

1. BACKGROUND

Ethiopia, with a total surface area of 1.1 million square kilometers and an estimated population of 82 million¹ in 2011 and growing at 2.6% per year, is the second most populous country in sub-Saharan Africa. The country has great geographical diversity: its topographic features range from the highest peak at Ras Dashen, 4550 metres above sea level, down to Affar Depression, 110 metres below sea level. Ethiopia is administratively structured into nine regional states and two city administrations. With only 16 percent of the population living in urban areas, the country is one of the least urbanized countries in the world. Addis Ababa, the capital city, constitutes about a quarter of the urban population of the country. While 15% of the urban population lives in towns with populations more than 100,000 but less than 250,000 and 37% lives in medium size towns with populations between 50,000 and 100,000 and 23.3% live in urban centers with population size of less than 50000. Ethiopia is an agrarian country and agriculture accounts for 45 percent of the gross domestic product (GDP).² The five year Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP) has been developed to maintain rapid and broad-based economic growth to end poverty.³ Keeping with the plan, the economy has been growing at a rate of over 11 percent per year in the past eight years. Significant achievements were made in reducing the level of poverty in the country. In 1999/2000 about 44 percent of the country's total population was living below the poverty line. But recent studies show that this level has declined from 43 to 29 percent in 2010/2011 in past five years.⁴ Literacy rate had increased from about 50 percent in 2004 to 56 percent in 2011.⁵ There are also changes in the social and demographic aspects. The total fertility rate of Ethiopia had declined from 5.4 children per woman in 2005 to 4.8 children per woman in 2011. Under-five mortality decreased from 166 deaths per 1000 live births in 2000 to 88 in 2011, while infant mortality decreased from 97 deaths per 1000 live births to 59 in 2011.⁶

The government of Ethiopia is strongly committed to the establishment of the Civil Registration and Vital Statistics system in the country. As per the Declaration of the First Ministerial Conference on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics, it had mainstreamed the

¹ This is based on the 2007 Population and Housing Census results

² Ethiopia.gov.et

³ MOFED, 2010, "Growth and Transformation Plan"

⁴ MOFED, 2012, "Ethiopia's Progress Towards Eradicating Poverty"

⁵ CSA, 2012, "Ethiopian Welfare Monitoring Survey"

⁶ CSA, 2011, "Demographic and Health Survey"

system to the national development plans, including the GTP and the National Strategy for the Development of Statistics (NSDS).⁷

2. PAST ACTIVITIES RELATED TO CIVIL REGISTRATION AND VITAL STATISTICS IN ETHIOPIA

Civil registration as source of vital statistics has never been existed in Ethiopia. There were only fragmented and non-standard civil status evidence productions such as the issuance of birth, marriage and death certificates by municipalities of big cities and towns. Similarly, several statistics oriented experimentations, sample registration and dual-record studies have been conducted by the Central Statistical Agency (CSA) of Ethiopia since the 1970's till the early 1990's.

Starting from the 1990's onwards, a consensus was reached among the different governmental bodies and stakeholders to make a **shift in approach and method towards the conventional civil registration**. Therefore, all provisional studies were aborted and major focus was given to the conventional civil registration method based on the UN recommendations and guidelines. In this respect the following activities were conducted in the past few years:

- Assessment of reports on the past practices and exercises of the CSA's experimentation and survey undertakings
- Survey on perception and practice of birth registration in Addis Ababa and three regional states
- Assessment study of baptism, burial and wedding registration practices and issuance of vital event certificates by municipalities, specifically in the capital, Addis Ababa
- Comprehensive national manual on the necessity and implementation of civil registration and vital statistics systems in the country was developed in the official language of the country (Amharic)
- Advocacy tools – brochures, pamphlets, posters, as per the conventional method were prepared
- Pilot study conducted – including preparation of project proposals, development of methodologies and techniques of registration, registrar's and registration officials

⁷ Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, 2009, "National Strategy for the Development of Statistics" (NSDS)

manual, preparation of training materials, vital statistics compilation and tabulation formats

- Assessment/ evaluation of the pilot study conducted and findings of the evaluation disseminated to key stakeholders
- Data capturing, compilation and processing customized computer program – developed by a local computing firm
- Civil registration legislative research study conducted and findings disseminated to key stakeholders
- Awareness creation activities were performed by the Statistical Association of Ethiopia as well as by the Ministry of justice to the different justice sectors in particular to the Regional Justice Bureaus
- As per the recommendations of the first Ministerial Conference, curriculum development activities on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics are being undertaken by professionals representing the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Urban Development and Construction and Regional States.
- The exercise of recognizing the civil status of refugees and displaced people is being undertaken by the Ethiopian Administration for Refugee and Returnee Affairs. Events such as births, deaths and marriages (excluding divorces) get due consideration. But certification of the events is being done by the nearby governmental organizations

3. ENACTMENT OF THE NEW PROCLAMATION ON THE “REGISTRATION OF VITAL EVENTS AND NATIONAL IDENTITY CARD”

The first conference of African Ministers responsible for Civil Registration was held in Addis Ababa in August 2010. During the meeting, one of the recommendations that the ministers reached into consensus was that countries should develop comprehensive legal frameworks for civil registration system, with associated strategies to derive vital statistics from the registers.

Ethiopian civil code of 1960 contains more than 100 Articles that have not been enforced over the past 52 years. The government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia by giving due consideration to the concern has incorporated a plan to set up a framework for Civil Registration and National ID implementation across the country under the five years

Growth and Transformation Plan (2010/11-2014/15). Accordingly, the initiative has been started to setup a Civil Registration legal framework. However, the enactment of the Civil Registration law delayed with a view to consolidate it with the National ID legislation, which was presented to the government separately. To maximize the implementation and interfacing of the two systems, the new concept of National ID could be cited as the main challenge for the delay of the legislation due to lack of experience how to merge the two systems.

Finally, after a thorough discussion with stakeholders at various levels, the House of People's Representatives enacted the Proclamation on the Registration of Vital Events and National Identity Card on the 7th of July 2012. This proclamation enables the country to establish two separate institutions for the purpose of implementing the vital events registration and the national identity card. These two institutions that sought to be established are obliged under the law to work closely in particular with exchange of data which are relevant to them.

Civil Registration is to be established with the objectives of among others serving, ensuring and safeguarding the basic human rights of the people, improving the efficiency and fairness of the justice system, facilitating the health, education and other social services to the public. Provision of Vital Statistics could be implemented based on the UN recommendations and guidelines. Vital Statistics, using Vital Registration as a source, is a prerequisite to socioeconomic planning. It is essential to estimate the yearly changes in population size and structure, to understand the dynamics of population, to get population projection inputs, to monitor and assess the health status of a population, and to conduct in depth epidemiological studies.⁸

Based on these objectives, the new "Civil Registration and National Identity" law contains the following important contents:

- It has given clear definitions of "Vital Events"
- Identified organs (at the national and regional level) and periods for the registration of vital events (including late registration)
- Identified the particulars of the registration of Births (including abandoned births), Marriage, Divorce, Death (including cause of death)

⁸ UN, 2001, "Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System"

- Identified the mechanisms which the transfer of copies of the records of vital events to the Statistical Agency of the country and the length of time required to transfer
- Certification of the registration of vital events to concerned individuals
- Registration for National Identity Card and the information needed for the registration
- The validity times and renewal of the national ID
- Obligations of the holder of the national ID

Henceforth, Regulations are being drafted for the full implementation of the law and establishment of the two institutions.

4. THE WAY FORWARD

It is expected that the Federal Civil Registration and the National Identity Card Issuing Organs and their structures, as per the provisions of the new law, will be operational soon and regional bodies will continue accordingly. Similarly, the Central Statistical Agency (CSA) will reorganize itself and its capacity to handle the inputs from civil registration based on its mandate to generate data on vital statistics from civil registration. Furthermore, CSA has to closely work with the forthcoming civil registration organ in providing technical supports in collaboration with United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) and African Center for Statistics (ACS), UNFPA, UNICEF and other development partners.

It is also believed that the decentralized system of administration in Ethiopia and reform programs in the civil service and the justice system could bring a good opportunity to facilitate the civil registration process close to the target population. Other activities such as integrating the health, education, and other sectors to the Civil Registration system would be promoted. Especially, the health extension programme that is already functional in the rural areas of the country could serve as a good linkage point between the registration centers and households at the lowest level administrative structures (“Kebeles”). Civil societies and associations such as the youth and women will contribute their effort in this regard. It is also expected to form a coordinating body that comprises stakeholders at Federal level to oversee the implementations of the Civil Registration and Vital Statistics System in the country.