Government of Sierra Leone
Ministry of Health and Sanitation
Office of the Deputy Chief Registrar Births and Deaths

ESTABLISHING 21ST CENTURY IDENTITY MANAGEMENT IN SIERRA LEONE

STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS FOR INTEGRATING CIVIL REGISTRATION AND IDENTIFICATION

—Draft V2—

Freetown, April 2014

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABBREVIATIONS

BEmONC	Basic Emergency Obstetric and Neonatal Care Centers (subset of PHUs)
CRC	Convention—, Committee on the Rights of the Child
CRVS	Civil Registration and Vital Statistics
DfID	Department for International development
DHS	Demographic and Health Survey
DMO	District Medical Officer
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
eID	Electronic Identity Document
EU	European Union
GNI	Gross National Income
ICF	Investment Climate Facility for Africa
ICAO	International Civil Aviation Organization
IFC	International Finance Corporation (The World Bank)
GNI PC	Gross National Income Per Capita
HMIS	Health Management Information System
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
ID	Identity document
IIVRS	International Institute for Vital Registration and Statistics
LDC	Least developed countries
MICS	Multi-Indicator Cluster Survey
MoFED	Ministry of Finance and Economic Development
MoHS	Ministry of Health and Sanitation
NASSIT	National Social Security and Insurance Trust
NCRA	National Civil Registration Authority
NEC	National Electoral Commission
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NOBD	National Office for Births and Deaths Registration
NRA	National Revenue Authority
OARG	Office of the Administrator and Civil Registrar
PHU	Primary health Unit
PRSP	Poverty reduction strategy paper
RENIEC	Registro Nacional de Identificación y Estado Civil (Peru)
SOWC	State of the World's Children
SME	Small and Medium Enterprises
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIPSIL	United Nations Integrated Peace-building Mission in Sierra Leone
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission of Refugees
UNSD	United Nations Statistics Division
UNV	United Nations Volunteers
WHO	World Health Organization (OMS)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report was commissioned in order to develop suggestions for strategic directions for government—in particular for the Birth and Death department of the Ministry of Health and Sanitation, UNICEF and its partners Plan International, Heal Sierra Leone and Christian Brothers. The mandate of UNICEF, who made this report financially possible, implies that it is especially supporting the improvement of birth registration, but it does so in full understanding that a systems-approach is needed. That, in present-day sub-Saharan Africa, implies a systems approach to the three major civil registration and identification systems: civil registration, voter registration and national ID issuance. Integrated identity management of a country government is based on certificates of birth registration as the breeder documents for all other official identity documents, and signifies the foundational role of the civil registration system for the 'ecology' of identity systems of the country.

In Sierra Leone, as in a growing number of other sub-Saharan countries, this convention is being put in doubt witness actual governance action that "puts the national ID and voter registration carriage before the civil registration horse". Countries in Africa with incomplete civil registration embark on the introduction of biometric identity documents. The cost of registration of a vital event is around one US dollar in sub-Saharan Africa. The cost of biometric voter registration in Sierra Leone in 2012 was USD 10 per voter, and a smart card that the country plans to introduce may cost about USD 16 (as in South Africa). Smart cards have a definitive validity (often 5 or 10 years), i.e. they need to be replaced multiple times during a person's life. Voter registration requires updates as well. Only a civil registration system is low-cost and suitable to a granular service delivery system, such as is the case in Sierra Leone, where civil registration is embedded in the health infrastructure (1,222 PHUs)—an internationally recommended practice. In established democracies polls cost just USD 1 to USD 3 per voter, *because they have an established civil registration system. Unfortunately, donors that would like to reduce their support to elections (notwithstanding that they are essential for good governance and democracy) encourage governments to introduce (biometric) national IDs as voter ID—putting the carriage before the horse.* This may ultimately prove an unsustainable and more costly solution. National ID systems lose their "currency" and accuracy in the same fashion as voter registrations do, unless a functioning civil registration generates a proper population register to feed the national ID system.

Ironically, as this report shows, the ministry of Health and Sanitation in Sierra Leone owns the 'crown jewels' of national identity management, although they are like an Old Master hidden under a pile of dust in a pawnshop. Only MoHS has the 'footprint', the service infrastructure to achieve registration completeness. And it is very low-cost. Sierra Leone is 4th for birth registration in ECOWAS, beating countries like Ghana and Nigeria. In 70 years Sierra Leone's birth registration birth registration rate climbed from 5% to 78%. If the country emulated South Africa (from 30% to 95% in fifteen years) it could have birth registration completeness very soon. Birth registration in Sierra Leone is also

remarkably equitable: there is little difference between rich or poor, urban or rural. Even death registration, though perhaps not more than 13% or so of deaths is registered, is high in comparison to the majority of sub-Saharan countries. But this is hardly known and appreciated in Sierra Leone, or even within the ministry itself. This is making the fragile civil registration system extremely vulnerable.

Sophisticated identity systems are not sustainable unless civil registration provides the foundation for them. The rush towards organizational and legal integration and technological sophistication in Sierra Leone needs to be rechanneled into a judicious process towards reform. This report makes suggestions how this reform process may be given shape, and what instruments could be used. There is political commitment to reform, but it needs to become communicated, broad-based and broadly supported. There is a need for a detailed reform plan with a clear organizational vision on integrated identity management. Necessary investments require a financial commitment; support should be forthcoming when a healthy business case is made. A judicious reform process implies that legal reform aims to put in place a state-of-the-art new law; this should be given time. For an expedient reform process interim legal measures can be put in place in stead. Civil registration services require to be embedded in an already existing service infrastructure (interoperability), which in Sierra Leone was realized already in 1929. Modern, affordable technology is available to replace the pen-and-paper based system by an online digital system. Mobile phone technology is available for notification of vital events and production monitoring in offline service points. The example of South Africa shows that developing countries can leapfrog and reach registration completeness within decades rather than centuries as the developed countries needed. South Africa introduced in 1998 the child support grant as the incentive that introduced anywhere will associate birth registration with a tangible, immediate benefit that speaks to the reality of the large majority of people. Birth registration is a child right indeed (Article 7 of the Convention of the Rights of the Child) that Sierra Leone has signed up to, but given Maslow's hierarchy of needs one cannot criticize Sierra Leoneans of limited means for the choices they make. Financial incentives can make all the difference. Another major instrument for reform is to look over the fence and learn from successful practice in other countries; South Africa especially has a wealth of best practice to show. It improved its birth registration from 30% to over 90% in 15 years.

This report concludes with suggested recommendations specifically to the ministry of Health and Sanitation, UNICEF and partners. This year will be a transitional year for the United Nations, important for the development of its support to government for 2015-2018. For that reason suggestions are made for 2014 and for 2015-2018. This is also done because there currently is uncertainty about the course the reform of national identity management will go. The earlier a consensus is reached of the continued role of the ministry of Health and Sanitation the better for the country's reform program. In the meantime a policy of "ring-fencing" the fragile civil registration service network is essential.

1. INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE OF THE DOCUMENT

The Civil Registration Centre for Development—CRC4D was invited by the Ministry of Health and Sanitation with support from UNICEF Sierra Leone for the purpose of undertaking a rapid assessment of the birth registration landscape in Sierra Leone. This included the development of suggestions for strategic directions for government (in particular for the National Office of Births and Deaths within the Ministry of Health and Sanitation), UNICEF and its partners (in particular Plan International).[1] Important other stakeholders in national identity management are equally within scope. Among government they are the agencies responsible for the civil registration of other vital events (marriage, divorce, adoption), for issuance of the national ID and for registration of voters. Among donors they are the donor agencies most associated with support to electoral registration: the World Bank, the European Union, UK Department for International Development and Irish Aid. Among civil society, they include Heal Sierra Leone and Christian Borthers, among others. This is a draft strategy for consultation.

SCOPE

Birth registration is a key child right (Convention on the Rights of the Child, articles 7 and 8). It provides newly born citizens with a legal identity and a legal relationship to the state of which they are citizens and to other citizens like them, including—especially—family members. It provides the state with legal and governance obligations towards these new citizens. Besides its legal purpose, birth (and, broader, civil) registration also has a statistical function for the generation of vital (=demographic) statistics that are used for government and private sector purposes such as taxation, government service allocation, location planning or marketing, to name just a few. Since birth registration is part of the larger civil registration system, strategies for birth registration need to take that larger systems context into account. Beyond civil registration the issuance of identity documents such as passports, driving licenses and national identity cards and the registration of voters for elections is within scope, since they functionally depend on the civil registration system or, alternatively, require relatively costly (and less reliable) identification procedures. The birth certificate is the gold standard "breeder document" for all other identity documents. Hence the strategic directions developed are focused on birth registration but they are contextualised in the broader scope of national identity management and organization.

AIM

This report aims to contribute to the development of strategic directions for national identity management and organization. It identifies the strategic

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[1] These stakeholders have formed a "UBR" (Universal Birth Registration) taskforce. During the CRC4D-mission information was obtained indicating that cabinet decisions have been taken

contributions of partners such that universal birth registration is achieved within a reasonable timeframe, e.g. within the next five years (by 2020).

TIMEFRAME

The strategic directions suggested here are subdivided into short-term and medium term strategies. This is in order that they fit within UNICEF's (and the United Nations') country programmes, viz. the United Nations 2013-2014 Transitional Joint Vision and the next four-year programme (2015—2018). An additional consideration is that, given the current, still uncertain, nature of government national identity management policy, it is judicious to plan for activity under the current situation and prepare for medium term programming when more clarity is obtained about the steps the Government of Sierra Leone will be taking. It is important to note that the United Nations High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda[2] has proposed universal birth registration as a target in the pursuance of good governance. The broader proposals of the High-Level Panel will inform the programming of governments and development partners, including the United Nations in Sierra Leone, alike.

CONSTRAINTS

The Government of Sierra Leone has not as yet undertaken the CRVS (Civil registration and vital statistics) country assessment as agreed in Durban, South Africa (September 2012) at the Conference of Ministers responsible for Civil Registration.[3] These assessments are designed to result in a national plan for the improvement of the vital statistics system. However, the work of the national taskforces (see also below) in Sierra Leone can well be seen as a substitute to the assessment as designed by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA). At the juncture of this drafting of suggested strategic directions therefore the interview inputs obtained from government officials have been used to craft a strategy that combines the thinking of officials closest to policy-making with international best practice.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE STRATEGY

The development of a strategy for birth- and death registration is primarily a responsibility of the Ministry of Health and Sanitation and its newly created interagency National Taskforce for Births and Deaths Registration, which is led by the ministry. The Taskforce works to develop and implement improved civil registration policies. International and local partners such as UNICEF, Plan International, Heal and Christian Brothers, are members of the task force and are implementing an ongoing project to raise awareness and provide technical assistance for digitization of the birth registration process.

In parallel there is a taskforce on civil registration with a focus on developing and issuing national identity cards with biometric data, and merging existing

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[2] Cf. United Nations, High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda. **A new global partnership, Eradicate poverty and transform economies through sustainable development**. New York (2013).

[3] The responsible minister (of the Ministry of Health and Sanitation) did not attend the Durban meeting.

civil registration and electoral databases.[4] This taskforce has been formed to develop a roadmap for future integrated identity management. For elections held in 2012 a new biometric voter registration was carried out. This has created a digital database with the records of 2.7 million adult citizens (the total population is close to 6 million). The electronic database of the National Registration Secretariat (NRS) holds just 300,000 records of citizens issued (new) national IDs since 2008. One of the central ideas is to use the voter registration cards and records for the extension of the coverage of the national ID database. This would also help the country carry out the ECOWAS' (Economic Community of West African States)[5] decision of 2013 that all member states introduce biometric national IDs as intraregional travel-document compliant with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) standards. Another is to merge[6] civil registration and identification functions that are now dispersed across several agencies.

The strategies suggested here can inform the work of both taskforces as inputs to the national consultation on the development of Sierra Leone's future national identity management and organization.

2. STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS

2.1 MAIN STAKEHOLDERS AND THEIR ROLES

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[4] This taskforce includes representatives of the following agencies: National Social Security and Insurance Trust (NASSIT) under the Ministry of Labour and Social Security, National Revenue Authority (NRA) under the Ministry of Internal Affairs, National Election Commission (NEC) associated with the Office of the President, the National Registration Secretariat under the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ministry of Health and Sanitation (MOHS), the Office of the Administrator and Registrar General (under the Ministry of Justice and the Attorney General), the Immigration department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), UNICEF and Plan International. The combination of this taskforce and the interagency National Taskforce for Births and Deaths Registration is under discussion.
[5] ECOWAS is a regional group of fifteen West African countries. Founded on 28 May 1975, with the signing of the Treaty of Lagos, its mission is to promote economic integration across the region.
[6] One of the sources has indicated that rather than merging (integrating) the various agencies it would rather be a bringing together of the agencies under one roof, a solution one could call "congregation".

INTRODUCTION

In surveying the landscape of identity management and organization, agencies can be classified into those that have an official (=government authorised) role in the registration of birth and the issuance of a certificate of birth and those that provide an officially recognised other identity document by the identification of individuals, generally later in life.[7] The birth certificate is generally known as the most important "breeder document": it functions as the official source document for the issuance of other identity papers.[8] Among the agencies discussed below the **National Office of Births and Deaths** within **the Ministry of Health and Sanitation** is responsible for the issuance of this most important identity document. It is also one of the oldest official agencies in Sierra Leone responsible for the issuance of identity documents.[9] Another agency with a long history is the **Office of the Administrator and Registrar General** that is responsible for "all" registration (land, business, trademarks, etc.) except births and deaths, i.e. it is responsible for marriage-, divorce- as well as adoption registration. A third agency of significance is the **National Registration Secretariat** that issues the National ID. For foreign residents in the country its responsibility overlaps with the fourth agency, the **Immigration department** that also issues its own IDs to foreign residents, as well as passports to citizens.[10] The fifth agency with an important identification role is the **National Election Commission** that is responsible for the voter rolls and issues voter IDs when needed. The NRS and the Immigration department are under the Ministry of Interior, while NEC is under the Office of the President. Since the country emerged from its civil war (1991 through 2002) Sierra Leone has successfully held major elections in 2002, 2007 and 2012, which required voter registration, of which the last one in 2011 and 2012 involved biometrics (fingerprints and photo).

Because of the key role of civil registration, and especially birth- and death registration, in providing the foundation for a country's overall identity and identification infrastructure, the analysis of the birth- and death registration is more elaborate than that for the other service providers.

MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND SANITATION, DEPARTMENT OF BIRTHS AND DEATHS

No former 'dependency' of England in Africa has a longer history of civil registration than Sierra Leone.[11] The British had become the most significant

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[7] In some countries, e.g. Malaysia or Uruguay, children whose birth is being registered are also issued a national ID, including a unique identity number.

[8] Cf. Mercer, John. *Breeder documents. The keys to identity*. **Keesing Journal of Documents & identity**, issue 29, 2009, pp. 14-17.

[9] Another old agency is the Office of the Administrator and General Registrar that, *inter alia,* is responsible for land conveyance registration. The oldest document at the National Office of Births and Deaths dates from 1893; the Office of the Administrator and General Registrar has archived conveyance registers that date back to 1856 and possibly older.

[10] The immigration department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is not included among the main stakeholders in this report. Neither is NASSIT which has a database of 300,000 records for social security and pension purposes.

[11] In other 'dependencies' birth- and death registration was introduced in 1845 in the Colony of the Gambia, in Lagos in 1867, in Zanzibar (now part of Tanzania) in 1900 (only death registration), in Kenya and Somaliland in 1904, in Uganda, North Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe)

European group in the 17th century in Sierra Leone and had a first 'factory' (trading post) from 1628. In the early 19th century Freetown served as the residence of the British governor who also was responsible for the Gold Coast (now Ghana) and the Gambia settlements. Compulsory registration of native and non-native births and deaths was introduced in the Colony of Sierra Leone (consisting of Freetown and Granville town) in 1801. Registration of births and deaths was planned from the very beginning of the Colony. The 'Rules and Instructions from the Directors of the Sierra Leone Company to the Superintendent and Council for the Settlement', issued in 1791, stipulated:

You are to take care also that a Register shall be kept of all births, deaths and marriages either of settlers or others, and that a Bill of mortality be made up with as much exactness as possible, and transmitted to us once a year at least, and still oftner at the first. You are to desire that in every case of death or material sickness, at the first the causes of disorder shall be reported to you, and they may be notified to us.

Civil registration was largely confined to the Colony and the non-natives in the "Protectorate" (proclaimed in 1896). Legislation covering the whole of what is now Sierra Leone, including the Protectorate, dates from 1 January 1914 when the 'Ordinance to consolidate and amend the law relating to the Registration of Births and Deaths' came into effect. This ordinance was amended in 1924, 1929, 1931, 1942 and 1945; for the period 1945 through 1960 no information has been found.[12] In 1960 a Births and Deaths Registration (Amendment) Act (Act No. 15, 1960) was adopted, prior to Sierra Leone acquiring its independence in 1961, which together with the Births and Deaths Registration Act (Cap 92) and the Births and Deaths (Protectorate) Registration Act (Cap 93) remained in force until in 1985 the 1983 No. 11 Births and Deaths Registration Act came into effect. Information about the extent to which these acts differed from the 1924 ordinance and its subsequent amendments is not available. The 1983 Act and the 1987 Regulations came about with support from UNFPA and an UNFPA-supported project that ran from 1980 through 1988.[13] The 1983 act finally put an end to two different registration regimes within Sierra Leone.

An important organizational measure, recommended by the 'Committee appointed by His Excellency the Governor to advise on the Amendment of

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and Nyasaland (now Malawi) in 1905, in the Gold Coast (now Ghana) in 1912 and in Tanganyika (now mainland Tanzania) in 1917, in Togoland (now Togo) in 1924 (notification of death from 1909 when a German dependency) and in 1926 in "Cameroons Province" (now part of Cameroon). In the Cape Colony (now South Africa) the Voluntary Births Registrations Act was adopted in 1880, which was later applied in the "South Africa High Commission Territories" of Basutoland (now Lesotho), Bechuanaland (now Botswana) and Swaziland. Egypt was a dependency of England only from 1882 (through 1953). Mauritius was an English dependency from 1810, and civil registration put in place by the French in 1793 was continued virtually unchanged until 1829. In the Seychelles (an English dependency from 1814), similarly, the French Civil Code applied until as late as 1893. Cf. Kuczynski R.R. **Demographic Survey of the British Colonial Empire**, Volumes I and II, London 1948-1949.

[12] Ibid Vol. I, p. 207

[13] Cf. Padmanabha, P. **Evaluation of UNFPA supported projects on civil registration and vital statistics. Consultancy report**. New York (1993). One of the international consultants working on this project hailed from India, which may explain the resemblance with civil registration law in India with regards to registration of given names. During the course of this project UNSD had not yet issued its handbook on civil registration law: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Statistics Division. **Handbook on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems. Preparation of a Legal Framework**. Series F_71E. New York (1998).

the Births and Deaths Registration Ordinance, 1924 (Cap. 16)', was the decision to place the Registration of Births and Deaths under the Control of the Deputy Director, Sanitary Service, which came into effect with the Births and Deaths Registration (Amendment) Ordinance, 1929. A main reason for this was the 'extremely high infant mortality very soon after birth'. In 1925 there were in Freetown 134 deaths of infants under fourteen days per 1,000 registered births, equivalent to 45% of all deaths under 12 months (about 300/1,000). The current infant mortality rate in Sierra Leone is still very high by international standards at 117/1,000 (2012; for the least developed countries it is 56/1,000) on average. The Committee recommended that births would be notified within 36 hours, this recommendation was not followed however. But the time for birth registration was reduced from 42 days to 15 (and for death registration from 5 to 3 days).

The 1924 amendment of the law allowed registration to be expanded to 'health districts' in the Protectorate, and Protectorate Medical Officers to assume the role of Registrar. Those districts were only few (their number rose from 15 in 1930 to 22 in 1931), however, and they were small (the largest being 1 ½ mile in radius). Registration in those districts was only compulsory if a Paramount Chief had made "a suitable request" to the colonial government; 19 made such requests and the African population covered comprised 6—7% of the total. The population of Sierra Leone was 1,768,480 in 1931 (versus 5,978,727 in 2012), of which 96,422 residing in the Colony, and 1,672,058 in the Protectorate. In the 1930s the birth and death registration rates were between 80 and 90% in the Colony, but they were virtually nil in the Protectorate which accounted for about 95% of the total population.[14] Interestingly the birth registration rates in the Western Area districts (a proxy for "The Colony") were 83% (rural) and 85% (urban) in 2010, i.e. they have hardly changed during the past 70 years. The registration rates for the other districts in 2010 vary between 56% (Tonkolili district) and 91% (Bombali district), implying a radical improvement of birth registration outside of the Freetown area in the same seven decades.[15]

<p style="text-align:center">**TEXTBOX 1: WHAT IS CIVIL REGISTRATION, BIRTH REGISTRATION?**</p>

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[14] Cf. Kuczynski, R.R., pp. 222-223. This would be equivalent to an average of only about 4—5% birth- and death registration for Colony and Protectorate together.

[15] Cf. Statistics Sierra Leone and United Nations Children's Fund. **Sierra Leone. Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2010**. Freetown(2011). There is some doubt about the 2010 MICS numbers, as they seem too high so soon after and compared to the 2008 DHS numbers. Sample fluctuation in both surveys may explain part of the difference. However, MICS survey results, as DHS-survey results, are under serious scrutiny before publication and tampering with results can be excluded is too farfetched a possibility. The new DHS survey of 2013 will provide an opportunity to verify the MICS 2010 numbers.

1.2 BIRTH REGISTRATION IN THE CONTEXT OF CIVIL REGISTRATION

Birth registration as part of civil registration

Birth is one of the main vital events recorded within a comprehensive civil registration system. Improvements in birth registration are rarely possible unless the civil registration system as a whole is improved.

In countries with relatively undeveloped civil registration systems, the main focus of activity is the registration of births (and events related to birth registration such as legitimation, recognition and adoption). Even though registration of deaths and marriages may be provided for by law, the rate of registration of these events is generally much lower in developing countries.[27] Improving civil registration systems in these countries will thus have a relatively large impact on birth registration, as this is one of the main activities of the civil registration function.

Defining civil registration

The most recent, "official" definitions of civil registration – those from UNSD – are shown in the text box below. The two definitions complement one another: The first mentions the characteristics of civil registration (continuous, permanent, compulsory and universal), while the second provides detail on civil registration processes (gathering, screening, documenting, etc.).

> **Civil registration – definition 1**[28]
>
> Civil registration is the continuous, permanent, compulsory and universal recording of the occurrence and characteristics of vital events in accordance with the legal requirements of a country, carried out primarily for the purpose of establishing the legal documents provided for by law.
>
> **Civil registration – definition 2**[29]
>
> Civil registration is a state-run public institution that serves both general and individual interests by (a system of) gathering, screening, documenting, filing, safekeeping, correcting, updating and certifying the occurrence of vital events and their characteristics as they relate to the civil status of individuals, and as they affect them and their families, and by providing the official, permanent record of their existence, identity and personal and family circumstances.[30]

Source: UNICEF. **A passport to protection. A birth registration programming guide**. New York (2013), p. 21.

However, the death registration rate has not kept apace: in 2013 provisional NOBD data indicate a death registration rate for the country of about 18%, but the rate might be closer to 12-13%.[16] For the Western Area (1.3 million

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[16] Based on provisional district data for 2013. These death registration numbers are substantially higher than the figures for 2011 (13,512; verified by Statistics Sierra Leone) and 2012 (11,174).

population in 2013 according to Statistics Sierra Leone projections) the death registration rate based on provisional data would have been 41% (2013).[17]

Since the first meeting was held in 1964, registrars of Sierra Leone have been rarely present at regional conferences in Africa, held under auspices of the United Nations, until the 1st Conference of Ministers responsible for Civil Registration held in Addis Ababa in 2010. Prior to such conferences invited countries were requested to submit their registration rates. There are two pieces of information on registration rates for Sierra Leone for the period after World War II until 2000. One source, based on a questionnaire filled out by countries, mentions that Sierra Leone in 1979 had a birth registration "regarded as 23% complete and a death registration about 26%".[18] The second number is mentioned by the UNSD: death registration was reported as "less than 90% in 1994".[19] The rate of 23% birth registration in 1979 (a year before the start of the UNFPA 1980—1988 support project) can be compared to the level of 4-5% measured in the 1930s, i.e. a five-fold improvement although admittedly achieved only over as long a period as half a century. From 1979 through 2000 the birth registration rate doubled from 23% to 46%, meaning an acceleration probably substantially subdued by the civil war that was raging for half of those two decades. Graph 1 (next page) shows the long-term trend in birth and death registration rates.

In the 1990s USAID and UNICEF initiated regularly held household surveys, the Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) and the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) respectively. These surveys have included a question on birth registration from 1999. For Sierra Leone the numbers are shown in the graph below. The graph shows stagnant registration rates towards the middle of the 2000s. As these percentages are for 0-60 months old children they represent conditions for registration pertaining during the five years before and including the year in which measured. The country has had a civil war from 1991 through 2002. Elections were held in 2002, 2007 and 2012. Civil war and political instability have a negative effect on service delivery and demand for registration. The results of the DHS 2013 survey will become available soon and could then show whether the improvement from 2008 through 2010 could be maintained, or whether the jump from 2008 to 2010 in birth registration rates is an anomaly.


Hence the death registration rate could be lower, at about 10%. Cf. Ministry of Health and Sanitation. **Annual report on births and deaths registered in Sierra Leone from 1st January to 25th December 2013**. Freetown (2014).

[17] Based on 9,360 deaths registered in the Western Area, source cf. previous note, population projection cf.: http://www.statistics.sl/2004_pop._&_hou._census_analytical_reports/2004_population_and_housing_census_report_on_projection_for_sierra_leone.pdf

[18] Cf. International Institute for Vital registration and Statistics. Methods and problems of civil registration practices and vital statistics collection in Africa. Technical papers No. 16. Bethesda Md. (1981). This source mentions the Ministry of Health as responsible ministry in 1976.

[19] Cf. http://unstats.un.org/unsd/Demographic/CRVS/CR_coverage.htm. However, this information seems not accurate as there is no IIVRS publication for 1994, while the IIVRS technical paper No. 63 for 1995 states that no data was available for Sierra Leone. Cf.. International Institute for Vital Registration and Statistics. **Organization of national civil registration and vital statistics systems—An update**. Technical Papers No. 63, Bethesda, Md, 1995.

GRAPH 1

Long-term trend birth- and death registration rates
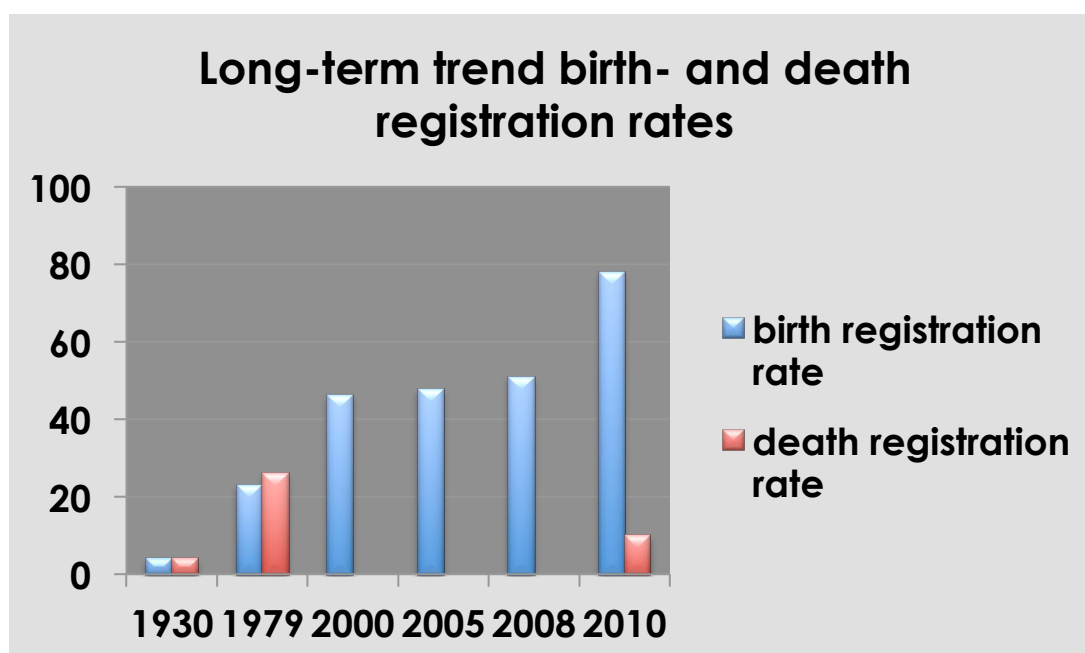
Source: cf. graph 2 and Kuczynski R.R. **Demographic Survey of the British Colonial Empire**, Volumes I and II, London 1948-1949, International Institute for Vital Registration and Statistics. Methods and problems of civil registration practices and vital statistics collection in Africa. Technical paper No. 16. Bethesda Md. (1981)

GRAPH 2

Birth registration rate 2000-2010
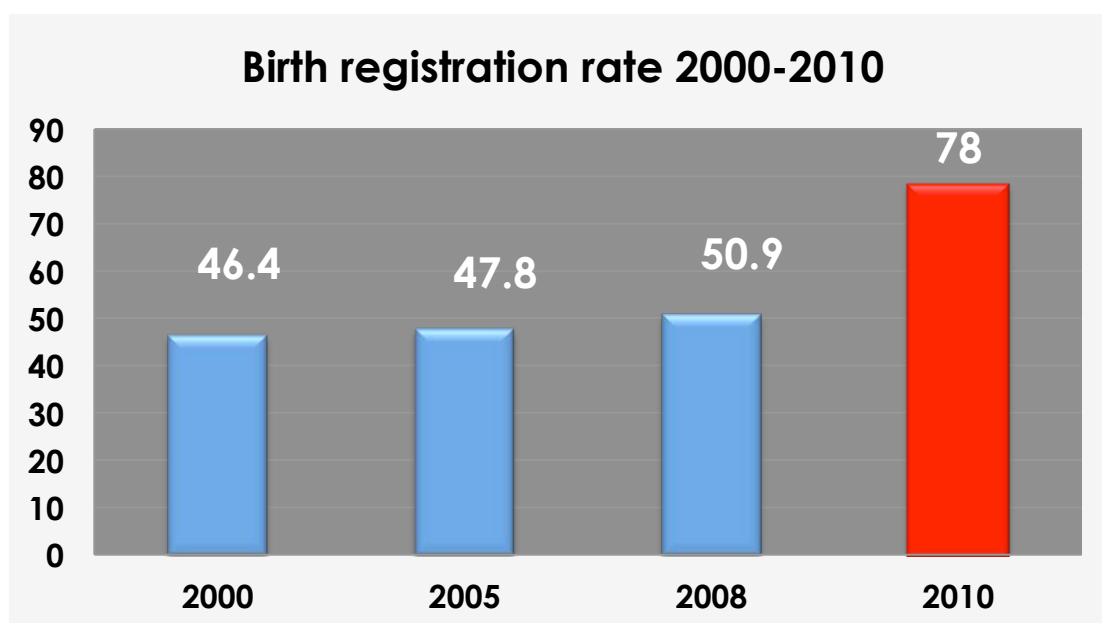
Source: Central Statistics Office. Ministry of Development and Economic Planning. **The status of women and children in Sierra Leone. A household survey report (MICS 2). Standard tables**. Freetown (2000); Statistics Sierra Leone and United Nations Children';s Fund. Sierra Leone. **Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2005**. Conakry (2007); Statistics Sierra Leone, Ministry of Health and Sanitation and ICF Macro. **Sierra Leone Demographic and Health Survey 2008**. Freetown/Calverton Md. (2009); Statistics Sierra Leone and United Nations Children's Fund. Sierra Leone. **Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2010**. Conakry (2011).

Besides the DHS- and MICS birth registration data NOBD also produces its own annual reports. These reports have weaknesses (e.g. internal inconsistencies). Statistics Sierra Leone has made a start in reviewing and correcting the NOBD reports. According to provisional data the live births registered in 2011 and 2012 were 120,000 and 148,000 respectively.[20] In 2013 provisional data is showing 230,000 registered births. These absolute numbers correspond with birth registration rates of about 54% (2011), 65% (2012) and 98% (2013).[21] The latter number is highly associated with a current project of NOBD with Plan International that also covers late and delayed registration. The numbers for 2011 and 2012 appear consistent with the MICS (2005) and DHS (2008) data.

Sierra Leone's birth registration performance can also be viewed from a more qualitative angle. There is still a largely manual system in place and archiving practice is poor. Since the beginning of the civil war in 1991 district records have no longer been collected annually for central storage (which itself is poor). Therefore, there can be real doubt about the ability of registrars to retrieve an old record when a lost certificate needs replacement. What compounds this problem is that among the children that are said to have been registered 19% has no birth certificate (MICS, 2010). For 2 out of 3 children who are said to have been registered and have a birth certificate the birth certificate has not been shown, i.e. no evidence of registration could be gleaned. On the positive side, the survey data show that birth registration services are delivered in a relatively equitable way, with the disparity in birth registration rates between rich and poor, urban and rural population and variance between regional rates being remarkably small compared to peer (least developed) countries. There is probably just one major reason for that: the proximity of the birth registration service to the people across the country. The keyword in this regard is the delivery of the birth registration service from Primary Health Units (PHUs).

Before the outbreak of the civil war in 1991 the country had about 700 PHUs. This number has increased to 1,222 at present. Over the past decade UNICEF and Plan International, in collaboration with local NGOs have endeavoured to bring civil registration services closer to the population by rolling out the birth registration function to most PHUs (and obtaining waivers for late and delayed registration procedures and fees). This has had a major impact on the rate of birth registration, although the quality of registration may not have improved in parallel. The dispersal of birth registration records, and the possibility of their retrieval, across a great number of offices have probably gotten worse. A computerization project carried out with UNICEF support (around 2005-2006) has not led to a sustained (and widened) use of digital means of registration. The domestic funding situation of the birth- and death registration function has remained extremely worrisome. Reportedly the non-salary budget for 2013 for birth- and death registration did not exceed Le 100 million (< USD 25,000), of which a part was in kind, in the form of registration books to be obtained from the government printers. Reportedly, the total number of staff working in the registration function (not counting medical

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[20] Recently released data for 2011, verified by Statistics Sierra Leone, gives a total of 123,014 registered births.
[21] Expected births and deaths numbers based on World Bank crude birth- and death rates (38/1,000 and 18/1,000) and the Statistics Sierra Leone population projection numbers.

personnel performing registration tasks part-time) was less than 100 for the whole country, equivalent with a total payroll of perhaps about USD 100,000. In 2012 NOBD reported a total of around 160,000 birth— and death registrations. I.e., with a budget of about USD 125,000 the average registration costs less than one dollar. It seems a very small amount to pay for a service that provides citizens with a lifelong legal identity.[22]

GRAPH 3—BIRTH REGISTRATION RATES ECOWAS MEMBER COUNTRIES, 2013 [23]
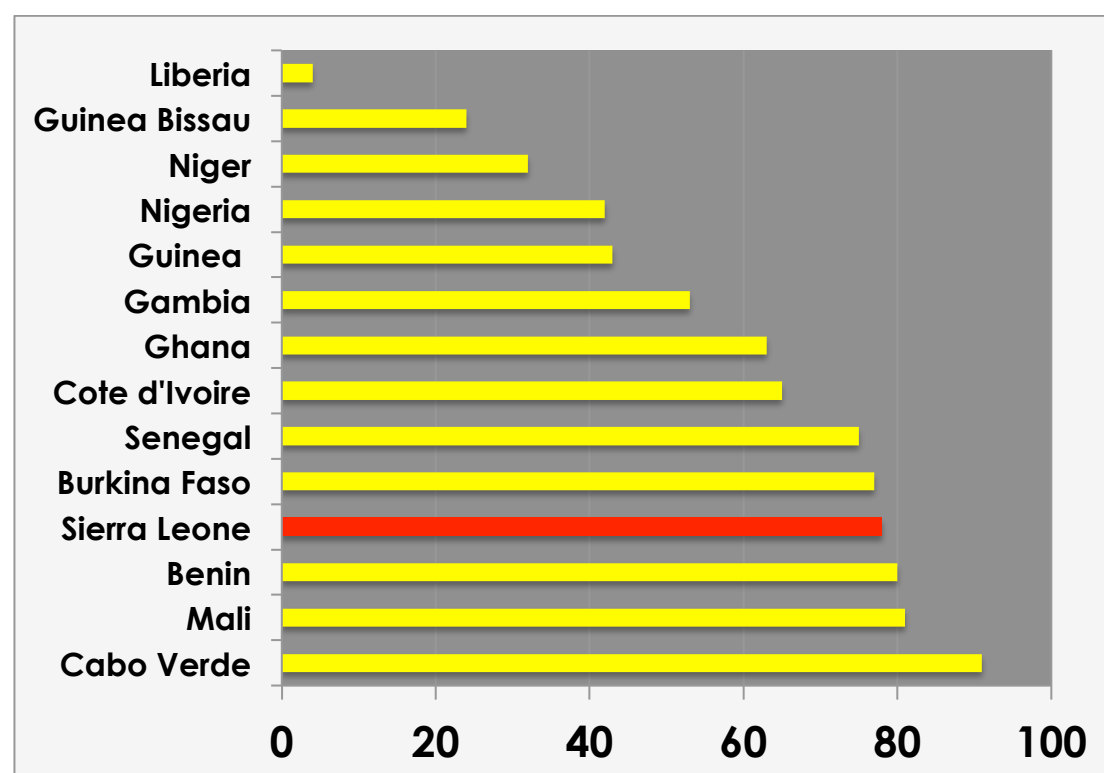
Source: United Nations Children's Fund. **Every Child's Birth Right. Inequities and Trends in Birth Registration**. UNICEF, New York (2013).

The civil registration service in Sierra Leone has been called "ineffectual" and "in crisis".[24] But for one of the poorer countries in ECOWAS Sierra Leone is doing remarkably well, as the above graph shows. Sierra Leone is in 4th place, while Benin (3rd), Mali (2nd) and Cabo Verde (1st) have higher income per capita. Countries like Ivory Coast, Ghana and Senegal—with double Sierra Leone's income per capita—have lower birth registration rates. It is important to comprehend the difficulties to develop civil registration systems that function well, how much time such systems building usually takes even under the most ideal of circumstances and what the realities are in (sub-Saharan)

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[22] Plan International started a USD 2 million project by mid 2012. This project may have come too late to be associated with the production of 160,000 registrations in 2012. The provisional NOBD report for 2013 shows 230,000 registered births and 20,000 registered deaths, and increase by 44% and 100% respectively. The cost per additional registration may well be a multiple of the average cost of a registration before the project. An evaluation of the Plan project will be done in 2014.

[23] The graph is based on the latest DHS or MICS surveys held in each country, i.e. for Sierra Leone on the MICS 2010 survey.

[24] Cf. United Nations Development Program (UNDP). **Civil registration reform. Review of the legal framework for civil registration and recommendations for adoption of a national civil registration law.** Freetown (2014).

Africa. Two examples may illustrate this. In the United States, in the early 1940s, one-third of the working age population had no birth certificate, for example.[25] But the first law on registration in the US had been passed in Virginia already *three hundred years earlier*, in 1632.[26] It led to the responsibility for civil registration being moved from the Census Bureau to the departments of Health in the states right after the war. In highly developed Australia, in the state of New South Wales, the registration rate of births over the period 2001—2005 was only 83% in the year of birth and 94% at age 1.[27]

In Africa, erstwhile colonial empires, especially France and England, have introduced their own systems that at home had been developed from the 16th century with state instructions for church-implemented registration. The introduction of two systems in Sierra Leone, one for the Colony and one for the Protectorate, is an illustration of the problematic fit of these old world systems with African realities. The 'scramble' of colonial powers out of Africa also left little or no time to prepare countries for the assumption of the role of civil registration. In most, the organization as well as laws hardly changed, if at all, in the early years of independence. The dual system in Sierra Leone remained in force until the unifying law of 1983 came into effect in 1985. One can also not ignore that Sierra Leone is a very poor country. In 2000 the WHO rated the goal attainment of its health system, in which birth- and death registration is embedded, as 191st among 191 WHO member states.[28]

Sierra Leone has an average per capita income of USD 580 (2012). Given that level of development the country would be expected to have a birth registration rate of about 35%; the 78% measured in 2010 is more that twice that level. Even the 50.9% birth registration rate measured through the DHS of 2008 is substantially higher than the 35% that is normal for Sierra Leone's income level. See the graph on the next page.

NOBD maintains relationships with district registrars in the 14 districts in the country, but the district registrars report to the District Medical Officer (DMO). Birth- and death registration has been devolved to local government. PHU staff conducting registration work report to the District Health Sister (and ultimately to the DMO). The Health Management Information System (HMIS) is a source of data on births and deaths at PHU level, whether they occurred in a health facility or at home.
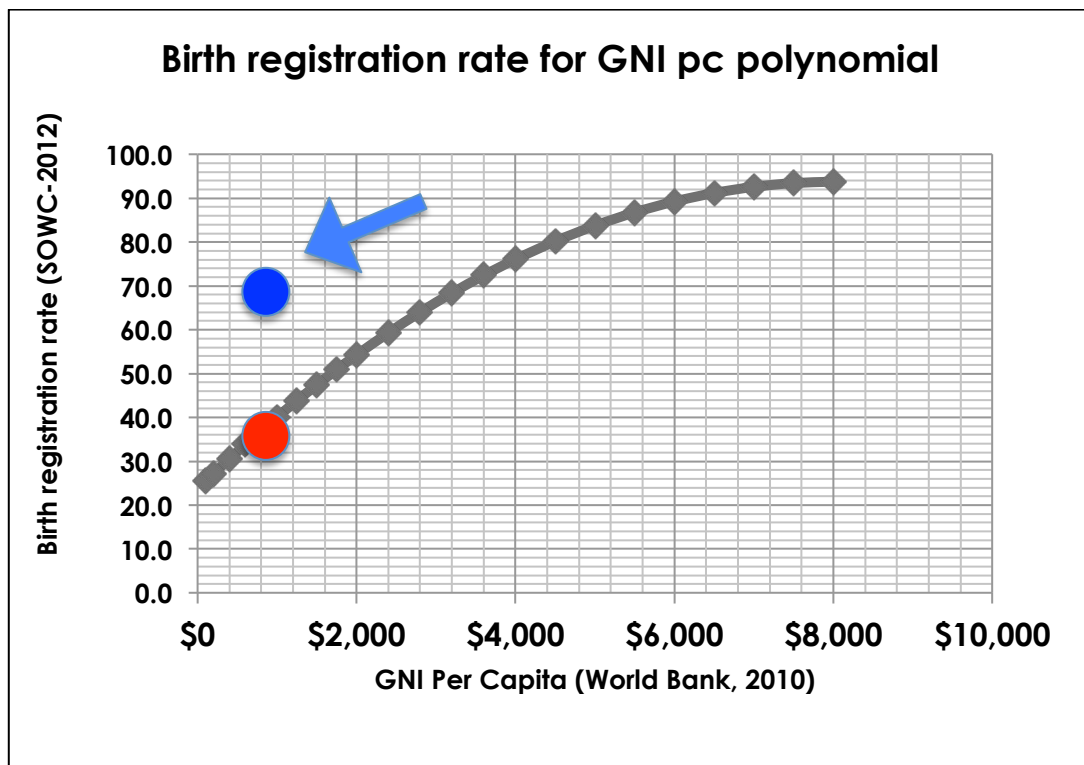
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[25] Cf. Landrum, Shane. **Undocumented Citizens. The Crisis of U.S. Birth Certificates**, 1940—1945. Waltham (2010).

[26] Cf. Hetzel, A.M. **History and organization of the vital statistics system**. National Center for Health Statistics. Hyattsville Md. (1997).

[27] Cf. Xu, Fenglian et al. *Under-reporting of birth registrations in New South Wales, Australia,* **BMC Pregnancy and Childbirth.** 2012 12-147.

[28] Cf. Renner, Ade, Joses M. Kiriga, Eyob A Zere et al.. *Technical efficiency of peripheral health units in Pujehun district of Sierra Leone, a DEA application*. **BMC Health Services Research.** 2005 5—77.

GRAPH 4

Birth registration rate for GNI pc polynomial

(Graph: x-axis "GNI Per Capita (World Bank, 2010)" from $0 to $10,000; y-axis "Birth registration rate (SOWC-2012)" from 0.0 to 100.0; a gray polynomial curve rising from about 25 at $0 to about 94 near $8,000; a red dot at approximately ($800, 36); a blue dot at approximately ($800, 69) with a blue arrow pointing to it.)

Finally, in discussing the current status of birth- and death registration in Sierra Leone, it is important to explain what can be called the "cruel law" of civil registration. This law says that, while for universal registration it is essential that the service is delivered in close proximity of the users of the service, the use of the service will be so little—even if all births and deaths are registered—that service proximity becomes prohibitively expensive and service quality could not possibly be guaranteed. This applies in most developing countries and especially the ones with low population density. See the text box on the next page.

THE LOGISTICS CONUNDRUM OF CIVIL REGISTRATION

Sierra Leone has a population of 6 million and a land area of 71,740 km2. When in 1929 health districts became registration districts in the Protectorate the radius of a health district was a maximum of 1 ½ mile (about 2.4 kilometres)—that small probably because the means of transportation of the time for government workers will have been limited to a bicycle. If we take 5 kilometres as the maximum radius for a civil registration point now, that translates into 920 of such points (registrar or registration office) required in the country. Ignoring the urban area and population, then those 920 registration points, optimally spread over the rural countryside, would be responsible for all rural birth- and death registration. The rural population is 60% of the total, hence 3.6 million, while the crude birth rate is 3.8/1,000 (expected number of births annually: 136,800) and the crude death rate is 1.8/1,000 (expected number of deaths annually: 64,800). The total number of vital events to register: 201,600. Equally divided over 920 registration points this translates into an average workload of 201,600/920 = 220 events annually, or (less than) 1 per working day. When registration is incomplete, as is the case at present, the average number of vital events registered drops. Given a "Bell-curve" distribution of workload across PHUs, many PHUs will have virtually no workload at all. *It would be financially impossible for the civil registration service to have its own service infrastructure with so little workload.*

In Sierra Leone now, in fact, registration is possible in 1,222 PHUs. The service delivery in PHUs should have solved the proximity of the service issue, but it is not at the same time a promise for a service that is being rendered in a technically competent and legally acceptable manner. The average workload is too small for registrars to be conducting registration competently, for their training to be affordable, or for control and supply chain management (in both directions) to be feasible (especially when a pen-and-paper system is used). In fact, the recommendation of the United Nations is that the health sector should have a notification rather than a registration role. For Sierra Leone it would, rather, imply that going forward the civil registration role of the frontline health staff would have to be reduced to notification and 'itinerant civil registrars' would assume the civil registration outreach task where needed. A reorganisation of work (e.g. notification replacing registration), registration points/offices and manual systems (digitisation and use of mobile phones) is needed. See the strategic directions for the supply-side problems.

Before the civil war district registers were collected once every four years and kept in the central office in Freetown. Reportedly, during the war a staff removed the sign of the office and as a result the records from before the civil war were not lost.

ILLUSTRATION: BIRTH RECORDS FROM 1983

MINISTRY OF JUSTICE AND THE ATTORNEY GENERAL, OFFICE OF THE ADMINISTRATOR AND REGISTRAR GENERAL ("OARG")

Probably with an organisational history as old as civil registration, from the first days of settlement in the "Colony" at the end of the 18th century, OARG is responsible for "all registration", including part of civil registration (marriage, divorce and adoption), but—more important in terms of activity and economic importance—the registration of land transactions, sole proprietor businesses (not the incorporation of companies), industrial trademarks and patents (with the exception of copyright), and the administration of estates. The oldest land conveyance record seen at OARG dated from 1857, but reportedly the records go back to the early 1800s. OARG has a head-office in Freetown and sub-offices in three provincial towns (Makeni, Bo and Kenema). It operates on the basis of the Registration Act of 1960 and the Instruments Act of 1960. As far as civil registration is concerned OARG is responsible for the implementation of the Civil Marriage Act, the Christian Marriage Act and the Muslim Marriage Act—all from 1960—and for the Adoption Act of 1989, and the, most recent, Customary Marriage and Divorce Act of 2009. Only customary marriages are not registered by OARG. No numbers have been obtained about the number of marriages, divorces and adoptions registered. The existence of four different marriage acts is explained as in keeping with the application of "pluralistic law" in Sierra Leone. The Administrator and Registrar General does not foresee that a bundling of civil registration functions under one roof would imply that marriage law could or would be simplified.

ILLUSTRATION: LAND CONVEYANCE RECORD OF 1857
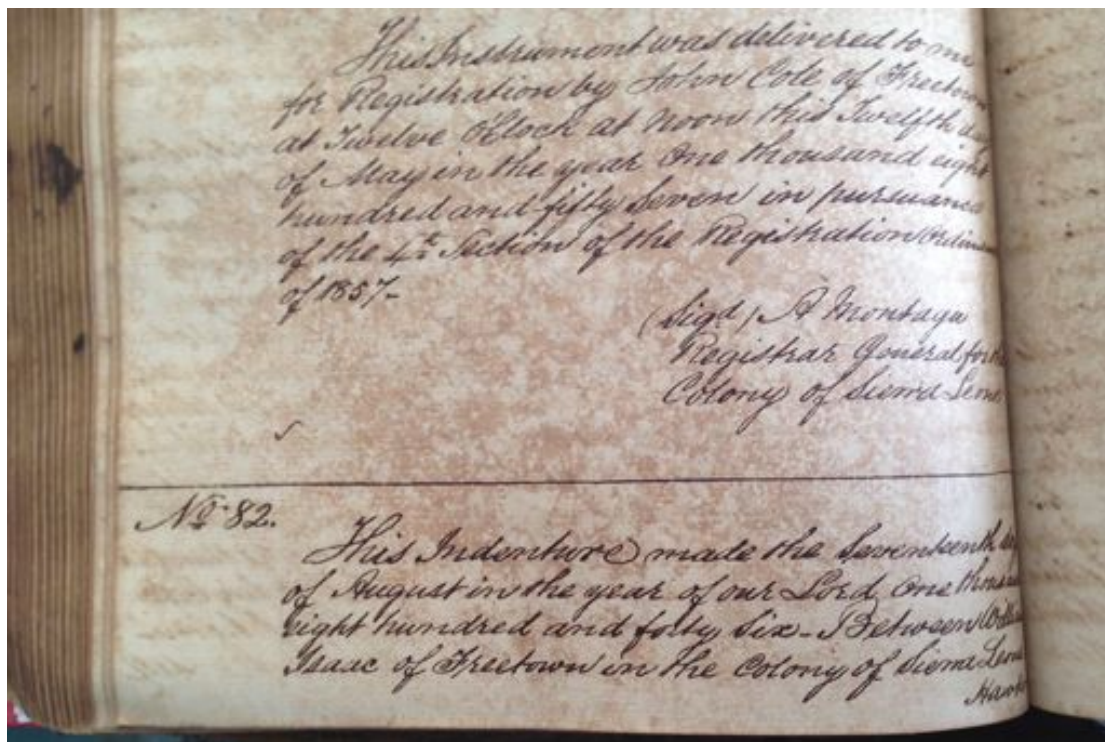
The assignment of the registration of marriage and divorce to another office than the registration of births and deaths is not uncommon. There are more such separations of civil registration duties either for religious reasons (e.g.

Muslim countries) or because of the importance of marriage and divorce for property rights (especially for marriage or divorce among the rich). It is not uncommon for the ministry of Justice to be responsible for marriage and divorce registration; the Ministry of Justice and the Attorney General is in fact OARG's line ministry.

OARG is actively implementing the digitisation of its records (though marriage and divorce records are not a priority for digitization) and it is in the process of building its website for electronic registration. Given its economic role is has the eyes and ears of donors such as the World Bank that support the improvement of Sierra Leone's investment climate. The revenue generated by OARG is significant: in 2011 total revenue was Le 7.6 billion (USD 1.7 million).[29] The number of staff of OARG in Freetown is 48 while the three regional offices still have only a skeletal staff body. OARG is not keeping track of the number of vital events (marriages, divorces, etc.) registered.

ILLUSTRATION: OARG HEAD-OFFICE

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[29] Cf. http://standardtimespress.org/?p=2410

NATIONAL ELECTORAL COMMISSION (NEC)

The National Electoral Commission was established by statute as independent body in 2002 (end of the civil war) and resides under the Office of the President. Prior to NEC there was an interim National Electoral Commission under the tutelage of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. NEC is responsible for the implementation of the Public Elections Act, i.e. the organisation of elections and referenda. It was responsible for the presidential elections of 2002, 2007 and 2012 (a year in which also the members of Parliament and Local Councils were elected). The Carter Center report on the 2012 elections has given excellent marks to the organisation of this multiple election.[30] The next Local Council elections will be held by end of 2016 or early 2017. A constitutional referendum is due in 2016. For the elections in 2012 voters had access to no less than 396 election wards and 9,493 polling stations. NEC has a head-office in Freetown and permanent offices in all 14 districts. The latter have a small body of permanent staff. Voting boxes and other supplies are stored for reuse. NEC employs about 200 permanent staff nationwide (as of 2012, including its Commissioners).[31]

According to NEC the costs of the elections of 2012 funded from overseas resources versus the local contribution was 50%/50% (as compared to 20%/80% in 2007). The total cost of the 2012 elections was about $28 million, which—given 2.7 million registered voters—is at USD 10 per voter above international standards of about USD 6—USD 7 per voter (although this range probably is the low-cost end of the spectrum).[32] Compared to an estimated one dollar per vital event registration voter registration is expensive, the more so because of the need of re-registration on a regular basis.

ILLUSTRATION: NEC HEAD-OFFICE

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[30] Carter Center. **Observing Sierra Leone's November 2012 National Elections**. Atlanta (2013)

[31] Cf. NEC, **Annual Report 2012**. Freetown (2013)

[32] The cost of the 2012 elections is published in the National Electoral Commission 2012 Annual report. In recent elections using biometric voter or national IDs Ghana spent close to USD 9 per voter and Kenya spent more that USD 12 per voter respectively. Cf. http://www.spectator.co.uk/features/8890471/the-technological-fix/. Elections held in 2006 in Haiti, for which a biometric national ID system was introduced, carried a total cost of USD 49 million, or over USD 10 per voter. Cf. Ulloa, Felix and Pierre Andre Guillaume. Haiti. **Cost of registration and elections**. Port-au-Prince (2006).

Authorities in Sierra Leone and the donor community led by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) have initiated a project to use the 2.7 million voter records in order to improve the coverage of the national identity card (about 300,000 individuals from 6 years and older). Reportedly the cabinet of ministers has taken a decision in October 2013 to this effect and for the creation of a National Civil Registration Authority (NCRA). A UNDP-sponsored report makes recommendations in line with the creation of a NCRA.[33] The use of national IDs for voting is introduced in an increasing number of African countries, since it is considered to be a cost-saving measure which is necessary also because donor support for elections is dwindling, while at the same time elections are becoming more common. The downside of both systems is that the in- and outflow of the system are not continuous in the same way as civil registration is continuous, or a population register that, when managed well, will also include up-to-date information on the address of citizens. Biometric voter- and national ID systems can prevent multiple registration but they don't provide a solution to determination of identity.[34] Also, the need for re-registration on a regular basis will imply high cost that either are borne by the government (and donors) or by the people (which may then lead to disenfranchisement). It is commonly understood that voter rolls need to be updated, which in the absence of a functioning population register derived from civil registration, requires regular new voter registration campaigns. A national ID system set up in the same way will need such expensive updates as well.

NATIONAL REGISTRATION SECRETARIAT

The National Registration Secretariat (NRS) was created by an Act dating back to 1974. Prior to that the 1965 Registration Act was primarily targeted at foreigners residing on a permanent basis in Sierra Leone and the implementation was entrusted to the immigration department at the Ministry of Internal Affairs. The immigration department still has that responsibility at present. However foreigners are also issued an ID by the National Registration Secretariat, which initially functioned on the basis of the 1974 Act and 1977 regulations. NRS also has the ministry of Internal Affairs as its line ministry. Currently the NRS conducts its work on the basis of the National Registration Act of 2008. Records of IDs issued go only back to 2009.[35] As of early 2014 NRS issued approximately 300,000 national IDs. The public pays a fee to NRS of Le 15,000 (USD 3.50) per national ID. The card is a rather simple biometric card, not a smartcard with an embedded chip. Prior to the Act of 2008 the eligible age for the national ID was 16; in the 2008 Act no age is mentioned. The NRS has revealed plans to introduce a smartcard version of the national ID with an embedded chip for persons of 16 and above, a card without such a chip will

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[33] Cf. source mentioned in note 24.

[34] Cf., *inter alia*, ACE Electoral Knowledge Network. **Complications in introducing biometrics.** (2014): http://aceproject.org/ace-en/focus/voter-identification/complications-in-introducing-biometrics .

[35] Prior to the current registration program (in which DeLaRue, a company also printing Sierra Leone's banknotes, is involved through a local agency) an Israeli company called Central Data International issued IDs but it took the records with it when GoSL did not extend their contract in 2004 (source: NRS).

be issued to the age group 6—16 while all new-borns will be issued with a national number and a birth certificate.[36]

Because of limited resources the NRS has not been able in the five years of its existence to open offices outside of Freetown, and some staff hired for such offices are employed in the single Freetown office. Staff-strength is around 130—140. In 2011 the then director of the NRS, Dr. Max A. Sesay, wrote a paper on the status of civil registration in Sierra Leone.[37] In this paper the observations are:

1. There is no single state policy on civil registration[38]
2. There is no overarching, holistic civil registration law
3. A previous UNICEF report has identified the low coverage (50%) of the birth registration system[39]
4. There is a "complex" registration system linked to the national health system[40]
5. The NRS has never been able to deliver on its mandate
6. Civil registration is marred by corruption and bribes
7. The nationality of parents is included in the birth certificate[41]
8. Drastic improvement in the civil registration system is needed
9. For a turn-around the following are needed:
    a. Political commitment
    b. Resources
    c. Coordination and collaboration
    d. Public awareness
    e. Adequate salaries and training
    f. The creation of demand and linkage to the entitle to social and economic benefits
10. Priorities[42] are:
    a. Legal reform
    b. Overarching policy

Dr. Sesay concludes his paper with a call for a bold step: the creation of a single, autonomous Civil Registration Authority ("CRA"). The paper of 2011 coincided with an initiative of the Ministry of Internal Affairs:

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[36] A similar plan was hatched in Haiti in 2005 and laid down in law, but by 2013 the implementation of the assignment of a unique national number to newborns had still not been implemented, while national ID offices and civil registration offices still are independent operations. The quarterly supply of civil registration data by the civil registration service to the national ID service to keep the national ID database up-to-date has also failed thus far.

[37] Sesay, Dr. Max Ahmadu. **Civil registration and good governance in Sierra Leone. The missing link?** Freetown (2011)

[38] In Sierra Leone the term "civil registration" is used loosely. In fact what is generally meant is _not_ civil registration (the registration of vital events such as birth, death, marriage, divorce, recognition etc.) but "civil registration and identification", or "national identity management". For Dr. Sesay's paper one should read the latter rather than the officially defined activity of civil registration only.

[39] This report—UNICEF. **Evaluation of birth registration situation in Sierra Leone and recommendations for strengthening the system-enhancing birth registration**. Freetown (2010)—did not, as is done here, put the civil registration situation in regional and historic context. If it had been it would have been more judicious in its conclusions.

[40] While the paper seems to qualify the system as a liability it is in fact an asset and follows well-established and global best practice.

[41] While the 1983 births- and deaths law was developed before UNSD had issued a model law in 1998 the Sierra Leone law in fact follows international standards: the nationality of the parents _should_ be mentioned in the birth record and the birth certificate.

[42] One could agree with those priorities, provided that the policy comes before legal reform, and the policy is based on a thorough and independent expert analysis of the current organization of (broad) national identity management, the development of a vision on future organization design of national identity management (international best practice included) and thorough national consultation on the policy.

"With Cabinet's approval in July 2011 of a proposal to introduce an integrated and automated security system to ensure greater control of its borders and enhance Government's knowledge of the profile of its population[43], and the related proposal to introduce an electronic identity card (eID card) for multiple purpose use, questions would naturally arise about rights, entitlement and access to services. This has to be arrayed against the background of an anachronistic citizenship law that is blatantly discriminatory on the basis of race and gender."

Reportedly, in October 2013 the country's cabinet of ministers approved the creation of a centralised civil registration database and a single multi-purpose identity card, and it assigned NRS to lead the process. An important driver is also the ECOWAS decision taken in 2013 that the fifteen member states introduce biometric national IDs that can be used within the common area, including for travel across borders.

The introduction of a smart multi-purpose card with an embedded chip will be a rather costly operation. A similar, advanced system will be introduced in South Africa and will cost USD 16 per card.[44] About 3.3 million citizens would qualify and the total costs would be USD 53 million. The South African government plans to charge USD 17.25 for the card. For the majority of citizens of Sierra Leone these costs might be prohibitively high.

ILLUSTRATION: NRS OFFICE

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[43] This was submitted by the Minister of Internal Affairs and endorsed by the Cabinet at the Conclusion of its 8th Meeting on Thursday 21st July 2011. Cf. Op. cit., p. 3.
[44] The total costs of the project were reported by minister Pandor as Rand 5 billion for 38 million cardholders.
Cf. http://www.sabc.co.za/news/a/f73e1600414528c1a199a73895839b19/New-Smart-Identity-Cards-to-cost-billions-20132909. South Africa has an integrated civil registration and national ID service.

2.2　GOVERNMENT PARTNERS

The stakeholder organizations discussed above receive, or have been receiving, support from donors and local voluntary organizations.

The Ministry of Health and Sanitation (MoHS) received support from UNFPA during the period 1980-1988. The total amount of financial support was USD 732,000, a significant amount of support in real terms (USD 1.4 million at 2013 prices). During this period the law of 1983 was developed as well as the regulations of 1987. The immediate objectives of the project were to strengthen the civil registration system in a model area, develop and experiment with the procedures and field organization to determine the most appropriate ones, produce estimates of demographic variables in the model areas, develop a uniform law relating to civil registration and secure effective implementation of the registration law through training of the hierarchy. The project was evaluated as largely positive.[45] Since the 1980s the National Office of Births and Deaths has received support from UNICEF (about USD 500,000) during the middle of the 2000s and from Plan International more recently. Plan's program in Sierra Leone is for 3 years (from mid 2012 to mid 2015) with a total budget of over USD 2 million. The majority of it is resourced from an Irish Foundation. Both UNICEF and Plan are especially interested in the improvement of birth registration (which accounts for the lion's share of current registration by MoHS). The local NGOs Christian Brothers and Heal Sierra Leone have been involved in the UNICEF- and Plan projects. The World Health Organization provides support to MoHS on maternal death surveillance, but has not in recent years worked on general death and cause of death registration.

The Office of the Administrator and the Registrar General (OARG) received financial support from the Investment Climate Facility (ICF) for Africa for its work in the improvement of the business investment climate. ICF's development partners are Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, South Africa and the United Kingdom, as well as the World Bank (the International Finance Corporation-IFC) and the African Development Bank. ICF also has a number of corporate partners. The amount of aid to OARG is unknown. The ICF support is used for a project to modernize and digitize administrative procedures in OARG. The project will create a one-stop-shop for all business related procedures, reducing the time and cost of doing business in Sierra Leone. The project aims to increase efficiency, reduce delays and lower the costs of commerce. The project aims to reduce the time taken to register a business from three weeks to just two hours, and the registration of a land transaction within two days instead of the current three weeks. These improvements are crucial to attract both foreign and domestic investors, and particularly the country's SME sector, that can often be deterred by the high cost and time implications of doing business.

The National Elections Commission (NEC) receives substantial support for the conduct of elections, although the share of domestic funding is reported to increase while donor support dwindles. NEC exhibits the European Union, the

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[45] Cf. Padmanabha, P., op. cit., pp. 5—8.

Department for International Development (DfID/UKAID), USAID, Irish Aid and the Japanese Government as donors on its website, while it also receives technical support for elections through the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and in-kind assistance from the Governments of Nigeria and China.

UNDP manages the "Support to the Electoral Cycle Programme" which has been implemented in close cooperation with UNIPSIL (United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Mission in Sierra Leone) that has just completed its mission. UNDP administers the Elections Basket Fund, the funding partners of which include the **European Commission (EC), the UK Department for International Development (DFID), the Government of Ireland, the Government of Germany and the UN Peacebuilding Fund.** The Programme aims to further strengthen the technical capacity of NEC to administer credible elections and improve public participation and confidence in the electoral process. The Programme is expected to contribute to the achievement of three main outcomes by 2014:

1. Electoral institutions have the capacity to administer technically sound, credible and sustainable elections (with progressively less international support).
2. Improved public confidence and participation in the electoral process, political tension and potentials for violence identified, prevented and resolved.
3. Election-related conflict managed for peaceful polls (before, during and after).

For work on the first outcome UNDP has initiated activity that has gone beyond the management of elections and voter registration. It has, together with NRS, taken a lead in the reform of overall national identity management. UNDP and the Government of Sierra Leone commissioned what was labeled as a scoping mission in 2012, which, was a small study (two weeks) to be conducted by a civil registration expert who, according to the terms of reference, would map out the present options in designing and executing a civil registration system that could combine the NRS and NEC registration efforts with a view to ensuring effective and efficient capture and storage of a credible profile of citizens and residents of Sierra Leone. The study[46] provides a rapid organizational review though additional in-depth study is advised to form the basis of far-reaching reform of identity management involving five separate organizations (including the immigration department). In 2013 a new legal policy consultancy was commissioned by UNDP.[47] The policy uses an uncommon definition of civil registration, encompassing not just the civil registration of vital events but also the identification tasks of NRS and NEC. It includes issues with regards to nationality and discrimination in the Constitution. UNDP recently (in March 2014) advertised for a legal consultant

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[46] Cf. UNDP. Africore. **Sierra Leone Civil Registration Project**. Freetown, Accra (2012). Africore could hardly be blamed for the quality of its consultancy given the extreme limitations of their budget.
[47] Cf. United Nations Development Program. **Civil registration reform. Review of the legal Framework for civil registration and recommendations for adoption of a national civil registration law**. Freetown (2014)

to draft a civil registration law. The Chair of NEC announced publicly that the national ID would not be used for elections before 2018, contradicting efforts to support putting in place a civil registration law that would make this possible already by 2016.

The current timeline to put in place a new civil registration law is unrealistic considering the complexities involved. The earlier UNFPA project which had a much more limited scope took eight years (1980-1988) and at least 3-4 years to prepare a births and deaths bill that came into force only in 1985.[48] The imperative to put in place a unified legal framework integrated identity management needs to be based on a detailed organizational study and thorough legal reform process.

Additional study is required on how the new agency would deliver its services across the country. NEC manages that process at intervals (not continuously) at a cost of about ten times as high as the registration of a vital event by the ministry of Health and Sanitation. NRS has not been able to offer its services outside of Freetown. OARG has just opened three offices outside of Freetown but it has a significant income base (USD 1.75m annually, equivalent to the income from 500,000 national IDs, i.e. more than eight years of NRS income).

In Haiti, a country with a population of 10 million, the merger of civil registration and national ID issuance laid down in law in 2005 has not taken place so far. If, in Sierra Leone, one agency would be created, and the law were passed (a process that itself could take years) the new agency would have its hands full during its first years with integrating central services and offices, during which it would have to also be able to manage the issuance of national IDs (in compliance with ECOWAS policy) and would have to provide the electoral register for local council elections in 2016/2017, a referendum in 2016 and presidential elections in 2018. During those years NEC could not afford to give up its field infrastructure and depend on the new agency, and national ID issuance could only at high cost be delivered countrywide. In the meantime the current service delivery infrastructure for births- and deaths registration managed by the ministry of Health and Sanitation most likely would deteriorate as there would be uncertainty about its future and investment funding would no longer become available for its improvement.

The National Registration Secretariat (NRS) receives support from UNDP and is housing consultants that are commissioned by UNDP. With a staff body of about 140 its annual payroll will be about USD 200,000, while its annual revenue from the issuance of national IDs is about that same amount. I.e., NRS already needs additional government funding to run its operations, for rent, electricity, supplies, etc. It is unknown whether NRS received financial support from donors. See also the discussion above for NEC as the envisaged reform appears to focus on how NRS and NEC activity could be (better)

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[48] Also, the UNFPA project, in prices of 2013, had a project budget of USD1.4m. The UNDP budget for scoping mission, civil registration coordinator, legal policy and draft law likely will not exceed a cost of USD 200,000 for a project of much more consequence.

integrated, 800 biometric kits[49] used for the 2012 elections could be reused for national ID issuance (outreach mode) and the 400 election wards in the country may be used in future for the country-wide service delivery infrastructure.

The challenges of keeping electoral rolls up-to-date are substantial. This is what a study for Africa concluded:[50]

"Complex issues such as the establishment of citizenship or residence and the de-registration of deceased persons need to be addressed by means other than technology; for example, by a well-organized display of the voters' roll or by data exchange with the civil registry. However, only few countries in Africa have an established and functioning civil registry, which leaves EMBs[51] with the task of having to decide on the eligibility of a person to be registered, capturing residential data and providing voter cards as identity documents (ID). EMBs are generally not tasked or financed by the state authority to take over civil registration tasks, but in practice voter cards remain the only valid form of identification in many African countries."

"Combined civil and voter registration can utilize synergy effects of data exchange and can serve state administration effectively. In South Africa, this system works successfully and can certainly function as a best practice model for other countries. However, a combined system makes EMBs highly dependent on the performance of other state departments. The reliability of the civil registry, increased organization challenges and the divergent responsibilities of state ministries have to be assessed realistically and must be factored into decision-making processes."

ILLUSTRATION: THE NEC BIOMETRIC VOTER REGISTRATION PROCESS

Source: National Electoral Commission 2012 Annual Report.

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[49] The cost of a "BVR" kit (biometric voter registration kit) is about USD 3,000, and 800 kits would therefore cost just over USD 2 million. This is only a small part of the total cost of the 2012 elections of USD 28 million. In the NRS office kits from an earlier, failed enrolment effort are stored and it would be judicious to include lessons learned from earlier attempts that perhaps could not be sustained.

[50] Cf. Electoral Institute for the Sustainability of Democracy in Africa (EISA). **Voter registration in Africa. A comparative analysis**. Johannesburg (2010).

[51] EMB stands for Election Management Body.

3 STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter a strategic vision for a reformed national identity management system is suggested first. Then an assessment of the current situation is made, focussing on the four main stakeholders, MoHS, OARG, NRS and NEC. In a next section possible strategic directions are set out, classified according to whether they belong to the enabling (or disabling environment), to the service supply side or to the service demand side of the civil registration and identification services. There are three important conditions for success: 1) commitment, 2) conceptual clarity and 3) financial resources. Five instruments to achieving success are examined subsequently: 1) inter-operability, 2) the use of ICT, 3) incentives (and disincentives), 4) interim measures (legal) and 5) international exchange. This chapter is concluded with a summary of possible major short-term (2014) and medium-term (2015-2019) actions.

3.2 STRATEGIC VISION

What, in overall terms, would success of the reform of civil registration and identification in Sierra Leone look like? That success might be defined as:

"The ability of government to run an affordable, efficient and reliable civil registration and identification system that achieves acceptable standards of accessibility, accuracy, completeness ("inclusiveness") and timeliness."

3.3 THE CURRENT POSITION

In the previous chapter an analysis of stakeholders has been given, and their implementation or support roles have been described in brief. Summarizing this here we have the following.

MoHS and OARG
Two organizations, MoHS and OARG, divide between them the responsibility for the registration of vital events. Birth- and death registration is conducted by MoHS in about 1,200 registration points across the country. While MoHS is extremely poorly funded for its registration responsibility is has over the past 80 years managed to improve birth registration rates from less than 10 per cent to almost 80 per cent (to be confirmed by the DHS 2013 results). Death registration has improved only little. For both, in a comparison of performance with ECOWAS countries or internationally, Sierra Leone is performing remarkably well. However, much needs to be improved and reform is necessary in order to achieve acceptable standards of accessibility, accuracy, completeness and timeliness. Only accessible, complete and

reliable records of all citizens and residents of Sierra Leone, available from a population register, could serve the needs of NRS—or a yet to be named integrated registration and identification authority—for the issuance of ICAO-compliant identity documents (satisfying ECOWAS standards), of NEC to be provided with up-to-date voter rolls, and of the immigration department to issue passports. MoHS also needs to serve the country's needs for the generation of vitals statistics. Below will be set out what measures would be needed to achieve this result (or "success"). Here it is important to state that 1) MoHS provides the foundation for an integrated national identity management service infrastructure that in important respects is in accordance with international best practice, and 2) that the importance of this foundation is generally not recognized within government circles (or even within the health ministry itself). MoHS conducts the registration of a vital event at an estimated cost of one dollar per event.

The Office of the Administrator and the Registrar General (OARG) conducts the registration of most marriages and divorces as well as adoption. There is quite an array of marriage laws. A central question would be whether the country could reduce the diversity of marriage laws, and the registration of these events could be combined with the registration of births and deaths, as is "normally" the case. OARG does not (as yet) provide civil registration services outside of Freetown. That current position is not tenable. This will be taken up below. For OARG the "loss" of vital event registration would hardly affect its operations or substantial revenue generation capacity; it may in fact lead OARG to better focus on its core services targeted to the business sector and the investment climate. No information is available about the fees OARG charges for registration of marriages, divorces or adoptions. Generally the fees are much higher than for the registration of births or deaths, and they can "cross-subsidize" services (such as free birth registration) that are delivered at a charge below cost.

NEC and NRS
The two other main institutions that matter within the country's "eco-system" of identity systems are NEC and NRS that divide between them the tasks of identification of the country's citizens (and residents: NRS with the Immigration department). The current position is that NEC has been well able to deliver its core services, but with substantial external and domestic support. This support may, and probably will, dwindle witness the UNDP Electoral Cycle priority outcomes and, for example, the recommendation of the Commonwealth Observer Group that Sierra Leone amend the legal framework "to provide for the continuous registration, updating and maintenance of the Voters' Register".[52]

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[52] Commonwealth Secretariat. **Sierra Leone National and Local Elections. Report of the Commonwealth Observer Group**. Freetown (2012)

A comparison of the available data on the costs of birth registration (USD 1 per registration, but likely somewhat more to boost registration rates short-term and to conduct late or delayed registration), a smart card national ID (USD 16 per card, example South Africa) and the cost of biometric voter registration (USD 10 per voter, elections 2012 Sierra Leone) leads to the conclusion that birth registration is by far the most affordable method of establishing the identity of a person although, admittedly, it does not include biometrics. Instead, it establishes the identity of a person often in a hospital or with the help of a midwife, i.e. in the presence of next of kin and health staff who can reliably attest to the filial relationship of the person. It is for that reason that birth certificates are internationally recognised as the 'gold standard' breeder document. However, the civil registration system needs to be accessible, complete, accurate and up-to-date for the birth certificate to serve that important role. The recommendation of the Commonwealth Observer Group for the electoral roll to be up-to-date on a continuous basis is a luxury that established democracies have achieved. An election in those countries costs only USD 1 to USD 3 per voter. The costs are that low because the electoral register is obtained from the population register (based on a civil register) that is continuously updated and maintained.[53] In the case of Sierra Leone this recommendation can only be realized through an improvement of civil registration and the creation of a population register. That will also allow the linkage of birth registration, the assignment of a unique national number at birth and the issuance of an identity document at later age.

In many sub-Saharan African countries voter registration cards play an important role for adults as the only form of ID they possess. This is the result of the way voter registration campaigns are conducted: 1) people are identified ("Who are you?") where they live, 2) requirements for enrolment (authentication: "Are you who you say you are?") are low-threshold, and 3) no enrolment fees are charged. Voter registration cards are kept because they bring benefits: 1) the right to vote, 2) access to other government services, and 3) a "laissez-passer" at security checkpoints for domestic travel. The advantage of these IDs is also that they make the registration of children easier (inter-generational effect). A growing number of countries in sub-Sahara also have decided to replace the voter card by a national ID with a longer official validity, but also with the application of more scrutiny at the enrolment point and, often, a fee. Examples are Cameroon, Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda.

The success of the application of (biometric) voter registration campaigns and the increasing government demand for identity documents for citizens, e.g. for cash transfer programs, issuance of SIM cards (domestic security) or

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[53] A civil register (usually) is organized by the place where vital events occur. A population register is based on the residence (usual address) of the population. The latter is what is needed for voting and issuance of a national ID, as well as for the generation of demographic data for geographic areas.

travel between member countries of economic unions (e.g. ECOWAS, economic interests and regional security) has put biometric voter cards and national IDs in a favourable light in comparison to civil registration agencies with a poor public image and reputation.

The important question raised now is: "Can the 'biometrics revolution' make developing countries "leap-frog" the "identity gap" (just as they did with the mobile phone)?[54] Could it in Sierra Leone? Historians of identity have posed the "highly contemporary policy questions of the future of identity registration in a biometric and commercialized global context preoccupied with internal and external security".[55] Another historian concludes: "If the Information State became a two-way process, and there appears nothing in the technology that prevents this, it would become a means of expanding the power of citizens over the state. This would still enable the state to save money, and prevent it having to rely on the pooling of suspect information from across numerous and separate databases, the results of which can do unnecessary harm to the rights and wellbeing of citizens".[56] For citizens to have access to the information the state holds on them, might that be too unrealistic an expectation for developing countries (and for developed countries)? A very authoritative study conducted by the London School of Economics on the possible introduction of a biometric national ID in the United Kingdom came to the conclusion that it would be too much for that country.[57] Plans for the introduction of the national ID were jettisoned following the publication of this study.

One of the key problems of a "national ID-based national identity system" in comparison to a "civil registration system-based national identity system" is the delivery of the service across the countryside. The technological—, human resource—, accommodation— and supply-chain requirements of a national-ID based system are such that it would be infeasible to have a service delivery network that could rival that of MoHS. The sacrifice in terms of accessibility of the service of a national-ID based system would likely lead to _more_ under-registration as well as *more* "under-de-registration", i.e. return of the ID upon death. See for the "centralisation versus decentralisation choice" for national IDs Annex B. In addition, the vital statistics aspect of civil registration in Sierra Leone, which needs substantial improvement both in terms of perinatal information as well as cause-of-death information, is hard to combine with a national-ID based identity system that has a service delivery network that is not integrated with the health system.

Detailed study of the various business processes for civil registration, issuance of national IDs and voter registration would be needed before embarking on a revolutionary transformation of the conventional organization of a country's

[54] Cf. Gelb, Alan and Julia Clark. **Identification for development. The biometrics revolution. Center for Global Development**. Working Paper 315, Washington D.C. January 2013

[55] Cf. Breckenridge, Keith and Simon Szreter (Eds.). Registration and recognition. Documenting the person in world history. Oxford (2012), p. 30.

[56] Higgs, Edward. **The information state in England. The central collecting of information on citizens since 1500**. Houndmills and New York (2004).

[57] Cf. The London School of Economics and Political Science. **The identity project. An assessment of the UK Idenitity Cards Bill and its implications**. London (2005)

national identity management than Sierra Leone has seen thus far. The basic principles of a civil registration system—supporting national ID issuance and electoral roll generation in the form of extracts of the civil register (in similar fashion as a birth certificate or death certificate)—are that it is continuous, permanent, compulsory and universal. And, especially in developing countries, the system can be compulsory only when it is low-threshold in terms of accessibility for all, and in terms of direct and indirect cost. Only if a national ID-based national identity management system would satisfy those criteria—universality in particular—and would also include the vital statistics generation, could it replace the conventional organizational configuration that one finds in all developed countries.

This does not mean that the technological and biometrics revolution doesn't open up new opportunities for the improvement of the civil registration system and government service delivery. Affordable information technology allows the digitization of the system that presently is still pen-and-paper based and consists of numerous local "registers" that are not connected, poorly kept and virtually inaccessible. Affordable communication technology (mobile phones) can revolutionize the notification and registration process. Both can be used to transform the current scattered system into a well-integrated system of which the performance at any moment and in any location could be monitored and managed. Such a well-integrated civil registration system can deliver on its role of enabling national ID-issuance and generation of electoral rolls and vital statistics. Biometric national IDs can be used as voter cards and for access to government services. They have been proven to allow major reduction of 'leakage' in the use of government benefits.

The journey to a new organizational configuration of Sierra Leone's national identity management will likely be a phased and incremental process shown in the diagram below—even while authorities may prefer a more expedient transformation.
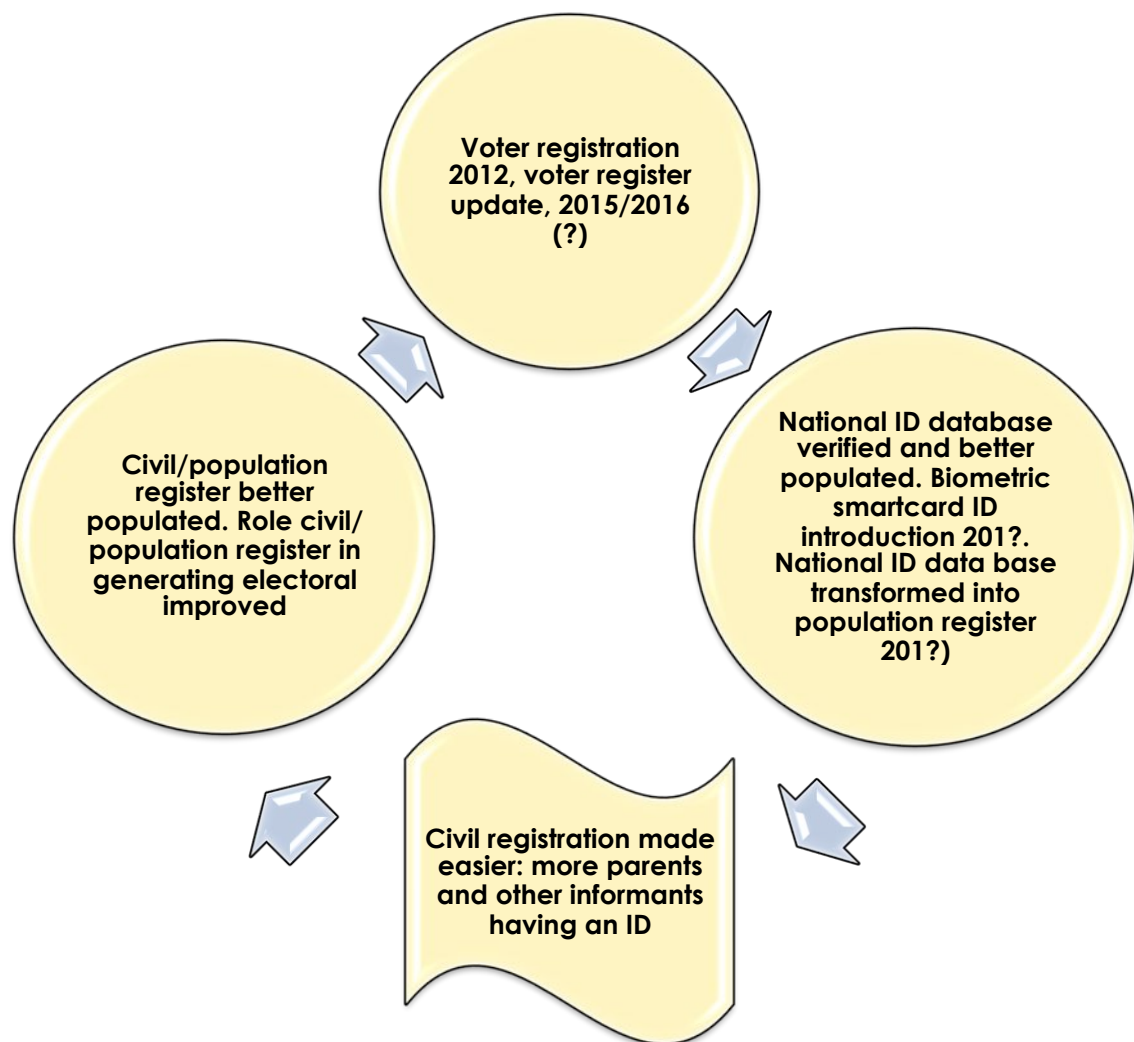
3.4 STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

What would be the key performance results one wants to have achieved this year, and in the 2015—2018 timeframe, based on what is known about stakeholders' needs and expectations, which will demonstrate that the country has moved towards achieving the strategic vision?

Based on the discussion in the previous section it is recommended that— first and foremost—the roadmap for achieving the vision is extending over a realistic timeframe. This timeframe should make it possible that Sierra Leone conducts a judicious and thorough legal reform process resulting in a law that is state of the art, evidence-based and locally appropriate, and incorporates global best organizational and legal standards and practice. It should also take into account commitments made in ECOWAS for a biometric national ID and the electoral calendar for the remaining years until 2020. It is believed that the (shorter) period of 2014—2018 could be a realistic timeframe if three C's are satisfied:

1. **Commitment** and **consensus** of people in power
2. **Conceptual clarity** of future national identity management design
3. **Currency**—sufficient resources to make the investments needed

These are the instruments that will lead to achieving the vision:

1. **Interim legal measures** so that a judicious legal reform process can be given sufficient time
2. **Interoperability**—key stakeholder organizations working as if they were one organization whether they are one or not
3. **ICT**—information and communication technology used in a smart and judicious way
4. **Incentives**—the population is given tangible and easily understandable benefits when registering or acquiring an ID, while the disincentives that may make them reluctant are removed to the extent possible
5. **International exchange**—much can be learned from other countries in Africa and beyond

The first **C**—political commitment and consensus—appears to have been reached in the cabinet of ministers but there is no policy document available and a **transparent, articulated policy** document is required to give direction to the reform process and gain buy-in from direct and indirect stakeholders. Dr. Sesay mentioned that need in his 2011 paper (cf. p. 26).

The second **C**—conceptual clarity of future organizational design of national identity management—requires clarity in detail: a **detailed reform plan**. It is not enough to decide there will be one central registration agency and one law.

The third **C,** currency (financial resources), requires that the **business case** be made for the investments needed, and for operational expenditures and revenue. This should be made part of the detailed reform plan. It should include an assessment of any international resources that might be needed, and—if a social cost-benefit plan is made as well—it could include the

external costs and benefits.[58] For example, a recent study conducted in India showed substantial savings through the use of a smart card for payments in the National Rural Employment Generation Scheme (NREGS) and for pension payments. The MIT Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL) conducted the study and found a 40% reduction in "leakage" in these payments.[59] Such external benefits can be substantial. But there is another important aspect: the use of an identity document by beneficiaries, workers or pensioners to avail of their payments or benefits. In South Africa the introduction of a child support grant in 1998 gave a boost to birth registration such that the country now has virtually complete registration (see illustration next page). From 1998, when the child support grant was introduced, through 2013 the birth registration rate increased from 30% to 95%.[60] Sierra Leone is in the process of embarking on the introduction of its own cash transfer program with support from the World Bank. It is an excellent opportunity to establish a link between birth registration and a financial benefit such as has been so effective in South Africa.

For the business case to be made to the donor community it is important to recall as mentioned before that the High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons for the Post-2015 Development Agenda has proposed universal birth registration as a proposed target under good governance, mentioned before.

ILLUSTRATION: BIRTH REGISTRATION AND CHILD SUPPORT GRANT, SOUTH AFRICA
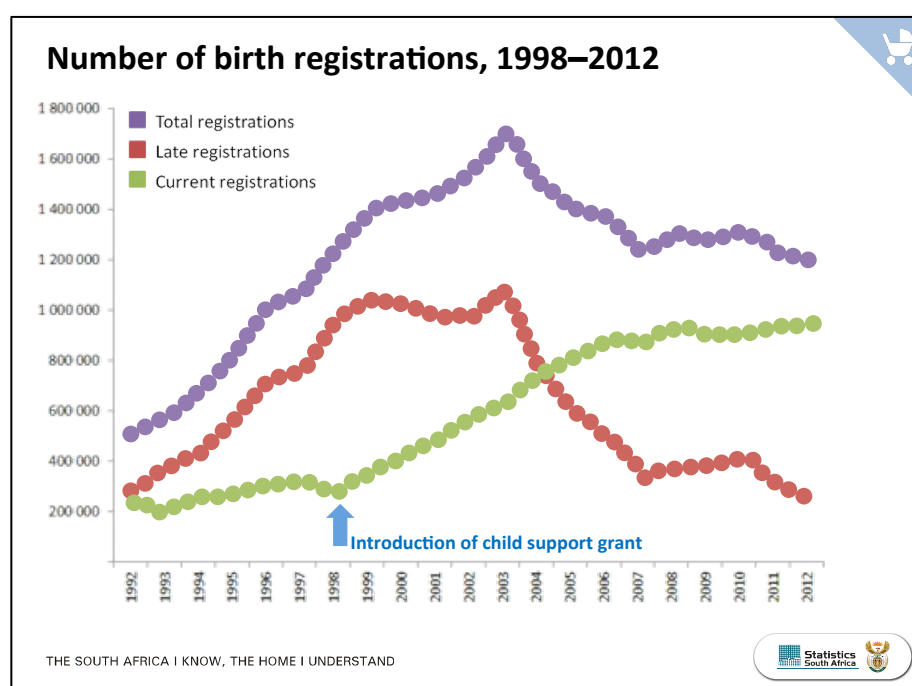
Source: Lehohla, Paul. **Health, education and social grants - South Africa**. Presentation at 9th ASSD. Gabarone (2013). *Birth registration increased from 30% in 1998 to 95% in 2012.*

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[58] One very good example of a cost-benefit analysis is the one conducted for the "Real ID" of the USA: Department of Homeland Security. **Regulatory evaluation. Final rulemaking**. 6CFR Part 37 RIN: 1601—AA37. Docket Number DHS—2006—0030. Washington (2008)

[59] Cf. http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/news/states/smartcards-safeguard-nregs-funds/article

[60] Birth registration rates published in UNICEF. **The state of the world's children**. New York (2009) and UNICEF. **Every Child's Birth Right. Inequities and Trends in Birth Registration**. New York (2013)

As far as the instruments recommended for use for the reform are concerned, these can be classified as those that address the (enabling or disabling) environment, those that address supply factors and those that target demand issues. This strategic directions document will only discuss some of the key instruments.

Enabling or disenabling environment
Without a doubt the current **legal framework** for civil registration and identification needs replacement. Current civil registration law dates from 1983 and predates the formulation of legal framework recommendations by UNSD in 1998. Marriage law in Sierra Leone is older still. If the national ID legislation would be integrated with new civil registration law (examples: the laws of Ethiopia, Kenya, Sudan and Yemen), this would add another reason for legal reform. However, as examples from Sierra Leone (UNFPA project 1980-1988) and other countries clearly show, this requires time and expertise. A clear vision of future organizational design is needed, and may even need testing, before it can be laid down in law. For this reason it is suggested that transitional legal measures—**interim measures (e.g. decrees or similar)**—are put in place to remove any obstacle that would be an impediment to expedient change or testing.

Another element of an enabling environment would be to put an **articulated government policy on national identity management** in place. Examples could be used from England and Wales, or Kenya, which recently developed a white paper and a civil registration policy respectively.

Supply
The main organizational challenge is how the operations of MoHS, OARG (marriage, divorce and adoption) and NRS could be made interoperable. At present MoHS has 1,222 service points for birth- and death registration, while OARG has only three outside of Freetown and NRS has none. Authorities in Sierra Leone have of late (April 2014) suggested that 90 permanent registration and identification offices will be used.[61] However, for birth- and death registration such service points would be too far away for part of the population. A cohort of 16-year olds eligible for the national ID smart card in any year may number about 150,000 people. On average, each service point would have thirty-two new IDs to issue per week (and about fifteen cases of ID de-registration for deceased persons). There would be some ID replacement workload as well, depending on the length of the validity of the ID, in time increasing the workload. However, given a likely Bell-curve shape distribution of workload over the 90 offices, there will be with rather small workload rendering them not viable for ID issuance (while they, as combined "static" civil registration and outreach civil registration offices, will be more viable). For ID issuance the requirements for technical competence of staff, accommodation, hardware maintenance and trouble-shooting are very demanding while supply chain management because of security concerns is costly and tamper-prone when there are many ID-issuing offices (cf. also Annex B). It is for that reason that when civil registration and ID issuance are combined, the organizational solution is that ID card production may be centralized and ID enrolment and issuance may be performed in selected

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[61] 1 in each of 13 districts, 1 in each of 65 BEmONC centers (Basic Emergency Obstetric and Neonatal Care Centers, a subset of PHUs – there are 5 in each of 13 districts), and 12 extra offices to fill geographic gaps

offices among the 90 regional offices (as is for example the case in Yemen at present). Over time the replacement of expired IDs for new IDs will add caseload and more offices could offer national ID-services.[62]

No quantitative information is available about the number of marriages, divorces and adoptions (currently largely an OARG responsibility) registered, but the current number is probably small, although it will grow. In proportion to birth- and death registration these vital events could probably be ignored as a major organizational consideration (although they are, potentially, a lucrative "milk-cow" service).

With regards to NEC it should be noted that its work in future—when provided with a reliable and up-to-date electoral roll by the civil registration and ID service when needed—would largely remain as it is today, with the exception of the voter registration task. I.e., when an election or referendum is held NEC needs to mobilize temporary staff and avail of temporary accommodation. However, one could envisage that a new civil registration and ID service network would play a more important role than PHUs and staff currently play in supporting election work.

Sierra Leone is not the only country that has the ministry of Health in charge of civil registration. The United States is another. The history behind this has been told earlier (page 17). Egypt has had complete birth- and death registration for quite some time. The ministry of Interior is responsible and has only 27 offices across a country 14 times the size of Sierra Leone. This is possible because the ministry of Health performs birth- and death registration in over 4,000 service points (the ministry of Justice does marriage and divorce registration). The health sector has an unrivalled footprint in countries, while statistics offices do not have that service infrastructure. It is global good practice for the health sector to play an important role in birth- and death registration—although most often as an interoperable partner of another ministry such a ministry for home affairs.

However, in Sierra Leone the current organization of birth- and death registration within the ministry of Health and Sanitation is not adequate and needs to be rationalized. Importantly, it has an important strength: the number of service points for birth- and death registration (1,222). This puts them close to the population and thus removes one of the most important obstacles for birth- and death registration: distance. Also, health staff are professionally involved with birth and death, are politically neutral and unthreatening. But the frontline registrars often have too little workload to be competent as registrars and—with a pen-and paper based system—the supply chain management issues are insurmountable, leading to stock outages. Registers are scattered and do not reach a central office. Control is hardly possible.

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[62] A national ID could be compared to a birth certificate re-issued every five or ten years. Replacement of national IDs thus can become a multiple in terms of workload compared to first issuance of the birth certificate.
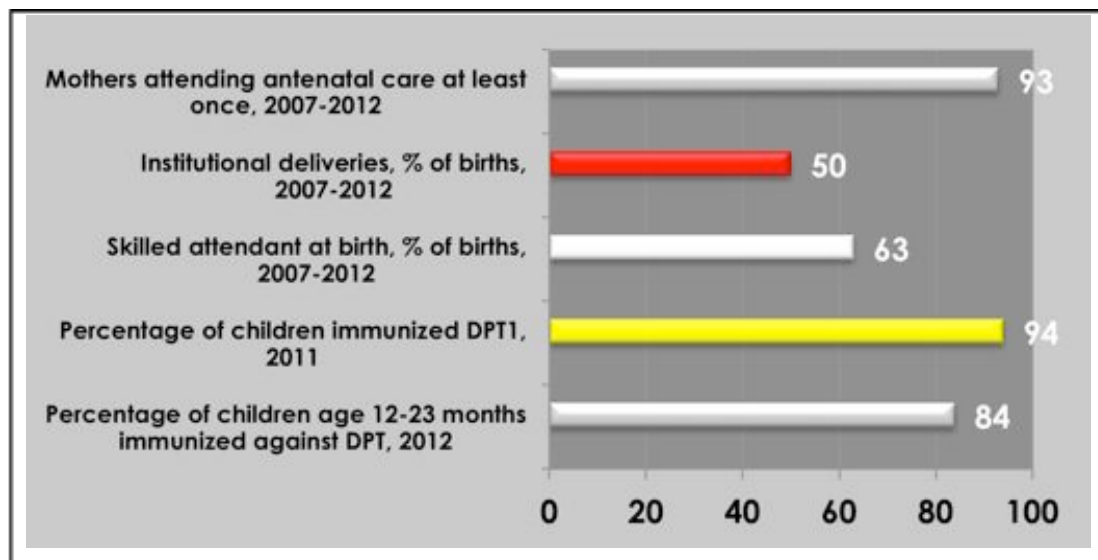
Source: UNICEF. **The state of the world's children 2013**. New York (2013) and The World Bank.

It is necessary that frontline registration tasks are digitized and simplified: frontline outreach tasks should be limited to the electronic (mobile phone) notification of vital events that will be followed up by an itinerant registrar (outreach registration service). This means that the number of registration offices where full-service registration is offered (including marriage, divorce, adoption, recognition, annulment, etc., and ID services) will be substantially less than the 1,222 service points currently in use. Registration offices will need to be on-line and computerized. A possible organizational hierarchy of service points is shown in the table below.

Given the complex health system challenges facing Sierra Leone, birth- and death registration are not the MoHS's highest priority. This results in minimal investment in registration activities and infrastructure. This is understandable, and should be solved by introducing a legally determined budget for birth- and death registration unrelated to the budgetary needs for public health. In this context the following also deserves mentioning. MoHS undertakes considerable efforts to strengthen the Free Health Care Initiative (where all health care is free for children under 5 years). This is resulting in high numbers of births taking place before skilled birth attendants (i.e. in health facilities). The statistics show that 62% of mothers have a child before a skilled birth attendant, while antenatal care coverage is even higher at 93% (MICS 2010). This has the effect of "bundling" more birth registration workload in fewer service points, which is a favorable development for the overall cost of registration work.

Level	Agency	Technology	Action
National (1)	MoHS initially. NRS or NCRA in due time	24/7 Power, Server, Internet, etc.	Storage of data; policy making; leadership; M&E
District and Chiefdom level (90)	MoHS initially. NRS or NCRA in due time	Power, Server; Internet, Biometric registration kit; computer; ability to receive data from community and transmit data to district; interface between e-notification and central server (NASSIT for PIN: this will probably become the NRS or NCRA task).	Administrative office - Receive e-Notifications from community; - Receive notifications and declarations in person going straight into system - Verify e-Notifications - Print certificates - Conduct outreach birth- and death registration - Officiate and register marriages - Register adoptions
Community (1,222)	MoHS (PHU)	Mobile phone with software apps. Link with vaccination for monitoring.	- e-Notification of B&D - Mobile phone report of production on regular basis (example Nigeria) - Distribute certificates

Source: Joshua Dankoff, UNICEF Sierra Leone

Sierra Leone is implementing a **decentralization policy**. The MoHS has actually been a ministry that has done more than other ministries in implementing this policy.[63] As a result financial resources for civil registration already flow to local councils although they very rarely implement any civil registration work on their own, especially work that requires funding from the Council through the District Health Management Committee. Decentralization of civil registration is incompatible with United Nations recommendations for the organization of civil registration. When possible, the UN recommends central control, and a de-concentrated rather than a decentralized service (see quote below.[64] When civil registration and national ID issuance are integrated it will become more judicious to revert back to a de-concentrated model because a national ID system does not lend itself to decentralization or devolution.

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[63] Cf. The World Bank. Yongmei Zhou (Ed.). **Decentralization, democracy and development. Recent experience from Sierra Leone**. World Bank country study. Washington (2009).

[64] United Nations Statistics Division. Department of Economic and Social Affairs. **Principles and recommendations for a vital statistics system. Revision 3**. New York (2013), p. 66.

"Although it is recognized that administrative efficiency is not the sole factor determining the type of organization for registration which a country might establish, there are advantages, under some circumstances, to the centralization of registration under a national authority. Centralized control facilitates standardization of forms, procedures and methods. If properly administered, it should also stimulate improved registration by means of technical coordination, advice and assistance to registrars, monitoring and evaluation. The uniform interpretation of the registration law, the development of comparable procedures at a specified standard of excellence and the adherence to a definite time schedule of reporting vital events can all be established and maintained more easily through a system of central control."[65]

Interoperability between MoHS, OARG, NRS and NEC is required, i.e. that they work as if they were one organization. Their current civil registration and identification activities may in future be delivered through one integrated service structure. However, on the way to realizing that integrated service structure the current birth- and death registration service structure needs to be **"ring-fenced"** from reorganization of the integration of central functions.

The earlier a decision is made that the MoHS-role in birth- and death registration is maintained and strengthened, the likelier success of the overall reform effort will be. Twinning of health and birth registration services is a critical component to improve accessibility to registration

There are three activities that are recommended be undertaken to improve birth- and death registration in the short run:

1. Divide current registration service points of MoHS in those that will do notification only with support from outreach civil registrars, and those that offer "full service". Provide notifiers with mobile phones for notification. Conduct this process in a judicious, gradual way.
2. Introduce production monitoring as per the Nigeria model (see illustration below). Similar systems have been put in place with UNICEF support in Uganda and Tanzania.
3. Start a project of collection of registers and scanning of legacy records. Such a project has been successfully conducted in Haiti.

Information and communication technology is a second key instrument to achieve improvement of civil registration (while it is a given for national IDs in the current age).[66] Starting from the center and moving outwards one office at the time, the national civil registration and national ID service needs to be digitized, and brought on line. The law should allow this, and proper safeguards need to be in place (legally, technically and organizationally) to ensure that sensitive personal information is safe. Again, in the interim the law(s) may not be in place and temporary measures may need to be taken to be able to move forward. At the same time improvements are necessary

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[65] See note 64.
[66] Cf. for example: The World Bank and the African Development Bank. **The transformational use of information and communication technologies in Africa**. Washington, Tunis (2012).

"from the outside inwards". The frontline birth- and death registration services need to be reorganized by moving from registration to notification for which the mobile phone is proposed, combined with a civil registration outreach service. The mobile phone for notification of vital events has been introduced in Vanuatu, Pakistan, Uganda, Kenya, Burkina Faso, Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia and Tanzania. A mobile phone record transmission can be shared instantly across offices. These records can be shown on a "dashboard" so that notification activity can be monitored and anomalies can be detected and followed up quickly (in operation in Uganda and Tanzania). The mobile phone may include an "app" to monitor supplies and stock-outages. Mobile phones owned by the public can be used to report customer satisfaction (in Uganda UNICEF supported the development of the so-called "U-report" for a similar purpose). In Nigeria registration offices report their production numbers on a regular basis by mobile phone ("RapidSMS", which is using open-source software). This report is shown on the Internet which implies a forceful "name-and-shame" peer pressure tool is used—see the screenshot below. Mobile phone notifications would be received in the nearest registration full-service office and receive a follow-up by an outreach service to move from notification to registration conducted by an authorized registrar. Given a reasonable timeframe for registration (e.g. a month for birth registration) any community would only need to be visited once per month.

There is an as yet untapped potential in the requirement of showing an ID in order to register a SIM card for a mobile phone, while mobile phone penetration is growing quickly. It still is relatively low in Sierra Leone (36 per 100 inhabitants in 2012, according to the World Bank), but quickly growing like anywhere in sub-Saharan Africa (which shows the fastest growth in the world). The mobile phone is the first affordable 'gadget' that everyone, including the youth and including the population the most remote villages, "can no longer do without". But governments like the one from Ghana and Nigeria have conducted biometric registration of mobile phone users, while almost all other countries at least require that the applicant for a SIM shows an identity document that providers need to capture and share with government. _This is an interface that could and should be used for raising awareness about the importance of identity documents and birth registration._[67]

The flight of mobile money (Kenya is in fact the world leader) will make mobile phone providers rich. [68] The government which provides the spectrum—owns the spectrum—should use this for free messaging in the public interest.

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[67] The government of Uganda has just "strong-armed" the mobile phone providers in supporting the national ID issuance campaign.

[68] Mobile money comes with a 'float'—an amount of money that the collective of mobile money customers does not use at any moment of time. These amounts of money are free money that mobile phone providers can reinvest and turn into profit.

Source: http://rapidsmsnigeria.org/br
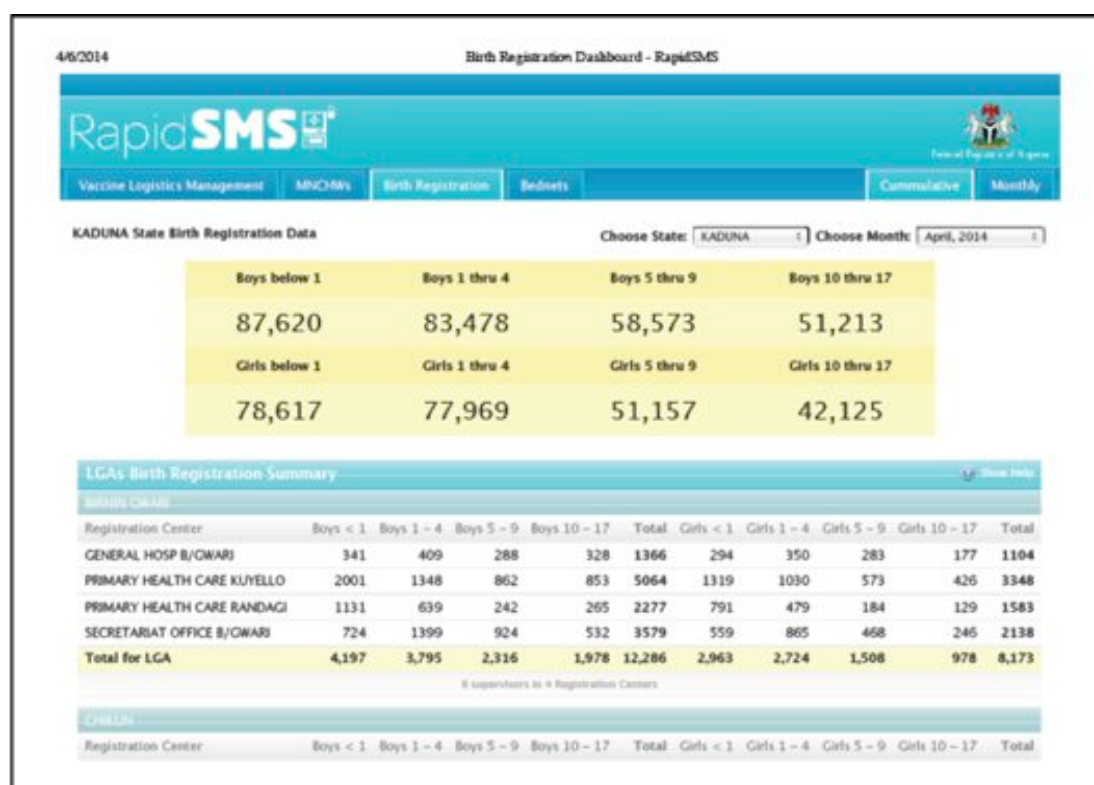
Demand

The example of South Africa's child support grant, that—without a doubt—led the country's birth registration rate to increase from 30% in 1998 to 95% in 2013, shows that the demand for birth registration services can be boosted to a substantial degree by associating a tangible benefit with the registration of births. Mauritius (100% birth registration) gives a one-off grant of a few dollars at registration. The flight cash transfer programs are taking in sub-Saharan Africa builds upon the centuries (if not millennia-old) knowledge of the linkage between civil registration and the provision of government benefits points to the importance of **incentives**, the third **I**—instrument, to generate effective demand for registration services.[69] It is important that a linkage is found between the World Bank supported cash transfer program in Sierra Leone and the civil registration and identification reform program. The Post-2015 development agenda includes both poverty eradication and good governance (among which universal birth registration); cash transfer programs should make the link that has been made throughout world history.

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[69] Cf. for example Simon Szreter, The right of registration. *Development, identity registration and social security—A historical perspective.* **World Development** Vol 35, No. 1, pp. 67-86, 2007, for the role civil registration played for the Poor Laws of 1699 and 1701, how these allowed labor mobility and urbanization which led to the Industrial Revolution. Much older still, during the Qin dynasty in China (221—206 BCE), the guiding principle for the population registration system was *bianhu qimin*: 'register households in order to make the people equal'. Cf. Van Glahn, Richard. *Household registration in Imperial China* in Breckenridge, Keith and Simon Szreter (Eds.). **Registration and recognition. Documenting the person in history**. Oxford (2012), p.44.

The success of voter registration reaching almost all eligible voters also holds a lesson: if registration is not onerous, low-threshold, free, brought to people's doorstep and comes with a tangible benefit of being able to vote then registration will be complete. This points to the need to remove and reduce **disincentives** to the extent possible. From research across the world, including done in Sierra Leone,[70] it is well known that the most important deterrents for birth registration are distance to and indirect (travel, time, etc.) and direct (fees) costs of registration services. Hence the importance, and the relative success, of the current service infrastructure for birth- and death registration services offered in over 1,200 PHUs. *In the rush towards integration of registration and identification services, encouraged by a donor community that wants to reduce election funding dependence, Sierra Leone may overlook and dismiss an invaluable asset already in place for the last 85 years, namely a birth- and death registration system that is fully integrated into the health system.*

Generally, within this context of discussing demand, the need for the **raising of awareness** is being emphasized. In fact this is so common that it generally is the only instrument mentioned to improve demand. However, there is very little evidence that awareness is keeping demand down, or that awareness raising activity would have had impact. When there are no resources to study whether awareness-raising activity would have impact it is judicious to limit spending on this activity to what makes common sense. For example, when there are changes in procedures, in fees, in organization etc., there is an obvious need for communication. Also, the methods used for awareness raising need to be chosen based on their impact. Innovative methods may reduce cost and have more impact.[71] If expectations are raised and the civil registration service cannot respond to the increase in demand the effect may be counterproductive.

The discussion above has included the mentioning of examples from other countries, in the African continent and beyond. It is important that the civil registration reform that Sierra Leone is embarking on is informed by good (and less good) international practice by **international exchange.** This would be mostly South-South exchange, not just because the examples would be more suitable for the conditions in Sierra Leone, but also because in the application of technology a growing number of middle-income countries are ahead of the "Old World" countries. Examples of such countries are Peru (RENIEC) and Chile[72], Thailand and Malaysia, and South Africa (mentioned several times in this document). A platform for international exchange is provided in Africa by the so-called "ministerial process", the technical meetings that are conducted before the ministerial meetings and the meetings of the ASSD (African Symposium on Statistical Development). The biennial meetings of African Ministers Responsible for Civil Registration have been held in 2010 in Ethiopia (Addis Ababa) and in 2012 in South Africa (Durban). The next meeting is due this year in Côte d'Ivoire (Abidjan, October). A global meeting

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[70] Cf. UNICEF. **Parental behaviours towards children aged 6 months-6 years in Sierra Leone.** Adeline Seurat, Iredu / Université de Bourgogne. Table 64: Child's registration in the Civil Registry

[71] For example, in rural areas there might be a dearth of recreation possibilities. In Indonesia the author has used village theatre, music performances and films to attract large groups of villagers, for which radio messages and word-of-mouth were sufficient. The occasion was used for the raising of awareness about changes in program methodology.

[72] Cf. Harbitz, Mia and Bettina Boekle-Giuffrida. **Democratic Governance, Citizenship, and Legal Identity, Working Paper IADB**. Washington (2009)

on identity management will be held in Seoul, South Korea, in September. An example of continental exchange is the study tour organized by the Government of Uganda, UNICEF and the European Union for over a dozen of African countries to see first-hand the use of mobile phones for civil registration and hospital-based on-line civil registration service points.

3.5 SHORT-TERM AND MEDIUM TERM ACTIONS

In the previous section strategic directions were suggested that can be either realized short-term or require a longer period. The possible activities for 2014 for MoHS and its partners UNICEF and Plan are attached in Annex A.

Short-term measures
The remaining time this year (2014) could be used for further preparation of the reform. These are the suggestions for some of the actions that would be possible this year:

1. Translate the political consensus on reform in an articulated policy for consultation of and feedback by stakeholders (also beyond the four discussed in this report)

2. Develop a detailed reform plan, including a financial plan (if possible a social cost-benefit study) for the investment and operational phase

3. Determine the legal obstacles of current legislation for the reform measures going forward and issue interim legal measures while sufficient time is given to thorough legal reform (informed, *inter alia*, by the reform plan and international study)

4. Conduct international study, e.g. Nigeria, South Africa. Participate in the Côte d'Ivoire conference

5. Agree to a continued described role for MoHS in order to facilitate ongoing investment and improvements (support from Plan and UNICEF: mobile phone notification, digitization of selected offices and central capturing of notification messages, production monitoring tool Nigeria, support to international study)

6. Merge the taskforces for Civil registration and for Birth and Death registration

7. Mobilize resources and ensure domestic funding

Medium-term measures

1. When the reform plan is approved hire project management and staff and appoint steering and technical committee, start project implementation

2. Develop the central database and connect OARG, NRS and MoHS

3. Transfer the voter registration database to the central database; issue IDs to replace voter cards

4. Introduce new "full-service field offices" in an incremental way

5. Centralize and digitize legacy records

6. Integrate SIM-card issuance within the service and enter into a contract with mobile phone providers for public service use of the mobile phone

7. Establish the linkage with social protection cash transfer projects

END

Annex A

Elements of a MoHS, UNICEF and Plan International Proof of Concept Project for e-Notification of Birth and Death

- Partnership development (MoHS, NRS/NCRA, UNDP, WHO, World Bank, local NGOs)
- Seek a legal opinion for the e-Notification project
- Detailed implementation plan
- Project organization and management
- Mapping study PHU B&D notification points, regional registration offices (use tool UNICEF and Ministry of Finance and Economic Development-MoFED are working on)
- Regional office organizational design developed
- Agreement with telecoms ministry and mobile phone providers
- Mobile phone application software development (use: Uganda, Tanzania etc. examples)
- Software development for NRS/NCRA database and district offices for mobile phone notifications
- Software development for Nigeria RapidSMS tool for production monitoring
- Specs hardware developed
- Training in use of software and mobile registration function
- Project implementation

UNICEF (and Plan international) steps for 2014

- Participate in and deliberate next steps in taskforce
- UNICEF: study visit Nigeria and Uganda, participation TBD
- UNICEF: explore scanning legacy record project in consultation with NOBD/MoHS and OARG. Consider involving United Nations Volunteers (UNV)
- Plan to continue developing mobile phone software while interfacing with UNDP/NRS
- Develop partnerships with mobile phone providers
- Continuation Plan project
- Evaluation Plan project

ANNEX B

Technical feasibility for centralized versus decentralized Smart Card centres

Source: ASTEC Global ICT Consortium. **Centralized versus Decentralized Smart Card Printing system. Study and specifications**. Dublin (2014), pp. 4-6. (European Union funded consultancy for Government of Yemen)

Technical Feasibility For
CENTRALIZED VS. DECENTRALIZED
Smart Card CENTERS

Schema of centralized personalization centers

The following diagram illustrates the standard schema of centralized personalization centers
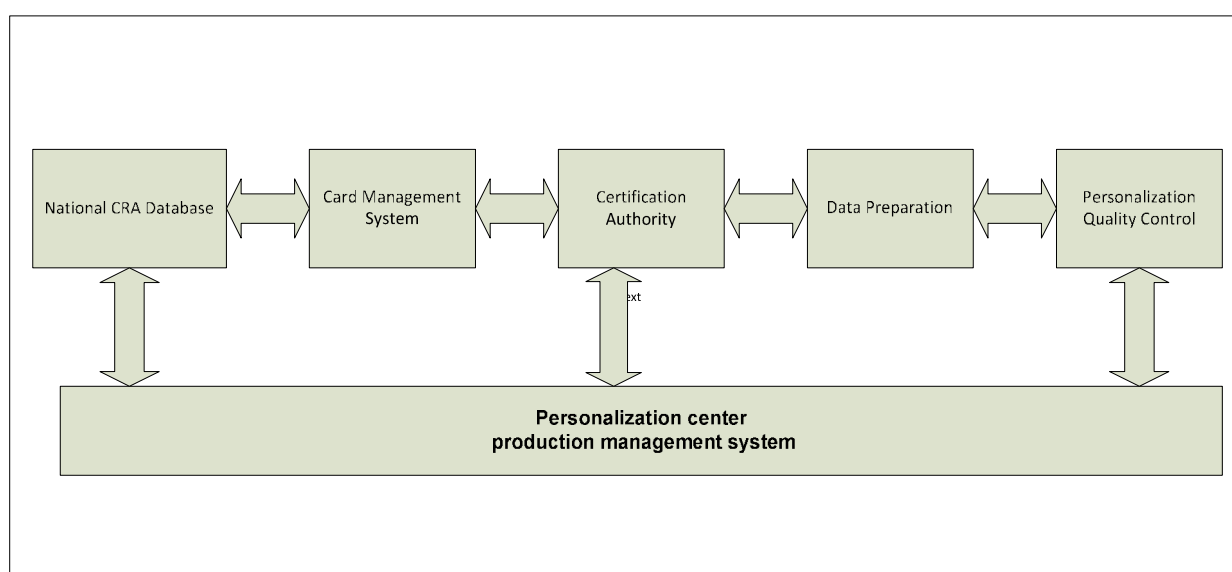
Centralized Personalization Center

Technical Aspects:

1. All card management systems and modules are deployed centrally (once)
2. Clustering and redundancy can be implemented once at the central datacenter as per the requested cards throughput
3. Citizen data enrollment and acquisition can be deployed centrally (through web-based application) and accessed from workstations terminals at enrollment centers

Financial Aspects:

1. The implementation of industrial card personalization machines is more expensive than desktop-based card personalization machines
2. The cost of building infrastructure is much less comparing to decentralized approach (i.e. building clustered environment in each decentralized center)

Operations, Management, and Security Aspects:

1. Better control on central card issuance operations and processes
2. Less effort and personnel required for card tracking and control
3. More security over the card personalization process
4. Minimize movement of blank cards (unlike the decentralized issuance scheme)
5. More lead-time required considering the delivery of the printed cards to the respective citizen
6. More cost required for the card delivery process (through specialized card mailing carriers)

Decentralized Personalization Center

The following diagram illustrates the standard schema of decentralized personalization centers:
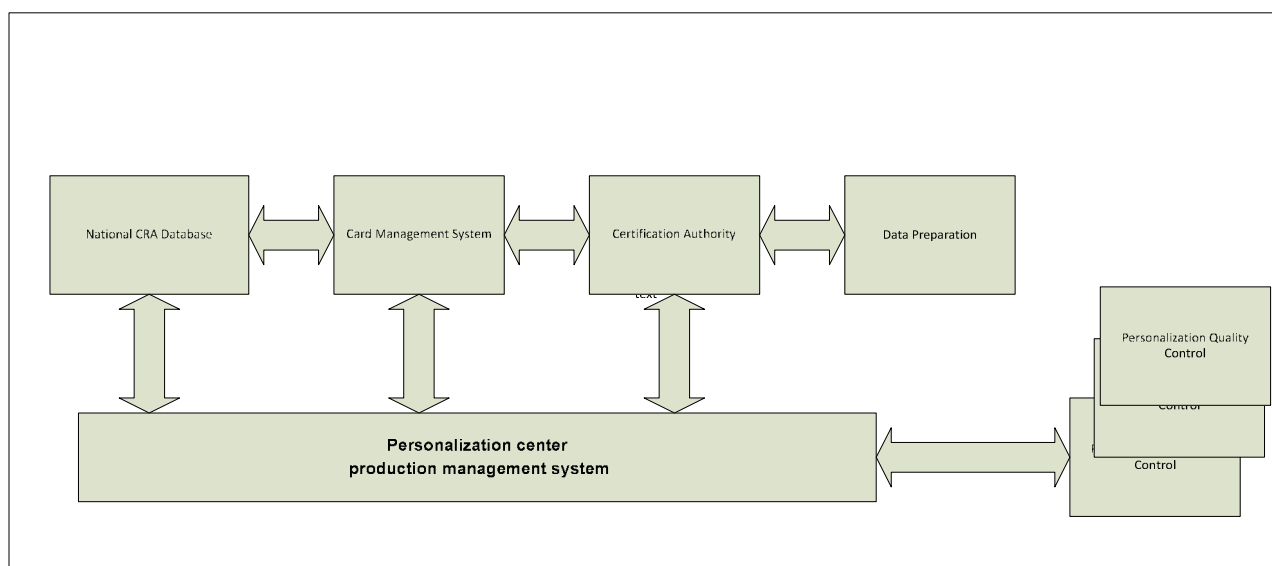
Technical Aspects:

1. Some of the systems and modules (considered as Back-End systems) will be deployed centrally (Card Management System, Key Management System, CA, etc.)
2. Other systems and modules have to be deployed de-centrally within the user sites (Card Production Management, Personalization Workstations, Drivers, Quality Control, etc.)
3. Clustering and redundancy shall be implemented in both central datacenter and the user sites as per the requested cards throughput
4. The Citizen data enrollment and acquisition is recommended to be deployed decentrally within the user sites (through desktop-based application). However, the enrolment data shall be compiled in central Enrollment Management System which shall perform deduplication and verification process against Legacy systems,

Financial Aspects:

1. The implementation of desktop card personalization machines is less expensive than industrial card personalization machines (depending on the number of sites to be deployed),
2. The cost of building infrastructure is much more considering building clustered environment in each decentralized center
3. The cost of securing the blank cards in specific security vault will be higher considering building a vault in each user site in addition to the central headquarter

Operations, Management, and Security Aspects:

1. Less control on decentralized card issuance operations and processes
2. More effort and personnel required for cards' tracking and control among the user sites
3. **Less security** over the card personalization process
4. Increased movement of blank cards all over the country (unlike the centralized issuance scheme) – which is not recommended from security perspective.
5. Less lead-time required considering the delivery of the printed cards to the respective citizen
6. Less (No) cost required for the cards' delivery process (Delivery will be done through same user sites)

Centralized vs. Decentralized data centers

Centralized Data Center

From a generic, point of view, in centralized datacenter, the system components, which are

1. Card Management System
2. CRA Registration System.
3. CRA database

will be distributed over the private network:

De-Centralized Data Center

In decentralized datacenter, the system components Issuance will be distributed over the different issuing centers