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RECOMMENDATIONS FROM REGIONAL CONFERENCES AND SEMINARS  
ON CIVIL REGISTRATION AND VITAL STATISTICS

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FOREWARD

Over the years, a number of meetings and conferences on civil registration and vital statistics have been held in different regions of the world under various sponsorships. Almost all of these conferences have resulted in recommendations for the improvement of different civil registration procedures and methods. This is a compilation of those recommendations classified under various subject headings, and indicate the range of subject matter coverage in those conferences.

Although there are some regional differences in the problems, the basic problems in the developing countries are incomplete registration coverage and poor quality of collected information. The deterrents to improvement are inadequate funding and the lack of understanding and appreciation by the public of the importance of civil registration.

## SUMMARY

Over the past 25 years, a number of regional seminars on civil registration and vital statistics have been held. The purpose of this report is to bring together all the recommendations dealing with civil registration emanating from these seminars so that they may serve as background material for those concerned with strategies for the improvement of civil registration in the various regions of the world.

The various seminars have posed questions and issues perceived by the participants to be the principal problems in their particular geographic region. However, many of the regions have similar problems and future prospects stemming from the same kind of conditions such as poverty, illiteracy, lack of legal and social need for civil registration, inadequate funding of civil registration services, etc. Under these conditions, incomplete registration of vital events is inevitable. The hard core of the problems facing the various countries appear to lie in the existing social and economic situation to which there are no simple solutions.

The recommendations presented here are essentially unedited with one notable exception. All of the recommendations from the First Inter-American Seminar are in the form of suggestions, but in this presentation, the prefatory phrase "To suggest that..." has been deleted. Also excluded are the preambles to the resolutions. In many cases, reference to the original report will provide a fuller understanding of the issues and the problems at hand.

The recommendations have been classified under the following subject headings:

1. Legal provisions
2. National and public interest
3. Administrative organization
4. Coordination
5. Registration methods and procedures
6. Personnel
7. Training
8. Facilities and equipment
9. Needed research and study
10. Evaluation
11. Needed improvements
12. Priorities
13. Technical assistance
14. Other recommendations

Note: Some of the recommendations are classifiable under more than one heading, but they have been included only once.

There are undoubtedly regional differences in civil registration practices and problems. On the other hand, there are many common elements, the differences being a matter of degree. Therefore, the recommendations from one region may have application in others. At any rate, it seems worthwhile to study the principal problems and recommendations in different regions to determine their applicability to the region under consideration.

The following regional seminars on civil registration and vital statistics practices are covered in this compendium:

- A. First Inter-American Conference on Civil Registration, Santiago, Chile, 1954. Organized by the Civil Registration and Identification Office, Chile, the Statistical Office of the United Nations, the United Nations Technical Assistance Administration, the World Health Organization and the Institute of Inter-American Affairs.
- B. African Seminar on Vital Statistics, Addis Ababa, 14-18 December 1964. Organized by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, Bureau of Technical Assistance Operations, and Statistical Office of the United Nations.
- C. Second Inter-American Conference on Civil Registration, Lima, Peru, 1964. Sponsored by the Government of Peru, the United Nations Bureau of Technical Assistance Operations, the Statistical Office of the United Nations, the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America, the United Nations Regional Center for Demographic Training and Research in Latin America, the Pan American Health Organization, the Inter-American Statistical Institute, the Inter-American Children's Institute and the Inter-American Civil Registration Association.
- D. Seminar on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics for Asia and the Far East, Copenhagen, Denmark, 1968. Organized by the Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East in cooperation with the Government of Denmark, the Statistical Office of the United Nations and the United Nations Office of Technical Cooperation.
- E. United Nations Working Group on Current Demographic Statistics, Bangkok, Thailand, 9-14 June 1975. Organized by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific and the Statistical Office of the United Nations.
- F. Meeting on Strategies for Improving Civil Registration, Montevideo, Uruguay, 1977. Sponsored by the Inter-American Children's Institute, the Pan American Health Organization, the Statistical Office of the United Nations, the U.S. National Center for Health Statistics and the U.S. Agency for International Development.
- H. UDEAC Ad Hoc Commission on Civil Status, Libreville, Gabon, 1978. Sponsored by the Regional Center for Study of Population.
- I. OCAM Seminar on the Improvement of Civil Registration, St. Louis, Mauritius, 1979. Sponsored by the Organisation Commune Africaine et Mauricienne and the U.S. National Center for Health Statistics.
- J. OCAM Seminar on Organisation of Organizers of Personnel Systems for Civil Registration. Cotonou, Benin, 26 May to 4 June, 1980. Organized by the Organisations Commune Africaine et Mauricienne.
- K. Meeting of the Working Group on Civil Registration Systems and Vital Statistics Collection in Africa, Nairobi, Kenya, 1980. Organized by the United Nations Fund for Population Activities and the Economic Commission for Africa.

- L. Iberoamerican Conference on Strategies for Improvement of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems, Lima, Peru, 1980. Organized by the National Office of Statistics of Peru and the U.S. National Center for Health Statistics.

It is difficult to do justice to all the recommendations in a summary. However, an effort is made here to obtain a flavor of the recommendations which might be helpful to those interested in civil registration problems. For the specific recommendations, reference should be made to the actual statements given in the body of this compilation.

1. Legal provisions

There seems to be a general recognition of the need for a simple, sound and current legal basis to provide for uniform national registration of vital events. Registration fees and other obstacles to complete registration should not be required.

2. National and public interest

In most of the developing countries, there exists little or no incentive for individuals to register vital events. However, these countries have urgent need for vital statistics based on registration of vital events for national development planning and for study of social change. Civil registration should represent a felt need for the whole community, and should be an institution that is a part of the national process of development planning. Conscious support should be developed at top governmental levels for adequate staffing and funding of all activities leading to the improvement of the civil registration system. Means must be developed to motivate the population to register vital events.

3. Administrative organization

The administrative organization of a national civil registration system should be such that the direct responsibility for civil registration is in the hands of local agencies which is dependent upon a national agency for direction and supervision. Where this is not possible, the local agencies will have to be coordinated by the national office. The local registration offices should be readily accessible and services provided for the convenience of the population they serve.

4. Coordination

Coordination between the civil registration services and other governmental activities, especially the civil identification services and the vital statistics data processing system is necessary, through some mechanism like the National Committee on Vital and Health Statistics or similar bodies to promote technical cooperation between all the agencies concerned. Close cooperation between the civil registration officials and social service workers will be mutually beneficial in facilitating their tasks.

5. Registration methods and procedures

The established civil registration methods and procedures determines to a large extent the efficiency of the system, and the provision of necessary safeguards in the preservation of vital records. It is suggested that countries

compare its civil registration practices with the definitions and procedures recommended by the United Nations.

## 6. Personnel

The need for a competent corps of registration personnel is stressed with due care given to the selection of local registrars and providing them with adequate compensation.

## 7. Training

Training programs should be conducted at various levels on technical as well as administrative problems. There is need to know about the relationship between civil registration and vital statistics in order that civil registration service can discharge one of its primary responsibilities.

## 8. Facilities and equipment

Mechanical tabulating and computer equipment are essential for the preparation of detailed cross-tabulations of data, and in the rapid preparation of alphabetical indexes. However, they should not take priority over efforts to improve completeness of registration. Consideration should be given to measures to reduce needs for archival space and for ensuring the preservation of records.

## 9. Needed research and study

A program for the improvement of civil registration services is suggested. Impetus to civil registration programs can be given by establishing demonstration areas. Matching studies are recommended for the evaluation of the civil registration system complemented by follow-up investigations to ascertain the causes of deficiencies in registration. It is also recommended that countries develop a method of ascertaining and classifying causes of death reported by lay and paramedical personnel.

## 10. Evaluation

Evaluation of the completeness of birth and death registration and of the quality of reported information is the principal problem in the developing countries. A satisfactory direct method of determining registration completeness, particularly of deaths, is needed.

## 11. Needed improvements

Secure improvement in registration completeness, accuracy and promptness of registration through various means, including a 5-year program of national action.

## 12. Priorities

Priority and special importance should be attached to the organizational, technical and administrative aspects of the system. After this initial stage, consideration should be given to use of statistical methods, such as sampling.

In view of the limited resources available, the goals should be such that they are attainable. First priority should be given to registration of births and deaths.

### 13. Technical assistance

Suggestions are made for international technical assistance.

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RECOMMENDATIONS FROM REGIONAL CONFERENCES  
AND SEMINARS ON CIVIL REGISTRATION AND VITAL STATISTICS

1. LEGAL PROVISIONS

A. *First Inter-American Conference on Civil Registration*

The replacement of compulsory measures, which are deterrent in effect, by measures of persuasion and encouragement such as allowances and increased facilities which will lead uneducated persons to appreciate the advantages of a properly constituted family.

The use of appropriate measures to ensure that religious marriages and baptisms shall not be celebrated until the marriage or birth has been duly registered in accordance with the law.

Registration fees should be abolished in order to remove any possible financial obstacle to registration.

C. *Second Inter-American Conference on Civil Registration*

Countries that are without modern legislation on civil registration should review and amend their laws in the light of the indication and recommendations of the present Seminar.

Similarly, the civil registration services must revise and redefine their aims in accordance with the functions they should perform as part of the modern organization of government, and with the activities they carry out in cooperation with other institutions.

In the discussion of the legal bases for the civil registration function, the Seminar agreed on the various elements that might usefully be included in drafting legislation. [These points are listed in the Appendix.]

D. *Seminar on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics for Asia and the Far East*

Recognizing that a registration law applicable throughout the country was a desirable basis for effective civil registration, it is recommended that a uniform registration law should be enacted wherever necessary.

The law should provide for the designation of an appropriate authority with specific powers, duties and responsibilities for purposes of administering the law, a proper keeping of records and carrying out inspections for ensuring the smooth functioning of the system and statistical reporting.

As far as possible, the law should provide that no fee be charged for registration of vital events, particularly births and deaths, and that a notification as proof of a registered event should be provided free of charge to the informant.

E. *Working Group on Current Demographic Statistics*

Suitable legislation should be promulgated to ensure uniform application to the entire country where it was not in force or required revision. Progress

could also be made by rationalizing existing practices or by instituting the system afresh.

*F. Meeting on Strategies for Improving Civil Registration*

Inadequate laws for current process of change. Lack of legal uniformity in countries with a federal system of government.

*G. OCAM Conference on Civil Registration*

Simplification or reform of legal codes governing civil registration and the forms used to collect data.

*H. UDEAC Ad Hoc Commission*

Make studies of applications of regulations and laws governing vital registration.

*I. OCAM Seminar on the Improvement of Civil Registration*

Regulations governing vital registration should be re-written to insure proper functioning of the improved vital registration system. Such re-writing may be complete or partial depending upon the level of development of vital registration in the state concerned. These modified provisions should not be promulgated until after the planned changes have been fully pre-tested.

*J. Working Group on CR/VS in Africa*

The civil registration system should be based on a legal provision which defines the responsibilities of the various agencies and persons participating in the activities and indicates how the institution should operate. Such a legal basis should ensure that civil registration data are processed, analysed and published. Any revision of the existing laws should be undertaken only when the new organization of the system has been satisfactorily tested.

A model law should be developed by international agencies and organizations and made available for consideration of countries drafting national legislations. Since the French and English legal systems differ considerably, separate models may be needed for French speaking and English speaking countries. It is understood that both models will take account of the fundamental principles governing the civil registration system as defined by the United Nations.

*K. Iberoamerican Conference on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics*

An exhaustive study should be carried out on the Civil Registration Service Law and its regulations in order to determine their effectiveness. Said Law and its regulations should include specific guidelines for the organization and operation of the Central Civil Registration Office and its branch offices, including field personnel in the case of centralized services. Whatever the system adopted, there should be one law governing national services.

In each country, an inter-disciplinary group should be set up to study new Civil Registration legislation and to select new ways of organizing and operating this service, so that it completely fulfills the legal, statistical and collaborative purposes and invested with modern doctrine.

A study of national laws on statistics should be carried out in order to determine whether such legislation includes the vital statistics service, its structure and functions. The laws should incorporate these services. Should this study show civil registration laws to be deficient or insufficient to guarantee the proper operation of a national service, the necessary modifications of said laws should be promoted.

As far as possible, legislation on civil registration should be contained in a single text, organic in character and national in scope. In those countries with a federal structure, such legislation should, at least, have provincial or state scope, and be as similar as local conditions permit.

Without interfering with the above, efforts should be made to establish adequate rules for the organization and operation of the system in order to support administrative action as well as to ensure uniformity of operation.

Actual documentation should be checked both in regard to design and content, in order to achieve simplification. It should be kept in mind that the information in each document be determined by its objective and that eventually the service might be automated.

The Organic Law governing civil registration should include a clause establishing the nature, amount and characteristics of the collaboration with the Civil Registry. This is to be determined by the consensus of the agencies concerned.

Legislation should authorize other public officials, as an important part of their public functions, to perform registration functions where a formal service is not available. The type of officials should be selected carefully and their work clearly defined in accordance with the conditions in each country.

Any legal or regulatory device which restricts an individual's access to registration must be removed, as well as all classifications considered by the population as negative or stigmatizing (illegitimacy, illiteracy, race, etc.).

Without interfering with the prevailing procedures regarding correction and clarification of certificates, the possibility should be considered of introducing an administrative procedure facilitating the public's access to records without defects or errors. At all events, the kind of error that can be corrected by this means should be determined.

Revision of the regulations regarding the users of the Civil Registry for registration of births and deaths. This should be carried out with a view to increasing the number of users and determining their order of priority.

The necessary formulas should be incorporated into legislation to regularize names, the most important attributes of individuals in order to avoid unjustified discrimination.

## 2. NATIONAL AND PUBLIC INTEREST

### A. *First Inter-American Conference on Civil Registration*

Governments should give special attention to civil registration services and furnish them with the funds and staff necessary to enable them to accomplish

their social function and their function as an auxiliary of other national agencies.

*Second Inter-American Conference on Civil Registration*

The juridical function of civil registration is as important as ever. At the same time, the statistical function is also of great importance because of the data furnished for development planning and the study of social change. To facilitate the full performance of both these functions, civil registration should represent a felt need for the whole community, and should be an institution that forms part of the national process of development planning.

*E. Working Group on Current Demographic Statistics*

To obviate the general apathy of the public as well as of governmental organizations towards the civil registration system, it is necessary to evolve ways and means of effectively motivating them towards achieving a sound civil registration system. Extensive publicity through all modes of communication such as radio, television, cinema, books and pamphlets and other audio-visual media was considered helpful.

*F. Meeting on Strategies for Improving Civil Registration*

At present, civil registration services in Latin America undergo technical and administrative deficiencies and lack adequate financing; its personnel, with few exceptions, lacks the required experience; in general, governments do not recognize the significant importance of their functions.

It is recognized that the modernization of civil registration services, through a reform of its machinery, will contribute in a direct and meaningful way to support national institutions and thus will increase the possibilities of countries to carry on their development process by themselves.

In most countries, little or no incentives exist for persons to register vital events.

To publicize the activities of civil registration services with the purpose of affirming its importance and encouraging individuals to register vital events.

To develop conscious support for all activities leading to the improvement of the registration system at top government levels.

*G. OCAM Conference on Civil Registration*

Putting into operation a strategy to motivate the population to register vital events.

*H. UDEAC Ad Hoc Commission*

Promote awareness on the part of national authorities of the civil registration problem.

*I. OCAM Seminar on the Improvement of Civil Registration*

The States should develop diversified programs of sensitization and

motivation addressed to the key personnel of the country and to their urban and rural populations taking into account to the extent possible local customs and traditions.

*J. Working Group on CR/VS in Africa*

Sufficient national resources should be mobilized to enable the implementation of projects for improvement and expansion of civil registration systems.

*K. Iberoamerican Conference on CR/VS*

Motivation of the public is essential. It is not enough that people are informed. They should recognize the importance of registration and its social value. This, aside from appropriate publicity, requires a favorable attitude of officials seeking to avoid a routine, dehumanizing relationship with the public, through permanent supervision, encouragement, and appreciation of their work.

Financing of registration services should be the responsibility of the State, with guarantee of sufficient economic support without expense to the public.

### 3. ADMINISTRATIVE ORGANIZATION

*A. First Inter-American Conference on Civil Registration*

Civil registration should be the responsibility of local agencies directly dependent on a national office which can supervise, inspect and unify the civil registration system and promote its efficiency to the end that it satisfies both legal and statistical needs. If it is not feasible to organize the civil registration system on these lines, the local agencies should at least be coordinated with the national office.

The civil registration services should be the responsibility of officials appointed principally for that purpose provided that, where such arrangements are not feasible, responsibility for registration may be assigned to other authorities or persons, with a view to ensuring maximum possible registration of vital events.

Civil registration officials should enjoy security of tenure.

Registration offices should be established in adequate numbers and in easily accessible places.

*C. Second Inter-American Conference on Civil Registration*

The dynamic development process which is taking place in the Latin American countries requires that the State must reorganize and coordinate the activities of all its institutions, establish their aims, make it clear what their functions should be, provide the means to carry out those functions. The advances made in administrative techniques make it necessary that each government institution should organize and carry out its activities in accordance with modern planning principles, so as to make the best use of the resources available and obtain more fruitful results in its own field of operation.

As regards civil registration, the first step is to redefine its aim in line with the functions it must perform, described in earlier paragraphs. This redefinition of aims should cover the activities that the civil registration service must carry out in close cooperation with other State institutions.

Once the aims of civil registration have been determined, in line with the country's general economic and social development targets, the service will have to be reorganized so that it can effectively carry out its functions. The Seminar recognized that for this purpose it was urgent that the civil registration service should adopt the planning techniques referred to, and form part of the national development programme. The planning of civil registration activities cannot be an independent process, since other related sectors must also be involved in the same activities. Consequently, machinery for the coordination of the service with these sectors is essential.

With respect to the technical and administrative features that the body responsible for civil registration should have, the Seminar agreed that no standard rules could be recommended, since the different political and administrative systems of the various countries would have to be taken into account. However, it was considered that there were certain criteria that could be generally applied, and the Seminar considered that the most important of these were:

The civil registration service should operate at the highest administrative level, in accordance with the situation and political and institutional organization of each country, in order to ensure a proper technical operation that excludes activities and influences outside its true sphere of action.

There should be a centralized organization if possible, and, if not, at least a supervisory body to lay down standard rules and coordinate the work.

The national or regional services should be organized with an appropriate hierarchy, and with separate sections dealing with juridical, administrative, budgetary and inter-institutional questions, among others.

The staff should be assured of an administrative career, in the hope that senior officials and those acting as chiefs of offices would be professionals, or at least, if that is not possible, persons fit to undertake the responsibilities of the post.

A central and local archives should be organized, in the light of the relevant recommendations of the First Inter-American Seminar on Civil Registration.

The offices should be easy of access, their territorial jurisdiction should be clearly defined, and the office hours should be suited to the needs of the population, at local offices, and should provide for service on holidays.

Wherever possible, mechanized procedures should be adopted for doing the work.

*F. Meeting on Strategies for Improving Civil Registration*

Little or no centralization in many countries with a unitary system of government.

Deficiencies in many countries with centralized systems.

In countries where two institutions are in charge of recording vital events, there is no quantitative consistency between them.

In most countries, the poor administrative organization of vital registration services is not able to secure reliable and timely records.

In some countries, officials responsible for civil registration belong to two or more organizations.

To promote, where it does not exist, the establishment of a national organization centering and coordinating the activities of all local registration offices.

*G. OCAM Conference on Civil Registration*

Creation of national centers of civil registration.

*I. OCAM Seminar on the Improvement of Civil Registration*

States which have not yet established a National Commission on Vital Registration should do so at the earliest feasible time. This National Commission should have as its first order task the establishment of a National Center or National Directorate of Vital Registration having the following basic responsibilities:

To devise a full system of vital registration including the connections and relationships among the national and regional branches and organisms.

To organize and direct, according to the national plan and also at the regional level, all the technical and administrative activities of the system: the creation and establishment of new centers, the recruiting of personnel, effective personnel management, the sensitization and motivation of the general population, the collection of the returns, dissemination of pertinent summary information, maintenance of liaison with the agencies having responsibility for analysis of the returns and for other uses of them.

To centralize and control (including administrative, legal and statistical control) the returns registered from the standpoint of their processing, maintenance and preservation.

*J. Working Group on CR/VS in Africa*

The designation of the appropriate ministry to which the civil registration system should be attached depends on local conditions and especially on the political and administrative organization of the country. However, it must also

be guided by the authority and capacity of the particular ministry or department to run and control the system throughout the country.

A central agency (National Civil Registration Office or Registrar General's Department) responsible for organizing and managing the activities of the civil registration system at the national and regional levels should be established or strengthened where it already exists, within the ministry under which the system is placed.

#### *K. Iberoamerican Conference on CR/VS*

Civil registration functions should be managed by a single agency with its own structure and organization. It should also have available sufficient resources and the necessary powers to attain the objectives assigned to it by law. This central body having technical and administrative functions will govern branch offices in such number and location as to ensure total coverage of the population and territory. In countries with a federated structure, a similar organization should be set up at provincial or state level as well as a coordinating body at the national level.

### 4. COORDINATION

#### *A. First Inter-American Conference on Civil Registration*

The need for ensuring the efficient operation, or, as the case may be, the establishment of national vital and health statistics committees or similar bodies to promote technical cooperation between all the agencies concerned.

The need for improved coordination of the work of civil registration offices and similar services working in the same geographical area and serving the same population.

It is necessary and advisable for Governments to promote coordination between different bodies forming part of a single administrative system.

The advisability of instituting the closest possible coordination of the civil registration and civil identification services.

The establishment, or the extension, where they already exist, of social services and close cooperation by civil registration officials with social service workers (visitors, assistants, welfare workers and so on) and with other organizations, to facilitate their task in this field.

#### *C. Second Inter-American Conference on Civil Registration*

The Seminar considered that the national committees on vital statistics, whose establishment was recommended by the World Health Organization in 1950, and endorsed by other international meetings such as the First Inter-American Seminar on Civil Registration (1954), the Third Inter-American Statistical Conference (1955) and the Vital Statistics Sub-Committee of the Inter-American Statistical Institute's Committee on Improvement of National Statistics (COINS), could play an important role under suitable operating conditions.

Although the national committees, with few exceptions, have not played an active and useful part in the past ten years, in a few cases the provincial,



State, or even local committees have been able to perform useful coordinating functions with fruitful results. This shows, firstly, the need to experiment more with the different methods of organization and operation that these committees could use, and, secondly, that given the right conditions these committees can be very useful bodies.

*D. Seminar on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics for Asia and the Far East*

The Seminar emphasized the need, within countries, for integration and coordination between the various public and private agencies using and producing data, so that there might be a uniformity of concepts, definitions, classifications and tabulations to be adopted by the various users and producers of data in the related field. It therefore recommended that countries set up national committees on which different interests would be represented.

Recognizing the importance of developing a sound system of civil registration and vital statistics, the Seminar recommended that the ECAFE secretariat should intensify the efforts and coordinate the activities of the specialized agencies in promoting the establishment and maintenance of adequate national systems of vital records and statistics.

*E. Working Group on Current Demographic Statistics*

The civil registration system should involve the active cooperation of hospitals, health centres, and medical and para-medical personnel in the registration of births and deaths and particularly in improving data on the causes of death.

In the context of promoting effective coordination and dissemination of knowledge regarding the status of the civil registration system at the national level, it was considered advantageous to establish a national committee on civil registration and vital statistics composed of agencies responsible for registration, collection, tabulation, analysis and dissemination of civil registration matters and vital statistics in the country.

Experience shows that the responsibility for registration rested with officials drawn from different departments according to local convenience obtained in several countries. In such cases, a suitable mechanism should be evolved to maintain strict supervision over those officials through the formation of inter-departmental coordination committees.

*F. Meeting on Strategies for Improving Civil Registration*

To search for methods for promoting a better understanding between civil registration offices and offices responsible for the preparation of vital statistics with the purpose of improving the latter.

To promote the organization of meetings for the improvement of civil registration and pertinent statistics.

*I. OCAM Seminar on the Improvement of Civil Registration*

Invites CEA (Economic Commission for Africa) and VISTIM (Vital Statistics Improvement Project of the U.S. National Center for Health Statistics) to coordinate their actions in order to avoid wasteful dissipation of efforts. To this

end the two organizations might jointly organize one single conference or, alternatively, hold two separate joint conferences on different themes.

#### *J. Working Group on CR/VS in Africa*

Under the conditions of most African countries, it is necessary to ensure the cooperation of several ministries and institutions in order to establish an efficient and viable civil registration system. In this connection, a national civil registration committee or commission comprising of representatives of the various ministries and institutions concerned should be set up to facilitate the cooperation of activities, and to define measures to ensure the smooth running of the system. Subcommittees such as a technical subcommittee, a training subcommittee and a communications subcommittee could also be established under the national committee to deal with specific questions.

### 5. REGISTRATION METHODS AND PROCEDURES

#### *A. First Inter-American Conference on Civil Registration*

Civil registration registers or records should be kept in duplicate, one copy being retained in the custody of the office responsible for the largest geographical area feasible and the other in the custody of the office responsible for the smallest geographical area practicable having regard to the political and geographical division of the country.

The need for establishing a permanent relationship between hospital and related services on the one hand, and the civil registration offices on the other hand, since particulars relating to births, deaths, and foetal deaths are, in many cases, obtained from physicians and midwives, maternity homes and hospitals.

It is desirable that each country should compare its usual practices in the matter of civil registration with the definitions and procedures recommended by the United Nations; if differences are observed, the competent United Nations organs should be consulted, and if a country's legal definitions cannot be adapted to the international definitions, the definitions suggested in Principle No. 202 in Principles for a Vital Statistics System should be adopted for purely statistical purposes.

The desirability of authorizing the higher authorities of the civil registration services to establish clearly defined geographic registration units of a size which will make it possible to ensure that vital events occurring within their areas are registered within the time allowed for registration. Each geographical unit will be served by a single civil registration office, but the official in charge may delegate his powers when circumstances so require.

The attention of the competent authorities in the various countries should be drawn to the fact that it is desirable that the registration records should be suitably completed to enable them to be satisfactorily used for registration. In all cases, the record forms should be printed, the materials used being such as will ensure maximum durability and legibility.

In designing forms for the registration of vital events, attention should be paid to the desirability of providing adequate space for (a) the proper inclusion of the particulars required by law; (b) any marginal notes that may be required; and (c) observations.

General alphabetical indexes should be regarded as absolutely essential for the efficient working of the civil registration services; that the preparation of such indexes by mechanical means has advantages over any other system, and that, without prejudice to the foregoing, it may be considered desirable to supplement the alphabetical index by a chronological index.

In order to make it easier for persons who are naturalized or permanently settled in countries with a language other than their native languages to engage in legal proceedings and conduct their social relations, provision should be made in the legislation of every country for the translation of the baptismal names into the language of the place where the record is kept.

Consideration should be given to the possibility of including in the civil registration legislation of the various countries a recognition of every person's right to change, if he so desires, the name which was given to him when his birth was registered.

The possibility of requiring that the footprints of the new-born child and the fingerprints of the mother should be taken when births are registered.

Witnesses should be dispensed with in cases where there is reliable documentary evidence of the events to be registered.

Appropriate measures should be taken to simplify the procedure for the correction of entries.

#### *F. Meeting on Strategies for Improving Civil Registration*

Many countries record their vital facts in oversized books which are difficult to handle.

Some countries record unimportant or unnecessary events and leave out important events, which implies the absence of registration criteria.

#### *G. OCAM Conference on Civil Registration*

Direct transmission of documents to the office where they are processed.

Creation of a system of verification at all levels; administrative, judicial and statistical.

#### *J. Working Group on CR/VS in Africa*

Uniform national standards relating to the content and types of civil registration documents (registers, declaration or notification forms and/or statistical report forms) must be established to ensure the collection of a minimum number of basic topics for all population groups and geographical subdivisions. Provision should be made for sending systematically the registration and notification forms or the statistical report forms to the agency designated to process the data (Central Statistical Office, Registrar General's Department, etc.)

A major problem in Africa will be the rapid deterioration of paper documents. Work should be done on systems of micro photography for the preservation of records. Work should also be done on suggested filing systems for documents, and indexes for the retrieval of these documents. Standards for the storage of paper documents should also be developed.

Documents should be developed on suggested systems for data processing which will integrate the registration and statistical functions, i.e., systems which will produce alphabetical indexes needed by the registration personnel, and statistical data, with a single handling of each document.

#### *K. Iberoamerican Conference on CR/VS*

Quality control procedures should be established, preferably close to the place of the event.

Civil registration documents and forms to be used for vital statistics purposes should be prepared in close coordination with governmental services requiring information from the Civil Registry, such as health services, electoral rolls, statistical services, etc.

The present registration documents should be revised in design and content, keeping in mind that the data in each document should be determined in terms of its purposes. Eventual automation should be contemplated.

Simplification of registration procedures and instruments should be pursued, so that informants as well as recipients have less difficulty.

Registration deadlines should be established in accordance with geographic and cultural accessibility of the population, striving to facilitate compliance with the legal obligations in the registration of vital events.

### 6. PERSONNEL

#### *A. First Inter-American Conference on Civil Registration*

The need for the civil registration services to develop increasing initiative in the performance of their work.

Due care should be given to the selection of registrars, particularly in rural areas, ensuring when possible, that the persons selected are natives of the area concerned or have resided in it for a reasonable length of time.

#### *F. Meeting on Strategies for Improving Civil Registration*

Low salaries, and in some countries no salaries, for personnel in charge of civil registration activities.

#### *I. OCAM Seminar on the Improvement of Civil Registration*

Recommends establishment as an integral part of the Civil Administration (or Civil Service) of each State a corps of vital registration personnel and that appropriate perquisites and benefits be accorded such personnel to reinforce their motivation for the accomplishment of their tasks.

Invite the States to put in place an appropriate program to establish and support a personnel system for vital registration.

#### *J. Working Group on CR/VS in Africa*

The efficiency of the civil registration personnel should be ensured by improving their professional status and their expertise through possibly

establishing a separate body of civil registration personnel, periodic training, in-service courses, appropriate supervision, etc, and by increasing their numbers where necessary, taking into account both area size and population distribution.

A clear definition of the roles and functions of the civil registration personnel, including the community contacts in the rural areas, should be included in the programmes for improvement and expansion of the civil registration system.

#### *K. Iberoamerican Conference on CR/VS*

Minimum requirements should be established for the hiring of personnel for civil registration so that they are able to benefit from specific and systematic training which they should receive in order to improve the service.

### 7. TRAINING

#### *A. First Inter-American Conference on Civil Registration*

The need for placing sufficient emphasis in programmes of training and advanced training on the close relationship between the collection of data relating to vital events and the application of such data to various activities of collective interest, the purpose of such emphasis being to give officials an increased awareness of their responsibility to society.

The necessity and advisability of recognizing that the civil registration service's direct and permanent collaboration with the vital statistics service is one of its most important functions, and that consequently persons employed in the civil registration service should be properly trained so that they may discharge their functions correctly and with full awareness of their responsibilities.

All registrars should receive theoretical and practical training which will fully qualify them for the efficient performance of their administrative and technical duties, and that they should be given opportunities of regular promotion and receive remuneration commensurate with their ability and the quality of their work.

#### *C. Second Inter-American Conference on Civil Registration*

With respect to assistance for training of personnel, it was suggested that the proposed committee for coordinating the activities of international agencies in the field of civil registration could take advantage of the existence of the Advanced School of Public Administration for Central America (ESAPAC, Costa Rica), the Getulio Vargas Foundation School of Administration in Brazil, the School of Public Administration in Puerto Rico, and the School of Public Health of the University of Chile, by arranging through those institutions for courses on administrative techniques that could be applied to civil registration, and for provision of advance on reorganizing the civil registration services.

In connection with training, the Seminar learned with great interest of the training programme that the National Center for Health Statistics of the United States planned to give shortly, and that would be useful for training registrars, as well as statistical and public health officials. The Seminar suggested that

the competent agencies might consider the possibility of giving courses of this type in Spanish in the future, if possible in a country in the Latin America Area.

*D. Seminar on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics for Asia and the Far East*

It is recognized that, in order to have an efficiently functioning registration system, the local registrars, who were key officials in that process, would have to be chosen carefully, should be trained adequately and should be provided with suitable incentives.

*E. Working Group on Current Demographic Statistics*

Intensive training programmes for registration officials at all levels should be organized.

*F. Meeting on Strategies for Improving Civil Registration*

To train personnel devoted to the registration of vital events.

*G. OCAM Conference on Civil Registration*

Invite the Secretary General of OCAM to undertake the printing and the publication of a manual for the training of civil registration personnel.

Invite the Economic Commission for Africa to collaborate on the technical aspects of this work and request them to develop an English version of a training manual for the benefit of the Anglophone African countries.

*I. OCAM Seminar on the Improvement of Civil Registration*

Recommends the organization of periodic national and regional seminars for the exchanging of experiences, study of the vital registration laws in force, and seeking solutions to the various problems which exist in this area.

*J. Working Group on CR/VS in Africa*

A training workshop for civil registration personnel should be organized in 1981 in English, in collaboration with interested agencies. Continuing assistance in training and developing the staff resources needed in establishing effective programmes for the improvement and expansion of civil registration systems should be provided, in collaboration with the United Nations Statistical Office.

To the extent possible, countries should be assisted with the training of intermediate level personnel who would be responsible for the training of lower level personnel.

A training manual for civil registration personnel should be developed on the basis of country experience, taking into account the existing OCAM/UDEAC manual or any similar manual.

*K. Iberoamerican Conference on CR/VS*

The essential factor is permanent training of all employees in correspondence with their rank and functions. Emphasis is placed on the need for training

of medical personnel and other professionals during their studies for correct completion of forms, and on permanent training of registration and statistics employees in data processing and supplementary means of correcting deficiencies in informant's data.

Constant attention should be paid to the proper filling out of registration books and certificates. This implies continuous, or at least periodic, training of civil registrars, personnel involved in preparation of medical certificates, and of the public at large.

Major offices of civil registration and statistics should have permanent personnel, trained and updated in quality control.

Training at all levels is one of the fundamental means for attaining such improvement.

Regional training activities should be undertaken in coordination with national policies on this matter. Actions on a regional basis should include the preparation of teaching material.

Support should be given to the organization and conduct of national training plans for such personnel; it is suggested that these plans be worked out jointly with national bodies in charge of the system.

## 8. FACILITIES AND EQUIPMENT

### A. *First Inter-American Conference on Civil Registration*

Consideration should be given to the possibility of measures to reduce the space required for archives and ensure the preservation of records.

### D. *Seminar on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics for Asia and the Far East*

It is recognized that mechanical tabulation or computer facilities are essential to detailed tabulation, and that a general use of such facilities should be envisaged in the long run. Nevertheless, it is considered that efforts spent on improving registration and flows of registration information on number of events registered, by inspection, reminders to local registrars and by simple scrutiny of number of events in successive periods, might yield more valuable results than processing a smaller number of events in greater detail.

## 9. NEEDED RESEARCH AND STUDY

### B. *African Seminar on Vital Statistics*

Experimentation and analytical studies should be continued (a) to improve the efficiency of sample design through suitable variability studies and (b) to improve the quality of data by adopting methods for detecting and adjusting for non-sampling errors and biases, including use of demographic models.

### C. *Second Inter-American Conference on Civil Registration*

It is of basic importance for countries to work out a programme to improve civil registration services, of which the first stage would cover the period 1965-69. The initiative and main responsibility for the preparation of the

programme would rest with the Governments themselves, and they should make use of the cooperation of the national committee on civil registration and vital statistics, with a view to ensuring both the participation of all the agencies that make up the system that produces statistics, and the full implementation of the programme.

The following were regarded as the bases for preparing a programme of this nature:

Formulating a government policy to ensure that the programme of improvement would be carried out.

Conducting the specific studies needed to determine the existing defects in the organization and functioning of the service.

Formulating the programme on the basis of those studies and the goals established for the period in question.

Periodic evaluation of the programme in order to introduce any changes needed for its gradual improvement.

Incorporating the programme to improve the civil registration services into the national programme of economic, social and administrative reform plans.

Far-reaching publicity for the programme in cooperation with the educational authorities and the social service organizations.

With respect to inter-institutional relations, it is recommended that working groups should be set up, composed of demographers, statisticians, registrars, public health officers, sociologists, etc., to carry out studies on specific aspects of vital events.

#### *D. Seminar on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics for Asia and the Far East*

It is recommended that ECAFE member countries whose civil registration was lacking or deficient should, as a first step, set up demonstration civil registration areas, to give an impetus to civil registration programmes.

It is recommended that more experiments should be undertaken in the countries of the region to develop a method of ascertaining and classifying causes of death by laymen and paramedical personnel. It is also recommended that, as a first step, WHO be requested to prepare a manual on that subject.

It is recommended that matching studies should form part of the evaluation of a civil registration system and should be complemented by follow-up investigations to ascertain the causes of deficient registration.

#### *G. OCAM Conference on Civil Registration*

Suggest that OCAM convene a work group to examine the contents of the training manual and study the different civil registration methodologies utilized by the African countries.



### *I. OCAM Seminar on the Improvement of Civil Registration*

Deems it desirable that a study of the institution of vital registration in the setting of nomadic or migratory populations be undertaken by OCAM in collaboration with other interested agencies in order that proper account may be taken of the specific problems of certain States in the Sahel.

Invites the General Secretariat of OCAM to appoint and assemble at the earliest possible time a technical commission charged with the task of completing an OCAM-UDEAC Vital Registration System Organization and Personnel Manual which will permit the States to use this general framework for the elaboration of their own national guide.

### *J. Working Group on CR/VS in Africa*

Studies on methods and problems of civil registration systems and vital statistics collection in Africa should be undertaken on a periodic basis. Such periodic studies should be submitted to a Working Group to review the progress so far achieved in the region in this field and to formulate recommendations on any future relevant remedial action.

A study on civil registration systems of relevance to the nomadic areas should also be undertaken.

An inventory of available information on the status and problems of the existing civil registration system should be undertaken to enable the preparation of medium and long-term programmes for the expansion and improvement of the civil registration scheme in the country.

It is essential that special measures be provided for rural areas including remote area dwellers and nomadic tribes where the question of distance and difficulty of terrain as well as lack of motivation of population have to be taken into account. Such special measures may involve active civil registration procedures.

### *K. Iberoamerican Conference on CR/VS*

The study of other means of achieving wider coverage (such as mobile registrars, auxiliary offices, etc.) is recommended.

Coverage assessment will generally be made by special survey methods. Such surveys may be of the retrospective type, including census-like questions on the number of vital events that occurred, or may begin with a retrospective approach documented by detailed histories of births and/or pregnancies. Also recommended, are prospective or follow-up demographic surveys to be carried out over a period of not less than two years, by the repeated interview method.

Meetings of experts should be organized for the purpose of analyzing specific issues; for presentation and study of methodologies and/or techniques that may contribute to its improvement.

Countries, WHO Centers for the International Classification of Diseases and the Region should carry out the necessary studies in order to establish a glossary of local folk terms designating complaints in terms of the disease equivalents.

Countries, WHO Centers and the Region should carry out studies with a view to establishing ways and means of grouping of symptoms and complaints as reported by lay personnel into diagnostic equivalents which can be classified by the ICD.

## 10. EVALUATION

### A. *First Inter-American Conference on Civil Registration*

National authorities should undertake special studies to determine the degree of incompleteness of registration in each of the main population groups using the methods best adapted to local conditions, and that standing arrangements should be made for the exchange of information concerning the experience gained by each country.

### C. *Second Inter-American Conference on Civil Registration*

It is an urgent task to evaluate the degree of omission from the registers and carry out studies to determine the cause. Such studies should be made regularly and should take the form of a cooperative undertaking by the institutions that participate in the production of vital statistics.

It is recommended that a program of national action be carried out during the next five years with the following as the responsible agency:

#### Civil Registration

Study of the existing situation, with an indication of the factors hampering its improvement and development.

#### Statistical Office

Inclusion in the programmes of the Statistical Office of activities aimed at:

Determining the degree of omission of registrations of vital events and the main defects in their accuracy. This study should be based on the smallest possible geographical unit, and should include filed studies if they are considered necessary.

#### Department of Health

Making a proper evaluation of the reliability of the medical and health data obtained from the civil registration office.

Within the framework of an administrative modernization, an evaluation of the problems that beset the civil registration services, especially in relation to completeness, can provide basic criteria to guide the process of administrative revision. Such an appraisal should be carried out in conjunction by those services and by all the bodies that have an interest in receiving civil registration data. Among the means that could be used for such an appraisal, the Seminar considered as important procedures combining population censuses and samplings with specific surveys to measure the completeness of the registers, together with special studies to supplement the usefulness of the registers. Similarly, the Seminar thought it would be advisable to conduct tests to measure the accuracy or truth of the information furnished by the civil register, and,

from a more general standpoint, to organize and develop registration zones, with the aim of achieving a gradual improvement in the service. The fact that such measures reflect the recommendations by the First Inter-American Seminar on Civil Registration is the reason why they were endorsed by the Second Seminar.

With respect to measures to ensure the proper functioning of the civil registration services, the Seminar's discussions centered on those that would ensure the completeness, accuracy and promptness of the registration of vital events, as well as cooperation between the registrars and those responsible for preparing the vital statistics.

As previously stated, the Seminar recognized the need to make regular appraisals, on the basis of the information available, with a view to establishing the degree and cause of omissions from the register for the various regions within the country. For this purpose, it was considered that the methods set forth in the working documents would be useful. Such studies should be carried out in cooperation with the other institutions that participate in the preparation of vital statistics.

Without prejudice to the study by international agencies of methods suited to Latin America that would permit taking advantage of such demographic surveys as the 1970 censuses in order to evaluate the completeness of the registration of vital events, the following methods were suggested as suitable for measuring the accuracy of the registers in certain cases:

A comparison with various lists independent of civil registration (notices of births and deaths; lists of baptisms; lists of burial certificates; school registrations, etc.).

A study of the consistency for comparable periods of the total number of births and deaths.

A study of the ratio of total births to total deaths.

A study of the consistency of the distribution by age and sex.

A study of the consistency or probability of the rates obtained on the basis of the events registered, and the economic, cultural, social, health and other conditions prevailing in the country and in regions within the country.

A study of the pattern of the total and infant death rates by sex and age.

Special surveys to measure the degree of omission and accuracy of the information collected through the registers.

Population censuses during which the special infant card can be used.

Surveys not especially intended to measure the degree of omission and accuracy of the information, but which can throw light on those questions.

Estimates based on census results; compensatory equation and fertility rates by cohorts.

Theoretical population methods.

Calculation of the inverse survival rate of the child population obtained through censuses.

*D. Seminar on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics for Asia and the Far East*

It is recommended that a continuous programme of evaluating civil registration be undertaken by countries and that that evaluation be conducted independently of the actual operation.

*G. OCAM Conference on Civil Registration*

Evaluation of each nation of its system of civil registration. OCAM should collaborate with the African nations in the development of effective systems of civil registration.

*J. Working Group on CR/VS in Africa*

More research on the best way of achieving complete coverage should be undertaken. This work should include actual tests of active systems so as to evaluate the working conditions and the possibilities of developing them over time.

## 11. NEEDED IMPROVEMENTS

*A. First Inter-American Conference on Civil Registration*

Civil registration services should play an active role and that officials should be particularly encouraged to undertake a program of propaganda to encourage the legal constitution of families, to seek the help and cooperation of all social organizations which are helping or might help to achieve this aim; to guide and assist illiterates, and, particularly, to extend their activity to centers of population remote from registration offices.

All the Latin American Governments should adopt such measures as they deem appropriate to ensure completeness of registration, particularly in areas with a predominantly Indian population.

The various countries should organize continuing publicity and educational campaigns with a view to:

Awakening and increasing public interest in the registration of vital events.

Maintaining and increasing the interest of civil registration officials in widening the coverage of vital events, with a view to promoting completeness of registration.

In conducting such publicity and educational campaigns, use should be made of all appropriate channels and of all opportunities of influencing the public, in particular of the schools and other educational institutions.

An attempt should be made to secure the cooperation of all public agencies and private bodies whose normal activities are such as to permit them to collaborate.

*C. Second Inter-American Conference on Civil Registration*

The following particular measures to improve the completeness, accuracy and promptness of registration were suggested:

Revision of the civil registration legislation and its regulations to adapt them to new conditions and requirements in the country concerned.

Steps to ensure strict fulfillment of the legal requirements (for example, the reporting of a birth or death; the requirement of a civil registration certificate as proof of the occurrence of a vital event; the requirement of burial permits, etc.).

Staff training on a permanent basis.

The establishment of registry suboffices in hospitals, clinics and maternity centers.

A permanent system for the inspection and advising of registry offices, and consideration of the possibility of holding seminars and other national conferences from time to time.

Establishment of sufficient statutory time limit for the registration of vital events, and regular analysis of the extent to which the provisions in question are complied with. Since late reporting indicates a tendency towards nonreporting of the occurrence of vital events, the Seminar recommended the issuing of tables showing the degree of delay in registrations.

Incentives to register within the statutory period, such as the provision of free copies, and of the child's identity card; and making use, for the same purpose, of the application of certain social welfare measures, such as social security, family allowances, maternity grants, etc.

Simplification of formalities, as far as the legislation in force permit.

It is recommended that a program of national action be carried out during the next five years with the following as the responsible agency:

**Civil Registration**

Formulation of a programme to be carried out within five years, whose aims would include:

Improving the structure of the service.

Bringing the distribution and facilities of local registry offices into line with the population to be served.

Training of registrars.

## Statistical Office

Cooperating with the civil registration service in publicity campaigns both among the general public and among professional groups.

## Department of Health

Inclusion in the work programme of activities aimed at:

Convincing the medical profession of the importance of a prompt and detailed medical certificate covering births and deaths, including foetal deaths.

Preparing publicity material for that purpose.

Including a reference to the above in the curricula of schools of medicine and public health.

### *E. Working Group on Current Demographic Statistics*

The status of civil registration, wherever it exists, should be surveyed as early as possible to assess the extent of geographic coverage, under-registration, timeliness in the receipt of returns, and under-reporting of events from the periphery to Headquarters.

The system of soliciting the assistance of local officials such as village headmen, teachers, social and religious workers, practical midwives, barbers, funeral directors, health visitors, sanitary workers, etc. to function as notifiers as the periphery was regarded as one of the effective means of promoting good registration. Notification so received should be followed up by registration officials promptly. The success of that system depends on the establishment and maintenance of constant and easy communication with notifiers by registration officials.

## 12. PRIORITIES

### *A. First Inter-American Conference on Civil Registration*

In any programme for the improvement of a civil registration system in the first stage, priority and special importance should be attached to the organizational, technical and administrative aspects of the system.

Only when the initial stage has been completed, should consideration be given to the use of more complex statistical methods, such as sampling, with particular object of improving the system itself.

When it is decided to use any such technique, its use should always be supervised by skilled staff as a guarantee of efficiency and the production of reliable results.

### *B. African Seminar on Vital Statistics*

Recognition should be given by Governments to the fundamental importance of establishing a comprehensive civil registration system in each country of the

region at the earliest possible opportunity. In the light of limitations of resources in certain countries, suitable priorities should be adopted for phasing the implementation of registration schemes.

*D. Seminar on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics for Asia and the Far East*

While recognizing the desirability of aiming at an ideal system of civil registration and appreciating the comprehensive nature of the United Nations Recommendations for the Improvement and Standardization of Vital Statistics: *Draft Proposals* (document ASTAT/CERVS/1), recommended that, in view of the limited resources of many countries of the region, the goals should not be set so high as to be unattainable. A flexible approach was necessary and it was desirable to lay down several levels of priority for building up a vital statistics system.

It is recommended that countries should give first priority to the registration of births and deaths by recording basic topics and compiling relevant statistics.

It is recognized that marriage and divorce registration provided indicators of changes in number and composition of families/households, which had great demographic, social and economic implications. The Seminar, while agreeing that birth and death registration should receive priority, urged the countries which had not yet developed a system of registering marriage and divorce to take early steps to do so and to compile statistics of those events.

The Seminar endorsed the recommendation contained in the United Nations *Draft Proposals* that the registration of foetal death should be given a lower priority than that of live birth, death, marriage and divorce.

It was recognized that statistical data on causes of death were inadequate in most countries of the region. As a first step towards improving cause of death statistics, the Seminar recommended that properly completed medical certificates of causes of death be obtained and processed for all deaths attended by physicians in or out of hospitals.

*I. OCAM Seminar on the Improvement of Civil Registration*

The States should pay special attention to the development of vital registration at the rural community level.

### 13. TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

*B. African Seminar on Vital Statistics*

The United Nations should give the fullest possible support to the promotion of civil registration in Africa including material contribution and technical assistance in personnel.

Pending the achievement of complete coverage of vital events through registration, the United Nations should assist to the fullest possible extent in schemes, such as those discussed at the Seminar, for obtaining temporary substitutes for the vital rates.

*C.1 Second Inter-American Conference on Civil Registration*

With respect to aid from international agencies in the field of civil registration, either through the committee that the Seminar proposed should be set up, or directly from the agencies concerned, the Seminar stressed the benefit that countries could derive from prompt, full-scale and coordinated action. It was suggested that the United Nations, the Organization of American States, the Pan American Health Organization and the Inter-American Statistical Institute might examine their technical assistance programmes with particular attention to the institutions that participate in the production of vital statistics, especially the civil registration service and problems relating to public administration in general.

In detail, the Seminar agreed that international technical assistance should include the following:

Advice from experts on improving civil registration legislation and regulations; suggestions as to administrative procedures and the preparation of related rules, including rules on questions of mechanizing the service; organization of national training courses for registrars; carrying out of tests to evaluate the reliability of the statistical information collected by the civil registration service; and the introduction of publicity techniques to arouse the interest of the community in prompt registration of vital events.

Granting of fellowships for officials in the civil registration, statistical and health services.

The preparation of manuals for the use of registrars in the Latin American countries, describing the main administrative techniques applicable to civil registration, and certain simple statistical methods for measuring the completeness of the registers and the accuracy of the statistical information they provide.

The conducting of experiments to improve the methodology of evaluating the registers and the resultant statistics, by means of sample surveys.

It is recommended that a program of national action be carried out during the next five years with the following as the responsible agency:

Civil Registration

A plan for joint action with other government bodies with a view to:

Securing the inclusion of requests for international technical assistance (fellowships, experts, etc.) in national programmes.

The international agencies that have an interest in the efficient functioning of civil registration, including the United Nations Statistical Office, the Latin American Demographic Centre, the Pan American Health Organization, the Inter-American Statistical Institute and the Inter-American Children's Institute, could coordinate their activities in order to make the best use of any resources that may be made available for this purpose. To this end, it is suggested that a committee should be set up consisting of representatives of the agencies concerned, which will undertake to promote an integrated programme for improving the civil registration services in the Americas.



D. *Seminar on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics for Asia and the Far East*

The Seminar was aware that deficiencies in the coverage and quality of national vital statistics represented a serious gap in world demographic knowledge. It recognized that efforts should be exerted by the United Nations, ECAFE, the specialized agencies and countries to advance the development of universal civil registration and reliable vital statistics.

The ECAFE secretariat should assist countries of the region with regard to any special difficulties that they might encounter in the implementation of civil registration programmes and suggest suitable devices for adapting them to local conditions.

The ECAFE secretariat should provide regional advisory services in civil registration and in the training of national personnel in that field, under the United Nations Programme of Technical Assistance.

It further recommended that Member countries of the United Nations whose civil registration and vital statistics systems were highly developed should make available experts to advise in that important area, under the United Nations or bilateral programmes of technical assistance.

Recognizing the benefits that might accrue from visits of officials from countries with a less developed civil registration and vital statistics system to those with a developed system, it is recommended also that the ECAFE secretariat should assist countries in obtaining facilities for training and observation in developed countries or countries with registration promotion/research projects of particular interest and provide necessary financial support for such a scheme under the United Nations Programme of Technical Assistance.

Realizing that the derivation of vital rates through sample registration/surveys was extremely important, particularly where the normal civil registration system was deficient, and called for a special study in itself, the ECAFE secretariat should undertake the following measures to promote such schemes in countries of the region:

To collect and distribute detailed information on the current and past experience of countries which conducted such sample registration/surveys.

To provide expert guidance wherever needed.

To organize workshops to consider designs suitable for such sample registration/survey and methods to deal with problems of recall lapse, supervision and control, evaluation, etc. of such sample registration/surveys.

With a view to assisting countries in the implementation of a system of civil registration and adapting it to the needs not only of the countries of the ECAFE region but also of all developing countries, it is recommended that supplementary guidelines be prepared, possibly in the form of a special publication, setting out the minimum goals of civil registration and covering, in addition, the following:

For *governments*, advice on the relative importance of civil registration schemes, censuses and surveys in obtaining vital statistics data.

For the *general public*, education in the benefits to be derived from civil registration, and the motives which should encourage registration.

For *officials*, encouragement to improve their standards of service and efficiency.

#### *E. Working Group on Current Demographic Statistics*

A programme of visits of registration officials among the countries of the region would help in assessing the problems of providing civil registration systems as well as the ways and means of coping with them. The Working Group noted with appreciation the offers of some developed countries to provide assistance both in that programme and with regard to other aspects of improving current demographic statistics.

ESCAP (Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific) might consider establishing a mechanism for providing detailed information on the current status of civil registration systems in the countries of the region, such as the publication of a periodical news bulletin.

#### *F. Meeting on Strategies for Improving Civil Registration*

The support required by civil registration services should be provided through an integrated, continued Latin American-wide program, implemented by a specialized unit working in this field.

Consequently, the establishment of a focal point, within the institutional frame of the IACI, is promoted with the purpose of boosting and ensuring the prompt and efficient enforcement of an action program leading to the modernization of civil registration services in those countries which require its aid.

Financial and technical assistance for the normal operation of this machinery should be provided by national and international organizations involved, such as the United Nations Fund for Population Activities, the Statistical Office of the United Nations, the World Health Organization, the Agency for International Development of the United States, the United States National Center for Health Statistics, etc.

Request technical and financial assistance from international organizations with the purpose of drawing up diagnosis which serve as basis for the design, implementation and performance of projects contributing to the improvement of the present operation of civil registration services.

#### *J. Working Group on CR/VS in Africa*

The necessary technical and research knowledge should be made available to African countries by national and international agencies working in this field.

Technical and financial assistance should be strengthened to supplement national efforts.

Advisory services should continue to be made available to African countries in project formulation, planning and implementation of programmes for the establishment, improvement and expansion of civil registration systems, in collaboration with the UN Statistical Office.

## 14. OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

### A. *First Inter-American Conference on Civil Registration*

An exchange of information and experience between the American countries should be organized as a basis for the improvement and standardization of registration systems and the clarification of interpretations of the concepts and definitions of registrable events.

As a means of facilitating such exchanges, the establishment of a body or an association to act as a link between civil registration officials in the various countries of the hemisphere and discharge the function, *inter alia*, of keeping up to date a register of institutes, authorities, officials and other bodies and persons connected with the civil registration services in the various countries.

The compilation of a Latin American vocabulary of terms commonly used in all civil registration procedures, with their respective definitions.

The desirability of including in the United Nations definition of marriage a reference to the fact that the principal purpose of the union is the formation of a family.

The systematic use of statistical techniques in civil registration, since such techniques can assist registration services to attain their objectives and to cooperate with other institutions for the achievement of their own aims and for the carrying out of various special studies of general interest.

To establish on the basis set forth below, an organization to be known as the "Inter-American Civil Registration Association." Its main objectives will be the following:

To improve the quality of registration.

To promote the better training of registration staff.

To promote the standardization of registration techniques.

To promote the formation of national civil registration associations in countries where such associations do not as yet exist.

To exchange information and experience.

To promote the publication of national periodicals and of an Inter-American Bulletin.

To promote exchanges of civil registration officials between the different member nations.

To promote the organization of national and Inter-American training courses.

The Association will be a private technical association composed of national civil registration services and civil registration officials or employees.

It is recommended that the national associations should be duly incorporated. The founding members, honorary members, and officials and individuals engaged in work connected with civil registration will be full members of the Association. Other persons applying for admission will be associate members. The Association will maintain relations and exchange information with agencies concerned in the efficient operation of civil registration services.

The funds of the Inter-American Association will consist, *inter alia*, of the contributions of national associations, governmental grants, and any assistance obtained from Inter-American or other sources.

The national civil registration association of the country which is the seat of the Inter-American Association will provide the secretariat of the Association.

The Interim Committee will draft the statutes of the Association and circulate them to member associations for approval; it will also organize a permanent Inter-American secretariat. The Interim Committee will be authorized to lay down the procedure for the adoption of the statutes.

#### B. *African Seminar on Vital Statistics*

Recognition be given to the equally fundamental need for sustained efforts both by Governments and international agencies in all projects aimed at obtaining reliable vital statistics on a continuing basis.

#### C. *Second Inter-American Conference on Civil Registration*

It is advisable that countries should try out methods of organization and operation that could be used by the national committees on vital and health statistics that, it is suggested, might more appropriately be called national committees on civil registration and vital and health statistics, because of the part that they can play in promoting an improvement in civil registration.

A competent organization should prepare and publish a statistical manual for registrars, describing in simple terms the elementary technical principles involved.

Countries should work out a five-year programme to cover the period 1965-1969 for improving their civil registration services, in line with the suggestions and the outline put forward at the present Seminar. This programme should form part of the country's development plans. Although the chief responsibility for the formulation and development of such programmes falls to the Governments, their success cannot be assured without coordinated, full-scale and prompt assistance from international organizations.

As a guide in drawing up a programme of national action for the next five years, the Seminar recommended that an outline of the following nature should be used, since it assigns specific responsibilities to the central planning body that is assumed to exist in each country, and to the services that usually make up the system that produces vital statistics:

#### Planning Office

Ensuring that the national committee on civil registration and vital and health statistics includes senior officials of the bodies

responsible for civil registration, statistics, health and planning, and keeping watch on the efficiency of its operation.

Providing technical assistance in the formulation of the programme to improve the civil registration service, to ensure that the programme is consistent with national plans, especially development plans.

Giving due priority to the allocation of funds to the civil registration service to enable it to carry out the programme.

#### Civil Registration

A plan for joint action with other government bodies with a view to obtaining the funds essential to the carrying out of the programme.

#### Statistical Office

Cooperating in other activities of interest to the civil registration service.

Transmitting regular and up-to-date reports to local, provincial and national civil registration offices on the figures for births, deaths and marriages for each office.

#### D. Seminar on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics for Asia and the Far East

Countries which did not yet have fully effective civil registration should consider organizing, or should continue to organize, sample surveys/sample registration schemes as interim measures, while at the same time taking recommended long-range steps towards achieving universal civil registration and comprehensive vital statistics.

The Seminar recognized the fact that an extensive tabulation programme would be useful only when the degree of completeness had exceeded 90 percent. It recommended that, till then, only simple tables should be compiled and that full attention should be paid to achieving complete registration.

Recognizing that much emphasis was currently being placed on the formulation of overall plans of economic and social development in developing countries, that such plans required an integrated approach and the part of all sectors of the economy, and that vital statistics played an important role in making such plans, the Seminar urged that, as part of their overall national development plans, the Governments of member countries of ECAFE should formulate long-range national civil registration and vital statistics programmes.

Being aware that the definition of "live birth" given in paragraph 41 of the *Draft Proposals* was not clear to laymen, and recognizing that in the less advanced countries of the ECAFE region a large number of events would be reported by lay informants, the Seminar suggested that it would be useful to evolve a definition of "live birth" which could be applied in the less developed countries of the region. It therefore recommended that WHO be requested to suggest one characteristic which could be used as a test of "live birth" in less advanced areas.

The Seminar felt that a working definition of "maternal death" applicable in the developing countries of the region was needed, and recommended that WHO

be requested to assist in arriving at a suitable definition for classifying such deaths on a systematic and uniform basis.

Recommended that countries should provide the population with all possible incentives to register vital events.

In connection with the editing of data for unacceptable combinations of items, the Seminar suggested that documents giving specifications of the editing programme used in particular countries should be made available to others for information.

Steps should be taken to secure the active and effective cooperation of the public, on the basis of mutual courtesy, efficiency and consideration.

#### *E. Working Group on Current Demographic Statistics*

In areas where the system remained to be initiated, emphasis should be placed on obtaining information on a minimum set of topics in the first instance. The minimum set of characteristics might be:

- (i) Births and late foetal deaths: Dates of occurrence and registration, age and place of usual residence of mother, sex, attendant at birth.
- (ii) Deaths: Dates of occurrence and registration, place of occurrence, place of usual residence, age, sex and cause of death, attendant at death.

Even in areas where some system was already in existence, attention should be given to achieving a complete reporting of the events. To that end, emphasis should be placed on obtaining accurately the minimum set of particulars described above. The tabulation programme should attempt a minimum cross-classification involving a basic set of particulars as emphasized above.

#### *J. Working Group on CR/VS in Africa*

Countries which have not yet established civil registration systems should do so in the immediate future.

In formulating national projects for the improvement and/or expansion of civil registration systems, some countries may wish to adopt interim measures such as experimental registration and sample registration schemes. They should be encouraged to do so bearing in mind that the final goal is nationwide coverage of registration of vital events.

Agreement should be reached on a minimum data set which should be included in items collected by each country, and an optional data set suggested as additional desirable items. As a part of this effort, countries should be encouraged to adopt the definitions of events developed by the World Health Organization and the UN Statistical Office. Where there are no standard definitions, these should be developed.

#### *K. Iberoamerican Conference on CR/VS*

When designing a new civil registration system, the United Nations' guidelines should be utilized to promote international uniformity in civil registration.

## APPENDIX

In its discussion of the legal basis for the civil registration service, the Second Inter-American Seminar on Civil Registration held in Lima, Peru in 1964 took note of the compilation of civil registration laws prepared by the Inter-American Children's Institute. As a result of its study of the related documents and the outline for the model law prepared by the Inter-American Civil Registration Association, the Seminar agreed that the following basis might usefully be followed in drafting the legislation.

### General Considerations

Name of the institution or service that registers the events and acts relating to the civil status, and any amendments thereto. Authority under which the service comes. Organic structure.

Functions to be performed.

The registrar and his functions.

Whether or not registrations and other civil registration transactions are free of charge.

Competence and territorial jurisdiction of registrars.

Rules governing the establishment of civil registration offices and registration zones (sub-offices).

Rules to promote an active role for the registrar and to govern his relations with the public.

Compulsory nature of registration.

### Registration Books and Documents

Rules on the registration document (book, document, or book combined with a document).

Number, method and form of the books or documents.

Procedure to be followed in the case of destruction or loss of books or documents.

Public nature of the register: right to inspect it and to ask for copies.

### Registrations in General

Form in which registrations are entered: consecutive, no abbreviations, corrections, etc.

Standardized content of the registrations.

Essential items that must be included in a registration before it can be legally valid.

Application to register a vital event or civil status act: verbally or in writing.

Registration of vital events or civil status acts that take place abroad.

Rules on delayed registrations.

Rules on the correlation of the registrations for a given individual.

Rules on the value of registrations as evidence.

#### Duplicate Certificates or Copies of Registrations

Rules on the content of duplicate certificates or copies, and on short forms of certificates.

Rules on the form of the certificates: whether handwritten, typed, photographed, or otherwise mechanically produced.

#### Births

Persons who should report a birth.

Persons responsible for registering a birth.

Evidence required for the registration of a birth.

Period allowed for the registration of a birth.

Items that should be included in the registration of a birth.

Place where the birth should be registered.

#### Legitimations and Recognition

Time at which a child may be legitimized or recognized.

What is required of a mother or father who legitimates or recognizes a child.

Authorities through whom a child may be legitimized or recognized.

Formalities required for registering a legitimation or recognition; documents in which a legitimation or recognition should be noted.

#### Adoptions

Persons entitled to request the registration of an adoption.

Time at which the registration may be made.

Official empowered to register an adoption.

Requirements for the registration of an adoption; documents that must be produced.

Further registrations or annotations to which the registration of an adoption gives rise.

#### Marriages

Rules on the power to perform marriages, and place of registration.

Conditions to be fulfilled by the contracting parties.

Content of a marriage registration.

Formalities for a deathbed marriage.

Special formalities for marriages of widowed or divorced persons, or of persons whose marriages have been annulled.

Marriages by proxy.

#### Divorce, and Other Acts that Change the Civil Status

Requirements for the registration of a divorce.

Requirements for the registration of the annulment of a marriage.



Requirements for the registration of a legal separation.  
Further registrations or annotations to which these acts give rise.

### Deaths

Persons who should report a death.  
Authority responsible for registering a death.  
Evidence required for the registration of a death.  
Period allowed for the registration of a death.  
Place where the death should be registered.  
Items that should be included in the registration of a death.  
Requirements for the disposal of a corpse.  
Rules governing the registration of presumed deaths.

### Foetal Deaths

Concept of a foetal death.  
Evidence required for the registration of a foetal death.  
Period allowed for the registration of a foetal death.  
Place where a foetal death should be registered.  
Items to be included on the registration document if registration is considered necessary.  
Requirements for disposal of a foetus.

### Family Names and Personal Names

Number of names that can be given to any person.  
Order of the family names.  
Personal and family names of foundlings.  
Power to change family and personal names.  
Restrictions, if any, on the right to use certain words as names.

### Correction, Cancellation or Reconstruction of Registrations

Authority to correct, cancel or reconstruct registrations.  
Persons entitled to request a correction, cancellation or reconstruction.  
Corrections, cancellations and reconstructions on the initiative of the competent authority.  
Grounds for correcting, cancelling or reconstructing registrations; procedures.

### Collection and Transmission of Data for the Preparation of Vital Statistics

Procedure for collecting statistical data and transmitting it to the service responsible for processing.

### Archives

Rules on the organization and operation of the local, regional and national archives. Rules on preparing local, regional and national indexes.

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