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SNAPSHOT

OF CIVIL REGISTRATION AND VITAL STATISTICS SYSTEMS OF THE

REPUBLIC OF BURUNDI



ECA

Program information

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International Development Research Centre
PO Box 8500
Ottawa, ON, Canada
Email: crvs@idrc.ca
www.CRVSystems.ca

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Introduction

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

The information was collected through a questionnaire completed by the Directorate General of Territorial Administration, Civic Education and Local Collectives in December 2020 and supplemented by a desk review of available documents.

Among other things, this report presents:

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

The report will also serve as an important benchmarking tool for the improvement initiatives of other countries.

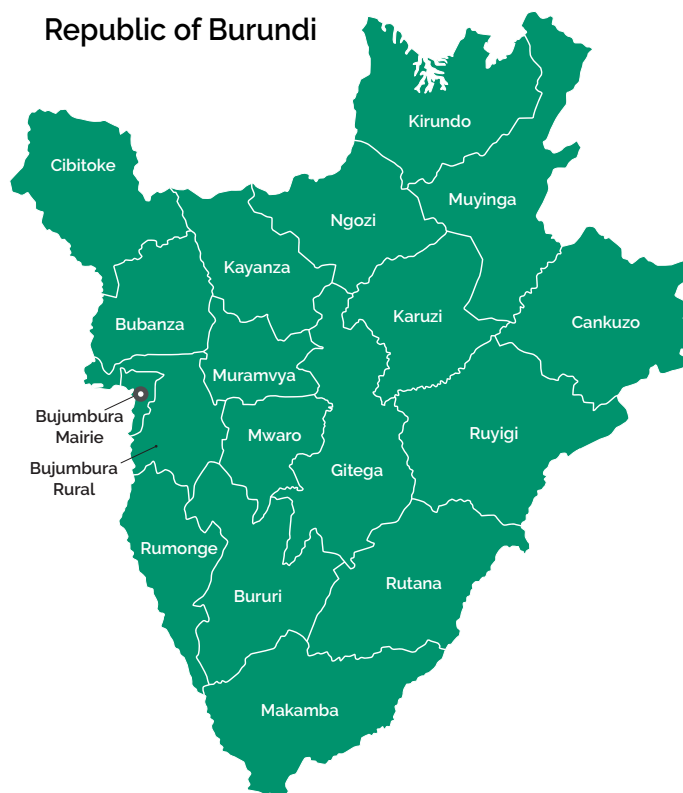
Brief country profile

The Republic of Burundi is a landlocked country in the Great Rift Valley, where the African Great Lakes region and East Africa converge. It is bordered by Rwanda to the north, Tanzania to the east and southeast, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo to the west. Lake Tanganyika lies along its southwestern border. The capital city is Gitega.

Burundi was an independent kingdom for more than 200 years, until the beginning of the 20th century, when Germany colonized the region. Burundi gained independence in 1962 and initially had a monarchy.

The largest administrative division is the province. There are 18 provinces in Burundi, each named after its provincial capital. Each province has a governor. The second-largest administrative division is the *commune* (municipality). There

Republic of Burundi



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

are 119 *communes* in Burundi. The smallest subdivision in Burundi is the *colline* (hill): there are 2,911 *collines* in the country. The population grew from 5.44 million in 1990 to 6.38 million in 2000, 8.68 million in 2010, and 11.18 million in 2018.¹

- Land area: 27,834 km²
- Population: 11,865,821, with an annual growth rate of 3.2 percent²
- Capital city: Gitega
- Official working languages: Kirundi and French
- Ministry responsible for civil registration: Ministry of the Interior, Community Development and Public Security; the ministries with justice and health in their portfolios play a collaborative role in the registration of vital events.
- Civil registration agency: Directorate General of Territorial Administration, Civic Education and Local Collectives
- National statistical office: Burundi Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies (ISTEEBU)



CRVS dimensions

Births	
Completeness of birth registration ³	Not available
Children under 5 years of age whose births were reported as registered	84% (2019) ⁴
Births attended by skilled health personnel	85% (2017) ⁵
Women aged 15–49 who received antenatal care from a skilled provider	49% (2017) ⁶
DPT1 immunization coverage among 1-year-olds ⁷	97.2% (2019) ⁸
Crude birth rate (per 1,000 population)	37.77 (2019) ⁹
Total fertility rate (live births per woman)	5.4 (2018) ¹⁰
Adolescent fertility rate (per 1,000 girls aged 15–19 years)	55 (2018) ¹¹
Population under age 15 years	Not available
Institutional deliveries: percentage of deliveries in a health facility	Not available
Deaths	
Completeness of death registration	Not available
Crude death rate (per 1,000 population)	7.6 (2019) ¹²
Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 live births)	40 (2019) ¹³
Under-5 mortality rate (per 1,000 live births)	56.6 (2019)
Maternal mortality ratio (per 100,000 live births)	548 (2019)
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

Like in most sub-Saharan African countries, the civil status system in Burundi was colonial in origin. A new civil status system was set up in April 1980 by Legislative Decree No. 1/1 of 15 January 1980, on the Code of Persons and the Family. The Code of Persons and the Family, which deals with civil registration matters, was introduced by ministerial order No. 530/102 of 29 April 1980; this created the communal civil status offices. The Code of Persons and the Family of 1980 was revised by Legislative Decree No. 1/024 of 28 April 1993.

The purpose of civil status systems is:

- To provide the population with the records and certificates that grant individuals the civil and legal rights recognized by the Code of Persons and the Family; and
- To provide reliable statistical data to have a better knowledge of the movements of the population.

Legislative framework

The legislative framework includes the Constitution, the Code of Persons and the Family, the Penal Code, all regional and international legal instruments ratified by Burundi, and joint ministerial orders from the Minister of the Interior and Minister of Public Health.

The legal framework is guided by the following legislation:

- Constitution of 7 June 2018; and
- Legislative Decree No. 1/024 of 28 April 1993 on the Reform of the Code of Persons and the Family, which was implemented on 29 April 1980 by the creation of civil registration offices and by the designation of officers and the deputy civil registration officer.

These civil events are covered in the legislation:

- Birth;
- Marriage;
- Death;
- Other acts:
 - Adoption;
 - Recognition and legitimation of natural children;
 - Divorce;
 - Acquisition of Burundian nationality; and
 - Recovery of Burundian nationality, etc.

Management, organization, and operations

The entities involved in the registration of vital events and identification are:

- Ministry of the Interior, Community Development and Public Security;
- Ministry of Justice and Keeper of the Seals; and
- Ministry of Public Health.

The organizational structure for civil registration in Burundi is as follows:

- The Ministry of the Interior, Community Development and Public Security (MIDCSP) oversees the Directorate General of Territorial Administration, Civic Education and Local Collectives (DGATECCL) at the central level; and
- The Department of Population oversees the offices at the provincial, municipal, and commune levels.

National CRVS systems coordination mechanisms

The coordination mechanisms in the country have not been formalized. There is no national coordination mechanism (technical working group) that provides a forum for CRVS systems stakeholders.

Administrative-level registration centres

The lowest administrative unit where local civil registration offices are found is the *zone administrative*. There are 396 civil registration centres in the Republic of Burundi: 366 in non-urban areas and 30 in urban areas. There are 386 civil registrars: 297 in non-urban areas and 89 in urban areas.

Accessibility of civil registration services

The average distance to travel to a civil registration centre is 5 to 10 km; most people travel to these centres on foot, on motorcycle, or by car.

Registration of vital events

Birth registration and a birth certificate confer the right to citizenship and related privileges: eligibility, voting rights, child protection rights, and so on. An efficient civil status system greatly facilitates registration on electoral lists and is therefore a guarantee of transparency. It also allows the country to be divided into coherent electoral districts. Civil registration facilitates the recognition and identification of the rightful claimants to inheritances. It ensures rigorous control of the adoption of children. Better local management of resources and population is in line with decentralization of the state. Civil registration also allows the authorities to control migration flows.¹⁴

At the socio-economic and cultural levels, civil registration data have been used to support budgetary expenditure on infrastructure and human resources in the social sectors in Burundi. The permanent observation of civil status facts can help to measure the needs of the population when it comes to education (construction of schools and daycare centres) and health (building maternity hospitals and health centres). This ensures better management of public funds at the local level thanks to in-depth knowledge of the number of inhabitants, their age, and more.

The events covered by the civil registration system are listed in Table 1.

Table 1: Events covered by the civil registration system.

Vital events	Is event covered?	Are definitions aligned to UN suggested definitions?
Live birth	Yes	Yes
Death	Yes	Yes
Marriage	Yes	Yes
Divorce	Yes	Yes
Adoption	Yes	Yes
Other:		
• Recognition and legitimation of natural children	Yes	
• Acquisition of nationality	Yes	
• Recovery of nationality	Yes	

The state officer is responsible for **birth registration** in Burundi. This task has been carried out since 1980 in Burundi and has been documented since 1922. Births must be registered within 15 days of the event; if the child is registered within two weeks, the process is free. After that, a fine must be paid. Birth certificates are to be obtained from the community administrator of the commune where the mother lives. In 2012, it was estimated that 1.5 million children in Burundi did not have birth certificates, which led to a nation-wide effort to register 170,000 children under 18. The main barriers to obtaining a birth certificate included:

- Lack of knowledge;
- Local customs in some areas;
- Children born to single mothers or into polygamous marriages who fell through the cracks;

- Distance to the registration office; and
- The penalty charged for late registration.

Birth certificates can be obtained by applying at the civil registry in the commune where the mother of the child lives. The application must be submitted with one parent's or applicant's proof of identity, along with the applicant's name, date of birth, place of residence, and province of birth.

Unregistered children in Burundi have more difficulty than registered children in accessing free medical care provided by the government and are more vulnerable to being trafficked or forced into child labour and underage marriage.

There are fees specific to children who are eligible for citizenship but who were born outside the country. In addition to the costs of investigation and publication, a fixed fee is determined by the Joint Ordinance of Ministers having Finance and Justice in their portfolios (Nationality Code, art. 9).

Requirements for birth registration include:

- Identification of the child's father;
- Identification of the child's mother; and
- Name of the child.

As stipulated in the Code of Persons and the Family, article 39, the key data elements collected at birth registration include:

- Child:** name, sex, date of birth, date of registration, place of occurrence of the birth, and place of registration;
- Mother of the child:** age, place of usual residence, occupation, and citizenship; and
- Father of the child:** age, place of usual residence, occupation, and citizenship.

A birth certificate is required to claim an identification, education, inheritance, and social assistance.

The legal framework for **death** in Burundi is provided for Legislative Decree No. 1/024 (28 April 1993), which reformed the Code of Persons and the Family, and by Ministerial Order No. 530/102 (29 April 1980) which established civil registration offices. When a person dies, an official death certificate is issued to the family of the deceased upon request after registration of the death.

The mandated legal informant to register a death is any person determined by the registrar. The registrar takes the necessary measures to ensure that any death in his or her jurisdiction is duly declared. The registrar may invite any person likely to know the deceased to make the declaration (Code of Persons and the Family, art. 43); 15 days are allowed for registration.

There is no cost to register a death, but penalties are charged for late registration. No other official fees are involved in the death registration process.

The key data elements collected at death registration include:

- Deceased:** name, sex, age, place of birth, place of usual residence, occupation, name of parents, and name of spouse; and
- Death:** date of death, date of registration, place of occurrence, and place of registration. Fetal death is not registered.

A death certificate is required for burial, inheritance, and obtaining social assistance, succession, or pursuing legal action on behalf of heirs.

In Burundi, the legal framework for the **registration of vital events** is stipulated in Legislative Decree No. 1/024 (28 April 1993), which reformed the Code of Persons and the Family and by Ministerial Order No. 530/102 (29 April 1980), which established civil registration offices.

The legal age for marriage is 21 for men and 18 for women. The provincial governor may grant age exemptions for serious reasons (Code of Persons and the Family, art. 88).

The requirements for marriage registration include:

- Presence of the future groom at the place of registration;
- Presence of the future bride at the place of registration;
- Residential evidence of the future groom;
- Residential evidence of the future bride;
- Proof of the future bride's age; and
- Proof of the future groom's age.

In the marriage register, the following information is collected about the spouses:

- Bride's date of birth or age;
- Bride's usual place of residence;
- Groom's date of birth or age;
- Groom's usual place of residence;
- Profession; and
- Nationality.

A marriage certificate is also vital for inheritance, registration of children, and insurance.

Fees

There is no cost to register vital events, but there are costs related to the issuance of certificates. The exception is for marriage registration: a fee of around US\$5.12 is charged, although it varies by municipality. There is a late registration fee.

Table 2: Fees for issuing vital events certificates.

Vital event	Certification fees	Certification cost
Birth	Yes	US\$0.52
Marriage	Yes	US\$0.52
Divorce	Yes	US\$0.52
Death	Yes	US\$0.52

Backlog of unregistered births

The estimated backlog of unregistered births (any births that are unregistered after one year) was not provided.

Sample registration forms

The registration forms are processed manually (on paper in a register of vital events); all vital events are directly recorded on forms following the country's standards.

Samples of registration forms and certificates can be found on the UNICEF Burundi website:¹⁵

- [Birth certificate](#)
- [Marriage certificate](#)
- [Death certificate](#)

Vital statistics system

Vital statistics

The Burundi Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies (ISTEEBU) is a public administrative body under the authority of the supervising ministry or with statistics under its responsibility.

The mission of ISTEEBU is defined by provisions in Legislative Decree No. 100/59 of 18 March 2008, which reorganized the organization, and in Legislative Decree No. 1/17 of 25 September 2007, on the organization of the statistical system in Burundi, especially in their respective articles 4 and 7.

However, there is no provision in the law for the production of vital statistics, and no text provides for cooperation between the various ministries working in the field of civil registration. There

is a lack of formal mechanisms for collecting, producing, and disseminating vital statistics and a lack of interoperability between civil registration services.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), World Health Organization (WHO), UNICEF, The UN Refugee Agency, and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) are the development partners that are starting to support the vital statistics system in Burundi.

Coverage and completeness

The registration of vital events covers all segments of the population and all geographic areas in the country. Completeness of registration of vital events has not been estimated.

Causes of death

The cause-of-death information collected through the civil registration system is listed in Table 3.

Table 3: Cause-of-death information collected through the civil registration system.

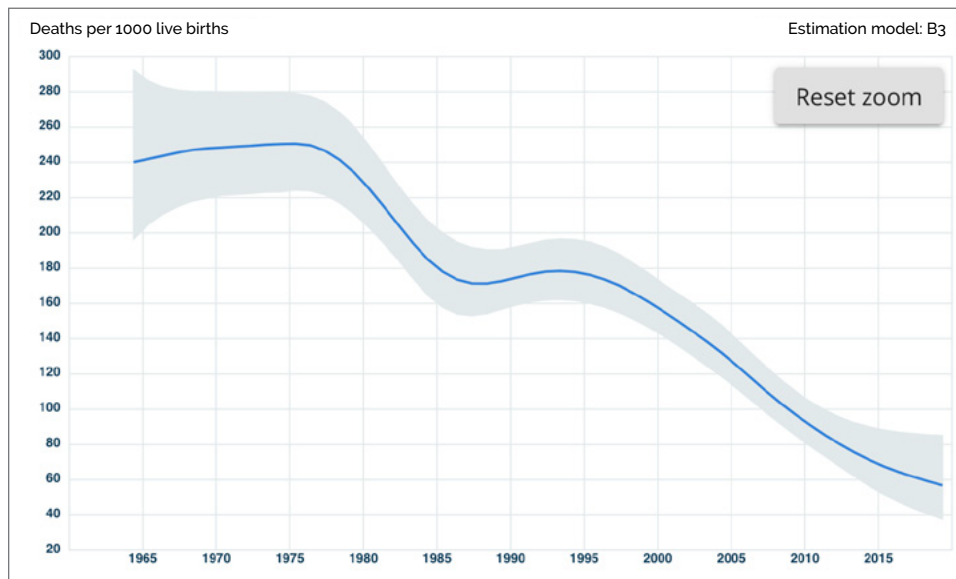
Cause of death (COD)	Is COD information collected through the civil registration system?	Is the Standard International Form of Medical Certificate of COD for recording deaths used?
For deaths occurring in health facilities	Yes	Yes
For natural deaths occurring in the communities	No	No
For non-natural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

For non-institutional deaths, verbal autopsy tools or methods are not used to collect cause-of-death information. The cause of death is coded according to the International Classification of Diseases, version 10 (ICD-10). Provisions in the

Births and Deaths Registration Act require all deaths to be medically certified, regardless of where they occurred.

Other sources indicate mortality rates for children under 5 at 56.46 deaths per 1,000 in 2019.¹⁶

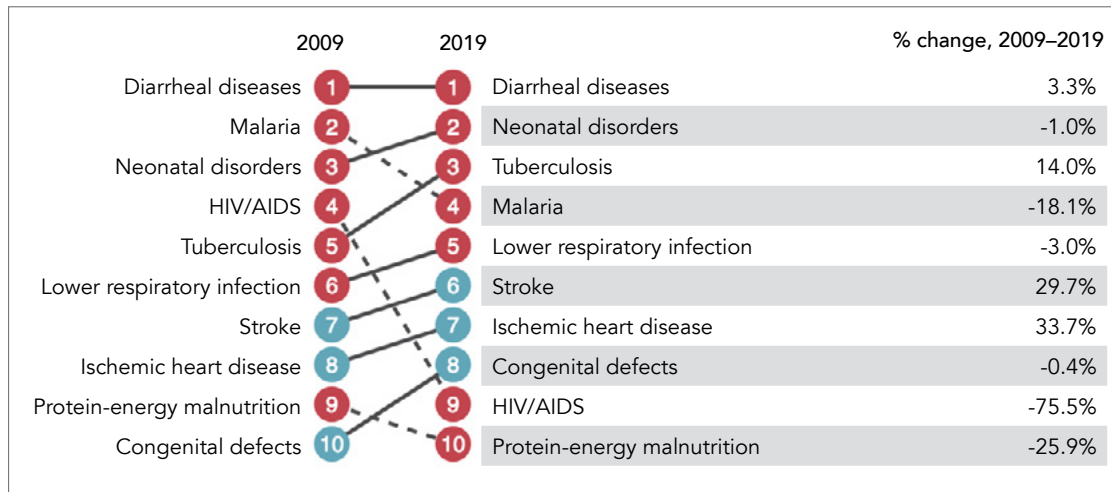
Figure 1: Mortality rates for children under 5, 1965 to 2015.



Health data provide the most common causes of death in Burundi from 2009 to 2019. Diarrheal

diseases, malaria, neonatal disorders, and HIV/ AIDS are the leading causes of death.¹⁷

Figure 2: Most common causes of death between 2009 and 2019 in Burundi.



Digitization

Computerization

Computer use in CRVS is outlined in Table 4.

Table 4: Computer use for registering civil status facts.

Centre	Are computers used for civil registration?
Local registrars across the country	No
Urban centres	No
Healthcare facilities	No

Online registration services at health facilities

No information was provided.

Mobile technology application

No information was provided.

Unique identification number

This system does not exist yet.

Digitization of historical registration records

This system has not yet been put in place.

Link with the identification system

The Ministry of Interior is responsible for issuing national identification (ID) cards in Burundi. National ID cards are paper based and have been issued since 1978. In 2013, Burundi launched a pilot program to issue machine-readable national ID cards to individuals who are 16 and older (national biometric ID card) at a cost of US\$3.83.

The new electronic national ID card contains the cardholder's name, sex, date of birth, province, *commune*, address, parent's names, and children's name(s). In principle, it could be used for medical

assistance, as a travel document, and as a service number for the police or military. It also contains bank account details, signature, education level reached, marital status, medical assistance information, fingerprint, and blood group.

To obtain a national ID card, individuals need to submit supporting documents such as their birth certificate, two recent passport photos, identification documents, a medical assistance card, and an affiliation card for civil service mutual insurance. A social security national institute card, employment card, court clearance certificate, passport, driver's licence, military or police card, and polling card are also accepted. This project has not progressed, but it is currently in the 2021–2027 strategic plan of the Ministry of the Interior, Community Development and Public Security.

In 2014, the Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI) of Burundi announced that Burundians would no longer need the national biometric ID card to register for general elections in 2015. Burundians had previously used their baptismal certificate, driver's licence, and passport to register to vote. In 2010, the United Nations Development Programme issued 1 million paper-based national identity cards to Burundian citizens old enough to vote to establish an inclusive electoral process for marginalized populations and women who could not afford the cost associated with a national ID card.

Data protection and data privacy

Burundi has a statistics law (2007) that regulates personal data protection. However, several laws and regulations currently in force contain data protection provisions or impose confidentiality obligations on specific types of personal information. For example, employment, banking, telecommunications, and health sector laws impose some data protection requirements. Such provisions generally require covered entities to maintain the confidentiality of personal information.



Under Legislative Decree No. 1/012 of 30 May 2018, on the Code of Health Care and Health Services Provision in Burundi,¹⁸ healthcare institutions are required to maintain the confidentiality of patient information unless confidentiality is waived in cases provided for by law.

Legislative Decree No. 1/17 of 22 August 2017 governs banking activities: article 133 imposes confidentiality obligations on customer and account information. This article provides that any person who contributes to the operation, control, or supervision of a banking institution is bound to professional secrecy. Violations are enforced under penal code provisions without prejudice to disciplinary proceedings.

Several legislative decrees and ministerial orders that apply to the telecommunications sector have been adopted to protect the privacy of and restrict access to and interception of the contents of communications:

- Legislative Decree No. 100/153 of 17 June 2013, on the Regulation of the Control and Taxation System for International Telephone Communications entering Burundi;
- Legislative Decree No. 100/112 of 5 April 2012, on the Reorganization and Operation of the Telecommunications Regulatory and Control Agency (ARCT); and
- Ministerial Ordinance No. 730/1056 of 7 November 2007, on the Interconnection of Telecommunications Networks and Services Open to the Public.¹⁹

Interface with other sectors and operations

No information was provided.

Improvement initiatives and external support

Improvement plan and budget

Budgetary allocations and requirements

The total budget for the approved five-year strategic plan was not provided.

Activities identified as high priorities

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

- Capacity building of staff;
- Digitization of the civil status system;
- Supply of the necessary equipment for the proper functioning of recording devices; and
- Creation of a General Directorate of Civil Status.

The Republic of Burundi would like to achieve more effective and efficient coordination among national key stakeholders at the country level through pooling the efforts of the actors involved in the civil status system.

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 are listed in Table 5.

Table 5: CRVS external support.

International organizations, NGOs, and partners	Mandate
UNDP	Improve access to administrative, legal, and rights services, and conduct a feasibility study on the modernization and digitization of the civil registration service.
UNICEF	Strengthen the civil status system through birth registration and promote the issuance of birth certificate extracts.
UNFPA	Establish a national population policy.
WHO	Improve the civil registration of deaths and causes of death and the production of statistics on births, deaths, and causes of death.
UNHCR	Support for the voluntary repatriation of refugees.

Conclusion

The Republic of Burundi has taken great strides in improving its CRVS system. Some notable achievements are:

- Free documents for the vulnerable, as determined by the social services department;
- Decentralization of the civil registration service to the *zone administrative* level (secondary registration centres);
- Requirement of a birth certificate extract when the child is enrolled in school; and

- Free health care for children under 5, especially with the health booklet of the mother and the child or the birth certificate provided by the parent to access services at health facilities.

The Republic of Burundi needs to ascertain the statistical issues of civil registration at both the local and national levels. At a time when many initiatives are underway to redress civil status, this helps to highlight an aspect that has been somewhat overlooked: the role of civil status statistics. One way of enhancing the value of civil registration data would be to systematically organize the digitization of basic data. Having data already entered on a computer system makes it possible to quickly produce regular reports and annual reports. Given the constraints of the Burundian civil registry, there is an urgent need to digitize civil registration. The development of capacities to produce periodic and timely vital statistics through a civil registration system is still a major challenge. Abundant resources and a long-term commitment are essential at the highest levels of government.

The civil registration agency, the Directorate General of Territorial Administration, Civic Education and Local Collectives, should be supported by development partners in the following areas:

- Building staff capacity;
- Digitizing the civil status system;
- Providing equipment for the proper functioning of recording system devices; and
- Accelerating the establishment of a coordination framework for the civil registration system and the compilation of civil registration statistics.



Resources

Websites

Burundi Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies: isteebu.bi

Republic of Burundi government portal: burundi.gov.bi

UNICEF – Burundi: data.unicef.org/crvs/burundi

World Health Organization – Burundi: who.int/countries/bdi

Additional materials

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Endnotes

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- 2 Ibid.
- 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. See ECA, ESCAP, and Statistics Norway. 2016.
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