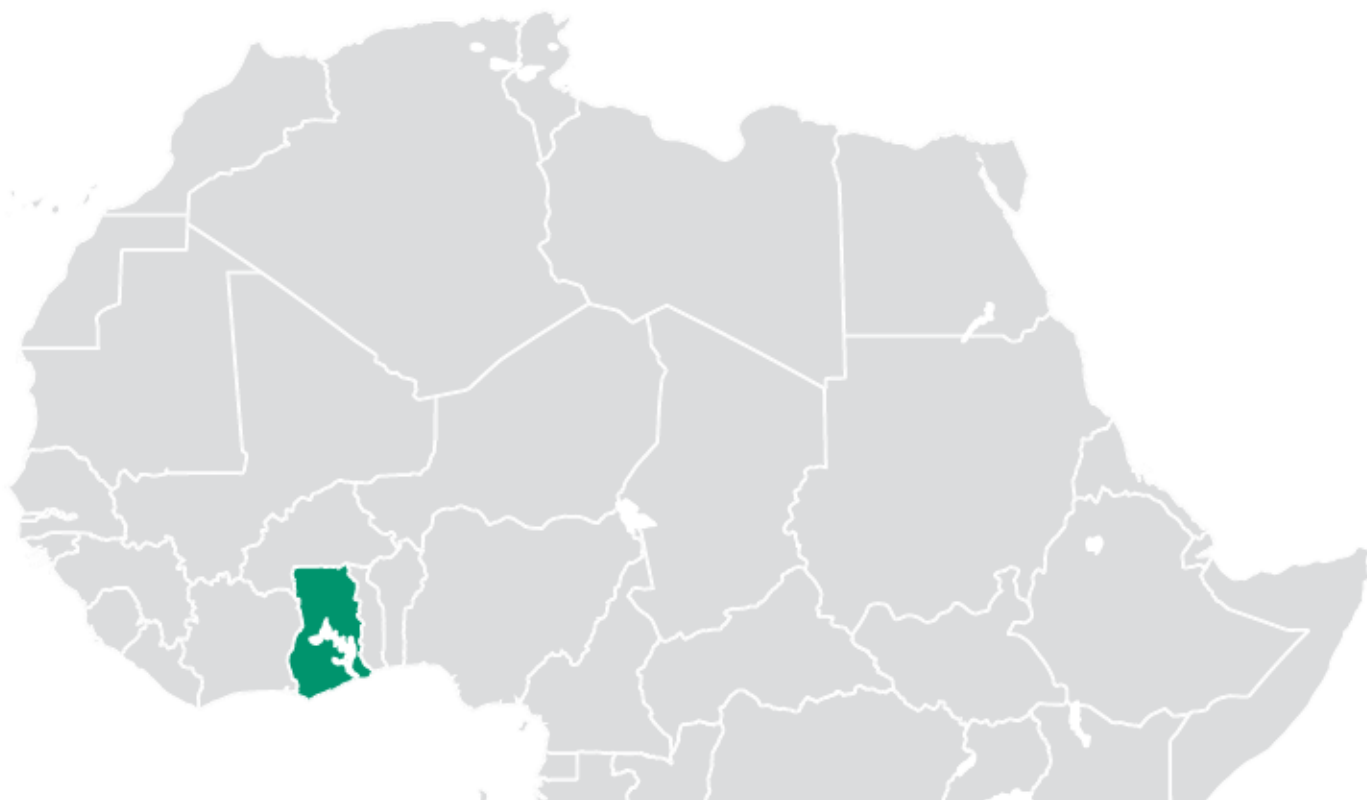




CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE
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SNAPSHOT

OF CIVIL REGISTRATION AND VITAL STATISTICS SYSTEMS OF

GHANA



ECA

Program information

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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.

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Contents

Program information	ii
Introduction	2
Brief country profile	2
CRVS dimensions	3
Civil registration system	4
Legislative framework	4
Management, organization, and operations	5
Vital statistics system	6
Vital statistics	6
Causes of death	6
Digitization	8
Computerization	8
Population register	8
Improvement initiatives and external support	9
Improvement plan and budget	9
Support from development partners	9
Conclusion	10
Resources	11
Websites	11
Additional materials	11
Endnotes	12

Introduction

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

The information was collected through a questionnaire completed by the civil registration services in January 2020 and supplemented by a desk review of available documents.

Among other things, the report presents:

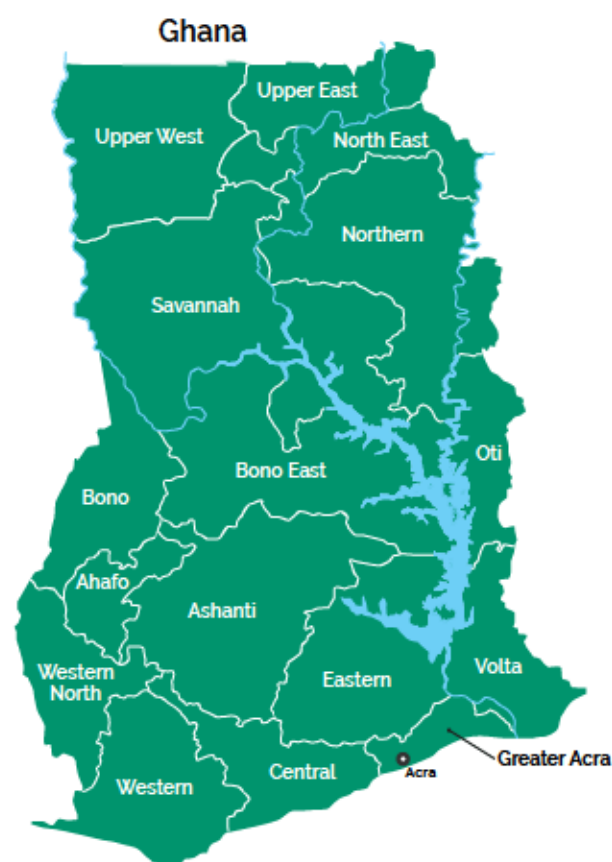
- Background information on the country;
- Selected indicators relevant for CRVS improvement processes;
- Stakeholders' activities; and
- Resources available to strengthen CRVS systems.

Brief country profile

The Republic of Ghana is located along the Gulf of Guinea and the Atlantic Ocean, in the subregion of West Africa. Ghana is bordered by Côte d'Ivoire to the west, Burkina Faso to the north, Togo to the east, and the Gulf of Guinea and the Atlantic Ocean to the south.

Ghana is divided into 16 administrative regions and subdivided into 275 districts.

- Land area:¹ 238,535 km²
- Population: 30 million, with an annual growth rate of 2.2 percent.² Around 29 percent of the population is under the age of 15, while persons aged 15–64 make up 57.8 percent of the population; 50.9 percent are males and 49.1 percent are females.



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

- Capital city: Accra
- Official working language: English
- Ministries responsible for civil registration: Ghana Health Service (for notification); Births and Deaths Registry (for registration); Registrar-General's Department (for marriage)
- Civil registration agency: Births and Deaths Registry
- National statistical office: Ghana Statistical Service



CRVS dimensions

Births

Completeness of birth registration ³	Not available
Children under 5 years of age whose births were reported as registered	71% (2014) ⁴
Births attended by skilled health personnel	78% (2014) ⁵
Women aged 15–49 who received antenatal care from a skilled provider	87% (2014)
DPT1 immunization coverage among 1-year-olds ⁶	96% (2016) ⁷
Crude birth rate (per 1,000 population)	29.85 (2017) ⁸
Total fertility rate (live births per woman)	3.9 (2018) ⁹
Adolescent fertility rate (per 1,000 girls aged 15–19 years)	67 (2018) ¹⁰
Population under age 15 years	29% (2017) ¹¹

Deaths

Completeness of death registration	Not available
Crude death rate (per 1,000 population)	7.41 (2017)
Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 live births)	34.91 (2018) ¹²
Under-5 mortality rate (per 1,000 live births)	47.9 (2017) ⁹
Maternal mortality rate (per 100,000 live births)	320 (2015) ¹³

Marriages and divorces

Marriage registration rate	Not available
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	Not available
Medically certified causes of death	Not available

Civil registration system

The first civil registration system in Ghana was established during the colonial administration. The registration of births, deaths, marriages, and divorces dates back to 1888 in the then-Gold Coast. At the system's inception, it was restricted to the registration of deaths, mostly of expatriate workers of the then-colonial government, who mostly resided in a few commercial towns. Birth registration was introduced in Ghana in 1912 as part of the civil registration process. Over the years, the law governing the registration of births has gone through a series of transformations, starting as the Cemeteries Ordinance of 1888, which was first amended in 1891.

In 1912, the Births, Deaths and Burials Ordinance was passed and amended again in 1926. This law was replaced with the *Registration of Births and Deaths Act of 1965* (Act 301), which is the legislation currently in place, and which made the registration of births and deaths compulsory in all parts of the country. The act also provided for the registration of fetal deaths, which has not been reviewed since. This implies that there are related laws that have since been passed with provisions that may not be supported in an act more than 50 years old.

Initially, registration was not under any specific department until 1895, when this responsibility was put under the Sanitary Section of the Department of Medical Services. It remained under the medical department from 1912 to 1926. Between 1948 and 1960, this responsibility was placed under the Registrar-General's Department.

In 1965, upon the establishment of the Births and Deaths Registry, registration was placed under the Ministry of Local Government to handle the data collection component of the registration, while the Central Bureau of Statistics, now Ghana Statistical Service, handled the data processing.

In 1972, the Births and Deaths Registry was assigned to the Ministry of Finance under the direct supervision of the government statistician. However, in 1984, under the government policy of decentralization, the registry reverted to the Ministry of Local Government, now known as the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development.¹⁴

The other ministries and agencies responsible for notifying and registration of vital events are the following:

- The Ghana Health Service is an autonomous executive agency responsible for implementing national policies under the control of the Minister for Health through its governing council, the Ghana Health Service Council, which notifies the events happening in health facilities.
- The Registrar-General's Department, under the Ministry of Justice and Attorney General's Department, is responsible for marriage registration.

Legislative framework

The laws governing civil registration in Ghana include the *Registration of Births and Deaths Act, 1965* (Act 301).

Vital events indicated in legislation include birth, death, marriage, divorce, and adoption, covering all legal geographic areas of Ghana and its entire population, including non-citizens and refugees, with provisions for the collection of vital statistics.

Management, organization, and operations

The demographic events that are currently covered by the civil registration system include live birth, death, marriage, divorce, and adoption, although synchronization of definitions with the definitions suggested by the United Nations is only done for live births and deaths so far.

National CRVS systems coordination mechanisms

There is a national coordination mechanism in place that provides a forum for stakeholders in CRVS systems. The coordination committee is made up of members from the following institutions:

- Births and Deaths Registry;
- Ghana Health Service;
- Ghana Statistical Service; and
- National Identification Authority.

There is no law or other instrument (such as a memorandum of understanding or terms of reference) for the establishment and functioning of the coordinating committee.

Administrative-level registration centres

The lowest administrative level is the community level.

Accessibility of civil registration services

Accessibility of local civil registration offices in Ghana still remains a challenge, with little information available on the number of service points, local civil registration offices, and local registrars countrywide.

Registration of vital events

Civil registration and vital statistics physical documents are prepared separately. Vital statistics records are prepared separately.

The categories of registers are:

- A register of births;
- A marriage register;
- A register of deaths; and
- A register of miscellaneous acts (life certificate, residence certificate, certificate of non-remarriage, etc.).

Recording of demographic events currently covers all segments of the country's population and all geographical regions of the country. The estimated completeness of event registration is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Estimated completeness of population event registration.

Event	Completeness ⁴⁵ of record		
	2016	2017	2018
Live birth	63%	64%	70%
Marriage	N/A	N/A	N/A
Divorce	N/A	N/A	N/A
Death	18%	17%	16%

Backlog of unregistered births

The country has a backlog⁴⁶ of unregistered births representing up to 30 percent of the population.

Sample registration forms

Sample forms are also available on the UNICEF Ghana website:

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

Registration fees

Timely registration of vital events is free of charge, but late registration incurs a fee. There is also a cost for issuing vital events certificates.

Incentives for registration of vital events: Some of the incentives for recording demographic events are the following:

- Birth registration is a compulsory requirement for essential services (health care, education, and socio-economic benefits); and
- A cemetery register was created at the district level to ensure that no burial takes place without its registration.

Social factors affecting registration of vital events: Some of the social factors that influence the recording of demographic events in Ghana include the following:

- There is no immediate use for civil registration documents;
- Some of the registration centres are not easily accessible, especially in the rural areas due to long distance; and
- There is sometimes a lack of knowledge on the part of the public as to the need and benefits of registering vital events.

Vital statistics system

Vital statistics

Ghana Statistical Service has the legal mandate for the collection, compilation, analysis, publication, and dissemination of vital statistics and the coordination of the national statistical system. Ghana Statistical Service also collects statistics on causes of death.

Vital statistics on live births and deaths are compiled from the civil registration system and vital statistics reports are published.

Causes of death

In Ghana, the cause-of-death information is collected through the civil registration system, especially for institutional deaths (Table 2).

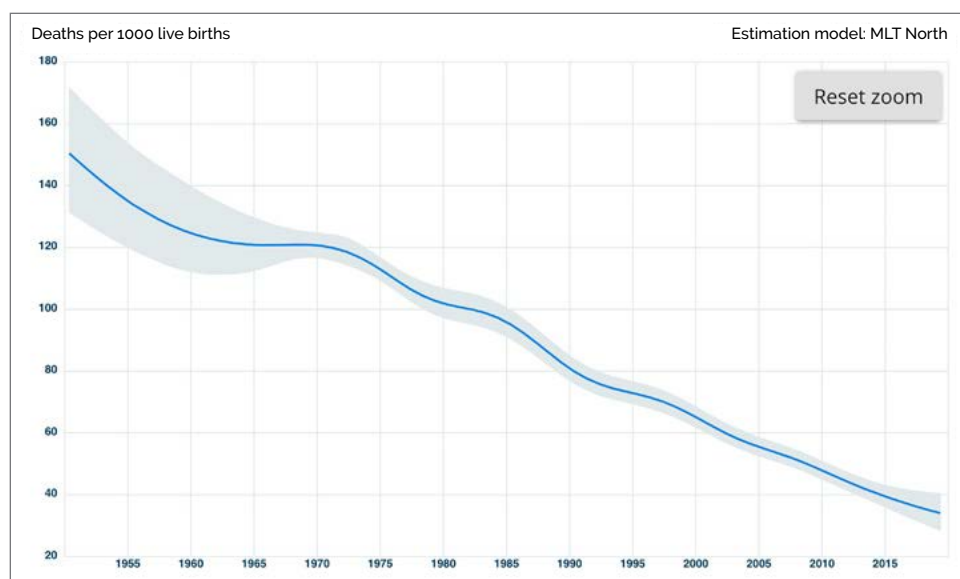
For non-institutional deaths, verbal autopsy tools or methods are used for collecting cause-of-death information and the cause of death is coded according to the International Classification of Diseases version 10 (ICD-10). However, no report on the causes of death has been published.

Other sources indicate the infant mortality rate at 36.11 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2017 (Figure 1).

Table 2: Cause-of-death information collection through the civil registration system.

Cause of death (COD)	Is COD information collected through the civil registration system?	Is the Standard International Form of Medical Certificate of COD for recording deaths used?
For deaths occurring in health facilities	Yes	Yes
For natural deaths occurring in the communities	No	No
For non-natural deaths occurring in the communities	No	No

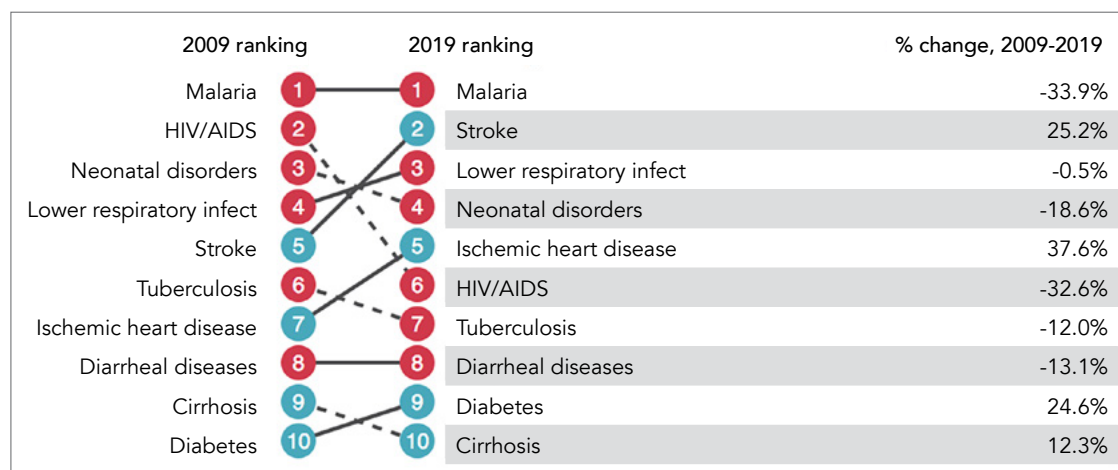
Figure 1: Infant mortality rate — Ghana.



Source: childmortality.org/data/Ghana, UN Inter-agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation

The Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation lists the leading causes of death in 2009 and in 2019 in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Leading causes of death in 2009 and in 2019.



Source: healthdata.org/ghana

Digitization

Computerization

Ghana, through the e-government strategy called eGhana, has created an enabling environment through the e-government network infrastructure, the data centre, and server infrastructure, and has established the e-services portal.

The transfer of vital statistics data from the civil registration system to the office responsible for compiling vital statistics is done electronically.

Online registration services at health facilities

The health sector under the Ghana Health Service is mandated to notify all births and deaths, using the institutional forms provided by the Births and Deaths Registry. Current institutional deliveries in health facilities are at 73 percent and births attended by skilled health staff were reported at 78 percent of the total in 2017, according to UNICEF.

Mobile technology application

Mobile technology is employed in the notification of occurrence of vital events.

Unique identification number

There is an existing identification (ID) system, which is linked to the civil registration system. The ID is issued by the National Identification Authority (NIA) under the Office of the President. To acquire a national ID, applicants must submit one of the following documents: birth certificate, marriage certificate, or citizenship certificate. National ID enrolment is mandatory for all residents of Ghana over 15 years of age, regardless of citizenship status.¹⁷

In 2006, Act 707 established the NIA as the sole authority responsible for the enrolment of individuals in the program and for the issuance of national identity cards. The NIA is also required to establish a biometric-based national identity register. Sections 18 and 73 of Acts 707 and 750, respectively, state that NIA will craft regulations to create, maintain, provide, and promote the use of national identity cards.

There is a data protection law in place. Under Ghana's *Data Protection Act of 2012* (Act 843), a data protection commission was set up and functions as an independent statutory body to protect the privacy of the individual and personal data by regulating the processing of personal information. The commission is responsible for the process to obtain, hold, use, or disclose personal information, and for other issues related to the protection of personal data.

Population register

Digitization of historical registration records

There are ongoing efforts by the Births and Deaths Registry to digitize manual historical registration records.

Link with identification system

The existing ID system is linked to the civil registration system. In the current institutional arrangement between ID and civil registration, apart from consultation frameworks, there are currently no formalized functional relationships.

Improvement initiatives and external support

Improvement plan and budget

Strategic plan

There is no national CRVS improvement strategic plan so far in Ghana. However, a comprehensive assessment of the CRVS systems in Ghana was undertaken in 2015.¹⁸

Budgetary allocations and requirements

In fiscal year 2020–2021, the budget allocated by the State Treasury to the civil registration system is not provided. No specific amount is indicated from development partners providing in-kind or other support.

Activities identified as high priorities

No activities are identified in the national plan as high priorities for lack of funding.

Some of the upcoming priorities in the country's planning cycle for the civil registration office include:

- Increasing the number of service delivery centres;
- Deploying technology in the collection and processing of vital events, including e-services, e-payments, and shipments;
- Increasing mobility; and
- Strengthening collaborations with CRVS stakeholders.

Support from development partners

The international organizations, non-governmental organizations, and other organizations that support the improvement of the civil registration system in the country that are not part of the government administration in Ghana are listed in Table 3.

Table 3: CRVS external support.

International organizations, NGOs, and partners	Mandate
Bloomberg Philanthropies and Vital Strategies	Improve death registration and causes of deaths at community level, notification, and verbal autopsy
World Bank	Accessibility, backlog capture, community-level operatives
UNICEF	Improve birth registration

In addition, the Secretariat of the Africa Programme on Accelerated Improvement of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (APAI-CRVS) and its partners support the Ghana civil registration system through

- capacity building;
- seminars and workshops on emerging trends (such as issues with surrogacy, which is becoming common in African countries); and
- advocating for governments to invest adequately in CRVS.

Conclusion

The CRVS systems in Ghana are multisectoral due to the different agencies being responsible for different vital events, hence the need for proper and functional coordination mechanisms. This will provide a proper understanding of the business processes for the different stakeholders, align the priorities, and ensure a harmonized approach to different CRVS initiatives. High-level commitments have been made to improving civil registration and vital statistics.

Some of the key lessons to learn from Ghana include the following:

- The Ghana Health Service is used for notification of vital events occurring in health facilities.
- There is a *Data Protection Act of 2012 (Act 843)* in place and a data protection commission functions as an independent statutory body to protect the privacy of the individual and personal data by regulating the processing of personal information.

The current priorities for CRVS in Ghana include increasing service delivery, deploying technology, and strengthening the coordination between the different stakeholders.



Resources

Websites

Births and Deaths Registry:

mlgrd.gov.gh/posts/departments/60-birth-deaths-registry/?plugin=100

Data Protection Commission:

dataprotection.org.gh

Ghana Statistical Service: statsghana.gov.gh

National Identification Authority:

nia.gov.gh/about.html

Registrar-General's Department: rgd.gov.gh/

UNICEF – Ghana: data.unicef.org/country/gha

World Health Organization (WHO) – Ghana:

who.int/countries/gha/en

World Bank – Ghana: [data.worldbank.org/](http://data.worldbank.org/country/ghana?view=chart)

[country/ghana?view=chart](http://data.worldbank.org/country/ghana?view=chart)

Additional materials

Ghana e-Government Interoperability Framework.

ghanahealthservice.org/downloads/Ghana_eGIF_Main.pdf

Ghana Statistical Service. 2015. Civil Registration and Vital Statistics System in Ghana: Report on the Comprehensive Assessment. statsghana.gov.gh/docfiles/publications/CRVS%20Assessment%20Report%20Final_%2018.04.17.pdf

Government of Ghana. 1965. *Registration of Births and Deaths Act*. Laws of Ghana. refworld.org/docid/548edaf74.html



Endnotes

- 1 Wikipedia. 2020. Ghana. en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ghana
- 2 World Bank. 2019. Population growth (annual %) – Ghana. data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.GROW?locations=GH&display=graph
- 3 Birth or death registration completeness means the actual number of registered births or deaths divided by the estimated number of births or deaths in a particular country or area, in a specified time period usually one year. Source: ECA, ESCAP, and Statistics Norway. 2016.
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- 11 United Nations. 2017. World Population Prospects. Vol. II: Demographic Profiles. Department of Economic and Social Affairs. Population Division. esa.un.org/unpd/wpp/Publications/Files/WPP2017_Volume-II-Demographic-Profiles.pdf
- 12 United Nations Inter-Agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation. 2018. Total Under-5 Mortality Rate, Infant Mortality Rate and Neonatal Mortality Database 2018. childmortality.org
- 13 World Health Organization (WHO). 2016. World health statistics 2016: Monitoring health for the SDGs. who.int/gho/publications/world_health_statistics/2016/en
- 14 Ghana Statistical Service. July 2015. Civil Registration and Vital Statistics System in Ghana: Report on the Comprehensive Assessment. statsghana.gov.gh/docfiles/publications/CRVS%20Assessment%20Report%20Final_%2018.04.17.pdf
- 15 Completeness of registration means the current number of demographic events (births or deaths) divided by the estimated number of demographic events (births or deaths). A complete registration or 100 percent completeness is achieved when every demographic event that occurred in the population of a given country (or region) during a specific period has been recorded in the system.
- 16 All unregistered births in the year following the occurrence of the event.
- 17 World Bank Group. The State of Identification Systems in Africa: Country Briefs. openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/28310
- 18 Ghana Statistical Service. July 2015. Civil Registration and Vital Statistics System in Ghana: Report on the Comprehensive Assessment. statsghana.gov.gh/docfiles/publications/CRVS%20Assessment%20Report%20Final_%2018.04.17.pdf



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