, and interoperable national population registration system in Namibia. This facilitated the articulation of the e-government strategy and the formulation of the civil registration and identity legal framework while also maintaining the strategic focus and alignment among all key stakeholders, which were crucial factors contributing to the achievements in this country. The Vision document underscores the importance of the country achieving universal birth and death registration to generate timely, complete, and accurate data to pave the way for national sustainable development.

What stands out above all is the nationwide decentralized framework available in Namibia, where the integrated facilities for civil registration, population register, and identity documents are available close to the population in a country that is the second most thinly populated country in the world after Mongolia. This, combined with the fact that the CR and ID documents are required for a whole range of purposes from school admission to acquiring a driving license or opening a bank account, gave incentives to everyone to use the available services in collaboration with health facilities and the MHAISS offices.

A key to this achievement is the consistent and effective government leadership that has built this well-integrated network forward. It is also noteworthy that the impressive digital facilities established were developed within the country with its own resources. The Prime Minister's Office providing the continuing leadership and coordination for this effort was a significant factor in Namibia's success.

The ICT backbone was key to building the NPRS. It was a major enabler in integrating and launching electronic birth and death notification platforms. It proved that if ICT is adopted correctly and applied to redesigned business processes, it delivers an overarching and interoperable population register that is an effective tool for many domains of governance.

The digitized e-notification systems for civil registration hold tremendous potential in achieving complete and timely registration of vital events. This process facilitates the registration of the required information for

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16   Namibia National Planning Commission : "By the year 2030, Namibia should be an industrialised nation, enjoying high per capita income, a highly educated nation, abundant prosperity, and interpersonal harmony, peace and political stability."

vital events, as it is entered into the system before the formal completion of the registration request, thereby enhancing data accuracy and integrity. Additionally, the advance notification aids in following up with family members who might not appear for registration.

Namibia's experience shows that legal frameworks and technological advancements need to be in sync as much as possible despite the fast pace of technological innovations. It appears that "technology has run ahead of the required legal framework to govern data sharing and authenticity of electronic datasets"[17]. This is a problem that several countries in the process of developing integrated data systems face and could be attributed to a slow law-making process. The legal framework has a major role in protecting the privacy of data being mined and shared, and this is an area where more sharing of experiences between countries will be of immense value.

A unique initiative in Namibia was the focus on improving the customer experience through what was known as the Turnaround Strategy, which was taken up for implementation in 2015. This was undertaken with the expertise of a private sector firm where a study helped to locate the pain points that were encountered by the people who were using the registration facilities and found appropriate solutions in redesigning the business processes and improving the communication of the process information in simple visual terms at the points of use.

It is important to highlight the spirit of inclusivity embedded in the identity ecosystem. The identity law and its processes ensure the inclusion of permanent residents in the population register. Furthermore, the proposed new law envisions the birth registration of children born to refugee families and providing identity cards to refugees. Births of refugee children are registered currently, and they get non-Namibian birth certificates; refugees get ID cards, yellow in colour. The new law will codify these practices.

Some of the challenges are described below:

Namibia's process of establishing a comprehensive population register for all residents in the country has proven to be highly complex. Over the course of more than two decades, the country has faced the challenging task of ensuring a complete population register. Presently, several individuals reside in the country without a Namibian identity, (as envisioned in the Identity Act) due to various reasons.

The problem with death registration is that old death records are not updated in the NPRS. MHAISS has a running project to capture these old death records in the NPRS. For deaths that have not been updated in the NPRS, the identities of such persons who are registered in the population register are not deactivated after their death. Birth registration, although showing growth, is still incomplete, which hinders the overall completeness of the population register.

The e-notification system's performance is adversely affected by slow network connections and the unwillingness of some officials to embrace the new system. Moreover, the lack of connectivity to the NPRS in certain Sub-regional Offices continues to hinder the timely capturing of records and verification for the issuance of duplicate documents.

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17 Compendium of Good Practices in Linking Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) and Identity Management Services, Centre of Excellence for Civil Registration and Vital Statistics System, IDRC, Canada, 2019

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5. Annual Vital Statistics Report 2016-2017 published in 2020

Annex

CASE STUDY ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF CRVSID SYSTEM IN NAMIBIA QUESTIONNAIRE

UNICEF as co-chair of the UN Legal Identity Task Force has commissioned case study on implementation of CRVSID system in six countries Asia, Africa, and Latin America – Bangladesh, Bhutan, Kenya, Namibia, Rwanda, and Columbia. The overall objective of the case study is to These cases are for learning from the experience that selected countries have had, so that this learning will help many other countries in their own journeys to build integrated CRVSID systems.

Although the study will offer some insights into the current operational status of the three systems (CR, VS, and ID management) individually, its primary objective is to learn about the interoperability of these systems. The country-specific case studies will attempt to answer the following questions:

a. How was the "stock" built?

b. When was the civil registration data was linked to the population register and/or national ID, and how?

c. How much time did the system take to migrate from transient to steady state?

The studies will also include the steps taken by the countries in establishing organizational capabilities required for the efficient functioning of a CRVSID system, such as the legislative frameworks, organizational structure, human resources, ICT infrastructure, physical infrastructure, advocacy and communication and management and coordination.

We have gathered a significant amount of information through desk reviews and our team's individual knowledge and experience working with Namibia. However, there are still some gaps in our understanding

on some of the aspects of the systems and future plans Therefore, we would like to address these gaps by discussing the following points:

1. We understand that the first priority after independence in Namibia was to create legal identities for all citizens to remedy the deficiencies in the period prior to independence. Hence nationwide campaigns were organized to register all citizens with birth certificates (since the Birth, Marriages and Deaths Registration Act was in force from 1963 and presumably birth registration was more widespread than legal identities at that time. We also understand that almost everyone had SWA-IDs – including practically the entire indigenous population at the time of independence following the Identification of Persons Act of 1979.

   a. So, who were the people who had no legal IDs at the time of independence?

   b. What were the changes that the Act of 1996 bring about?

2. It is understood that the Namibian government had started a campaign to phase out the SWA IDs in 2016. Can you let us know if this is complete and if not the reasons for the delay? It is also understood that the work for designing and developing Namibia's own NPRS began in 2000. Please confirm

3. Is there a law that covers the operation of the NPRS?

4. Is it therefore correct to assume that the NPRS is "an integrated and web-based Civil Registration system developed by the office of the PM on the basis of the old ID system" as the WB assessment report of 2016 says?

5. Was another existing database used for developing the NPRS (which is the stock)?

6. At what point of time were the biometric data of the existing population taken?
   Was there an effort made to deduplicate the NPRS?

7. The World bank assessment report of 2016 mentions - *The birth records were captured in a filing and record management system called M-files. The system was introduced by Document Warehouse, but later proved to be insufficient for management of civil registration records. The Department of Civil Registration therefore decided to capture he historical death and marriage records in the National Population Registration System (NPRS)' On the other hand, the CRVS compendium states that following ' The marriage and death records were scanned and captured directly in the NPRS. Birth records could not be uploaded to the new digitized NPRS because the birth records and ID records did not have a unique identifier'*

   a. There appears to be a contradiction between the two. Could you clarify what was the actual position?

   b. Was the NPRS that was built based on the information of individuals with ID updated (retired) based on the death registration information captured through the above mentioned process?

8. The WB Assessment says: *Approximately, 2.7 million (the compendium says 4.5 million; need to verify) birth records, including amendment records have been captured and quality checked in the M-files. The records can be traced from all offices with a network connection across the country. Today, M-files is an essential tool for the management of the country's birth records. Services can be delivered faster and more efficiently than post the digitalization.'*
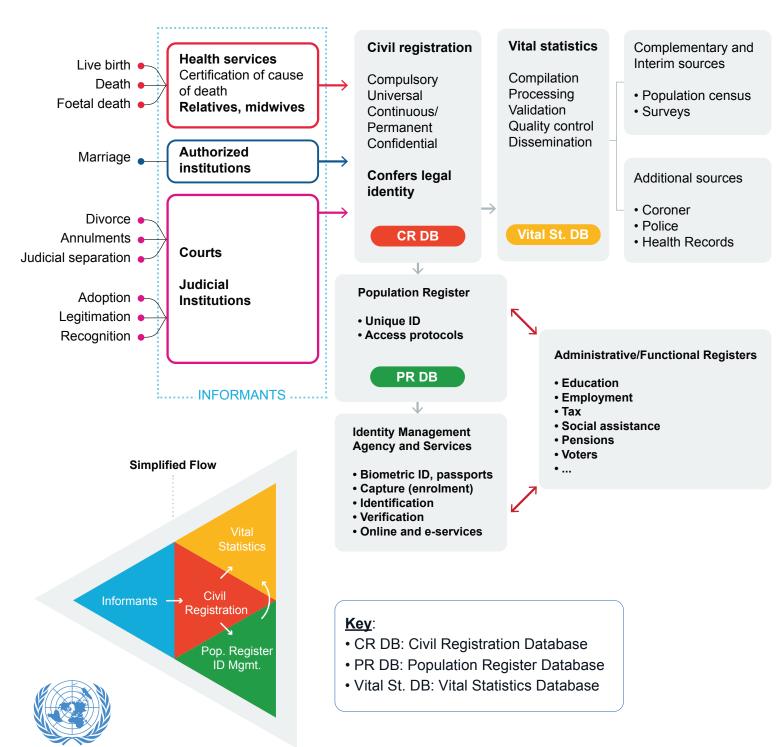   The Compendium says: *These birth records are still kept in a dedicated M-files database: they are added to the NPRS only after a person applies for a duplicate or an amendment and after more verifications are done.'*
    Are the M-files used only for management of old records that have been scanned and stored?
    Are the new birth records entered in the NPRS directly?

9. The e-notification of births and its link with UIN is clearly described in the Compendium : *The e-birth notification platform was designed to allow health workers to validate the mother's identity against the NPRS before a birth takes place' The e-birth notification system that nurses use notifies the National Population Registration System (NPRS) of the birth in real time. This makes it easier to register births in the legally prescribed timeframes. Birth notification is linked with the NPRS through a number that is generated during the birth notification: this is treated as a unique identification number (UIN) in the NPRS. This approach integrates the e-birth notification system and the birth registration module in the NPRS. The UIN connects all the modules in the NPRS (births, identity, marriages/divorces, deaths). All health personnel and registrars are issued the individual user's name and password and are given rights that are in keeping with their responsibilities.'*

    a. Is it that the UIN is provided even before birth is registered and part of the NPRS?

    b. Does the number appear in the birth certificate?

    c. If not, how does the family get to know about the number of child?

    d. What if the child dies before event is registered after notification?

    e. Lot of e-notifications are not converted into birth registrations – is this the correct position ?

10. What is the current status of linking of other functional registers (Education, Social Protection etc) with NPRS. If the linking is not complete, can you let us know what are the reasons for the delays in linking the registers?

11. How did the birth registration completion rate leapfrog to this extent in such a short period? Is this something to do with its link with NPRS? Is it that some linking of the NPRS with some social scheme led to people to register the birth in quick time? This increase has been phenomenal.

12. It would also be important to know why death registration has always been high, as it seems that the people cannot escape registration as it may be linked to issuance of burial permits.

13. In Namibia, 5.9% of the population aged 15 years and over are married under customary law, 16.4% are married with a certificate, and 63.5% have never been married.[18] Does 'never married' here mean not in civil union? If they are not in civil union, are their UINs linked as spouses in the NPRS?

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14. Is it correct to assume that children born to Namibians outside of Namibia are registered by embassies/consulates of Namibia and provided birth certificates?

15. Birth registration facilities are there in 22 out of 35 hospitals. – To be updated as the data is that of 2016

16. The MHAI or Police Service requires a death certificate to issue a burial permit when a person dies of an infectious disease and the police have started attending to home based deaths. – To be confirmed if this is only for infectious diseases.

17. The NPRS provides real time updates to the Statistics Namibia Population System on death and cause of death. – To be confirmed and what is the purpose of doing this?

18. Need to understand the registration process. How decentralized is the registration process? Are all registration centers linked to NPRS or are there centers which still manually capture data and then send it to NPRS for update?

Given on the following page is the framework on CRVSID proposed under the UNLIA.

Live birth •
Death •
Foetal death •

Health services
Certification of cause of death
Relatives, midwives

Marriage •

Authorized institutions

Divorce •
Annulments •
Judicial separation •

Courts

Judicial Institutions

Adoption •
Legitimation •
Recognition •

INFORMANTS

Civil registration

Compulsory
Universal
Continuous/
Permanent
Confidential

Confers legal identity

CR DB

Vital statistics

Compilation
Processing
Validation
Quality control
Dissemination

Vital St. DB

Complementary and Interim sources

• Population census
• Surveys

Additional sources

• Coroner
• Police
• Health Records

Population Register

• **Unique ID**
• **Access protocols**

PR DB

Identity Management Agency and Services

• **Biometric ID, passports**
• **Capture (enrolment)**
• **Identification**
• **Verification**
• **Online and e-services**

Administrative/Functional Registers

• **Education**
• **Employment**
• **Tax**
• **Social assistance**
• **Pensions**
• **Voters**
• **...**

Simplified Flow

Vital Statistics

Informants → Civil Registration

Pop. Register ID Mgmt.

Key:
• CR DB: Civil Registration Database
• PR DB: Population Register Database
• Vital St. DB: Vital Statistics Database

This model represents a holistic approach to civil registration, vital statistics and identity management recommended by the United Nations, adapted from the United Nations *Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System, Revision 3*. It can be adjusted to national circumstances and governing structures as necessary.

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