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**Enhancing the application of scientific outputs of the International Network
for the Demographic Evaluation of Population and their Health:
implications for replication and scaling-up through official statistics**



APAI-CRVS
Everyone visible in Africa

**Decade for Repositioning
of Civil Registration and
Vital Statistics in Africa
2017-2026**



World Health
Organization



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I. Introduction

1. Understanding human population statistics has progressed through time. Censuses and the continuous reporting of vital events, such as births and deaths, account for the size and structure of and changes in the human population. On the African continent and in large parts of the world, censuses have remained the predominant source. Scandinavian countries, on the other hand, have applied continuous recordings of their life events. There are, however, designs that focus on longitudinal life events and dig deeper, especially with a focus on health.

2. The International Network for the Demographic Evaluation of Population and their Health (INDEPTH) is a network that focuses on generating better health information for better health outcomes. Established in 1998 as a collaborative research programme, the Network¹ covers 18 countries in Africa and Asia through its 47 health and demographic surveillance sites. Of the 18 countries that host the sites' infrastructure, 12 are located in Africa. The sites report on 3.8 million people continuously. The surveillance systems provide deep science-based data systems (unfortunately not shared with the official statistics community) that hold the key to replication and scaling-up.

II. Focus

3. INDEPTH provides an architecture that brings censuses and continuous life events together by asking penetrating questions that advances civil registration and vital statistics.

4. The present paper contains the suggestion that it is possible to exploit the range of science that exists between official statistics and surveillance sites for the benefit of society, should there be a deliberate line of sight created between these systems. Previously, these systems did not share scientific outputs between them, even when they occupied the same geographic space. Nevertheless, the world would reap many benefits should a deliberate architecture be created that fosters an evolution of a science-based ecosystem of information. Africa would stand to benefit the most, given that it is host to 37 of the 47 sites. One of the programmes of INDEPTH is the Comprehensive Health and Epidemiological Surveillance System, which is capable of the timely delivery of high-quality data for morbidity and disease-specific conditions and mortality by cause. In addition, INDEPTH has enormous knowledge hubs on non-communicable diseases and their manifestations. With regard to communicable diseases, INDEPTH covers malaria, tuberculosis, HIV and AIDS with science-based enquiry on vaccine and low-cost approaches to securing prevention and cure. It focuses on vaccine research, with specific attention given to children in order to optimize lifelong positive effects of immunization. The health and demographic surveillance sites focus on health accounts and affordability in the system of health, including the effects of health care in communities under surveillance.

5. On the other hand, statistics offices run large-scale surveys to investigate the living conditions of society. Most of the time, statistics offices run large-scale cross-sectional national surveys that also have the reach and possibility to report at the subnational level of geography.

6. The strength of the two systems is in their immediate triangulation of results and, most important, in informing the design of the national statistics survey system and deepening science through record matching and institutionalizing multivariate and regression analysis. In

¹ INDEPTH headquarters was first located in Navrongo town, Ghana, and later in Accra.

this regard, the health and demographic surveillance site outputs and designs are scientific catalysts for how the civil registration system and the vital statistics system interface and evolve over time.

7. In South Africa, there is a warm working relationship between these sites and Statistics South Africa. This is not to the extent of being systematic, given that there is an evolving design in the offing with the establishment of the South Africa Population Information Network (SAPRIN) that will reach to 500,000 people annually. The Department of Science and Technology gave a subvention to establish the Network in an effort to expand research and innovation systems to the benefit of society.

III. Issues for discussion

8. In the light of the above, the following questions can be used as the basis of discussions:

(a) Can these two systems of science (INDEPTH and statistics offices) enhance better statistics in countries?

(b) What, in specific terms, do countries learn from the research outputs of INDEPTH and statistics offices?

(c) With regard to the recently formed SAPRIN, does the South African experience offer futuristic solutions to obtaining better information for better population outcomes?

(d) How will countries ensure that they emulate the SAPRIN example in South Africa?

(e) How can INDEPTH and similar approaches contribute to the strengthening of vital events registration and vital statistics systems, and the recording of causes of death?
