CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE
for CRVS Systems

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SNAPSHOT

OF CIVIL REGISTRATION AND VITAL STATISTICS SYSTEMS OF

BOTSWANA

ECA

Program information

About the Centre of Excellence for CRVS Systems

Housed at the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), the Centre of Excellence for Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) Systems is a global knowledge and resource hub that actively supports national efforts to develop, strengthen, and scale-up CRVS systems. It collaborates with organizations and experts to broker access to information and expertise, including global standards, tools, research evidence, and relevant good practice.

The Centre of Excellence was established with funding from Global Affairs Canada and IDRC and contributes directly to the work of the Global Financing Facility, a key financing platform of the UN Secretary General's Global Strategy for Women's, Children's and Adolescents' Health.

About the International Development Research Centre (IDRC)

Part of Canada's foreign affairs and development efforts, IDRC invests in knowledge, innovation, and solutions to improve the lives of people in the developing world. IDRC works with many stakeholders, including civil society organizations, think tanks, regional organizations, and government departments to promote growth, reduce poverty, and drive large-scale positive change.

Contents

Introduction

The purpose of this report is to provide a brief introduction to the civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) system in Botswana.

The information was collected through a questionnaire completed by Botswana's civil registration and statistics authorities in January 2020 and supplemented by a desk review of available documents. Among other things, the report presents:

- Background information on the country;
- Selected indicators relevant for CRVS improvement processes;
- Stakeholders' activities; and
- Resources available and needed to strengthen CRVS systems and coordination.

Brief country profile

Botswana is a landlocked country in Southern Africa. It shares borders with South Africa in the south and southeast, Namibia in the northwest, and Zambia and Zimbabwe in the northeast. The Kalahari Desert comprises more than two-thirds of the total area.

Botswana is divided into 17 administrative districts: 10 rural districts and 7 urban districts. These are administered by 16 local authorities (district councils, city councils, or town councils).

Botswana

Disclaimer: The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

- Land area: 582,000 km²
- Estimated total population: 2,024,904,[1] with an estimated annual growth rate of 1.9 percent.[2] A total of 69 percent of the population in 2018[3] lived in urban areas, with 31 percent residing in rural areas.
- Capital city: Gaborone
- Official working languages: English and Setswana
- Ministry responsible for civil registration: Ministry of Nationality, Immigration and Gender Affairs
- Civil registration agency: Department of Civil and National Registration
- National statistical office: Statistics Botswana

CRVS dimensions

Births	
Completeness of birth registration	94.7% (2017)[4]
Children under 5 years of age whose births were reported as registered	87.5% (2017)[5]
Births attended by skilled health personnel	100% (2015)[6]
Women aged 15–49 who received antenatal care from a skilled provider	Not available
DPT1 immunization coverage among 1-year-olds	98% (2018)[7]
Crude birth rate (per 1,000 population)	25 (2017)[8]
Total fertility rate (live births per woman)	2.9 (2017)[9]
Adolescent fertility rate (per 1,000 girls aged 15–19 years)	46 (2017)[10]
Population under age 15	32% (2012)[11]
Deaths	
Completeness of death registration	74.5% (2017)[12]
Crude death rate (per 1,000 population)	6 (2017)[13]
Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 live births)	30 (2018)[14]
Under 5 mortality rate (per 1,000 live births)	35.5 (2018)[15]
Maternal mortality rate (per 100,000 live births)	144 (2017)[16]
Marriages and divorces	
Marriage registration rate	5.5% (2017)[17]
Women aged 20–24 first married or in union before age 15	Not available
Women aged 20–24 first married or in union before age 18	Not available
Divorce registration rate	Not available
Vital statistics including causes of death data	
Compilation and dissemination of civil registration-based statistics	Available
Medically certified causes of death	Not available

Civil registration system

Legislative framework

The production of CRVS in Botswana is regulated by a range of legislative acts. The most important ones are the following:

- *Births and Deaths Registration Act* (2014), with amendments from 1968, 1974, 1977, 1978, 1983, 1992, 1998, and 2000;

- *Marriage Act* (2001), last amended in 2004, which is under review at the bill stage;

- *National Registration Act, 2017*; and

- *Change of Name Act* (1981), which is under review at the instruction stage.

The following legislation affects civil registration processes:

- *Children's Act* (2009);

- *Adoption of Children Act* (2000);

- *Married Persons Property Act* (1970);

- *Inquests Act* (2001);

- *Matrimonial Causes Act* (2008); and

- *Statistics Act* (2009).

The *Births and Deaths Registration Act* provides for mandatory registration of every birth (within 60 days) and every death (within 30 days) that occurs in Botswana. It also requires doctors and midwives to notify the Registrar of Births and Deaths of the birth and death events they attend. The comprehensive assessment of CRVS was completed in November 2013. The law was amended to define notification of births and deaths as part of the duties of health personnel. Although about 94 percent of births take place at healthcare facilities, the law defines the procedures and duties of community leaders in engaging in community outreach to register births outside institutions.

Management, organization, and operations

The Department of Civil and National Registration (DCNR) is an arm of the Ministry of Nationality, Immigration and Gender Affairs. It was formed in April 2003 when two divisions – Civil Registration and Vital Events, and National Registration – were merged. The department's mandate is to register all births, deaths, marriages, and divorces that occur in Botswana, regardless of a person's citizenship status. Citizens aged 16 and up are registered and issued with a National Identity Card (*Omang*).

In carrying out its work, DCNR has a strategic partnership with

- the Ministry of Health, which is responsible for birth and death events;

- the Administration of Justice, which is responsible for divorce administration; and

- Statistics Botswana, which is responsible for compiling, analyzing, and releasing vital statistics.

National CRVS systems coordination mechanisms

In line with guidance from the Africa Programme on Accelerated Improvement of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (APAI-CRVS), a national coordination mechanism has been set up. The aim is to decide on the best way to advance a national CRVS system and to oversee the implementing of improvement policies. The coordination is entrusted to a high-level CRVS Steering Committee made up of

- the Ministry of Nationality, Immigration and Gender Affairs – Department of Civil and National Registration (lead organization);

- Statistics Botswana;

- Ministry of Health and Wellness;

- Administration of Justice;

- Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development;
- Ministry of Education;
- UNICEF; and
- non-governmental organizations advocating for children's rights.

Also, dedicated CRVS Technical Working Groups were set up, bringing together appointed representatives of the institutions that are CRVS Steering Committee members.

Administrative-level registration centres

The DCNR has set up registration offices outside the capital city to make it easier to register life events by bringing services closer to the people. There are 50 registration service points in total:

- 12 are regional offices in urban centres;
- 24 are subdistrict offices in rural areas; and
- 14 are registration sites at health facilities.

Accessibility of civil registration services

To reach the closest civil registration office, household members need to travel 5 to 10 km on average. Translated into travel time, in urban areas, registration centres can be reached within less than one hour; residents of surrounding villages will need one to four hours' travel time by foot or less than an hour by car.

Registration of vital events

Birth registration can be done at the health facility where the birth occurred or at the nearest DCNR office. Assistant registrars are placed in health institutions to register births and deaths as they occur. The strategy helps achieve the goal of registering births within the 60 days stipulated in the *Births and Deaths Registration Act* and before age 1. This approach takes advantage of having 94 percent of births occurring in health institutions.

For registration at the health facility, health personnel record the birth or death by completing a birth/death notification form immediately after the event and forwarding the completed form to the relevant DCNR office for processing. This is done on-site at the hospital within an hour of occurrence, or at a district or subdistrict office within a week. Once the forms are received at the DCNR office, they are entered into the Birth and Death Registration System, where registration is quality checked and authorized.

In cases where the form was submitted to offices outside the hospital, the registration is processed and authorized, and the birth/death certificate is ready for printing. In the case of late registrations, the declarant must also bring an affidavit and witnesses to confirm that the event occurred. To be able to pick up the birth/death certificate, the next of kin is required to produce a tear-off piece from the birth notification form that was given at the time of the birth or death.

Also, the DCNR operates mobile registration services monthly or quarterly in remote and difficult-to-reach areas and other centres in each district and subdistrict. This allows the DCNR to register births and deaths that take place outside institutions and to distribute certificates without individuals having to visit civil registry offices.

In cases of late registration, the Late Registration Assessment Board reviews the application form to authenticate and authorize data at a higher level. The Board is based at the DCNR head office in Gaborone. The Board can ask for more information, refer the matter for further investigation, or approve or reject registration. All completed application forms, including approved late registration forms, are immediately entered into the registration system. At this point, the registration process is complete and a certificate can be issued.

A couple wanting to marry will normally appear before the registration officer of any district with their witnesses to submit the information to publish the marriage banns. Documents such as the decree absolute (from a divorce) or a former spouse's death certificate are required as proof for remarrying parties. The couple completes a marriage banns form that includes the name, age, status, occupation, identification, and residential addresses of both applicants. The parties sign the form before two witnesses; the notice is then sent to the district(s) where both parties reside and their places of origin. The same notice may be sent to the church, if the applicants intend to marry at the church. The *Marriage Act* contains certain prohibitions, so publication of the banns is done for three weeks. This allows those who might object to do so before the marriage is solemnized. After the 21 days expire, if no objections are raised, the marriage is solemnized by the District Officer under the Ministry of Local Government and Lands. The officer makes entries in the marriage register: Form 29 (a duplicate of the marriage register) and a marriage certificate are issued. Form 29 is given to the couple as the *prima facie* evidence of marriage.

Sample registration forms

Birth registration form – data.unicef.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/birthRegFormBotswana.pdf

Death registration form – data.unicef.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/deathRegFormBotswana.pdf

Marriage registration form – data.unicef.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/marriageCertificateBotswana.png

Registration fees

- Civil registration is free of charge.
- A late registration fee of 5 Botswanan pula (US$0.50) is charged for every month that the event is not registered, to a maximum of 100 pula (US$10).
- For a duplicate certificate, 20 pula (US$2) is charged.
- For alterations, the fee is 10 pula (US$1).

Vital statistics system

Vital statistics

According to the *Statistics Act* (2009), Statistics Botswana is the national agency that is responsible for producing official statistics. The main sources of vital statistics are the civil registration system, population and housing census, and household sample surveys. Birth, death, and marriage registration data is a source of fertility, mortality, and nuptial indicators, respectively. Indicators such as crude birth rate, total fertility rate, mean age at birth, nuptial births, marriage rate, mean age at marriage and infant mortality, under-5 mortality, and crude death rates can be produced through reports of the above-mentioned events.

The data for births and deaths is obtained electronically from the National Registration System, while marriage data is extracted manually from marriage certificates filed with the Department. The data is then processed by the Crime, Civil and Vital Statistics Unit of Statistics Botswana to produce the vital statistics report.
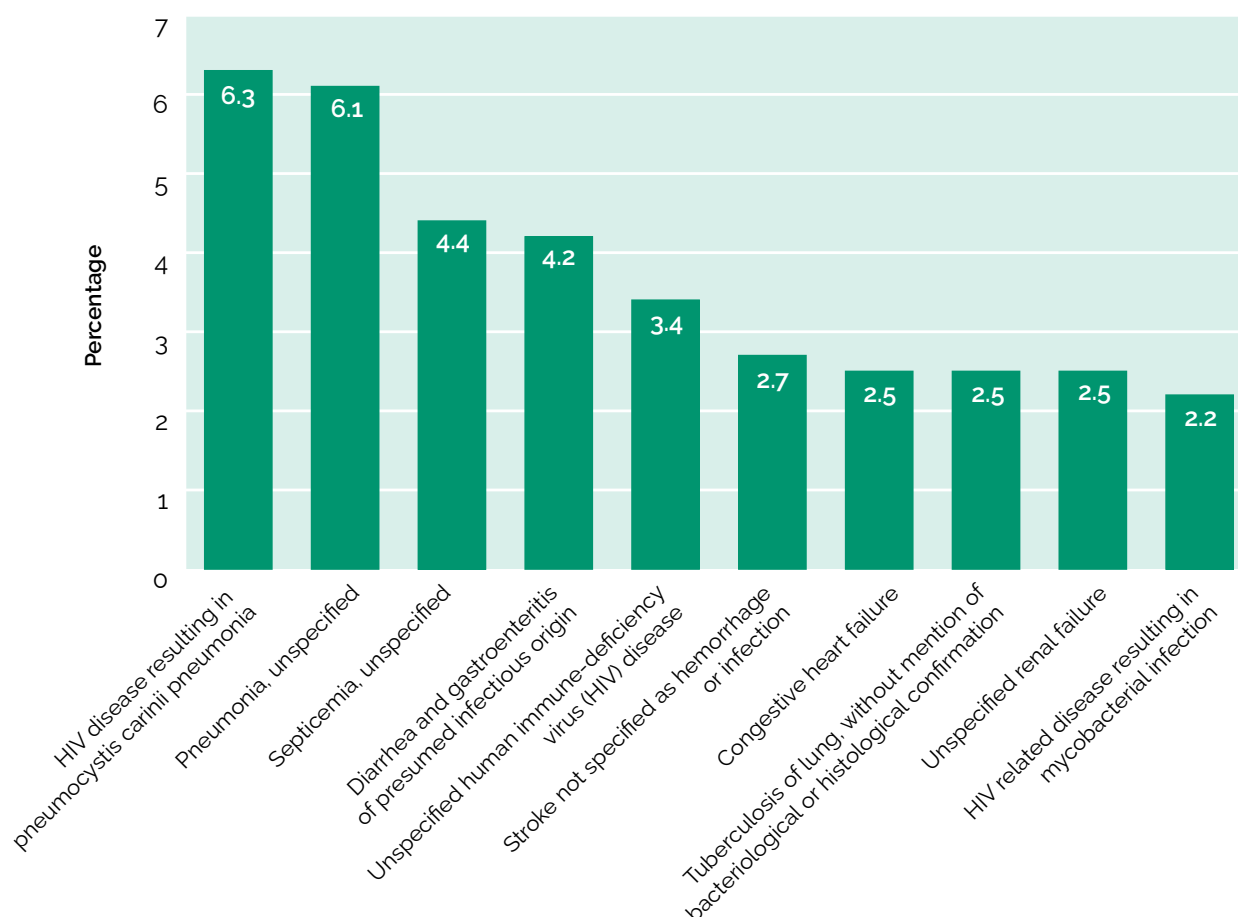
Causes of death

Information on cause of death is collected as deaths are registered (Table 1). This information is recorded for deaths in health facilities and non-natural deaths in the community. Trained health practitioners record cause-of-death information in line with the ICD-10 standard (Figure 1). The verbal autopsy method of determining cause of death is not in use. For now, cause-of-death information is obtained from health system records, not from the civil register.

Table 1: Information collected on causes of death.

Causes-of-death information	Information collected	
	Yes	No
Deaths occurring in health facilities	X	
Natural deaths occurring in the community		X
Non-natural deaths occurring in the community	X	

Figure 1: Percentage distribution of major causes for all ages mortality, 2014.

Source: Statistics Botswana (2018)

Digitization

Computerization

For Botswana, DCNR embraced information and communications technology to expand its service delivery capacity and to improve its efficiency and processes. In 1998, a special effort was made to automate national registration, which resulted in the National Identification System. In 2003, birth and death registrations were also automated; this resulted in the Birth and Death Registration System. Now the processes are being automated for change of name and marriages; these are being linked to the People Hub (Population Register). This is required by the project memorandum approved under the National Development Plan Ten (NDP10).

The Department of Information Technology houses all government data. It provides IT support and IT network infrastructure for the entire government.

Online registration services at health facilities

In Botswana, about 94 percent of births and 54 percent of deaths take place in health facilities. The government put in place a strategy of electronic on-site registration of births and deaths in hospitals in 2011; so far, it has opened on-site registration facilities in 13 hospitals. The transferring of documentation for births and deaths from local and regional offices to a central national data repository is done online. A central database, part of of the Birth and Death Registration System, is connected to remote workstations that allow changes on registrations and updates in real time.

Mobile technology application

Mobile technology is used only to support data transfer during registration that mobile teams do in remote areas.

Unique identification number

The unique identification number is a nine-digit number that is assigned at birth. This number is also the birth registration number on a person's birth certificate; the same number becomes a national identity number at age 16, when a person gets their ID. The number is further used to link all records and entries in the National Identification System and Birth and Death Registration System that belong to the same person.

The Birth and Death Registration System gives a non-citizen child a seven-digit unique identification number.

Population register

The National Identification System includes all citizens. A separate register is maintained for non-citizens under the Immigration and Citizenship System. This system is linked with the Birth and Death Registration System, which has yet to be upgraded to include marriage, divorce, and change of name records. These two systems are the basis of a comprehensive Population Register, or People Hub, for all the people in the country.

Digitization of historical civil registration records

All historical civil registration records since 1999 have been digitized. From existing civil registration records for 1918 to 1999, only 30 percent still need to be digitized.

Link with the identification system

The *Omang*, or National Identity Card, which was introduced in 1988, is made of laminated paper and has a bar code. An electronic identity card will be introduced as part of the NDP10 project. The unique identification number issued at birth is the same one used for the *Omang* at age 16. This provides a link between the birth register, the National Identification System, and the death register. Biometrics are used to avoid duplicate cards when people enrol.

Interface with other sectors and operations

Information updates in the Civil National Register, which includes the National Identification System, make it possible to share data from the Birth and Death Registration System with other government systems, such as

- the electoral system;
- the Social Benefits Registration System;
- government payroll; and
- the transport system.

This makes it easier to deliver services.

Identity verification in the National Identification System is a gateway for accessing these services. The National Identification System is updated in real time whenever a death occurs: the status of the registered citizen is automatically changed from "live" to "deceased." At the same time, this updated information is automatically changed in all other government systems that are maintained by service ministries that interface with the National Identification System.

Identity management has strengthened the election process in Botswana and has made it possible to continuously preserve its democracy by ensuring the integrity of the voters' roll. This integrity is achieved by the use of an identity card, which ensures that the right to vote is exercised only by those who are entitled and qualified to do so. The Botswana Constitution and the *Electoral Act* define who may vote by citizenship and age, and by validating the identities of voters to make sure they are who they claim to be before they register to vote or cast a vote. The voters' roll is generated using the Birth and Death Registration System and the National Identification System.

The linking of the National Identification System with the Birth and Death Registration System has benefited both systems. Establishing a Population Register, or People Hub, improves the interoperability of the systems.

Improvement initiatives and external support

Improvement plan and budget

Strategic plan

A five-year costed strategic plan for 2016 to 2020 was prepared in 2015.

The budget estimated for the whole five-year period was US$1.16 million.

Budgetary allocations and requirements

Government treasury allocations for the civil registration system for the 2020 fiscal year are projected at 90 percent of required funds.

The remaining 10 percent is covered by in-kind contributions by development partners.

Activities identified as high priority

The CRVS activities identified as high priority are in Table 2.

Table 2: CRVS activities identified as high priority.

High-priority areas	Estimated cost (US$)	Expected government allocations (US$)	Expected budget gaps (US$)
Review and development of the next CRVS strategic plan	15,000	7,000	8,000
Introduction of a mobile notification facility to service the remotest areas	18,000	8,000	10,000
Historical births and deaths data captured in the computerized system	2,000	1,000	1,000
Total	35,000	16,000	19,000

Source: Department of Civil and National Registration

Support from development partners

The Department of Civil and National Registration is collaborating with various development partners, such as UNICEF, United Nations Population Fund, World Health Organization, African Development Bank, and World Bank Group. Other strategic partnerships are with non-state actors such as Project Concern International, which is funded by the United States Agency for International Development; Masiela Trust Fund; and Marang Child Care Network Trust.

Conclusion

In the past decade, Botswana has made significant progress in improving its CRVS and identity management systems. Compared with other African countries, Botswana authorities concluded very early that strategic investments in civil registration will dramatically improve the entire system that caters to the legal identity of citizens. In particular, this will lead to positive effects on the civil identification system and the producing of vital statistics. The overall strategic objective of digitizing registration business processes, data processing, and data keeping resulted in the creation of a population register. This register integrates personal data kept in the civil register and the identification register as a necessary precondition to enable data interoperability with other citizen-oriented services to further strengthen government efficiency. Challenges, however, remain in ensuring that universal registration rates build on the significant progress made since 2010. Recording the cause of death has yet to be implemented for those who die in the community, along with ensuring that cause-of-death information is communicated to statistics authorities directly from the civil register.

Resources

Websites

Republic of Botswana. Immigration and Civil Registration – **gov.bw/immigration-civil-registration?txterm=97**

Statistics Botswana – **statsbots.org.bw**

Additional materials

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Endnotes

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