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UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA

Report on a Mission to Nigeria
(16 - 24 February 1987)

by
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This report is the sole responsibility of the writer.

1. INTRODUCTION

The mission was undertaken with the following terms of reference:

- to attend the meeting of UNFPA Deputy Representatives and Senior Advisers on Population (DRSAPs) in sub-Saharan Africa at the invitation of UNFPA; and
- to review progress in the implementation of the Nigerian births and deaths registration project and advise as necessary.

During the mission discussions were held principally with the following persons at the National Population Bureau (NPB) in addition to participants at the UNFPA meeting and I wish to express my thanks and appreciation for their co-operation and assistance.

Mr. O. Daramola, Acting Director
Dr. A. A. Kadejo, Assistant Director II
Dr. S. O. Alaneme, Head, Vital Statistics and Migration
(VSM) Division
Mr. S. A. Ogunlade, Deputy Head, Training, Research and
Development Division
Mr. Chike C. Mezue, Deputy head, VSM Division

2. BACKGROUND

The mission to NPB was a follow-up to previous missions in connection with the births and deaths registration project.

The first of the two previous missions was undertaken in November 1983 at the request of the Government. During that mission a preliminary draft project document in respect of the births and deaths registration project was prepared. A second mission was undertaken in August 1984 to revise the project document for submission to UNFPA.

The project is intended to establish an experimental compulsory births and deaths registration system which will provide a basis for the reorganisation and phased-expansion of the registration system throughout the whole country. The project request was submitted to UNFPA in May 1985 and approval for assistance in its implementation was received in February 1986. The project has provision for a UN Adviser to guide and assist the National Population Bureau in its implementation. The Adviser assumed duty in October 1986.

It was earlier proposed to undertake a mission to review progress in implementation of the project in October but due to the delay in the start of project activities at the time, NPB requested that the mission be deferred to March 1987.

Subsequently, UNFPA scheduled a meeting of its DRSAPs in February 1987 so with the concurrence of NPB the mission was carried out immediately after the UNFPA meeting.

3. UNFPA MEETING OF DRSAPs

UNFPA organized a meeting of its Deputy Representatives and Senior Advisers on Population in Sub-Saharan Africa in Lagos from 16 to 18 February 1987. The last such meeting was convened in Harare, Zimbabwe in 1983.

At the request of UNFPA, ECA regional advisers under projects funded by UNFPA participated in the meeting. The main objective of the meeting was to discuss the draft proposal on UNFPA strategy for assistance in population programmes in Sub-Saharan Africa during the next decade.

The meeting also provided an opportunity for regional advisers to discuss issues relating to population and related projects in Sub-Saharan Africa with UNFPA headquarters and field staff.

A more detailed joint report on the meeting has been prepared by the regional advisers from ECA Population and Statistics Divisions who participated in the meeting.

4. BIRTHS AND DEATHS REGISTRATION SYSTEM

(a) Current Registration System

Prior to 1979, the legal bases for the registration of births and deaths were the Births, Deaths and Burials Laws of the various states. A number of Local Government Areas (LGAs) in some states, therefore, have births and deaths registries which are operating at various levels of efficiency.

In 1979 the Federal Military Government published the Births and Deaths (Compulsory Registration) Decree. The Decree made registration of births and deaths compulsory throughout the country with effect from 1 September 1979. It also indicated that the laws of the various states relating to registration of vital events would continue to have effect as if they were Federal enactments. The Decree also has provision for the appointment of a Registrar-General who would be responsible for the registration system. The machinery for the operation of the registration system has, however, not been established and the appropriate procedures for its effective operation are expected to be developed through the civil registration project which will be implemented in 8 LGAs.

(b) The Proposed Experimental Registration System

The experimental registration system is expected to be carried out in two phases. The first phase will involve the trial of the proposed procedures in 4 urban LGAs. In the second phase 4 additional mainly rural LGAs will be included in the experimental registration system after a review of lessons during the first phase and any necessary revisions of the procedures.

It is planned that aspects of the existing administrative arrangements, if any, in the selected areas will be maintained but primary registration areas comprising of villages or groups of villages or wards in towns would be demarcated to ensure that it would be convenient for informants to report the occurrence of events for registration.

Generally, events will be registered at the primary registration areas and certificates issued immediately. The registration forms will be sent monthly to the registration office at the headquarters of the LGA where they will be checked and a limited number of simple statistical tables relating to vital events in the LGA prepared. The registration documents required for legal purposes will be retained in the registration office at the LGA and those to be used for statistical processing sent together with the statistical returns (tables) to the state Chief Registrar for general scrutiny and onward transmission to the Headquarters of NPB. Consideration is being given to the appointment of the Chief Statistician of the NPB Office at the state level as the Chief Registrar. Alternatively, the Chief Registrar will be from the headquarters of the State Government.

At the headquarters of NPB the registration forms will be further processed and additional tables produced. The statistical returns from LGAs will also be consolidated and the entire data from the registration system analysed and published.

Initially, it had been planned that in view of difficulties in the use of carbon paper to obtain second and third copies of completed registration forms and also the costs involved, only one copy of a registration form would be completed and the necessary particulars transcribed into a register to effect the required registration. Reservations were raised about the completion of only one copy of the registration form because of the possibility of loss or damage of the form during processing by various staff.

After some discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of completion of registration form in two or three copies, it was decided to try out the two procedures. Thus, in two of the selected areas one copy of a registration form would be completed and a bound register of events maintained. In the other two areas, registration forms would be completed in two copies and

the originals would constitute a register of events while the duplicates would be processed for statistical purposes.

(c) Contacts with LGAs

NPB has sent out letters to Secretaries to State Military Governments and Chairmen of the selected LGAs about a proposed visit by the UN Adviser on civil registration and some senior staff of NPB.

The visit was expected to be carried out during the first two weeks in March 1987 and it would be the initial formal contact with officials in the selected areas to observe the ground situation and also promote the co-operation of the relevant authorities in the experimental vital registration system.

It was expected that the initial contact would be followed by high-level meetings of representatives of NPB, State Governments and LGAs to discuss the proposed procedures for the registration system.

(d) Work Plan

At the time of the mission a revised work plan had been prepared and preparatory activities were in progress though some of the activities were slightly behind schedule.

The preparatory activities which were expected to have been completed by end of December 1986 were:

- Review of existing registration system
- Preparation of registration forms and instructions manual
- Establishment of National Committee on Vital Registration and Statistics

It was indicated that the review of the existing registration system had been completed. The preparation of registration forms and manual however, was in the final stages and, due mainly to some administrative bottlenecks, arrangements for the establishment of the Committee on Vital Registration and Statistics were still in progress.

It was, however, generally expected that the field work of the first phase of the experimental registration system would start in April 1987 as planned or shortly thereafter.

(e) Institutional Framework

The NPB has responsibility under the country's constitution for the registration of births and deaths and the Births and

Deaths Decree, 1979, which provides the legal basis of the registration, makes provision for the appointment of a Registrar-General to exercise the powers and perform the duties specified in the Decree.

At the time of the mission a Registrar-General had not been formally appointed by the Government but the Vital Statistics and Migration (VSM) Division of NPB was responsible under the guidance of the UN Adviser and overall supervision of the Acting Director of NPB for the project preparatory activities. The Division was also expected to constitute the headquarters of the experimental registration system. Staff from other Divisions of NPB would be involved as necessary.

The VSM Division had the following professional and technical level staff:

- 1 Assistant Chief Statistician (Head of Division)
- 2 Senior Statisticians (one was on a training course at the time of the mission)
- 1 Acting Senior Statistician (on training Course)
- 1 Statistician I
- 3 Statisticians II
- 2 Higher Statistical Officers
- 1 Senior Statistical Officer

It is planned that the field registration staff will comprise:

- Registrars at registration offices in primary registration areas;
- Senior Registrars who will supervise registration activities in a number of primary registration areas;
- Assistant Chief Registrars who will exercise supervision at autonomous community level;
- Deputy Chief Registrars at LGA level; and
- Chief Registrars at State level.

Generally, the field staff were expected to be employees of LGAs except that consideration was being given to the appointment of Chief Statisticians, who are employees of NPB, as Chief Registrars at the State level. Also, existing LGA registration officials would, as far as possible, be retained.

Thus NPB will collaborate with the relevant authorities at State and LGA levels to establish the registration offices and implement the registration system.

(f) Registration documents

Drafts of the registration documents had been prepared and were undergoing final review before printing.

The principal registration documents were reviewed during the mission and a number of comments and suggestions made for the consideration of the UN Adviser and the concerned NPB officials in the final revision of the documents.

The documents which were reviewed are:

Live Birth Registration Form
Death Registration Form
Report on Still Birth
Manual for Registration of Births and Deaths

The items which had earlier been considered for inclusion on the forms for registration of births and deaths are listed in the Annex.

During discussion it was stressed that in the initial phase of the registration system the items required for statistical purposes should be kept to a minimum and priority given to the development of strategies for the improvement of the coverage of the registration of vital events.

It was, therefore, suggested that the number of items on the draft forms needed to be reduced. The following were the items recommended for inclusion on the registration forms at the outset:

LIVE BIRTH REGISTRATION FORM

Registration Centre
Village/Town
LGA
State
Birth Registration Volume
Entry Number
Date of Registration

Particulars of Child

Name
Sex
Date of Birth
Place of Occurrence
Type of Birth (single, multiple)

Particulars of Mother and Father

Full Name
Age
Address of Usual Place of Residence
Nationality
State of Origin (Nigerians only)
Ethnic Origin

Particulars of Informant

Relationship to Child
Name
Address of Usual Place of Residence

DEATH REGISTRATION FORM

Registration Centre
Village/Town
LGA
State
Death Register Volume
Entry Number
Date of Registration

Particulars of the Deceased

Name
Sex
Place of Death
Age at Death
Date of Death
Address of Usual Place of Residence
Nationality
State of Origin (Nigerians only)
Marital Status
Certification of Death

Particulars of Informant

Relationship to Deceased
Name
Address of Usual Place of Residence

In addition to the above items NPB indicated that it would retain "educational level of mother and father" on the birth registration form and "educational level of the deceased" and "cause of death" on the death registration form.

Project Budget

The sources of funding for the project are the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) and UNFPA.

The estimated yearly costs of FGN inputs are:

<u>Year</u>	<u>Amount</u> <u>in Naira</u>
1987	738 641
1988	773 251
1989	431 141
<u>1990</u>	<u>164 119</u>
Total	2107 152

The amounts indicated will cover the salaries and allowances of national project personnel, rental of premises for registration offices, expendable and non-expendable office equipment, public enlightenment campaign, data processing facilities and miscellaneous costs including printing and running costs of vehicles.

At the time of the mission the budget covering FGN contribution had been submitted to the appropriate national authorities and approval and release of funds for the current year were expected shortly.

The approved total UNFPA contribution is US\$485,586 (1986 - US\$163,922; 1987 - US\$225,330 and 1988 - US\$96,334). The amounts for the three-year period will cover the services of a UN Adviser for two years, travel costs, local personnel payments, training, equipment and sundry.

As indicated earlier, the UN Adviser is at post. Also the following equipment had been received under UNFPA contribution:

- 2 Peugeot (505 GR) Estate cars
- 4 Toyota Land Cruisers
- 15 Motor cycles
- Spare parts for cars and land cruisers
- 5 Fire proof cabinets
- 6 Manual typewriters
- Duplicating paper

5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The preparatory activities for the first phase of the project have been started and they were steadily gathering momentum. The initial enthusiasm should be sustained and efforts made to ensure that any delay in the implementation of project activities would be minimal, if any.

In this connection it is suggested that a detailed time-table should be prepared. Such a time-table would be an implementation guide which would assist in closely monitoring the progress of project activities.

It should however be stressed that continued satisfactory progress would very much depend on the early approval of the project budget covering FGN contribution and the timely release of the necessary funds.

The proposed Committee on Vital Registration and Statistics also needs to be established without delay. Indeed serious consideration should be given to the establishment of two committees. One on the machinery and procedures for the registration of vital events and the other on public education and enlightenment. The two committees should comprise government ministries/departments and other agencies whose collaboration in the two aspects of the registration system would ensure its success. If it is suspected that there might be delays in establishing the committees at national level then, in the meantime, they might be set up for the states selected for the experimental registration system.

The above recommendation emphasizes the need to consider the project as comprising two parallel but integrated programmes, namely the development of procedures for effective registration of vital events and the related public education and enlightenment.

NPB had given some consideration to a publicity programme in connection with the project but efforts in that direction seemed to lag behind the progress in the preparations for the actual registration even though the implementation of the first phase of the registration system was expected to start shortly. It is therefore recommended that immediate steps should be taken to prepare and institute a programme to educate and motivate all concerned in the selected areas as part of the vital registration programme. It should be pointed out that the enlightenment programme should be conceived as a continuing exercise hence the programme should include plans for the follow-up of the initial campaign. Further, there should be effective collaboration between NPB and the appropriate government agencies in the selected States/LGAs in the exercise.

It is also suggested that in the initial phase of the project, emphasis should be given to the development of procedures which would ensure good coverage of registration of vital events rather than the derivation of maximum statistical information even though the statistical aspects of the registration system should not be completely ignored. Thus, in the first phase of the project the registration forms need to be made as simple as possible and the items kept to a minimum. Additional items for statistical purposes could be introduced at a later stage.

Finally, it is my view that NPB needs to have its own printing facilities. Such facilities may ensure timely printing of the registration documents and publications. NPB would also

use the facilities to print questionnaires, manuals and reports of its other statistical enquiries. Thus in the long run the provision of such facilities would reduce printing costs.

ANNEX

ITEMS ON DRAFT FORMS FOR REGISTRATION OF LIVE BIRTHS AND DEATHS

A. LIVE BIRTH REGISTRATION FORM

Entry Number
Birth Register Volume
Registration Centre
Village/town
Local Government Area
State
Date of registration

Particulars of Child

Name
Sex
Date of Birth
Place of Occurrence
Type of Birth (single, twins, triplets, quadruplets, others)
Attendant at Birth
Type of Delivery
Birth Weight
Birth Order

Particulars of Mother and Father

Full Name
Age
Address of usual place of residence
Nationality
State of origin (Nigerians only)
Ethnic origin
Occupation
Literacy
Level of Education (literate only)
Religion
Nature of Antenatal Care During Pregnancy (mother only)

Particulars of Informant

Relationship of Informant to Child
Full Name
Address of Usual Place of Residence

B. DEATH REGISTRATION FORM

Entry Number
Death Register Volume
Registration Centre
Village/town
Local Government Area
State
Date of Registration

Particulars of the deceased

Name
Sex
Place of Death
Age at Death
Date of Death
Last Occupation of Deceased
Address of Usual Place of Residence
Nationality
State of Origin (Nigerians only)
Ethnic Origin
Marital Status
Literacy
Level of Education (literate only)
Religion
Certification of Death
Cause of Death

Particulars of Informant

Relationship to Deceased
Full Name
Address of Usual place of Residence