



Distr.: Limited

AW/CRVS/94/17
4 November 1994

**UNITED NATIONS
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL**

Original: ENGLISH

**AFRICAN WORKSHOP ON STRATEGIES FOR ACCELERATING THE IMPROVEMENT
OF CIVIL REGISTRATION AND VITAL STATISTICS SYSTEMS
ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA, 5 TO 9 DECEMBER 1994**

**STATISTICAL DIVISION
UNITED NATIONS**

**ECONOMIC COMMISSION
FOR AFRICA**

**THE CURRENT STATUS OF CIVIL REGISTRATION
AND VITAL STATISTICS SYSTEMS
IN SOUTH AFRICA**

BY

CENTRAL STATISTICAL SERVICE

**AFRICAN WORKSHOP ON STRATEGIES FOR ACCELERATING THE
IMPROVEMENT OF CIVIL REGISTRATIONS AND VITAL STATISTICS
SYSTEMS - ADDIS ABABA, 5 TO 9 DECEMBER 1994**

REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

**COUNTRY REPORT ON CIVIL REGISTRATION
AND VITAL STATISTICS SYSTEMS**

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I. GENERAL BACKGROUND

Geographical

South Africa is located at the southern point of the continent of Africa and encloses the sovereign kingdoms of Lesotho and Swaziland. Flanking the country in the north are, from east to west: Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Botswana and Namibia.

The country's shores are washed by two oceans - the Indian Ocean in the east and the Atlantic in the west. The coastline is swept by two major ocean currents - the warm Mozambique-Agulhas Current that flows from the equator southwards along the East Coast and westwards along the South Coast as far as Cape Point, and the cold Benguela Current that flows from the Antarctic north along the West Coast. The two currents meet at Cape Point.

The interior plateau of the country is a vast plain with an average elevation of 1 200 metres.

The subtropical location, straddling 30 °S, generally enjoys warm temperatures. Due to the height above sea-level of the interior plateau, temperatures tend to be lower than in other countries at the same latitude. The increasing elevation towards the northeast also causes temperatures to be fairly even despite a latitudinal span of 13 degrees. Thus the mean annual temperature of Cape Town is 17 °C and that of Pretoria (1 600 km northeast) is 17,5 °C. East and West Coast temperatures differ sharply, owing to the difference in temperature between the two ocean currents flowing along these shores.

South Africa is, on the whole, a relatively dry country with a mean annual rainfall of 502 mm, compared with a world average of 857 mm. Rainfall is not only erratic, but also decreases sharply from east to west, from about 1 000 mm annually along the East Coast to less than 200 mm along the West Coast. About 65% of the country records less than 500 mm annually. Along the West Coast and in the Western Cape (around Cape Town), rain falls in winter, usually in gentle showers over extended periods. Over the rest of the country most rain falls in short, sharp thunderstorms during summer. Hail is fairly common in the summer rainfall region. Prolonged droughts occur fairly frequently.

Five major communities of indigenous vegetation can be clearly distinguished:

Desert and semi-desert - True desert vegetation occurs in a strip 15 km to 125 km wide along the West Coast. Karoo or semi-desert vegetation covers most of the western interior.

Mediterranean - Mediterranean-type vegetation occurs in the winter rainfall area of the Southwestern and Southern Cape and parts of the South Coast. Because of the wealth of plant life in this region, the area is regarded as one of the six floral kingdoms of the world.

Bushveld - Savannah-type vegetation occurs in the far north, northwest and east of the country.

Indigenous forest - Patches of indigenous forest occur along the southern and eastern coastal belts where annual rainfall exceeds 1 000 mm.

Temperate grassland - Most of the central interior consists of rolling grassy plains and contains few trees.

Cultural

South Africa offers vital and diverse cultural fare. Some of the many highlights include the annual national festival of the arts in Grahamstown and the Roodepoort International Eisteddfod of song and dance, held every second year.

Provision exists for the establishment of statutory organisations and councils to promote cultural activities as well as for the establishment of national cultural institutions and historic monuments. Statutory organisations include four councils for the performing arts namely: Performing Arts Council of the Transvaal (Pact), Cape Performing Arts Board (Capab), Performing Arts Council of the Orange Free State (Pacofs) and the Natal Performing Arts Council (Napac).

Cultural organisations include the Congress of South African Writers, South African Musicians' Alliance, the Performing Artists' Equity, the Film and Allied Workers Organisation, the English Academy of Southern Africa and the Federation of South African Cultural Organisations (Fosaco).

South Africa has two theatrical traditions: the African and the European tradition. Recently, a hybrid tradition developed containing elements of the two older cultures, yet distinguishable from them.

There are six main orchestras: the National Symphony Orchestra, Pact's Transvaal Philharmonic Orchestra, the Cape Town Symphony Orchestra, the Capab Orchestra, the Natal philharmonic Orchestra and the Orange Free State Symphony Orchestra. A number of city and youth orchestras, independent of the arts councils, and many amateur and semi-professional orchestras also perform regularly.

Folk-dancing and music are performed by special interest groups. Several local choirs, including school and children's choirs, have won international competitions.

For the ordination of the first black Methodist Minister at Nancefield in 1899, Enoch Sontonga wrote a special song, "Nkosi Sikelel iAfrica", but never lived to see his song become the unofficial anthem of the black community of South Africa. After the African National Congress's victory in the 1994 election it also became the national anthem of South Africa together with the existing anthem "Die Stem".

Economy

The South African economy, based almost entirely on agriculture until about a century ago, was transformed overnight by the discovery of diamonds in 1867 and gold on the Witwatersrand in 1886. For the next 60 years until 1945, mining was the greatest single source of national income. World War II, which had completely disrupted traditional foreign sources of supply, boosted local manufacturing to such an extent that secondary industry soon emerged as the major contributor to the gross domestic product (GDP), a position it still holds.

In 1993 the GDP at factor cost amounted to about R345 000 million. The most important contributions were made by manufacturing (23,5%), commerce (16,0%), mining (8,7%), transport and communications (8,1%), agriculture (4,6%) and electricity, gas and water (4,0%).

South Africa has vast known reserves of gold, chromium, platinum, vanadium, manganese and andalusite. Moreover, it has substantial deposits of coal, uranium, diamonds, iron, zirconium, titanium, fluorspar, nickel, vermiculite and phosphates.

About 78% of the South African mineral production is exported to more than 80 countries. The 1991 export sales value amounted to R30 774 million, representing about 52% of the total export revenue. Domestic sales were worth an additional R8 878 million.

Political and administrative characteristics

Since the first democratic elections in the country took place on 27 April 1994 South Africa has been governed by a Government of National Unity comprising of 400 members. Regional government in each of the nine provinces is effected by Legislative Assemblies comprising 100 members each.

Cape Town is the legislative and Pretoria is the administrative capital of the country.

II. DEMOGRAPHIC AND BASIC INFORMATION OF THE COUNTRY

The estimated population of South Africa as on 30 June 1994 is 40,4 million. This estimate as well as the other demographic indices in this paragraph is based on the 1991 population census as well as trends derived from earlier censuses. 49,5% of the population are males and 50,5% females.

The country is divided into nine provinces. The estimated size of the population of the provinces as on 27 April 1994, the day of the first democratic elections in the country, is as follows:

<u>Province</u>	<u>Population ('000)</u>
Western Cape	3 633
Eastern Cape	6 437
Northern Cape	737
Orange Free State	2 727
KwaZulu/Natal	8 506
North-West	3 253
PWV	6 869
Eastern Transvaal	2 922
Northern Transvaal	5 202
Total	40 285

According to the 1991 census 48,8% of the population live in urban areas. The level of urbanisation for the provinces varies between 9,2% in the Northern Transvaal and 96,0% in the PWV. The corresponding rates for the other seven provinces are as follows:

<u>Province</u>	<u>Percentage Urban</u>
Western Cape	86,4%
Eastern Cape	32,8%
Northern Cape	73,1%
Orange Free State	54,1%
KwaZulu/Natal	38,2%
North-West	32,2%
Eastern Transvaal	31,6%

The estimated population growth rate declined from 2,42% for the period 1980-1991 to 2,08% for the period 1991 to 1994.

III. THE CIVIL REGISTRATION SYSTEM

1. Legal frame of the system

Before union the laws relating to the Registration of Births, Marriages and Deaths were the same, but differed in each of the colonies. The different Acts, Laws, Ordinances and Proclamations in the four colonies were as follows:

CAPE - 1. The Voluntary Births Registration Act, 1880 (Act No 20 of 1880) states:

After the first day of September, 1880, there shall be kept at the office of every Civil Commissioner within this colony (Cape of Good Hope), a book, to be called the "Births Registration Book" in which shall be entered and registered by such Civil Commissioner (or the person elected by him for that purpose). Births to be registered within two calendar months.

Fees payable - one shilling.

2. Births and Deaths Registration Act, 1894 (Act No 7 of 1894) Registration to be done within twelve months. A penalty for failure to give notice was a sum not exceeding forty shillings. In the urban areas notice of birth to be given within forty two days and in rural areas within three months.

NATAL - Births and Deaths were governed by Law No 16 of 1867, as amended by Acts No 17 of 1894 and No 5 of 1896.

ORANGE FREE STATE - Proclamation No 15 of 1902.

TRANSVAAL - Ordinance No 19 of 1906.

(The last three colonies mentioned above had different Acts, but the contents were more or less similar to that in the Cape colony.)

The position was made uniform for the union of South Africa by Act No. 17 of 1923 which applied to all four provinces.

Births, Marriages and Deaths Registration Act (Act No. 17 of 1923) stated that no birth or death shall be registered after the expiry of one year from the date of such birth or death except upon the written authority of the registrar and the payment of a prescribed fee and notice of birth in urban areas given within seven days and in rural areas within thirty days.

Act No. 17 of 1923 was amended from time to time and repealed with all the amendments by the Births, Marriages and Deaths Registration Act, 1963 (Act No 81 of 1963). The Births, Marriages and Deaths Registration Act, 1963 (Act No 81 of 1963) was amended from time to time and repealed by the Births and Deaths Registration Act, 1992 (Act No. 51 of 1992) which was implemented on 1 October 1992. The provisions of this Act apply to all South African citizens, whether in the Republic or outside the Republic, including persons who are not South African citizens but who sojourn permanently or temporarily in the Republic, for whatever purpose.

There are presently two laws, namely Births and Deaths Registration Act, 1992 (Act No. 51 of 1992) and the Marriage Act, 1961 (Act No 25 of 1961) which are sufficient. In terms of the different Acts, regulations are promulgated which further direct certain sections of the Acts as well as describing the pro-forma of forms to be used.

The first certificate issued after a registration is free of charge; for any certificate required thereafter, fees are payable from R6,00 for a printed to R24,00 for an unabridged certificate.

2. Administrative arrangements

- a) The notification of Birth can be done at any of the ± 112 offices of the Department countrywide, or at a magistrate's office, where there is no office of the Department, for instance in the rural areas.
The notification of a death must be done in the magisterial area where the death occurred and can be registered any place in the country by a section 4 appointed officer.
In both circumstances the registration is free of charge.
- b) ± 112
- c) There are no secondary registration units at hospitals or clinics, although a notice of birth can be given to self appointed agent who completes the notice and delivers it to the nearest office for registration. (These agents charge a fee of ± R30,00).
- d) No boundaries. Births and deaths can be registered at any office, except the notice of death must be given in the Magisterial district where the death occurred.
- e) On average a population of approximately 98 000 is served per primary registration unit.
- f) In the rural areas the major problem is the distance to and from offices. Births, deaths and marriage registrations can therefore also be done at a magistrate's office or be posted to the nearest office.
- g) All officials of the Department in the Regional and District offices must pass a module, which has bearing to their work, successfully. The officials of the Department are therefore fully trained as the mission of the Department is to render an outstanding service. The office hours are Mondays - Fridays, from 7:30 - 16:00. There is no restricted time for the Notice of Deaths. It must be done as soon as possible, even over weekends to a section 4 appointed officer who will deliver the documents to the nearest office for registration.

h) Civil registrations by district 1992

District	Births	Deaths	Still births	Marriages	Divorces
CAPE PROVINCE					
Aberdeen	96	72	1	22	0
Adelaide	171	118	1	42	0
Albany	2 013	548	18	227	119
Albert	323	147	4	46	5
Alexandria	326	163	0	101	6
Aliwal North	632	322	4	97	8
Barkly East	39	27	1	15	0
Barkly West	926	352	8	117	26
Bathurst	373	292	0	81	17
Beaufort West	784	354	23	150	13
Bedford	122	82	4	48	0
Bellville	9 184	2 262	226	1 953	743
Bredasdorp	382	153	6	132	19
Britstown	105	42	1	17	0
Caledon	943	495	9	299	56
Calitzdorp	105	77	1	18	6
Calvinia	374	207	3	75	7
Carnarvon	188	101	4	31	5
Cathcart	268	118	0	43	0
Ceres	1 452	378	15	194	20
Clanwilliam	504	255	1	123	11
Colesberg	321	125	10	64	0
Cradock	830	262	8	134	21
De Aar	905	280	10	139	24
Elliot	218	138	6	31	0
Fort Beaufort	418	195	4	73	0
Fraserburg	55	28	2	18	0
George	2 187	876	36	533	116
Goodwood	3 790	1 828	17	1 535	655
Gordonia	2 943	1 276	87	464	85
Graaff-Reinet	652	355	20	131	39
Hankey	370	215	0	48	6
Hanover	62	45	5	18	0
Hartswater	750	277	1	105	17
Hay	165	99	2	18	0
Heidelberg (Cape)	6	125	1	56	13
Herbert	466	282	9	85	7
Hermanus	302	233	9	155	45
Hofmeyr	69	27	0	9	0
Hopefield	35	59	0	27	7
Hopetown	251	144	4	46	5
Humansdorp	766	474	6	181	42
Indwe	232	48	1	16	0
Jansenville	101	96	2	29	0
Joubertina	193	128	5	53	8
Cape	15 320	1 875	278	2 114	1 060
Kenhardt	185	86	7	37	6
Kimberley	5 015	1 855	170	970	268
King William's Town	562	240	5	168	38
Kirkwood	444	264	8	75	11
Knysna	1 041	529	19	251	48
Komga	321	79	0	19	0
Kuils River	356	695	5	580	358
Kuruman	727	239	7	155	19

District	Births	Deaths	Still births	Marriages	Divorces
Ladismith	240	142	6	65	0
Lady Grey	138	84	1	10	0
Laingsburg	111	86	0	24	0
Maclear	360	116	0	26	4
Malmesbury	2 065	738	19	521	127
Middelburg (Cape)	571	65	3	40	11
Molteno	127	114	1	31	0
Montagu	415	236	9	103	24
Moorreesburg	120	131	2	42	6
Mossel Bay	832	452	19	271	94
Murraysburg	115	67	0	22	0
Namakwaaland	1 223	478	17	294	27
Noupoort	186	92	12	24	0
East London	6 411	1 919	137	1 227	372
Oudtshoorn	1 912	692	37	368	60
Paarl	4 053	1 089	67	994	117
Pearston	76	53	1	19	0
Philipstown	86	81	1	24	0
Piketberg	496	351	5	168	18
Port Elizabeth	15 581	6 237	92	3 329	837
Postmasburg	1 238	430	27	170	25
Prieska	377	187	5	47	11
Prince Albert	207	114	2	27	0
Queenstown	1 542	530	74	226	35
Richmond (Cape)	171	30	1	20	0
Riversdale	604	251	10	127	21
Robertson	901	323	12	143	20
Simons Town	248	368	3	265	120
Somerset East	283	145	4	95	9
Somerset West	2 516	619	68	327	105
Stellenbosch	1 163	607	43	561	105
Sterkstroom	112	81	0	20	0
Steynsburg	219	107	1	31	0
Steytlerville	86	39	0	12	0
Strand	41	479	3	304	92
Stutterheim	1 300	332	5	189	0
Sutherland	40	31	1	14	0
Swellendam	492	322	3	137	35
Tarka	161	72	0	23	0
Tulbagh	116	266	0	118	19
Uitenhage	3 112	1 565	139	760	174
Uniondale	229	122	1	32	0
Vanrhynsdorp	84	151	1	88	0
Venterstad	74	38	3	20	0
Victoria-West	255	102	7	46	0
Vredenburg	824	309	15	200	48
Vredendal	739	246	21	102	13
Vryburg	990	614	27	228	36
Walvis Bay	394	108	9	59	23
Warrenton	333	234	4	72	7
Wellington	62	298	1	264	40
Williston	74	39	1	15	0
Willowmore	209	109	5	43	3
Wodehouse	211	96	1	32	0
Worcester	3 088	1 144	63	709	118
Wynberg	13 054	7 419	229	5 275	2 085
TOTAL	129 735	51 192	2 292	30 571	8 803

District	Births	Deaths	Still births	Marriages	Divorces
NATAL					
Alfred	482	209	37	42	4
Babanango	103	24	0	0	0
Bergville	168	110	0	39	9
Camperdown	439	348	0	140	29
Chatsworth	1 102	1 201	87	1 163	243
Dannhauser	31	191	2	26	8
Dundee	734	369	89	117	15
Durban	19 386	3 360	181	5 278	1 471
Eshowe	673	380	60	50	10
Estcourt	1 535	620	127	200	40
Glencoe	38	379	0	41	11
Hlabisa (Natal)	954	54	1	74	0
Impendie	2	73	1	2	0
Inanda	6 795	2 032	120	1 382	467
Ixopo	1 390	558	71	68	0
Kliprivier	2 008	882	191	253	56
Kranskop	114	134	0	10	0
Lions River	362	257	2	99	17
Lower Tugela	2 527	1 329	137	485	64
Lower Umfolozi	1 324	231	8	279	118
Mooi River	279	124	7	26	5
Mount Currie	570	339	53	104	21
Mtonjaneni	993	249	5	25	0
Mtunzini	46	316	0	72	14
New Hanover	149	331	2	68	0
Newcastle	1 362	191	3	327	90
Ngotshe	451	48	0	21	6
Paulpietersburg	439	304	0	94	0
Pietermaritzburg	6 788	2 505	152	1 767	559
Pinetown	4 136	1 262	94	808	304
Polela	24	169	0	27	0
Port Shepstone	2 515	982	115	383	68
Richmond (Natal)	224	116	1	21	6
Ubombo	12	2	0	6	0
Umvoti	2 229	452	45	127	13
Umzinto	3 032	546	31	266	49
Underberg	25	62	1	18	5
Utrecht	366	72	3	60	0
Vryheid	3 623	619	94	257	35
Weenen	236	123	0	12	0
TOTAL	67 666	21 553	1 720	14 237	3 737
TRANSVAAL					
Alberton	6 149	3 691	15	1 442	334
Amersfoort	698	177	0	82	0
Balfour	785	169	1	88	15
Barberton	1 180	401	22	172	35
Belfast	900	145	2	69	22
Benoni	3 075	2 409	110	1 545	288
Bethal	1 228	328	18	332	66
Bloemhof	303	183	5	68	0
Boksburg	5 190	1 719	200	1 173	408
Brakpan	1 308	1 265	65	804	224
Brits	1 110	681	2	808	122
Bronkhorstspuit	207	183	1	194	38
Carolina	558	76	5	50	14
Christiana	211	165	12	80	9

District	Births	Deaths	Still births	Marriages	Divorces
Coligny	603	159	2	58	6
Cullinan	141	104	0	194	30
Delareyville	434	240	0	181	8
Delmas	1 031	335	9	172	32
Ellisras	888	80	4	390	24
Ermelo	2 250	552	67	425	60
Germiston	2 044	1 245	11	1 647	560
Groblersdal	656	196	1	913	36
Heidelberg (Tvl)	1 004	230	8	280	48
Highveld Ridge	2 684	794	21	503	170
Johannesburg	37 869	14 116	383	10 433	2 761
Kempton Park	6 380	2 350	206	1 761	451
Klerksdorp	4 043	2 560	53	1 326	295
Koster	446	234	6	94	9
Krugersdorp	5 439	1 759	266	1 087	287
Letaba	731	168	5	273	62
Lichtenburg	1 661	679	9	437	44
Lydenburg	1 475	141	16	154	30
Marico	578	308	5	144	14
Messina	442	163	11	56	12
Middelburg (Tvl)	3 214	825	60	703	143
Moutse	3 278	515	50	297	0
Nelspruit	3 115	353	20	490	124
Nigel	707	656	10	426	85
Oberholzer	1 328	897	63	496	87
Pelgrimsrus	589	124	23	87	19
Phalaborwa	255	105	0	200	63
Piet Retief	1 698	507	58	149	34
Pietersburg	5 704	664	93	2 534	136
Potchefstroom	2 998	1 512	73	828	191
Potgietersrus	3 615	440	1	922	68
Pretoria	18 084	4 253	209	7 753	3 147
Randburg	3 631	1 707	25	1 903	637
Randfontein	754	1 187	7	656	174
Roodepoort	1 722	1 364	13	1 203	487
Rustenburg	2 109	934	100	813	221
Schweizer-Reneke	779	375	24	194	9
Soshanguve	3 732	220	1	269	16
Soutpansberg	768	200	0	207	44
Springs	4 722	1 358	59	1 174	268
Standerton	1 524	517	33	270	37
Swartruggens	110	115	2	42	0
Thabazimbi	615	81	0	138	29
Vanderbijlpark	9 125	2 766	276	2 676	254
Ventersdorp	677	308	5	102	8
Vereeniging	2 806	1 706	38	942	404
Volkswest	544	219	11	113	15
Wakkerstroom	913	207	5	29	0
Warmbad	876	297	12	338	27
Waterberg	868	330	16	136	29
Waterval-Boven	196	76	2	41	0
Westonaria	203	740	8	261	107
Witbank	3 493	892	76	1 055	205
Witrivier	203	149	0	121	34
Wolmaransstad	1 008	608	31	212	26
Wonderboom	436	1 397	26	383	387
TOTAL	180 100	66 609	2 971	55 598	14 029

District	Births	Deaths	Still births	Marriages	Divorces
ORANGE FREE STATE					
Bethlehem	2 425	801	70	458	52
Bethulie	215	102	6	36	4
Bloemfontein	7 052	2 244	102	2 017	836
Boshof	551	154	3	82	4
Bothaville	1 322	555	28	173	11
Botshabelo	2 456	878	131	306	10
Brandfort	259	158	10	58	6
Bultfontein	374	144	4	72	8
Clocolan	304	188	16	74	4
Dewetsdorp	223	79	1	57	0
Edenburg	138	64	2	18	0
Excelsior	344	149	3	104	0
Fauresmith	85	57	2	32	0
Ficksburg	590	330	2	93	9
Fouriesburg	451	130	2	46	0
Frankfort	974	440	21	172	13
Harrismith	1 102	546	30	319	20
Heilbron	771	359	21	102	0
Hennenman	315	294	6	39	8
Hoopstad	366	68	3	73	0
Jacobsdal	153	62	0	36	0
Jagersfontein	255	74	8	53	4
Koffiefontein	138	130	1	46	9
Koppies	255	152	0	40	0
Kroonstad	3 449	1 166	116	637	65
Ladybrand	467	278	4	87	5
Lindley	502	391	14	147	7
Marquard	261	133	6	51	0
Odendaalsrus	1 507	522	40	129	38
Parys	808	584	26	197	20
Petrusburg	148	91	1	38	0
Philippolis	103	45	0	11	0
Reddersburg	130	59	3	29	0
Reitz	374	236	13	104	5
Rouxville	153	37	0	29	0
Sasolburg	807	448	17	361	76
Senekal	583	359	6	142	14
Smithfield	192	51	3	18	0
Theunissen	423	139	3	73	7
Trompsburg	64	52	2	15	0
Ventersburg	191	162	4	45	0
Viljoenskroon	587	391	6	117	6
Virginia	887	538	40	226	38
Vrede	802	375	6	161	4
Vredefort	149	118	2	38	0
Welkom	4 200	1 136	115	1 140	222
Wepener	204	84	3	37	0
Wesselsbron	413	108	7	83	5
Winburg	345	40	6	58	6
Zastron	339	123	11	49	0
TOTAL	39 306	15 824	926	8 528	1 525

District	Births	Deaths	Still births	Marriages	Divorces
KWAZULU					
TOTAL	13 286	5 647	37		0
GAZANKULU					
TOTAL	12 585	2 238	12		0
LEBOWA					
TOTAL	40 370	8 417	25	2 313	0
QWAQWA					
TOTAL	4 344	1 952	14		0
KANGWANE					
TOTAL	10 880	1 934	3		0
KWANDEBELE					
TOTAL	3 180	463	0		0
OTHER					
TOTAL	9	0	7	259	144
UNSPECIFIED					
TOTAL	0	2 012	0	51	0
RSA					
TOTAL	501 461	177 841	8 007	111 557	28 264

- 1) There is no surveillance program available in the country, but a birth certificate is required for admittance to a school and pupils must be in possession of an identity number to register for the matriculation examinations. In the health clinics, specially in rural areas, midwives attend to the registration of births. The Department's head office which is situated in Pretoria (PWV Region) is the national registration office who administers and technically guides civil registrations. There are 10 Regional directors for each of the regions and 25 Regional Representatives over the ± 87 District representatives.

3. Procedures for registration

- a) Since the registration of births occurred, the loose-leaf forms are kept on a single file system which specifies each and every person's identity number. This file refers to a specific person with all his/her personal documents, for example birth register, marriage register, driver's licence, firearm licences, etcetera. Marriage and death registers pertaining to the "early" years are kept in bound books. The size of the bound books are approxiametly 300mm x 120mm. Paper and ink quality is still satisfactory.
- b) A birth can be registered countrywide. All notices of deaths must be reported in the magisterial district where the person died, thereafter it can be registered countrywide. A marriage can be solemnized anywhere countrywide, but the district where it was solemnized is usually the place of registration. A divorce takes place in the province where the husband is domiciled and the registration is done by the Master of the Supreme Court. A copy of the decree of divorce is sent to the Department for inclusion in the computerized population register. All birth, marriage and death registers and copies of the decree of divorce are kept at head office.

c,d,e,f) Procedure for registration of Births, Marriages and Deaths

1. Registration of births

A Notice of Birth (form BI-24) is prescribed for the registration of a birth.

The 1963 Act required a birth to be registered in the magisterial district where the birth took place. This requirement was repealed by the 1992-Act in order to make it as easy as possible for the public to register a birth. The same record with regard to the place of birth is still available by means of the computerized population register.

In the case of a child born alive, any one of his parents or, if neither of his parents is able to do so, the person having charge of the child or a person requested to do so by the parents of the said person, shall within seven days after the birth, give notice thereof in the prescribed manner to any office of the Department or to any person contemplated in terms of section 4 (1). In terms of section 4 the Director-General of the Department of Home Affairs may authorize any person, whether or not in the service of the State, to exercise any power or perform any duty conferred or imposed on the Department by or in terms of the Act. This authority enables the Department to co-opt persons outside the Department to assist with the registration process. This authority also enables the Department to render services as closely as possible to the public.

Where a notice of birth is given after the expiration of seven days from the date of birth, the Department may demand that reasons for the late notice be furnished and that fingerprints be taken of the person of whom notice of birth is given. The taking of fingerprints is optional. This arrangement was necessary as notices of births are sometimes given in respect of adults. The fingerprints are used for identification purposes and in order to enable the Department to identify those persons from those in other countries who have entered the Republic of South Africa and endeavour to adopt a South African identity.

Where a notice of birth is given after one year, one of the following documents must be submitted as proof of the person's birth and must be considered as part of the notice:

- (i) Baptismal certificate;
- (ii) Certificate from a hospital or maternity/nursing home;
- (iii) Extract from school register;
- (iv) Report by a social worker; or
- (v) Affidavit by a blood relative.

In order to ensure that all births of South African citizens are registered, section 13 of the 1992-Act provides that if a child of a father or a mother who is a South African citizen is born outside the Republic, notice of birth may be given to the head of a South African diplomatic or consular mission or a regional representative in South Africa.

After the particulars on the notice of birth have been found to be correct and the citizenship of the child has been established, every Notice of Birth must be approved by an authorized officer. The authorized officer must be empowered in terms of the provisions of the Births and Deaths Registration Act, 1992 (Act No. 51 of 1992) and the South African Citizenship Act, 1949 (Act No. 49 of 1949) to approve the Notice of Birth. If the Notice of Birth is approved, the birth particulars as they appear on form BI-24 are entered on terminal. The computer assigned identity number is placed on the BI-24 by means of a bar code, printed by a "fargo" printer.

Thereafter a computer printed birth certificate or in exceptional cases a handwritten birth certificate is issued. Notices of births are dispatched daily to head office.

Notices of Births are then placed on microfilm. The Act empowers the Department to reproduce any document or register in terms of the provisions of the Act. A document that has been reproduced is deemed, in terms of the provisions of the Act and notwithstanding anything to the contrary contained in any other law, an original document or record from which it was reproduced and a copy of such document certified to be a true copy of the original, shall in any court of law be conclusive proof of the contents of the original document. In view of the aforementioned, the Department is empowered to destroy the original copy of the document.

1.1 Still-births (Foetal deaths)

Section 18(1,2,3) -

- (1) "A medical practitioner who was present at a still-birth, or who examined the corpse of a child and is satisfied that the child was still-born, shall issue a prescribed certificate to that effect.
- (2) If no medical practitioner was present at the still-birth, or if no medical practitioner examined the corpse of a still-born child, any person who was present at the still-birth shall make a prescribed declaration thereanent to any person contemplated in section 4.
- (3) The certificate mentioned in subsection (1) or the declaration mentioned in subsection (2) shall be deemed to be notice of the still-birth, and a person contemplated in section 4 shall, on the basis of such notice and if he is satisfied that the child was still-born, issue under the surname of any parent concerned a prescribed burial order authorizing burial."

2. Registration of Deaths

The procedure for the registration of a death according to Act 51 of 1992 is as follows:

The Act provides that any person who was present at the death, or who became aware thereof, or who was in charge of the burial concerned, shall give notice thereof to a person contemplated in section 4 of the Act of which the provisions were previously referred to.

The 1963 Act required that a death in an urban area be registered within 48 hours and in the rural areas within 14 days. Those requirements were repealed by the 1992-Act which simply refers to the requirement - "as soon as possible" - because circumstances presently require the expedient disposal of a body in any case.

To ensure that registration of deaths contains quality medical information, the Act provides that all notices of deaths should be accompanied by a medical certificate issued by a medical doctor. Whether the deceased was a patient of the doctor or not, is immaterial because section 15 makes provision therefore that any medical doctor who did not attend to any person before his death, but after the death of that person examined the corpse and is satisfied that the death was due to natural causes, may issue a medical certificate to that effect.

If a medical doctor is of the opinion that the death was due to other than natural causes, he issues a certificate to that effect and he must notify a police officer who must act in terms of the provisions of the Inquest Act, 1959 and who then investigates the circumstances of the death with a view of prosecuting.

To ensure that all deaths are registered, section 19 of the Act provides that if any person who is lawfully and permanently resident in the Republic dies outside the Republic, his death shall be registered in terms of the provisions of the Act on the strength of a death certificate or other similar document issued by the authority concerned in the country in which the death occurred.

Another arrangement to ensure that all deaths are registered, is contained in section 20 of the Act which states that no burial shall take place unless notice of the death has been given and a prescribed burial order has been issued. This provision can be followed up -

section 21 of the Act stipulates that any person having charge of a burial place shall maintain a burial register in which he shall incorporate from the burial order the prescribed particulars regarding every burial in such a burial place.

Section 31 of the Act states that any person who, without reasonable cause, fails to furnish any notice of a birth or death shall be guilty of an offence and on conviction liable to a fine or to imprisonment for a period not exceeding five years or to both such fine and such imprisonment.

3. Registration of marriages

The solemnization of a marriage in the Republic of South Africa is governed by the Marriage Act, 1961 (Act 25 of 1961). The provisions of this Act and the regulations made in terms thereof are applicable to all persons of all population groups who marry in the Republic of South Africa. Customary unions are administered by the Black Administration Act, 1927 (Act 3 of 1927), but are at the moment not recognized as legal marriages in terms of the Marriage Act. The reason for customary unions not being recognized is that the custom allows polygamous marriages which is contrary to the provisions of the Marriage Act. A minister of religion of, or a person holding a responsible position in, a religious denomination or organisation or officials of the Department of Home Affairs can be designated as marriage officers.

A marriage officer shall, before he solemnizes a marriage, ensure that he has been furnished with the required documents and each of the parties to the marriage complies with the relevant legal provisions. After the marriage has been solemnized, the marriage officer, the parties to the marriage and two competent witnesses shall sign the marriage register and two copies of the register of such marriage before they leave the premises where the marriage took place. The marriage officer shall, after the marriage register has thus been signed, issue a marriage certificate to the parties, free of charge.

The original marriage register and the duplicate of the marriage register as well as any documents pertaining to the marriage, if any, shall, as legally required, be transmitted to the regional or district representative of Home Affairs in whose area the marriage officer falls. This must be done within three days from the date of marriage in order for the marriage to be registered in the computerized population register and thereafter sent to head office for microfilming.

The triplicate of the marriage register shall be retained in the book of marriage registers for checking purposes by the Department.

- g) All registrations are checked by head office and therefore no duplicate registration is supposed to occur.

4. Local registrars

- a) The Director-General may, subject to such conditions as he may deem necessary, in writing authorize any person, whether or not he is in the service of the State, or an officer or category of officers or an employee or category of employees or a person or category of persons in the Public Service, to exercise or perform, in general or in a particular case or in cases of a particular nature, any power or duty conferred or imfased on the Director-General by or in terms of this Act - Births and Deaths Registration Act, 1992 (Act No. 51 of 1992). No assistant registrars exist. The Department of Home Affairs renders a service to people of all groups, who communicate in any of the eleven official languages.

The registration of births, marriages and deaths is the department's responsibility and the work will be done as;

- b) an official is in the service of the Department,
- c) fulltime,
- d) the regional offices provide training,
- e) the salary scale of a junior clerk is R12 174 - R21 174 and of a senior clerk R22 056 - R29 880.

The section 4 appointed officer as well as the funeral undertaker does not get paid an extra salary for the extra service rendered.

- f) Manuals are available on request.

5. The informant

In the case of any child born alive, any one of his parents or, if neither of his parents is able to do so, the person having charge of the child or a person requested to do so by the parents or the said parents must give notice of the birth. No registration of birth shall be done of a person who dies before notice of birth has been given.

Deaths

In a case of a death due to natural causes any person who was present at the death, or who became aware thereof, or who has charge of the burial concerned, shall give, as soon as practicable, notice thereof.

Marriages

Any marriage officer shall, in respect of every marriage solemnized by him, forward the documents together with the register and duplicate register to the Department of Home Affairs.

6. Civil registration archives

(a) i No records are kept at regional and district offices. All old records of birth and marriage registers from 1857 up to 1930 and the death registers from 1883 up to 1976 from the previous four provinces are kept at two different offices of the State archives in Pretoria. The other records thereafter are kept at head office in a basement flank of the building. Safety measures are sufficient and meet the requirements.

ii Provisions to safeguard. Confidentiality of the records is attained in Section 29 of the Birth and Death Registration Act which reads as follow:

"Subject to the provisions of subsection (2), no person shall publish or communicate to any other person any information obtained from documents or records mentioned in section 5(1), and which he acquired by virtue of his functions in terms of this Act or any other law, except for the purposes of this Act, judicial proceedings or the performance of functions in terms of any other law, and no person who has come into possession of any such information shall publish the information or communicate it to any other person.

(2) Notwithstanding the provisions of subsection (1), the Director-General may furnish any information in relation to a person submitted in terms of this Act to-

(a) any department of State, local authority or statutory body for any of the statutory purposes of that department, authority or body; or

(b) any person who has applied therefor in writing with a full exposition of the purposes for which the information is required and who has paid the prescribed fees, if any, provided the Director-General is satisfied that the furnishing of that information is in the interest of the person regarding whom particulars are requested or is in the public interest.

- (c) Since 1992 all birth, marriage and death registers are microfilmed. The original films are kept in a humidity room and a copy thereof in a safe place. These two rooms are in different buildings.

7. Assessment of the civil registration system

In the early years a manual system was kept. The Department amended the records to a computerized system during 1972, however, only particulars of Europeans, Coloureds and Indians were entered into the computerized population register. With the issuing of uniform identity documents during 1986, the birth particulars of black persons were also entered.

To enable the Department to possess a more reliable and correct population register the marriage and death records of black persons have been included into the population register since 1990. This system proves to be very efficient as required information can be obtained immediately if recorded. The records of persons who are not in possession of identity documents are kept in alphabetical order and are entered into the population register when application for an identity document is made.

Furthermore a project was launched months before the 1994 election to enable members of the public to register their births in order for the necessary identity documents (which was a requirement for all voters) to be issued.

Hampering factors such as remote rural areas were overcome by "satellite stations" of nearby regional and district offices, which were sent out daily to different areas to grant these people the opportunity to register their births and simultaneously apply for identity documents.

With the consequent registration of many births the population register was largely updated. With the outcome of the census results which is held approximately every five years, there was a 20% under registration observed.

8. Uses of registration records

- (a) Any individual may apply for a birth, marriage or death certificate provided that the correct particulars are submitted and the required fees paid.
- (b) Records of births, marriages and deaths are provided to Central Statistical Services free of charge. Any other government department may apply for a certificate if the required fees are paid.

IV NATIONAL VITAL STATISTICS SYSTEM

1. Legal frame of the system

A national statistical office for South Africa was established in 1914 in terms of Act No 38 of 1914 which commenced on 9 July 1914. Amongst the matters for which statistics had to be collected and disseminated, vital statistics as such were specifically stipulated. For the next 43 years this Act remained effective with only a few minor revisions.

In 1957 the 1914 Act was repealed by Act No. 73 of 1957 which commenced on 24 June 1957. This Act underwent a major revision in 1965.

The 1957 Act remained effective until 1976 when the current Statistics Act (Act No 66 of 1976) commenced on 1 June 1976.

During the last 80 years the collection, processing and dissemination of vital statistics remained the sole responsibility of the national statistical office, albeit under various names, today known as the Central Statistical Service.

2. Administrative arrangements

The Central Statistical Service (CSS) is the national statistical office in the country under the Minister Without Portfolio. As the national statistical office, the CSS is also responsible for the compilation and dissemination of demographic statistics (including vital statistics) in the country.

The subdirectorates Demographic Statistical Planning has a separate section exclusively devoted to the collection and production of vital statistics. This function is on a national centralised basis and is not shared with other government agencies and there are no sub-national arrangements for the processing of civil registration records on a provincial or other decentralised basis.

3. Procedures for reporting and monitoring

(a) Monitoring statistical reporting

With the exception of divorces no separate statistical forms for the recording of vital events are in use. The civil registration records in use for live births, foetal deaths, deaths and marriages form the basis for statistical purposes. These records are standardised for the country as a whole.

The Department of Home Affairs is responsible for the registration of vital events in the country and the contents of the registration records in use are decided on in collaboration with CSS and the Department of Health.

The form in use for the reporting of divorces is designed by the CSS and completed under the supervision of the registrars of the various divisions of the Supreme Court in the country. The layout and content, including pre-coding of certain questions facilitate data-processing.

The vital events definitions in use are in conformance with international principles as embodied in the Principles and Recommendation for a Vital Statistics System.

(b) Monitoring

The basic information on live births and marriages is received on a monthly basis from the head office of the Department of Home Affairs (also in Pretoria) on magnetic tape. From these tapes the necessary information is withdrawn for processing of data on births and marriages.

In the case of deaths and foetal deaths the original death register forms and medical certificates are received on a monthly basis from the head office of the Department of Home Affairs for coding and data-capturing.

Reporting forms for divorces are also received on a monthly basis from the registrars of the various divisions of the Supreme Court.

The section at the CSS responsible for the collection of the basic information on vital events does the necessary control on the numbers of records received compared with the same period of the previous year. If apparant shortages occur as far as live births, deaths, foetal deaths and marriages are concerned, the matter is followed up by telephone or fax with the Department of Home Affairs to recover the probable missing records.

If probable missing records are detected with divorces the matter is taken up by telephone or fax with the specific office of the registrar of the Supreme Court who is at fault, in order to rectify the matter.

4. Procedures of statistical processing

(a) Births and marriages

The basic information received on magnetic tape from the Departement of Home Affairs is translated by computer into the required format for processing at the CSS. The Department of Home Affairs makes use of the CSS's Standard Code List of Areas to code the district/place names. Fields that are not or cannot be translated are listed on hard copy for manual correction and coding by the section responsible for vital events. Coding is done by trained staff in this section with the aid of manuals and guides designed by the Vital Statistics staff in the Planning Section.

The own-designed data entry programmes (Natural/Adabas) are based on written instructions to the Programming Section by the Vital Statistics staff in the Planning Section.

Data entry is done by means of mainframe computer terminals and edited by means of a computerised own-designed programme (Natural/Adabas).

Tabulations designed by the vital statistics staff in the Planning Section are produced in Natural by the Programming Section by means of a mainframe computer.

Evaluation of tabulations is done by the Tabulation Section with the aid of control tables designed by the staff of the Vital Statistics Planning Section.

The final evaluation and preparation of publications is the responsibility of the Vital Statistics Planning Section.

(b) Deaths and foetal deaths

The death register forms received from the Department of Home Affairs are coded by trained staff in the section responsible for vital events. Causes of death are classified and coded according to the International

Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems (ICD) World Health Organization (Ninth Revision). The ICD Tenth Revision will be implemented from the 1995 data year.

Causes of death which cannot be classified by the coding staff are put aside and are being taken-up with a medical assessor from the Department of Health at regular intervals for clarification.

The district where the death occurred and the residential district of the deceased are coded with the aid of CSS's Standard Code List of Areas.

The coding of occupations and other variables is done according to written instructions from the Vital Statistics staff in the Planning Section.

The own-designed data entry and interactive edit programmes (Natural/-Adabas) are based on written instructions to the Programming Section from the Vital Statistics staff in the Planning Section. The edit programme also produces a "caution" list of rare causes of death after data entry for confirmation.

Data capturing is done by means of mainframe computer terminals.

Tabulations designed by the Vital Statistics staff in the Planning Section are produced in Natural by the Programming Section by means of a mainframe computer.

Evaluation of tabulations is done by the Tabulation Section with the aid of control tables designed by the staff of the Vital Statistics Planning Section.

The final evaluation and preparation of publications is the responsibility of the Vital Statistics Planning Section.

(c) Divorces

The reporting forms for divorces received from the various registrars of the Supreme Court are coded by the section responsible for vital events.

The CSS's Standard Code List of Areas is used to code the residential district of the plaintiff. The other variables are coded according to coding instructions designed by the Vital Statistics staff in the Planning Section.

An own-designed data entry programme (Natural/Adabas) is in use.

Data capturing is done by means of mainframe computer terminals and edited by means of a computerised own-designed programme (Natural/Adabas).

The remaining procedures up to and including publication are the same as for deaths.

The tabulations of vital statistics are as far as possible in conformation with the recommended tabulations in the Principles and Recommendations to enable international comparability of the data.

The CSS is responsible for the in-house training of coders and data entry personnel while the Department of Home Affairs trains their own personnel dealing with vital events registration and certification.

5. Publication and dissemination of vital statistics

(a) Live births

Until 1990 information on births was published annually in a statistical release containing summarised data as well as in a detailed statistical report: Births - Whites, Coloureds and Asians No 03-05-01 (1990).

Although basic information on births of Blacks was collected, it was not published due to underregistration. In 1989 for instance only 5% of the estimated live births of Blacks were registered in the year of occurrence.

Since 1991 population group was no longer required at the registration of live births due to political reasons. Since then only numbers of recorded births by district, province and the country as a whole are published annually in a statistical release: Recorded Births P0305.

The last statistical release on births was issued in respect of 1992 while the tabulations for 1993 are currently being processed.

(b) Deaths and (c) foetal deaths

Until 1990 information on deaths in respect of each of the four population groups was published annually in statistical releases containing summarised data and in detailed statistical reports.

As from 1991 no distinction between the various population groups is made and information on deaths for all population groups combined is published in statistical release P0309 as well as a detailed statistical report.

The last statistical report, Recorded Deaths No 03-09-01 (1992) is in respect of 1992, while the tabulations for 1993 are currently being processed.

(d) Marriages

Until 1990 only information in respect of marriages of the Asian, Coloured and White population groups was processed and published annually in a statistical release containing summarised data as well as a detailed statistical report: Marriages and Divorces of Whites, Coloureds and Asians No 03-07-01. Most marriages of the Black community are solemnised according to tribal law or custom and are not registered. This may change in future.

As from 1991 no distinction between the different population groups is made. The last statistical report: Marriages and Divorces No 03-07-01 (1992) is in respect of 1992, while the tabulations for 1993 are currently being processed.

(e) Divorces

Divorces resulting from legally solemnised marriages are processed and are published annually in statistical release P0307 containing summarised information as well as in a detailed statistical report: Marriages and Divorces of Whites, Coloureds and Asians No 03-07-01. The last statistical report Marriages and Divorces No 03-07-01 (1992) is in respect of 1992, while the tabulations for 1993 are currently being processed.

A delay in the processing and publication of vital statistics was caused by the introduction of a new mainframe computer with the result that all programmes for data entering, processing, editing and tabulation had to be redesigned.

6. Assessment of the vital statistics system

In order to evaluate the scope and quality of the civil registration system it is possible to compare information obtained from the system with the results obtained from surveys done by the CSS and other research institutions.

The October Household Survey (OHS) as well as the population census of 1991 can be utilised for this purpose. As far as other institutions are concerned, the research done on fertility and mortality by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) could also be used to analyse the completeness of birth and death registrations in the country.

The October Household Survey

The October Household Survey (OHS) is an annual survey conducted by the CSS. In 1993 the main aim of the survey was to gather information on unemployment and the informal sector of the economy. It was however decided to include a few questions on births and deaths in an effort to obtain more accurate information for the two mentioned variables. The number of births and deaths for the year preceding the survey were estimated from the survey. As the survey included the variable ethnic group it was possible to calculate births and deaths for the four population groups separately. The variable ethnic group was scrapped from the registration system in 1991 and thus made direct comparisons on a population group basis impossible.

The Brass method of calculating Total Fertility Rate (TFR) was used to calculate TFRs for the four population groups based on information obtained for children ever born and children born in the year preceding the survey. The estimated number of births was then calculated by applying the obtained age-specific fertility rates to the corresponding cohorts of women 15-49 years.

When compared to the registered births for 1990 the 1993 survey confirmed that nearly 100% of births of Whites, Coloureds and Asians are registered. The corresponding figure for Blacks is 13%.

The black population contribute the majority of births in the country due to the size and level of fertility of this population group. This fact, together with the fact that the majority of black births are not registered, leads to the conclusion that the registration of births in the country is far from complete.

The same phenomenon of underregistration also applies for deaths although not to the same extent. Because of an already lengthy questionnaire the OH survey gathered information on deaths during the year preceding the survey

only. It was thus not possible to apply indirect techniques on the basic data. The sample was also too small to calculate accurate information on deaths by single year or five-year age groups. When compared to the registered deaths for 1990 the 1993 survey again confirmed the suspicion that nearly 100% of deaths amongst Whites, Coloureds and Asians are registered. The figure for Blacks is 37%.

The census of 1991

The results of the 1991 Population Census also showed that registration of births and deaths is nearly complete amongst Whites, Coloureds and Asians and less complete in the case of Blacks. More similar TFRs and death rates were deduced from the census than those obtained for the OHS.

Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC)

Due to the incompleteness of birth and death registrations for Blacks, the HSRC conducted several surveys during the 1970's and the 1980's to gather information on Black fertility and mortality. The results obtained by the HSRC are comparable with the CSS's own surveys and thus imply basically the same magnitude of underregistration.

As far as late registrations of births are concerned it can be noted that the CSS publishes data according to year of reporting as well as year of the actual event. Due to the gross underregistration of births for Blacks, this information was excluded from the CSS reports up to the year 1990. Since 1991, as mentioned earlier, vital events are no longer recorded by population group. In 1991, for example, 299 946 of the total of 537 999 registered births were in respect of late registrations.

With regard to the reporting of marriages and divorces the majority of the legal marriages and divorces do in fact reach the CSS. As discussed in paragraph 5, the majority of marriages of Blacks are solemnised according to tribal law or custom and are therefore not registered.

The Births and Deaths Registration Act, 1992 (Act No 51 of 1992) was an effort to improve the vital registration system of the country by making it easier for respondents to register vital events.

7. Users of vital statistics

The main users of vital statistics in the country are:

- Department of Health
- Department of Population Development
- Department of Home Affairs
- Human Sciences Research Council
- Medical Research Council
- Universities

These users obtain information from statistical releases and reports, special tabulations as well as full data sets on magnetic tape.

Although there is not a standing committee on vital events, the above-mentioned and other users liaise closely with the Central Statistical Service and participate actively when invited to serve on advisory committees regarding vital statistical matters.

V. CO-ORDINATION AMONG GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS

In South Africa the statistical function is centralised and the Central Statistical Service is the national statistical office, while the Department of Home Affairs is the only body responsible for civil registrations. Liaison takes place between these two Departments.

The subdirectorates Demographic Statistical Planning at the CSS is responsible for the Population Census as well as for vital statistics.

VI. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The vital statistics system in the country can be improved if civil registrations become more complete.

Problems

i) Administrative and legal factors

Due to the unpredictable flow of registrations at certain primary registration units, it is not always possible to give the necessary attention to every individual registration in respect of completeness.

In terms of the Births and Deaths Registration Act, 1992 deaths due to unnatural causes are only registered as such (and not in detail) and therefore the real cause of death is not stated.

Marriages solemnised according to tribal law or custom are not registered.

ii) Technical factors

At present it is not possible to computerise all primary registration units in the rural areas due to lack of electricity and cost effectiveness.

iii) The public

Although a large portion of the population may be aware of the registration of births and deaths they probably do not realise the importance of registering the events timeously. In rural areas some people may not even be aware of the fact that births and deaths must be registered at all.

Strategies

No short-term solutions for the problems mentioned are foreseen, only medium-term to long-term measures may be attainable.

i) More staff at certain primary registration units could improve the quality of registrations.

The Births and Deaths Registration Act, 1992 should be amended in order that the actual cause of death be stated in the case of an unnatural death as in the past.

Marriages solemnised according to tribal law or custom should be registered in terms of the Law.

Health personnel should be more involved with the actual registration of births and deaths.

- ii) An awareness campaign directed at the public should be launched to stress the importance of the registration of vital events. Political leaders could play a major role in this regard.

Due to the political history of the country the civil registration system was highly politicised. This inevitably led to negative attitudes of the majority of the population towards the civil registration system. With the new Government in place, these negative attitudes will probably diminish.