

# SOME OBSERVATIONS ON CIVIL REGISTRATION IN FRENCH-SPEAKING AFRICA<sup>1</sup>

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## Introduction

This article traces the development of civil registration in the Francophone countries of Africa and gives an account of the major problems facing these countries. It suggests that priority be given to the improvement of civil registration for administrative and demographic purposes, and that the project be approached with realism in its task of making civil registration a part of the national tradition.

### *Basic principle of vital registration*

The countries of black Francophone Africa generally have available three administrative sources of information on their population: the administrative census to enumerate certain population types (taxable persons, subjects, voters); the register of external migratory movements to enumerate persons who enter and leave the national territory; and vital registration to identify and specify the administrative status of each individual. If these three procedures functioned normally, every country would be able, at any time  $t$ , to know the actual size of its population in relation to an earlier estimate made at time  $t_0$ :

$$P_t = P_{t_0} + (B-D) + (I-E)$$

where:

- $P_t$  is the population at time  $t$ ;
- $P_{t_0}$  is the population at time  $t_0$ ;
- $B-D$  is the crude natural increase (births minus deaths) for the period  $t$  to  $t_0$ ; and
- $I-E$  is the migratory balance (immigrants minus emigrants) for the period  $t$  to  $t_0$ .

But, even today, none of the three procedures is generally able to furnish the necessary information for the annual calculation of the population size. Population at time  $t_0$  is usually obtained as a result of crude, costly, and infrequent operations (general population censuses) available to substitute for the administrative census; vital registration, often defective and incomplete, does not furnish annual crude natural increase; and international migration is, in general, poorly known.

In countries where vital registration functions normally, processing of the data is of interest especially to demographers to establish parameters to measure fertility, mortality and nuptiality. In other countries, censuses and demographic surveys are the only sources of information on births and deaths, and they do not provide current data.

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## Vital Registration Situation in the Countries of Black Africa

Modern vital registration was introduced by the colonizers, most often in the 19th or early 20th century. At first, its objectives were in direct relation to the needs of the colonial government, that is, they hardly concerned the African population, at least outside the urban centers.

In 1959, official vital registration in Francophone Africa yielded an incomplete registration of births and a totally unusable registration of deaths in both urban and rural areas. In 1965, the reporting centers were unequally visited, perhaps satisfactorily in some large agglomerations—mainly for births—but most often sporadically in rural areas. By 1970, the system had improved, but mainly in the large agglomerations (in Senegal, for example, coverage is estimated at 5 percent in rural areas but is almost complete in Dakar). At the national level, coverage in several countries is estimated at 50 percent for births, 30 percent for deaths, and 10 percent for marriages. Beyond the fact that these estimates have practically never been verified, such national averages mask very large disparities among areas or regions within countries.

To our knowledge, two countries are exceptions: Mauritius, where the first important regulation establishing vital registration was by royal ordinance in April 1667, and Madagascar, where vital registration was established by royal decree in July 1878. Currently, in Mauritius, coverage is satisfactory for births and deaths; in Madagascar, national coverage approaches 80 percent for births and exceeds 50 percent for deaths.

In 1970, of 16 Francophone countries of West and Central Africa, only seven published any vital registration statistics in their Bulletin, and these were limited to distributions by age and sex.

The only African countries having complete registration<sup>2</sup> are Egypt and six small island nations or territories (Cape Verde, Mauritius, Réunion, Saint Helena, São Tome, and Seychelles), or less than a tenth of the total population of the African continent. Therefore, one might ask whether the necessary conditions for the proper operation of vital registration are present in many countries and even whether all countries really are concerned about the development of a vital registration system.

The general secretariat of the Organisation Commune Africaine Malgache et Mauricienne published a study on this subject in 1974 entitled, "The Situation of Vital Registration in the Countries of OCAM."<sup>3</sup> The study reported that initial legislative codes for vital registration were established as early as 1667 in Mauritius and as recently as 1963 in Rwanda. Most codes have been modified over time with a new feature requiring a unique and obligatory vital registration for everyone at the national level. These new codes regulate vital registration and specify the events that are to be captured, often only births, deaths, and marriages.

Generally, vital registration appears to be an institution with both social and legal features. Because of that, guardianship is almost always taken up by the Department of the Interior for administrative management, with legal authority under the responsibility of the Justice Department to confer authenticity on the vital registration records. The Statistical Office is rarely called upon for vital registration, *a fortiori* for processing of the registrations.

The OCAM study underscores the huge disparities that can exist among and within countries with regard to the number of vital registration centers and to the numerical size of the populations served by the centers and the geographic area covered. The registrar, who has administrative

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<sup>2</sup>The United Nations considers as "complete" a registration system in which the rate of underreporting is officially under 10 percent.

<sup>3</sup>OCAM in 1974: Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Dahomey (now Benin), Gabon, Côte d'Ivoire, Madagascar, Mauritius, Niger, Rwanda, Senegal, Togo, and Upper Volta (now Burkina Faso).

responsibility for the records, is usually the local representative of the central office. Nevertheless, enforcement is the duty of agents who are also responsible for numerous other tasks, often more demanding ones than vital registration. Training usually takes place on the job.

Two systems of registration are practiced: a sedentary vital registration in most countries; or a sedentary/itinerant arrangement in some others, with or without use of a village record book. It appears that where the method is adapted to the area, sedentary in urban areas, sedentary and itinerant in rural areas, the results are relatively better.

For all the countries studied by OCAM, five types of principal documents were identified for the inscription and registration of vital events:

- certificates (documents prepared prior to establishing a record);
- records (single-sheet or multiple-entry registers, eventually existing in several copies);
- duplicates, copies, sworn affidavits;
- summary statements of the records drawn up in a center and/or indexes of the records;
- various other documents (burial permits, family records).

The time limits for reporting set by law attempt to strengthen the obligation to report. They vary by country.

Usually, registration of all vital events is free of charge. However, registration taxes do exist, not always officially, and these may vary in both cases from one region to another within a country.

The OCAM study shows that the development of vital registration encounters four categories of obstacles:

- the administrative system;
- the staff;
- the network of transmission;
- almost always, an insufficient motivation of the authorities and of the population.

The assessment of OCAM thus is not optimistic.

### **Obstacles and Observation Difficulties**

#### *The government*

In many countries, the government considers other tasks more important than vital registration, and thus it is not motivated to take the necessary measures to improve it. This attitude often provides an easy alibi for putting the responsibility for the mediocrity of the institution back on the informants. If, "tomorrow," all vital events were reported on time, in most cases the vital registration staff would be hard put to register all the events.

The question to be asked, then, is this: Why bother? The African reality points out that there are several possible "necessities" for a vital registration system:

- social necessity (the proof of the existence of an individual);
- purely administrative necessity;
- fiscal necessity;
- planning necessity;
- statistical necessity.

None of these seem to be well understood in most countries, since the governments are satisfied with short-term solutions. Administrative censuses—though of very uneven quality—often seem to satisfy the principal need for rough estimates of global trends of a population or for a general estimate of the per capita tax base, where it exists. Statisticians and planners in certain sectors—public health in particular—are the most sensitive to the importance of vital registration.

For ministries such as Planning, Development, Economy, and City Planning, the demand for demographic data is satisfied by means of various studies, either direct (ad hoc surveys), indirect (cross-checking, remote sensing), or secondary (more refined processing of a census, for example), because a national system of vital registration is difficult to establish in terms of both financial and human resources and thus is considered outside the needs expressed by the ministers. The time factor is often wrongly brought up as the major obstacle because, when resources are lacking, only time will permit a favorable outcome.

### *Legislation*

Current legislation regulating vital registration in Africa is not, for the most part, adapted to reality, but that is not what impedes a system from functioning. Whatever the legislation, the system works if someone who is motivated takes charge of it. If the principle of an adapted national vital registration is acknowledged, before attempting any reform the political authority should carry out an in-depth study of the customary law still in effect and its impact on the events pertinent to vital registration. Marriages, kinship ties and alliances are good subjects to explore; births, with respect to the time limits for reporting (which, currently, are often too short in traditional circles in relation to local customs), are another. It is also necessary to convince the legal writers to be less fastidious about form; it is not necessary for the records to be too detailed. Finally, to reform the codes, it is necessary to set up a real collaboration among the principal departments concerned: Justice, Interior, and Statistics.

### *The registration system*

All the studies undertaken on the subject underscore the weaknesses of the registration system, especially in rural areas. The number of centers is insufficient, procedures are too complicated and controls nonexistent. The studies also underscore the extreme isolation in which each center vegetates with the absence of supervision. The sedentary nature of the centers, the marginalized activity of vital registration in relation to other administrative responsibilities, a renovation of often deficient registers, the nonpreservation of files, the need for a client to return several times before receiving an official paper recording his report, and the scale of official (and unofficial) fees are so many additional obstacles.

In industrialized countries, the only document proving the existence or the death of a person is a medical report; there is no vital registration record without the medical record furnished by the doctor. In Africa, it seems that medical units are the best collectors of information on births and deaths and have the best infrastructure; moreover, they are generally the most esteemed. Their coverage rate, however, is often quite inadequate, especially in rural areas.

### *The staff*

It is certain that many vital registration centers in Africa do not have a qualified staff. Recruitment is deficient and training takes place only on the job. The obstacles of deficient recruitment standard and training would be overcome more easily with "simplified" registration,

with the establishment of just a proper record and a minimum of data processing. In addition, size of staff is insufficient, more because of the officials' other responsibilities than of their number. To agents occupied with other "more engrossing" tasks, often without clear and precise instruction for filling in the records, establishing summary registers, transmitting them to the supervisor, and receiving informants, it becomes illusory to explain that their work is important and of national usefulness, and even more so when the pay and status of the employee are absurdly low.

### *The population*

Many people live without an official record to sanction their birth or their marriage. The society knows their kinship and their alliances and customarily takes them into account when it is a matter of choosing a spouse, of paternity, or of distributing the estate of the deceased. But people move, and for that it is necessary to own a document that vouches for one's identity. A sworn affidavit can be established when the child's education begins if it is required. But, in certain cases, the availability of a sworn affidavit has become one of the major obstacles to the development of vital registration. Certain procedures for acquiring it constitute a large obstacle to the awareness of the population of the value of vital registration, of the duty, for example, of parents to declare the birth of an infant. In many countries, no campaign of sensitization and of information concerning the value and utility of vital registration is undertaken. It is here that education can play a major role. It is necessary to free the population from its fear of the system, a fear which arose in part from certain colonial practices.

### *Difficulties of reporting*

Certain difficulties in reporting can be mentioned here concerning:

- the identification of an individual and the question of names;
- marriage;
- the reporting of deaths and causes of death; and
- civil status and migration.

So that an individual can be identified, he should have a well-defined name that he will keep for life and which is known both to the government and to private persons with whom he deals. The rules for passing on the name should be well defined. The problem of names is not frequent, but one must be able to identify it when it exists. Sometimes in Africa a person may have an official or public name and other variant names according to the speaker. A name can also vary in time and space, often to reflect changes in social status or change of group.

Registration of marriages, renunciations, and divorces pose an extremely complex problem in black Africa because of a large conjugal variability in certain population groups and the diversity and confusion of customs, traditions, and religions. These problems should be approached by a study of customary law in relation to a system of vital registration, especially to clearly define the situations encountered.

In the case of deaths, a person may be interested in reporting a death to remove the deceased from the tax rolls and cut off the charge to the village. One may also be interested in *not* reporting a death for reasons of pension or retirement, and cases of apparently exceptional longevity are thus found in Africa, as elsewhere. Causes of death are an important element in Africa, and vital registration could play a role in recording them.



Some countries have established a population register with obligatory reporting of changes of residence, which can pose problems in terms of individual and democratic freedom. Although this is usually not the case in Africa, a population register is not desirable under certain political regimes.

## **General Principles and Characteristics of a System of Registration and Vital Statistics in Africa**

### *Frame of reference*

A system of registration and vital statistics has two complementary bases: The first is the obligatory, continuous, and permanent reporting of the principal vital events—births, deaths, marriages—and of their characteristics, allowing the establishment of official documents conforming to current legislation, destined to furnish proof of the event, and called vital registration records. The records are written up in registers devised especially for each type of event. The second is the establishment, at the time of registration of vital events, of a statistical bulletin presenting the basic relevant characteristics of the events themselves and of the persons to whom they pertain, including the transmission of these bulletins, their assembly and their processing for the elaboration, analysis, evaluation, presentation and distribution of the vital statistics gathered.<sup>4</sup>

### *The administrative system*

Vital registration depends administratively on the tutelage ministry, usually the Ministry of the Interior; and legally on the Ministry of Justice, which confers authenticity on each record by the numbering and initialing of the registers. The National Statistical Office processes and distributes the vital statistics. The creation of a national technical organization seems to be necessary to ensure the required coordination between the ministries; to ensure the responsibility for all aspects of the organization, administration, and operation of vital registration; and to satisfy one of the main conditions of the undertaking—the continuity of the operation until the perpetuity of the system is assured and national coverage is satisfactory. But it is not by creating this organization that the problem of vital registration is resolved, for it is only a tool. In a large country, there is also a further need for decentralization at the regional level.

### *The staff*

The registrar is the representative of the public authority. He is trained to guarantee the execution of the law and ensure the transmission of the data. He is assisted in his task by the operational agents who have a particular status and who, like him, have received theoretical and practical training to ensure the continuity and permanence of registration.

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<sup>4</sup>The establishment of a statistical bulletin may be the objective of a second phase in the establishment of the system, but from the beginning the registration necessary to the establishment of the record should have a dual legal and statistical role.

### *Registration*

The law designates in a precise manner the personnel, administration, and authority required to report a vital event to the qualified authorities, the place where the declaration should take place, and the time limits set for registration. The law likewise designates the form and content of the records and the registers, as well as their number and their use for statistical purposes (summary statements or statistical bulletins).

### *Controls*

The justice authorities oversee the enforcement of the law. The government ensures the management controls (buildings, property, materials, personnel, equipment, documents, files). The control of transmissions (copies, receipts, time limits) and the editing of statistics (processing stages, coverage) are also essential parts of the system.

### *Remarks*

The raw data collected in the field are from the start rudimentary: the existence of the event (birth or death) and a rather limited minimum number of characteristics, the accuracy of which depends little, if at all, on the qualifications of the person who records them. Yet, the data have meaning only if the passing on of information is assured and if one gives the people reasons to provide the information (administrative and statistical reasons are rarely convincing to the villagers). The village committee originated from this concept to integrate the system into a decentralized structure.

The problem still remains of how to link the reporting posts with the registration center, convert the declaration and registration into a vital record, and get it back to the informant. To link the collection system to the institution, that is, a statistical technique to an administrative obligation, is the most difficult obstacle to overcome. It can be overcome in several steps in rural areas and can be dealt with directly in urban areas.

## **The Difficult Vital Registration Experiment in UDEAC**

So as not to confine ourselves to generalities, we have chosen to present as an example the approach of five countries of UDEAC<sup>5</sup> to develop a strategy to improve vital registration.

### *Point of departure*

Starting out, the four countries of UDEAC found a more or less comparable situation in the demographic knowledge of their populations, which can be characterized as follows:

- insufficiency of official administrative procedures (administrative census and vital registration);

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<sup>5</sup>Union Douanière et Economique de l'Afrique Centrale (UDEAC) comprised four countries (Cameroon, Central African Republic, Congo, and Gabon), to which Equatorial Guinea was added later. With regard to the demographic projects, Chad was added to the group as a fifth participant (UDEAC-Chad).

- too great an expense for a periodic general census;
- lack of continuity in the effort for a better demographic knowledge in spite of some good classical or experimental surveys, the latter often limited to a single subject.

With this beginning, the Council of the Chiefs of State adopted on 18 December 1970 (in association with Chad) a common program of observation of demographic events to be carried out over a period of 10 years.<sup>6</sup> The Council quickly realized the need for a more precise aspect of the program, a necessary complement to the censuses and surveys, called system of registration and vital statistics, and the general secretariat of UDEAC proposed a conference on continuous observation and vital registration, which was held in Libreville, Gabon in 1974.

#### *Objectives of the project*

Why continuous observation and vital registration? After the adoption of the initial program in 1970, two trends were delineated within UDEAC:

- the need to have available as soon as possible data on demographic change (multiround surveys or continuous observation); vital registration was another field to study and deal with in the long term;
- the need for a rapid improvement in the system of registration and vital statistics, even to the detriment of an immediate knowledge of data on change at the national level.

These positions resulted in different ideas worked out in the countries:

- the improvement of vital registration at the national level would require a long period of time—one or several generations; during this long period of time, could censuses and surveys also be financed?
- the pilot continuous observation operations, initial operations of the program, were more or less a failure, depending on the country.<sup>7</sup>

The Libreville conference posed the following question: "How to have both demographic data and the improvement of vital registration?" The general secretariat of UDEAC proposed a response 4 years later in 1978, at the time of an ad hoc commission on vital registration at Libreville. This proposition was the result of an in-depth study of CREP<sup>8</sup> on all the work carried out in the region and elsewhere.

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<sup>6</sup>In 1970, it was not yet a question of vital registration but of an institution to develop it.

<sup>7</sup>Incomplete operations, resources insufficient or not respected, evaluations planned but not carried out, experiments with village record-books abandoned or not carried out, insufficient motivation at all levels, lack of support from outside organizations.

<sup>8</sup>CREP is the Centre Régional d'Etude de la Population.



## *The CREP Project*

Emphasizing the operational aspect, that is, the administrative side of vital registration, the general secretariat of UDEAC proposed a project for the improvement of the system of registration and statistics of vital events as a basis for study, not as a model, in order to plan a national strategy, followed by a national project in each country, adapted to local conditions. The CREP Project comprises four principal studies.

- The requirement for preliminary studies:
  - an exact inventory of existing centers and their personnel; evaluation of the budget of vital registration;
  - detailed cartography for an optimal administrative subdivision;
  - study of a consistent, rapid, and realistic network for transmitting the data;
  - sensitization of the local authorities;
  - in-depth analysis of existing legislative codes on vital registration and of customary laws and traditions;
  - evaluation of the quality of the forms used and of their eventual simplification;
  - study of the role and the necessary and sufficient tasks for each agent in the hierarchy.
- Study of the reporting offices and of the registers to be used:
  - increase in rural offices;
  - register in triplicate—original, copy for the central office, and receipt.
- Study of the theoretical and practical training of operational personnel:
  - training of trainers;
  - manual of basic training (a collaboration of CEA/OCAM/UDEAC);
  - operations guide for vital registration agents (collaboration of CEA/OCAM/UDEAC);
  - a study of indirect sensitivity training for vital registration—law faculty, national school of administration, school of judges, faculty of medicine, schools for nurses, paramedics, social scientists, teachers, etc.; civic instruction in all institutions of learning, in the army, etc.;
  - periodic retraining of staff.

- Study of the financial strategy of national projects:
  - how to free up funds and better distribute existing funds;
  - how to restrict outside financial aid;
  - how to relay outside financial aid if it occurs.

This project—the studies carried out in the framework of the project—comes under three principal ideas:

- a political will of the countries expressed by a continuing moral and financial commitment vis-à-vis the national project;
- the registration of births and deaths satisfies administrative and statistical needs—it is necessary to place at the disposition of the population an easily accessible administrative system, operating properly and served by a competent staff;
- it is necessary to work in the short term if one desires eventually to find a national solution in the long term. In other words, the national project should be put into place in one region, even in a part of a region in rural areas, and in just one agglomeration in urban areas. This objective permits a maximum reduction in cost, for obvious reasons of existing resources, but also allows one to "limit the damage" in case of failure.<sup>9</sup>

Thus, the project takes the following position: the improvement of vital registration has priority and has dual objectives, administrative and demographic. However, there remain three other possible options:

- obtainment of vital statistics data does not have high priority and the existing system should be left as best as possible in the hope that it will improve with time;
- rapid obtainment of vital statistics data does have high priority and data should be obtained by means other than vital registration;
- rapid obtainment of vital statistics data and the improvement of vital registration both have high priority; thus, both a demographic survey and actions to improve vital registration are needed.

#### *Simplified presentation of the working model*

On the one hand, there is an important effort to ruralize the system with collection at two levels:

- the reporting office;
- the vital registration center.

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<sup>9</sup>In 1975, IDRC (Canada) estimated the cost of 3 years of operation among 600,000 inhabitants, of which 100,000 in urban areas, at 55 million FCFA. This population corresponds to about 45,000 births per year. After the first 3 years, cost of the subsequent phases would be, also according to IDRC, from 30 to 40 percent less.

On the other hand, there is a national Department of Vital Registration and a Department of Statistics.

From one end to the other in the chain, there are persons to convince, including the operations staff who must also be trained, checked on, and retrained.

### *The reporting office*

The idea is to set up an office for a village or a group of villages—it is a question of the size of the corresponding population—that has available a medical, social, or rural infrastructure or in which one can create a village committee. In fact, it is doubtless less difficult to attack the problem at the elementary collective level than to think only in terms of individuals.

It is also a problem of density (low density but large distances to travel), of the nature of the settlement (grouped or dispersed), and of accessibility in all seasons.

A part-time vital registration agent with fixed remuneration has available only one reporting register, with triplicate copies—the original, the copy intended for the vital registration center, and the reporting receipt (which is not a record). This agent periodically submits the appropriate copy to the center, retrieves the completed records, and distributes them upon his return. He is under the control of the registrar at the vital registration center.

*The vital registration center.* The idea is to have a center in all the rural communes and urban divisions, operating full time. However, in regions of low administrative density, one can anticipate a larger number of vital registration centers than the number of rural communes. The center receives the declarations, retrieves them from the local offices, draws up the records, makes up the summary reports—or Statistical Bulletin—and transmits the information; it controls the local offices under its authority. It is under the control of the next higher administrative level and of the procurator of the lower court.

*The national vital registration office.* The central agency to be created, it is responsible for the organization, administration, and operation of vital registration. It has a department charged with sensitization programs.

*The national statistical office.* It processes the information that it receives and publishes the vital registration statistics. It ensures, together with the national vital registration office, the verification of the quality of the summaries, down to the reporting offices, and conducts periodic sample surveys to evaluate the coverage of the system.

*The village record-book.* A particular document prepared by CREP deals with village committees and record-books. It is the result of a thought process carried out during several years in the field and of an understanding of the area. It concerns rural areas.

It is probable that, in time, small rural villages will disappear to the benefit of larger villages having basic management and operational infrastructures—government, agriculture, health, markets, and vital registration. These basic infrastructures are possible if one utilizes the least expensive techniques supportable by the local budget, simple techniques that are easily controllable by a motivated local government. These techniques are thus the basis for the basic administrative infrastructure and a development approach that was put into place by the countries of UDEAC in the period 1970 to 1980—the village committee. Of course, active participation of the population is necessary for the creation and effective functioning of these committees, which prepare the eventual permanent administrative structures within the framework of integrated rural development. This willingness for community development was real in 1978 in UDEAC—success of the village health committees in the prefecture of Ouham in Central African Republic, and village committees established since 1974 in the Congo.

Concerning vital registration, one should return to the ideas of reporting offices and of village record-books in the desire to verify or recall that these have already worked elsewhere.<sup>10</sup> The village record-book is a memorandum, a written testimony of births and deaths; it can have a pedagogic value. But it is of use only if it is coherent, verified, and processed, and works only if it registers a minimum of information; a simplified reporting form for a birth, for example, might be as shown in Figure 1. Thus it is a basic register, but it can be made in triplicate as already discussed.

For the general secretariat of UDEAC, the components of a new system are to be determined according to the particular needs and conditions of each country. It would be interesting for the four countries to make known the situation of their vital registration today in relation to the approach to the problem proposed by the general secretariat between 1970 and 1980.

Name _____	Control stamp of vital registration register:
was born _____	
son, daughter of _____	
and of _____	
at _____	No. (RECORD)
_____	

Figure 1. Simplified Reporting Form for a Birth

### Conditions Inherent to the Development of Vital Registration

Patience and time.

Certain specific requirements:

- Absence of social, religious, or ethnic discrimination
- Need, from the start, for a strong, centralized authority for the definition of concepts, the enforcement of the law and the institutions, and the utilization of resources
- Conviction on the part of managers regarding the utility of vital registration
- Public safety and adequate means of communication
- Adequate number of rural centers
- Adequate staffing in number and competence
- Definition and quality of registration that is free of charge
- Operational and rapid means of transmission of information
- Ensured data processing in a regular manner, with periodic publications
- An appropriate control system and a staff responsive to the controls

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<sup>10</sup>The existence of a village record-book is not necessarily linked to the existence of a village committee, provided that the village has a capable person motivated to use it.

A program of sensitization and motivation of the population:

- Explain what vital registration is, what the records are used for
- Present information on the advantages of having records, and the disadvantages of not having them
- Motivate the reporting of events
- Familiarize the public with reporting procedures
- Present information on the government's efforts to improve vital registration
- Convince the public to cooperate
- Establish programs targeted by population type
- Utilize all means of communication
- Take into account the literacy rate of the targeted population

Five steps for adopting the idea of vital registration:

- Perception
- Interest
- Testing
- Evaluation
- Adoption

### Conclusions

How does one engage the politician, who loves what can be seen, and seen rapidly, in an effort whose results he will not see? One must not impose vital registration but create the conditions of a dynamic, show the people little by little the value of it, until the demand comes from them. The role of the statistician and the demographer is thus to suggest, to prompt, to push the authorities to find the capability to conceive along with them this long and slow process of official, obligatory, continuous, and permanent registration of births and deaths, and then of other events, such as marriage, when the time comes. The statistician and the demographer must have patience and imagination, the principal traits of the organizations in which they work. They know that changes in a population are generally slow. They should think the same way about vital registration, being careful to assist in putting it in place and not utilizing it as if it were already complete. They should also look into one or more isolated or little-known centers where there has been good registration, perhaps for a number of years, to understand the reasons for their success. At the same time, if they have the means, they should also try to furnish demographic data that the "provisionally" deficient system cannot yet provide. On the other hand, one must discontinue those projects where recurrent expenditures—operation, continuity, growth—will not be carried out in a satisfactory manner.

Let us not be like the parents who do not report a birth and then discover happily, at the time their child enters school, the means to acquire an affidavit. Let us assist in the creation of the habit of reporting an event in order to create, with time, a tradition of vital registration.