

**Fourth Conference of African Ministers Responsible for Civil Registration  
4-8 December 2018, Nouakchott**

**Issue Paper: Birth registration as opportunity to integrate civil registration and identity management systems**

**Background**

Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Target 16.9, which states “by 2030, provide legal identity for all, including birth registration”, presents an opportunity for countries to link Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) and Identity Management (IDM) Systems, which has benefits in multiple sectors.

The United Nations defines civil registration as the universal, continuous, permanent, and compulsory recording of vital events provided through decree or regulation in accordance with the legal requirements of each country.<sup>1</sup> Identity is the unique set of features and characteristics that individualize a person, including the name and other biographical data of the individual, while IDM system is the technical and organizational infrastructure used to define, design, and administer the attributes of an identity.<sup>2</sup>

An individual’s biographic information is recorded through civil registration (such as name, date of birth, place of birth, and names of the parents) to establish a legal identity. IDM systems typically add other attributes of the individual, such as a unique identification number (UIN), photograph, signature, and biometrics (e.g., fingerprint, facial recognition, hand geometry, voice recognition, iris scan, retinal scan) to prove their identity for a wide range of activities, including access to education, voting, opening a bank account, buying or inheriting property, paying taxes, enrolling in a health insurance plan, and qualifying for a cash transfer. The data link between CRVS and IDM systems is possible through the UIN assigned to each individual at birth. It is this same UIN that is used later in life on the identity card.

This UIN is used on various legal and other documents that a person receives during one’s lifetime. For example, an individual’s birth certificate, marriage certificate, and national identification card will all be associated with the person’s UIN, and that number serves as a link between databases belonging to different ministries and agencies.

Some countries assign UIN randomly while in other countries it is logic-based (for instance based on location, birth date, and sex). Examples of countries with logic-based UIN are: i) Norway has 11-digit identity number assigned at birth (first 6 digits represented date of birth, the next two are individual numbers, the following number indicates sex (even numbers for women, odd numbers for men), and the last two are check digits (for control), and ii) Korea has 13-digit identity number assigned at birth (first 6 digits for date of birth, followed by 1 for gender, 4 digits for area code, 1 digit for register serial number and 1 for verification number). On the other hand, India employs a random Aadhaar number which has 12 digits (11+1 check sum).

---

<sup>1</sup> United Nations Statistics Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. 2014. *Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System*, rev. 3. New York: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, paragraphs 1–39, 279–299.

<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/Demographic/standmeth/principles/M19Rev3en.pdf>

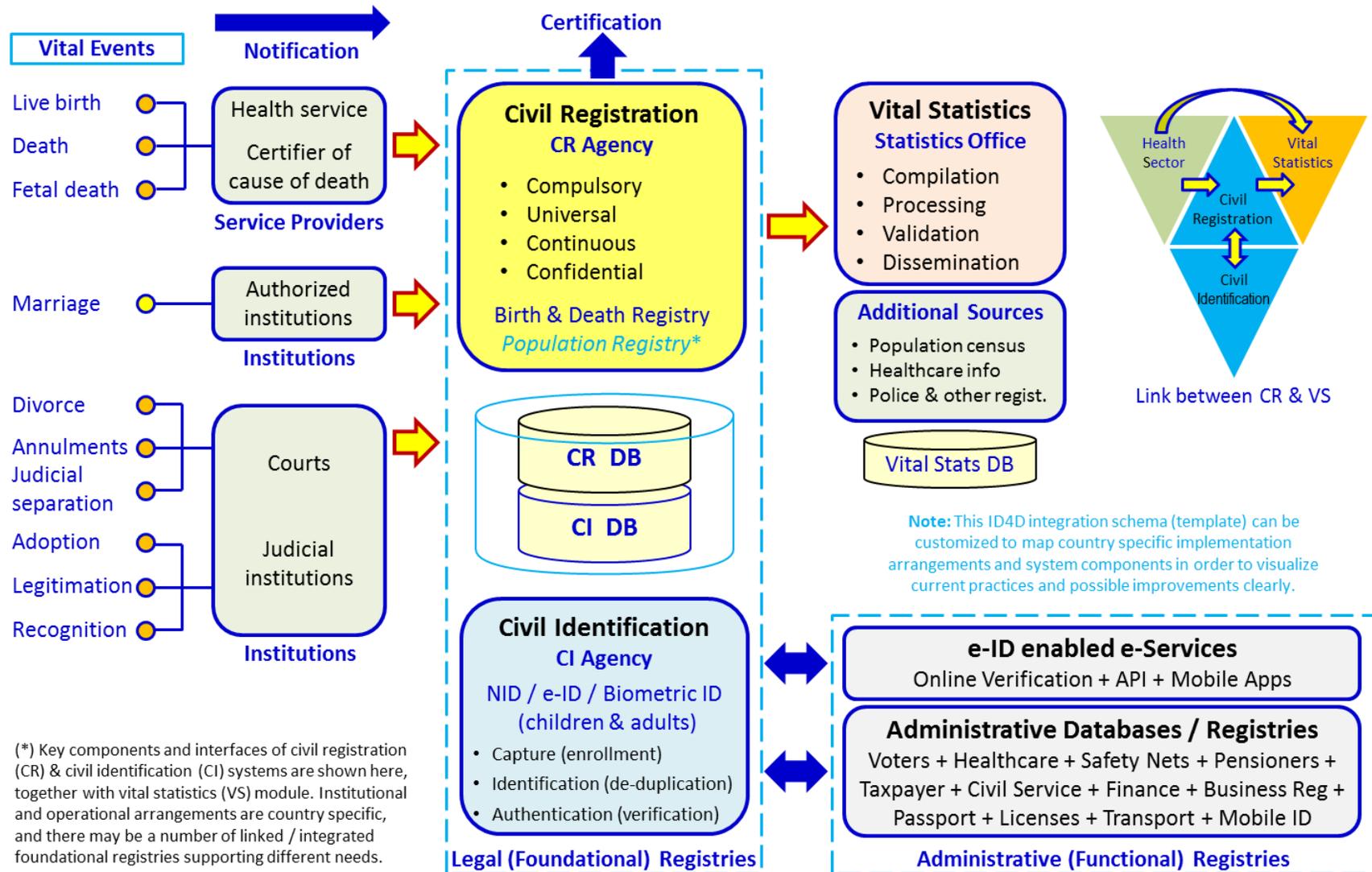
<sup>2</sup> Inter-American Development Bank. 2011. *Civil Registration and Identity Management*. <http://www.iadb.org/en/topics/government/civil-registration-and-identity,4032.html>

Electronic on-site birth registration in Botswana is an example process of assigning UIN at birth. Assistant Registrars are stationed at major hospitals in Botswana. Soon after delivery, the attending midwife or doctor completes a birth notification form and gives it to the Assistant Registrar who enters the information into an online registration system. The mother or father is allowed to check the accuracy of the information that is entered electronically, and then a registration number (UIN) is generated from the central database. A birth certificate with the UIN on it is printed and given to the mother prior to discharge from the hospital. Subsequently, the UIN is used for the national ID card issued at age 16 years and above. In health centers and small hospitals without on-site birth registration, a midwife or doctor completes the birth notification form and within a week forwards it to the nearest registration office where it is entered into the central database, quality-checked, and authorized by a supervisor. Since the information is captured in electronic form, the parent can go to any registration office in the country to get a printed copy. The parent will, however, have to show the tear-off piece from the birth notification form and identify him/herself.

In a country such as Botswana, the Department of Civil and National Registration is within the Ministry of Labour and Home Affairs, and administers both civil registration and IDM. This makes it easier to assign UIN at birth. **Figure 1** illustrates the interrelationship between civil registration and IDM systems. Ideally, a designated anchor ministry (that liaises with other ministries) houses the Civil Registration Office and Identity Management Office in one department or agency and performs the functions of national civil registration and IDM. Having one registrar general or director overseeing both functions enables efficient decision-making and coordinated provision of civil registration and identification services. Nevertheless, in countries where civil registration and IDM are housed in different departments or ministries, UIN generated and assigned at birth should ensure interoperability of the civil register with other administrative registers (or databases) (**Figure 1**). Good integration and coordination of the CRVS and IDM systems enables effective communication among systems, prevents duplication of efforts, and allows efficient public service delivery.

Figure 1. Integration of civil registration (CR) and civil identification (CI)<sup>3</sup>

# Civil Registration & Identification



(\*) Key components and interfaces of civil registration (CR) & civil identification (CI) systems are shown here, together with vital statistics (VS) module. Institutional and operational arrangements are country specific, and there may be a number of linked / integrated foundational registries supporting different needs.

<sup>3</sup> From "Identity Management System Analysis – Guidelines and Questionnaire", August 2015, Washington, DC. World Bank. License: Creative Commons Attribution CC BY 3.0. Adapted from the CRVS figure in *Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System*, rev. 3

**Session description**

SDG Target 16.9, which states “*by 2030, provide legal identity for all, including birth registration*”, presents an opportunity for countries to link Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) and Identity Management (IDM) Systems which has benefits in multiple sectors. Several countries in Africa are considering linkage of the two systems but want to learn how others have done it. This panel session will provide the opportunity to share experiences from selected countries such as Mauritius, Namibia, Uganda, and Zambia and will highlight civil registration as a foundation for IDM and discuss approaches for assigning unique identification number at birth and integrating this number in the civil register and on the physical birth certificate. The session will begin with an overview by the World Bank Group on the integration of civil registration and IDM.

**Questions to panelists**

1. Are the civil registration and IDM offices housed in the same department or ministry? If not, how are the activities of civil registration and IDM coordinated or integrated?
2. Is unique identification number assigned at birth? Why or why not?
3. Which administrative registers are currently linked to the civil register?
4. What are future efforts to integrate civil registration and IDM?