

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR WESTERN ASIA

REPORT

**REGIONAL WORKSHOP ON VITAL STATISTICS AND CIVIL REGISTRATION
SYSTEMS IN THE ESCWA MEMBER STATES
CAIRO, 16-21 OCTOBER 1999**

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INTRODUCTION

1. In 1991 the United Nations Statistics Division, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Institute for Vital Registration and Statistics joined in creating the International Programme for Accelerating the Improvement of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems. Within the context of that programme, the Statistics Division organized a series of workshops in close cooperation with the United Nations regional commissions, with financial support from UNFPA.

2. The first such workshop held in the region was the Western Asia Workshop on Strategies for Accelerating the Improvement of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems, organized by ESCWA in cooperation with the Statistics Division and held in Damascus from 20 to 24 June 1993. Its purpose was to assess the coverage and reliability of national procedures followed in civil registration and vital statistics, to propose strategies for improving civil registration and vital statistics systems in the countries participating in the workshop and to discuss ways and means of raising awareness of the importance of civil registration and vital statistics systems in each participating country.

3. Within the framework of the efforts being made by ESCWA in the area of acceleration of the improvement of civil registration and vital statistics systems, the Statistics Division of ESCWA, in cooperation with the United Nations Statistics Division and the Cairo Demographic Centre, held a Regional Workshop on Vital Statistics and Civil Registration Systems in the ESCWA Member States, which took place in Cairo from 16 to 21 October 1999.

I. OBJECTIVES OF THE WORKSHOP

A. MAIN OBJECTIVE

4. The primary objective of the Workshop was to provide training for specialists in the field of vital statistics and civil registration in the ESCWA member countries. The training programme focussed on issues related to the establishment, management, operation and maintenance of reliable civil registration and vital statistics systems and was also intended to inform the participants of the latest international recommendations and standards in that field. The Workshop used the handbook prepared by the United Nations Statistics Division, which contained training modules each comprising a summary of the material covered, key points with which one should be familiar, relevant source material, points and issues for discussion and review questions. In addition, use was made of five other subject-specific handbooks (see annex III, list of documents).

B. OTHER OBJECTIVES

5. The workshop was intended to create a group of trainees who could take on the training of cadres employed in the fields of civil registration and vital statistics and prepare, with the assistance of the ESCWA Statistics Division, training programmes and media campaigns in those fields in their respective countries.

6. A further purpose of the Workshop was to assess the progress made in the ESCWA region in the field of civil registration and vital statistics over the six years since the 1993 Western Asia Workshop.

7. Finally, the Workshop was intended to provide an opportunity for the exchange of experience among the ESCWA member countries and the discussion of means of regional cooperation with a view to the rational utilization of the resources available in the two fields in question.

C. LONG-TERM OBJECTIVE

8. The long-range objective of the Workshop was to strengthen the capacity of the countries of the region in the field of operation and maintenance of civil registration and vital statistics systems in an effective manner so as to enhance their reliability and increase the national, regional and international comparability of vital statistics.

II. ATTENDANCE AND OPENING OF THE WORKSHOP

9. The Workshop was opened at 9 a.m. on Saturday, 16 October 1999 at the headquarters of the Cairo Demographic Centre. The participants included 24 trainees from eleven ESCWA member countries, 5 experts from the United Nations Statistics Division and the UNFPA Country Support Team for the Arab States and Europe and experts from the Cairo Demographic Centre (see annex II, list of participants). The opening statement was given by Major General Ihab Elwi, Chief of the Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics, Egypt. He mentioned that the Workshop would take up one of the most important topics relating to statistical work, inasmuch as civil registration and vital statistics on births, deaths, marriages and divorces were pivotal elements of population statistics. He stressed the need for close cooperation between member States in the ESCWA region in the field of information exchange, calling, first of all, for the creation of an information network communicating with all other networks as a starting point for cooperation with a view to the exchange of information with world networks. He mentioned that Egypt had already begun work on that project, with many databases already having been connected to the Internet.

10. Professor Hisham Makhoul, Director of the Cairo Demographic Centre, said that States' economic and social planning depended on the availability and accuracy of population statistics, pointing out that a system for recording births and deaths had been used in ancient Egypt. Modern history had witnessed appreciable developments, including laws governing the registration of vital events, time requirements for reporting and the various stages of statistical processing, down to the issuance of bulletins. He stressed the need for the exchange of data-collection technology, saying that it was in that area that persons studying at the Cairo Demographic Centre received training.

11. There followed a statement by a representative of the ESCWA Statistics Division, who mentioned the five objectives of the Workshop: the provision of training to specialists in the fields of civil registration and vital statistics in the ESCWA member countries; the creation of training cadres; follow-up on the implementation of the recommendations of the previous workshop; exchange of experience among the participants; and efforts to strengthen the capacity of the countries of the region in the fields of operation and maintenance of civil registration and vital statistics systems in an effective manner and render them applicable at the local, national and regional levels.

12. The proposed agenda was then presented and was adopted by the Workshop (see annex II). The activities of the Workshop included the presentation of 24 training modules, use being made of the *Handbook on Training in Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems* prepared especially for that purpose, and 11 documents, in addition to country papers (see annex II). Also included was a field trip to the Civil Status Organization of Cairo. The Workshop met daily for six days, from 9.30 a.m. to 3.30 p.m.

III. THE ACTIVITIES OF THE WORKSHOP

A. DAY 1: PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF MODULES 1 TO 3 OF THE *HANDBOOK ON TRAINING*

13. At the first session on the first day, the representative of the ESCWA Statistics Division presented training module 1, entitled "The need for a civil registration system". He reviewed the factors underlying States' need for such a system and the administrative and statistical benefits they derived from it. He then presented the United Nations definition of civil registration and vital events and the related priorities and explained the civil registration system, its procedures and the use of the system by individuals (with respect to live births, deaths, marriages and divorces). He further explained a number of administrative uses of civil registration, concluding with the identification of a number of areas in which civil registry records were used in vital statistics, such as population estimates, cohort studies, time studies, the establishment of life tables and the preparation of health indicators and preventive studies, as well as programmes relating to public health, maternal and child health services and family planning services.

14. Training module 2, entitled "Vital events to be registered and the characteristics of the civil registration method", was presented by a representative of the United Nations Statistics Division in New York. Enumerating those characteristics, she explained that the system should be permanent, continuous,

universal and compulsory. In addition, the connection between civil registration and vital statistics systems was essential to ensure that the statistical office published vital events continuously and regularly. She explained the ten vital events whose registration was recommended by the United Nations as well as those considered to have priority. She pointed to the need to rely on legislation to ensure the confidentiality of vital data in the use of civil registration records for legal matters and in the preparation and publication of vital statistics and drew attention to the reasons for protecting the confidentiality of those records and the pressing need to protect vital records through the promulgation of laws.

15. The Inter-country Adviser in Demographic Statistics of the United Nations Statistics Division presented training module 3, entitled “National level designation of responsibilities and organizational structures”.* He explained that a registration law should give clear guidelines on the nature of the authority responsible for civil registration in the country and each area within it and mentioned the need for that authority to be adapted to social conditions and the organizational framework of the State in order to establish, manage and maintain the registration system effectively. He added that the law must fulfil its objective but should not enter too much into details, so as not to stand in the way of administrative modifications that might be issued in the form of rules, procedures and regulations. He also presented the features of a typical civil registration law and the advantages and disadvantages of both centralized and non-centralized systems.

B. DAY 2: PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF MODULES 4 TO 8 OF THE *HANDBOOK ON TRAINING*

16. On the second day, Mr. Abd Rahman Abd Aziz Hussin, of the Civil Status Organization of Egypt, presented training module 4, entitled “Model civil registration law”, which dealt with the basic rules that civil registration legislation should contain, the events to be included, competent agencies and their respective responsibilities, time requirements for reporting, the designation of those responsible for it, etc. He then took up civil status law in Egypt, recounting its historical development, and explained the present Egyptian law of civil status.

17. A representative of the United Nations Statistics Division in New York introduced training module 5, entitled “Integration and coordination in the civil registration system”. She drew attention to the need for coordination between the agencies responsible for civil registration, on the one hand, and the civil registration system and the vital statistics system, on the other hand, and the need for integration between the civil registration system and other agencies involved in civil registration and vital statistics operations, within both centralized and non-centralized systems.

18. The Inter-country Adviser in Demographic Statistics of the United Nations Statistics Division presented training module 6, entitled “Designation of responsibilities for the local registrar”, pointing out the requisite characteristics, qualifications and expertise of a local registry. He said that incentives must be provided in order to attract qualified staff, who must be assured of job stability. He set forth their responsibilities towards individuals and responsible authorities connected with the civil registration system and the vital statistics system.

19. He then reviewed training module 7, which dealt with the establishment of local primary registration units in a geographically and administratively clear manner; the population covered by their services; whether there should be additional secondary registration units (for example, hospitals and health care units); the rules and conditions that must be respected in the determination of the number of local offices or units; the designation of informants and the definition of the information to be provided by each one; the provisions governing reporting which civil registration laws should include: who is to conduct it, when and where; the related incentives and rewards; and the information to be reported.

* The titles of the chapters and modules in the *Handbook on Training* are reproduced here as in the *Handbook*, which is an unedited draft version.

20. Next a representative from Oman, Mr. Ali Mahboob Al-Raisi, presented training module 8, entitled "The civil registration process, part 1: place, time, cost, late registration". In addition, he presented the civil registration and vital statistics project prepared by Oman, also explaining the historical background of population registration in Oman and the way in which the transition would be made to the new civil registration system.

C. DAY 3: PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF MODULES 9 TO 12
OF THE *HANDBOOK ON TRAINING*

21. At the first session on the third day, Mr. Salman Oqlah Al-Qudah, of the Department of Civil Registration and Passports of Jordan, presented the required instructions, rules and procedures for the preparation and storage of registers of vital events, the subject of training module 9 of the *Handbook on Training*. He mentioned Jordan's experience in that area and the historical phases through which the civil registration system had passed before reaching the current phase based on the computerized system in which events were recorded on terminal computers and checked and confirmed by the person responsible for the terminal, after which records and certificates were extracted directly from the computer.

22. Next Mr. Hamed Mostafa Abou-Gamrah, a consultant at the Cairo Demographic Centre, presented the contents of training module 10, covering part 3 of the civil registration process. He explained the policies relating to the release of individual information, record content and numbering, or what was known as the personal identification number (PIN). Regarding the policies and principles applying to the disclosure of individual data, he mentioned data confidentiality, accuracy and completeness and the improvement of the statistics and studies used for registry data. He mentioned three classes of persons or entities permitted to have access to registration records: the person to whom the registry record relates, his deputies or persons so authorized by law; certain Government agencies, for official purposes; and researchers requiring access to such information for scientific purposes. He then spoke at length of numbering (or the PIN), presenting the experience of a number of countries which had long used such numbering as well as examples of the use of the PIN in certain Arab countries such as Egypt and Bahrain.

23. Mr. Ahmed Ibrahim Alnaqib of the Department of Civil Registration of Yemen presented part 4 of the civil registration process, "Additions, amendments to records, issuing certified copies, and linkages", questions covered by training module 11. He gave the definition of each of those questions and the related legal, administrative and implementation-related aspects, explaining what was required in the case of a manual versus a computerized system of registration. He discussed the types of forms required for effecting such additions, amendments or changes to recorded events and mentioned the need for laws to contain provisions relating to all aspects of the issuance of certified copies of vital records, the persons issuing and confirming such copies and those entitled to request certificates for each type of recorded event. He drew attention to the fact that there must be linkages among the different events, as for example between infant deaths and live births, which might reveal unrecorded birth events, and the like. In that connection he reviewed the civil registration system in Yemen and its historical evolution prior to and since unification. He gave an assessment of the current civil registration system and the recommendations contained in the country report on the current state of the civil registration and vital statistics systems in Yemen.

24. The final session on the third day was devoted to training module 12, entitled "The civil registration process, part 5: recording, reporting and collecting civil registration data for statistical purposes", which was presented by a representative of the United Nations Statistics Division in New York. The module included the following topics: the important role of civil registration in providing the data used in the country's vital statistics; the manner in which data should be recorded for statistical purposes; and the manner in which such data should be collected. The representative defined who was responsible for collecting forms and statistical reports, who was in charge of sending them and to whom they were to be sent, specifications that might be followed in the statistical report and the components of the report, explaining the need for such reports to be uniform throughout the country. She set forth the recommended administrative procedures and rules and indicated which authority should be in charge of collecting vital statistics. She mentioned the objectives of the vital statistics system, the role that might be played by a committee for coordination among the different agencies involved and the importance of the civil registration system for obtaining high-quality vital

statistics. Finally, she explained some basic principle that might be adopted to improve the quality and accuracy of vital statistics.

D. DAY 4: PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF MODULES 13 TO 17
OF THE *HANDBOOK ON TRAINING*

25. In connection with training module 13, Mr. Sufian Saleh Abu Harb, of the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, discussed the computerization of civil registration and vital statistics. He gave a rundown of the stages through which the Palestinian civil registration and vital statistics systems had passed prior to computerization, the computerization planning and preparation phases and finally the implementation stages. He spoke of the reasons for computerizing, the basic requisites and the fundamental decisions to be taken in planning for computerization of civil registration and consequently vital statistics. Those decisions, he said, involved the following:

- (a) Defining the framework of the civil registration and vital statistics systems;
- (b) Defining a unique key (unique number) for use in the civil registration system;
- (c) Defining vital objectives and purposes;
- (d) Establishing the organization that will supervise computerization;
- (e) Deciding on development and implementation strategies;
- (f) Defining the required hardware;
- (g) Selecting external contractors and concluding contracts; seeking the assistance of experts for the definition of specifications and terms of reference and for bid submission;
- (h) Choosing a data conversion (initialization) strategy;
- (i) Defining the functions of the computerized system.

He also mentioned the restrictions that must be borne in mind when civil registration data were used for scientific research.

26. A representative of the United Nations Statistics Division in New York explained the first module in Chapter II of the *Handbook on Training*, i.e., training module 14, entitled “Definitions, sources and priority of data in the vital statistics system”. The module dealt with the components of such systems and with priorities recommended in connection with the recording and classification of vital events for which the relevant information could subsequently be extracted by means of the system. The representative reviewed the principal features of vital statistics systems, starting with a definition of such systems, their sources and their purpose, and mentioned the vital events recommended for inclusion in such systems, the recommended priorities and the recommended definitions of vital events and civil status (live birth, death, intra-uterine death, marriage, divorce, annulment of marriage, separation, adoption, legal recognition, acknowledgment of paternity). She explained the anticipated benefits of such definitions and mentioned the characteristics of vital statistics systems and the printing and publication of those statistics.

27. Training module 15, entitled “Designation of responsibilities, organizational structures and coordination in the vital statistics system”, was presented by Mr. Abou-Gamrah of the Cairo Demographic Centre, who gave a definition of responsibilities relating to the recording, collection and publication of data and also to the relationship among the various units and organs connected with the system. He reviewed organizational frameworks in relation to responsibility at the national and regional levels, discussing whether such responsibility should be for all or only some vital events and whether for both registration and statistics or only one of them. In that regard, he said, any of three models might be followed: (a) assumption by a central agency of responsibility for both civil registration and statistics; (b) assumption by one central agency

of responsibility for civil registration and by another such agency of responsibility for vital statistics; (c) assumption by regional agencies of responsibility for the recording of statistics at the regional level and by a central agency of responsibility for vital statistics. He pointed out that coordination between the responsible agencies should include the standardization of definitions for the various fields and for all agencies.

28. A representative of the ESCWA Statistics Division presented training module 16, "Topics and themes to be investigated in a vital statistics system". He emphasized two basic aspects: the topics to be derived from the civil registration system by means of the vital statistics system and the importance of consistency between the topics included in the civil registration system and those included in population censuses and field surveys. There were, for example, topics derived from birth events, such as the date (time reference); other birth-related characteristics (individual/multiple, attendance at birth, type of place of occurrence); characteristics of the child and the parents; economic characteristics of each of the parents; geographic characteristics; characteristics of the mother (such as gestational age and prenatal, perinatal and postnatal care, etc.); characteristics of the population at risk (from censuses and surveys), on the basis of which intercensal estimation procedures were carried out. The various characteristics relating to death, fetal death, marriage and divorce were also reviewed.

29. Training module 17, entitled "Compiling vital statistics, part 1: advanced planning and national centralized compilation", was presented by Mr. Saleh Abdel Mouiem Abd El-Aall, of the Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics, in Egypt, who reviewed the stages and steps being carried out in Egypt, explaining the points related to the topic on the basis of the *Handbook on Training*. His remarks covered the responsibilities of the collecting agency as compared with those of the compiling agency with regard to the preparation of statistical reports. He also examined, by way of an example, the statistical cycle of notifications of births and deaths in Egypt, from the reporting of events by means of the registration agencies through the various stages down to their arrival in the statistical agency. He also referred to their statistical cycle within the central statistical organization, starting with the stage of office review and entry on the forms employed. Those stages were followed by weekly notice delivery records, computer preparation, tabulation, transcription and the checking of transcription, technical review and finally publication in both summary and detailed forms.

E. DAY 5: PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF MODULES 18 TO 22 OF THE *HANDBOOK ON TRAINING*, FIELD TRIP

30. At the beginning of day 5, Mr. Khalifa Ahmed Al-Jaber of the Ministry of Health of Qatar presented training module 18, entitled "Compiling vital statistics, part 2: tabulation principles". He based his presentation on the information contained in the module itself, which included tabulation coverage, the reference date and geographic reference of data and the tabulation of sample data and data from field surveys. The tabulation coverage of a vital statistics system, for example, depended on geographic coverage and time coverage, inasmuch as any vital event occurring within a particular area according to a given geographic system must be recorded for legal purposes and a report must be drawn up on it within the time limits prescribed by the law of civil registration and vital statistics. In developing or improving the efficiency of their vital statistics systems, States might decide to prepare detailed tables confined to geographic areas having a known degree of coverage, which would provide an incentive to areas with less accurate registration to improve their local systems. In that connection it might be possible to prepare reports on completeness of coverage, to make use of correction coefficients for registration inadequacies or to collect data in places without complete coverage by means of field surveys, reference being made to such procedures in the reports published. Regarding the reference date, it was essential that the data should cover a calendar year; if that was not the case in a particular country, it was imperative for that country to publish a set of tables based on the calendar year as well, so as to permit regional and international comparisons. It was recommended that published data should be based on the date of occurrence of the event; if it was based on the date of registration, an indication to that effect should be included. It was also recommended that, when final data based on the date of occurrence of the event were published, mention should be made of the cut-off date for the reporting of events included in the period covered by those data. With regard to geographic coverage, Mr. Al-Jaber mentioned the points that must be taken into account in respect of the geographic classification used in the tabulation of vital events. He said that if the published data had been

collected from a sampling of geographic areas only, care should be taken to restrict the tables to the areas covered by the sample, and wherever possible tabulation should be done at the level of small geographic units (urban/rural areas, ethnic groups or population subgroups), the results being expanded to cover the community as a whole at a later time.

31. A representative of the ESCWA Statistics Division explained all the aspects covered by training module 19, entitled "Presentation of results and data dissemination from the vital statistics system". He indicated principles and guidelines for the effective dissemination of vital statistics, whether on an annual, monthly or quarterly basis. He also explained the computer means employed in disseminating data and in satisfying the special tabulation needs of certain end-users. He mentioned the importance of meetings between producers and users of vital statistics to facilitate progress in the related work and the need to build a database of users of vital statistics to make correspondence with them possible when necessary.

32. The Inter-country Adviser in Demographic Statistics of the United Nations Statistics Division presented training modules 20 and 21, the first of which was entitled "Assessing the completeness of statistical reporting and the quality of vital statistics data". The latter, he said, included two approaches: one based on direct and one on indirect methods of assessment. The indirect methods included the following: comparison of trends, analysis of delayed registrations, patterns in the sex ratio at birth, comparison with census data, comparison of rates observed in similar populations or in previous periods and incomplete data methods based on indirect techniques for demographic estimation. Finally he summarized the advantages and limitations of indirect methods.

33. He then presented training module 21, entitled "Completeness of civil registration and choosing an assessment method". He explained that there were direct methods of evaluation as well as the use of administrative and social records, the use of lists obtained from censuses and field surveys as independent sources for data matching, and the dual-records system. He spoke of the advantages and limitations of direct methods, turning then to indirect methods of evaluation, which had been referred to in the previous module. He finally took up the design of the evaluation study with regard to the objectives of the study, the desired degree of precision, the time in which it must be completed, the type of events to be studied, whether the study related to completeness or quality and the determination of the resources available for the study.

34. A representative of the ESCWA Statistics Division presented training module 22, entitled "Training and public education", which dealt with improving the reliability of civil registration and vital statistics in connection with public information, education, training and communication. He considered that strategies for improving systems must be established, based on the preparation of a detailed action plan for improvement and on training, the holding of seminars and workshops and user feedback in both civil registration and vital statistics. Also important in that regard were the nature of the national and regional committees to be created and public education, information and communication. He mentioned the various groups that required training, including persons employed both within and without the system whose work was connected with the stages of operation of either of the two systems. Such training included field visits, initial visits and educational visits. He pointed out that public education, information and communication must include Government officials at all levels, the general public whose interests were affected by vital statistics and extracts of vital records, and members of institutions, professions and agencies involved in the operation of the system and extraction of data from it. He explained the essential elements of any publicity campaign for education, information and communication: the launching of the campaign, the monitoring of its impact on the system, the conducting of periodic research on the impact and effectiveness of the campaign and the evaluation of the campaign. He said that existing systems should be revised and adjusted on that basis.

35. To supplement the training programme, the participants undertook a field trip to the Civil Status Organization of Cairo, for which arrangements had been made by the Cairo Demographic Centre. They were welcomed to the Organization's headquarters by General Ibrahim Ibrahim Bossylah, Assistant to the Minister of the Interior for the Civil Affairs Department, and four officials of that Organization (see annex IV). They reviewed, each one in accordance with his own special area, the stages through which the civil registration system had passed, the steps in the transformation to full automation, and details of the steps that had been followed for civil registration, its monitoring and its maintenance since 1900. The procedures

followed in the establishment of identity cards on the basis of the national identification number were explained to the visitors. Also explained were the stages in the transfer of data to the Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics as well as the revision and adjustment stages. The participants were shown the software used for recording and extracting data and for issuing various documents and also had an opportunity to see all the different types of hardware employed. The officials drew the visitors' attention to aspects relating to vital events pertaining to persons resident in Egypt as well as nationals resident abroad.

F. DAY 6: PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF MODULES 23 AND 24
OF THE *HANDBOOK ON TRAINING*

36. On the last day of the Workshop, a representative of the Country Support Team for the Arab States and Europe of the United Nations Population Fund presented training modules 23 and 24 of the *Handbook on Training*. According to training module 23, entitled "Monitoring and evaluation studies and using information technology". According to that module he said, evaluation procedures were divided among external evaluation, internal evaluation and practical demonstration projects on new improvement efforts or innovations in specific areas of the country. He explained the use of information technology and system automation, drawing attention to the three phases of computerization of civil registration and vital statistics systems: defining the basic events to be included and the degree of vital statistics coverage of events; other vital events and vital statistics that might be included in the automation process; and population statistics and events, including questions related to population events: immigration (for the first time), change of address, change of name, granting or withdrawal of citizenship and the issuance of identity cards and passports.

37. He next presented training module 24, entitled "Information technology for today's civil registration and vital statistics systems", drawing attention in particular to computerized systems that meet the needs of systems already in existence (prior to automation). He mentioned geographical information systems, with which it was possible to organize and utilize relevant data on a geographic basis and to use data for mapping and the geographic representation of information in support of planning and decision-making. He pointed out that automation facilitated the use of computer-generated documents, those made by copy machine or those produced by hand which were on security paper and did not permit of tampering. Computerized systems facilitated the automatic coding of causes of death. Finally, he mentioned optical disk technology, which increased the efficiency of data storage and retrieval.

38. To complete the practical picture of information technology in the service of civil registration and vital statistics systems and to document the close link between the producers and users of civil registration and vital statistics data, the Cairo Demographic Centre conducted a practical demonstration, on the computer, of the Arab Population Network. The activities of the Network, which was based on the exchange of information and publications, the provision of technical support, the execution of a number of joint activities and distance learning, were highlighted. Attention was drawn to the areas of concern of the Network, namely: population and all issues relating to demographic variables; all aspects of environment; and sustainable development, including its social, economic and environmental dimensions.

39. On the basis of the participants' deliberations during the Workshop, a document entitled "Cairo Declaration on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics" was drafted. It focused on the goal of complete registration of all children under 18 years of age by the end of the year 2002; the intensification of efforts in all fields, each one individually, that would facilitate complete civil registration, use being made of the media, education and communication at every level; and efforts towards national capacity-building, the holding of symposia, the establishment of committees and other means that would contribute to the achievement of the goal. The document was adopted by participants and representatives from eleven ESCWA member States (see annex V).

40. A discussion session was conducted in which each participant gave a synopsis of the civil registration and vital statistics systems and their evolution in his or her own country, indicating whether there were any problems or obstacles. The question of how to overcome any such obstacles was then discussed on the basis of the material presented during the preceding sessions of the Workshop. In addition, a number of views were put forward, as well as recommendations which the participants felt should be adopted.

41. There followed an item-by-item discussion and review of the draft resolutions that had been formulated during the course of the Workshop. The participants proposed a number of changes, whereupon the recommendations were redrafted and presented again in the final form in which they were adopted by the participants.

42. The participants completed the Workshop assessment questionnaire. Its contents were then tabulated with a view to ascertaining the extent to which the participants benefitted from the activities, discussions and deliberations of the Workshop; learning about their expectations for the future regarding their fields of work; and hearing their proposals concerning possibilities for further development of manuals and the holding of workshops in the future (see questionnaire results in annex VI).

43. At the closing session, a representative of the ESCWA Statistics Division thanked the participants and all others who had contributed to the success of the Workshop.

44. Similar appreciation was expressed by some of the participants.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

45. The participants recommended the following:

(a) *At the national level*

- (i) Permanent national committees should be set up within the national organizations in the ESCWA member States to take up the task of improving civil registration and vital statistics methods through efforts of coordination and cooperation among the various governmental agencies and non-governmental organizations concerned;
- (ii) Emphasis should be placed on the third recommendation of the Western Asia Workshop on Strategies for Accelerating the Improvement of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems, held in Damascus in 1993, which calls for the formation of a regional committee on civil registration and vital statistics in the ESCWA region to be charged with facilitating the exchange of experience and information in those fields and efforts to establish a network of information and experience for the region, with ESCWA acting as secretary of that committee, calling for the holding of its first meeting and proposing the related agenda;
- (iii) Attention should be devoted to the adaptation of the laws and regulations pertaining to civil registration and vital statistics systems to technological developments, inasmuch as they constitute cornerstones of genuine work in the area of civil registration and vital statistics systems in the ESCWA member countries;
- (iv) Encouragement should be given to the publication of national reports, news bulletins, wall charts and other printed materials on vital statistics, as permitted by the systems in the different participating countries, it being deemed advisable for such reports, bulletins and materials to mention the level of data completeness, coverage and accuracy;
- (v) In connection with the appreciable progress made in the area of civil registration and vital statistics systems in the region since the time of the Western Asia Workshop, which the participants noted with satisfaction:
 - a. The agencies concerned in the member countries should be encouraged to continue efforts in this field;
 - b. The agencies concerned in the member countries should be urged to use the latest information technology in the field of civil registration and vital statistics systems;

- c. Attention should be paid to according absolute priority, in civil registration and vital statistics systems, to coverage, accuracy and up-to-dateness;
- (vi) The agencies concerned in the ESCWA member States should be requested to hold similar workshops at the national and regional levels;
- (vii) The agencies concerned in the ESCWA member States should be urged to undertake periodic consciousness-raising programmes aimed at the general public, making use of the United Nations Handbook on Education, Information and Communication and other literature on the subject;
- (viii) The member States should be urged to strive to implement the contents of the Cairo Declaration on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics, adopted by the workshop (see annex V);
- (b) *At the regional and international levels*
 - (i) ESCWA and the United Nations Secretariat should be encouraged to expedite the translation into Arabic of the *Handbook on Training* used in the Workshop as well as the five booklets on civil registration and vital statistics;
 - (ii) Emphasis should be placed on the importance of a prominent role of ESCWA in providing the member States with information and technical advice in fields connected with civil registration and vital statistics systems;
 - (iii) Regional training sessions on civil registration and vital statistics should be held yearly, resources permitting, and should be hosted in turn by the different ESCWA member States;
 - (iv) Another training module should be added to the *Handbook on Training* prepared by the United Nations Statistics Division to explain the various ways of using vital statistics for the purposes of planning and the assessment of health conditions, for purposes related to population and development, etc.;
 - (v) The Statistics Division of ESCWA should publish the proceedings of the Workshop as was done in the case of that held in 1993.

Annex I

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS*

A. ESCWA MEMBERS

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* Issued without formal editing, as submitted by the Statistics Division of ESCWA.

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Annex II

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

Saturday, 16 October 1999

A. OPENING OF THE WORKSHOP

9.30 - 10 a.m.	Registration
10 - 10.30 a.m.	Opening statement
10.30 - 11 a.m.	Break
11 - 11.10 a.m.	Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters
11.10 - 11.20 a.m.	Purposes of the Workshop (presentation by Ahmed Hussein, of the ESCWA Statistics Division of ESCWA, and Violeta Gonzales-Diaz, of the United Nations Statistics Division in New York)

B. DISCUSSION OF THE TRAINING MODULES (CHAPTERS 1 TO 4) IN THE *HANDBOOK ON TRAINING IN CIVIL REGISTRATION AND VITAL STATISTICS SYSTEMS*

11.20 a.m. - 1.45 p.m.	<i>Chapter I: The civil registration system</i> Module 1: The need for a civil registration system (Ahmed Hussein) Module 2: Vital events to be registered and the characteristics of the civil registration method (Violeta Gonzales-Diaz)
1.45 - 2.15 p.m.	Break
2.15 - 3.30 p.m.	Module 3: National level designation of responsibilities and organizational structures (Sirageldin Hassan Suliman)

Sunday, 17 October 1999

9.30 - 11.40 a.m.	Module 4: Model civil registration law and the basic features that should be present in legislation on civil registration (Mr. Abd Rahman Abd Aziz Hussin) Module 5: Integration and coordination in the civil registration system (Violeta Gonzales-Diaz)
11.40 a.m. - noon	Break
Noon - 1.40 p.m.	Module 6: Definition of the responsibilities of the local registrar and the limits of those responsibilities (Sirageldin Hassan Suliman) Module 7: Primary local registration units and how to make them geographically and administratively clear (Sirageldin Hassan Suliman)
1.40 - 2 p.m.	Break
2 - 3.30 p.m.	Module 8: The civil registration process, part 1: place, time, cost, late registration (Mr. Ali Mahboob Al-Raisi)

Monday, 18 October 1999

9.30 - 11.40 a.m.	Module 9: The civil registration process, part 2: required instructions, rules and procedures for the preparation and storage of the vital registration record (Salman Oqlah Al-Qudah)
	Module 10: The civil registration process, part 3: policies on the release of individual information, record content and numbering (Hamed Mostafa Abou-Gamrah)
11.40 a.m. - noon	Break
Noon - 1.40 p.m.	Module 11: The civil registration process, part 4: Additions, amendments to records, issuing certified copies, and linkages (Ahmed Ibrahim Alnaqib)
1.40 - 2 p.m.	Break
2 - 3.30 p.m.	Module 12: The civil registration process, part 5: recording, reporting and collecting civil registration data for statistical purposes (Violeta Gonzales-Diaz)

Tuesday, 19 October 1999

9.30 - 11.40 a.m.	Module 13: Computerization in civil registration and vital statistics (Sufian Saleh Abu Harb)
	<i>Chapter II: Essentials of a vital statistics system</i>
	Module 14: Definitions, sources and priority of data in the vital statistics system (Violeta Gonzales-Diaz)
11.40 a.m. - noon	Break
Noon - 1.30 p.m.	Module 15: Designation of responsibilities, organizational structures and coordination in the vital statistics system (Hamed Mostafa Abou-Gamrah)
	Module 16: Topics and themes to be investigated in a vital statistics system through the civil registration system (Ahmed Hussein)
1.30 - 2 p.m.	Break
2 - 3.30 p.m.	Module 17: Compiling vital statistics, part 1: advanced planning and national centralized compilation (Saleh Abdel Mouiem Abd El-Aall)

Wednesday, 20 October 1999

9.30 - 11.30 a.m.	Module 18: Compiling vital statistics, part 2: tabulation principles (Khalifa Ahmed Al-Jaber)
	Module 19: Presentation of results and data dissemination from the vital statistics system (Ahmed Hussein)
11.30 - 11.40 a.m.	Break

Wednesday, 20 October 1999 (continued)

11.40 a.m. - 2 p.m.

Chapter III: Assessing the reliability of civil registration and vital statistics

Module 20: Assessing the completeness of statistical reporting and the quality of vital statistics data (Sirageldin Hassan Suliman)

Module 21: Completeness of civil registration and choosing an assessment method (Sirageldin Hassan Suliman)

Chapter IV: Improving reliability of civil registration and vital statistics systems

Module 22: Training and public education (Ahmed Al-Ayyat)

2 - 6 p.m.

Field trip to the Civil Status Organization of Cairo

Thursday, 21 October 1999

9.30 a.m. - noon

Module 23: Monitoring and evaluation studies and using information technology (Arif Mohammad Farazi)

Module 24: Information technology for today's civil registration and vital statistics systems (Arif Mohammad Farazi)

Noon - 12.30 p.m.

Break

C. FINAL SESSION

12.30 - 3.30 p.m.

Adoption of recommendations and report

Annex III

LIST OF DOCUMENTS

A. WORKSHOP DOCUMENTS

<u>Title</u>	<u>Symbol</u>
Organization of work	E/ESCWA/STAT/1999/WG.2/2
Handbook on Training in Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems (Draft)	E/ESCWA/STAT/1999/WG.2/3
تاءاصحإل او يندمل ليجستل مظن ن ع يرطقلا ريرقتلا ةيمشاهل ةيندرال ةكلملل يف ةيويحل	E/ESCWA/STAT/1999/WG.2/CP.1
لاوحأل تاءاصحإ يماظنل قنهارل ةلاحل نأشب يرطقلا ريرقتلا ةينميلي ةيرومجل :يندمل ليجستل او ةيندمل	E/ESCWA/STAT/1999/WG.2/CP.2
لاوحأل تاءاصحإ يماظنل قنهارل ةلاحل نأشب يرطقلا ريرقتلا ةينانبلل ةيرومجل :يندمل ليجستل او ةيندمل	E/ESCWA/STAT/1999/WG.2/CP.3
نيماظنل قنهارل ةلاحل ن ع نيظسلف ةودل يرطقلا ريرقتلا ةيندمل ل اوحأل تاءاصحإو يندمل ليجستل نيين طول	E/ESCWA/STAT/1999/WG.2/CP.4
قنهارل ةلاحل ن ع ةيدوعسل ةيبرعل ةكلملل يرطقلا ريرقتلا ةيويحل تاءاصحإ او يندمل ليجستل نيين طول نيماظنل	E/ESCWA/STAT/1999/WG.2/CP.5
ةيويحل تاءاصحإل ماظن ن ع رطق ةودل يرطقلا ريرقتلا	E/ESCWA/STAT/1999/WG.2/CP.6
ةيويحل تاءاصحإل ماظن ن ع نامع قنظسل يرطقلا ريرقتلا يندمل ليجستل او	E/ESCWA/STAT/1999/WG.2/CP.7
لاوحأل تاءاصحإو يندمل ليجستل يماظنل يرطقلا ريرقتلا ةيوسل ةيبرعل ةيرومجل يف ةيندمل	E/ESCWA/STAT/1999/WG.2/CP.8
نهارل عضول ن ع ةيبرعل رصم ةيرومجل يرطقلا ريرقتلا ةيويحل تاءاصحإ او يندمل ليجستل مظنل	E/ESCWA/STAT/1999/WG.2/CP.9
لاوحأل تاءاصحإ يماظنل قنهارل ةلاحل نأشب يرطقلا ريرقتلا (قحلم) ةينانبلل ةيرومجل :يندمل ليجستل او ةيندمل	E/ESCWA/STAT/1999/WG.2/CP.10
لاوحأل تاءاصحإ يماظنل قنهارل ةلاحل نأشب يرطقلا ريرقتلا قارعل ةيرومجل :يندمل ليجستل او ةيندمل	No symbol
تاراملل ةودب ةيويحل تاءاصحإل ن ع يرطقلا ريرقتلا دحتمل ةيبرعل	No symbol

B. OTHER DOCUMENTS

<u>Title</u>	<u>Symbol</u>
<p>ةيويحل اءاءاصلل ماضن ءاشنل لجا نم تاايصوتو ءءابم عورشم</p> <p>2 حيقنلتا</p>	E/ESA/STAT/SER.M/19/Rev.2
<p>Handbook on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems: Developing Information, Education and Communication</p>	ST/ESA/STAT/SER.F/69
<p>Handbook on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems: Policies and Protocols for the Release and Archiving of Individual Records</p>	ST/ESA/STAT/SER.F/70
<p>Handbook on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems: Preparation of a Legal Framework</p>	ST/ESA/STAT/SER.F/71
<p>اهتراد: ةيويحل اءاءاصلل او ينلدا ليحسلا مظن ليلدا اهتنايصو اهتايلمعو</p> <p>Handbook on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems: Management, Operation and Maintenance</p>	ST/ESA/STAT/SER.F/72
<p>Handbook on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems: Computerization</p>	ST/ESA/STAT/SER.F/73
<p>بن او حل - لوال دل حمل؛ ةيويحل اءاءاصلل ا بيلاس او مظن ليلدا ةيحيقنلتا او ةييميظنلتا او ةينوناقلا</p>	ST/ESA/STAT/SER.F/35
<p>- يناللا دل حمل: ةيويحل اءاءاصلل ا بيلاس او مظن ليلدا ةينطول اءاسراملا ضارعتسا</p> <p>Handbook on Vital Statistics Systems and Methods, Vol. II: Review of national practices</p>	ST/ESA/STAT/SER.F/35
<p>قيرف - قرجلا اءاءاصلل او ةيعامتجال او ةيفارغوميل اءاءاصلل ا ءاشنل لجا نم تاايصوتو ءءابم عورشم عضوب ينعمل اءاربلا ةيويحل اءاءاصلل ماضن</p> <p>Expert Group Meeting on Draft Principles and Recommendations of a Vital Statistics Systems</p>	E/CN.3/1999/10

Annex IV

**OFFICIALS MET DURING THE FIELD VISIT TO THE
THE CIVIL STATUS ORGANIZATION OF CAIRO**

1. General Ibrahim Ibrahim Bossylah, Assistant to the Minister of the Interior for the Civil Affairs Department.
2. General Yusif Muhammad Tantawi, Director, General Administration, Office of the Chief of Civil Status.
3. General Abdul Rahim Abdul Rahman Malish, Director, General Administration of Civil Status Regions.
4. Abdul Rahman Abdul Aziz Hussein, Deputy Chief, Department of Civil Status.
5. General Hasan Abdul Hadi Al-Nahas, Assistant Chief, Security Section.

Annex V

CAIRO DECLARATION ON CIVIL REGISTRATION AND VITAL STATISTICS

We, the participants in the Regional Workshop on Vital Statistics and Civil Registration Systems in the ESCWA Member States,

Meeting at the Civil Status Organization of Cairo,

Having deliberated for six days, from 16 to 21 October 1999,

Believing in the inalienable right of every child to have a name and nationality,

Recognizing that the registration of births is a fundamental right of the child, as provided in article 7 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child adopted by the General Assembly on 20 November 1989,

Realizing that the registration of births constitutes official recognition of the child by the Government and of the rights and privileges inherent in such recognition,

1. Accord the highest priority to the objective of complete registration of all children under 18 years of age by 31 December 2002;

2. Agree to intensify our efforts in all fields so as to facilitate the completion of civil registration in our countries, use being made of the media, education and communication at every level, national capacity-building, the holding of symposia, the establishment of committees and other means that will contribute to the achievement of the objective;

3. Recommend the establishment and development of permanent and ongoing relations between central civil registration and vital statistics administrations so as to ensure that the various types of vital statistics are supplied and developed and made available to users;

4. Value the great efforts made by the Statistics Division of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia in that important field; thank the Division for organizing this Regional Workshop; and request it to continue its assistance in the organization of all regional efforts towards the acceleration of the improvement of civil registration and vital statistics systems in cooperation with United Nations organizations, other regional and international organizations and non-governmental organizations concerned with this field.

This declaration was signed and distributed in Cairo on 21 October 1999 and adopted as a document issued by the Workshop.

Annex VI

WORKSHOP ASSESSMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Number of questionnaires: 21

Part I

Benefit and timing	Yes	No
Benefitted from the Workshop	100%	0%
Timing of the Workshop convenient	95%	5%

The participants' answers to the general assessment questions were as follows:

Question 1: On the question whether they benefitted from the Workshop, the participants answered "yes" in all cases.

Question 2: On the question whether the timing was convenient, 95 per cent of the participants said that the timing was convenient, while 5 per cent felt that it was inconvenient.

Duration of the Workshop	Adequate	Too long	Too short
	71%	0%	29%

Question 3: On the duration of the workshop, 71 per cent reported that it was adequate and 29 per cent felt that it was too short.

Part II

Organizational aspects	Excellent	Very good	Good	Poor	Very poor
Organization of the Workshop	62%	38%	0%	0%	0%
Implementation of the Workshop	57%	38%	5%	0%	0%
Technical level of participants	38%	52%	10%	0%	0%

Regarding the questions on the suitability of each aspect of the Workshop, the responses were as follows:

Question 4: 62 per cent of the participants responded that the organization of the Workshop was excellent, while the remaining 38 per cent said that it was very good.

Question 5: On the implementation of the Workshop, 57 per cent said that it was excellent, 38 per cent said that it was very good and 5 per cent said that it was good.

Question 6: Regarding the technical level of the participants, 38 per cent considered it excellent, 52 per cent deemed it very good, and the remaining 10 per cent felt that the level was good.

Printed materials	Excellent	Very good	Good	Poor	Very poor
Up-to-date	48%	47%	5%	0%	0%
Clear	62%	28%	10%	0%	0%
Comprehensive	52%	38%	10%	0%	0%
Objective	52%	43%	5%	0%	0%

Question 7: The responses of the participants concerning the assessment of the printed materials were as follows:

- Regarding the degree to which the materials were up-to-date, 48 per cent said that they were excellent, 47 per cent said that they were very good and 5% considered them good.
- In terms of the clarity of the printed materials, 62 per cent indicated that they were excellent, 28 per cent said they were very good and 10 per cent considered them good.
- Concerning the comprehensiveness of the printed materials, 52 per cent felt they were excellent, 38 per cent said they were very good and 10 per cent considered them good.
- The objectivity of the printed materials was found to be excellent by 52 per cent, very good by 43 per cent and good by 5 per cent.

Arrangements	Excellent	Very good	Good	Poor	Very poor	No answer
Hotel arrangements*	15%	46%	31%	0%	0%	8%
Hospitality arrangements	43%	28%	19%	0%	0%	10%

* Eight persons did not stay in hotels.

Regarding hotel and hospitality arrangements:

- Of the participants who stayed in hotels, 15 per cent answered that the hotel arrangements were excellent, 46 per cent said they were very good, 31 per cent felt that they were good. This question was not answered by 8 per cent of the participants.
- Regarding hospitality arrangements, 43 per cent of the participants felt they were excellent, 28 per cent considered them very good and 19 per cent thought they were good, while 10 per cent did not answer the question.

Part III

Technical aspects	Very useful	Useful	Adequate	Inadequate
Presentation of new and previously unknown information	71%	29%	0%	0%
Clarification of important issues deserving of investigation and study	62%	38%	0%	0%
Presentation of new study methods and approaches	52%	43%	0%	5%
Long-term benefit derived from the Workshop for your work	71%	29%	0%	0%
Opportunity to exchange ideas, information and views	76%	19%	0%	5%

Assessment of issues relating to the content of the Workshop:

Question 10: The presentation of new and previously unknown information was rated very useful by 71 per cent and useful by 29 per cent.

Question 11: The clarification of important issues deserving of investigation and study was rated very useful by 62 per cent and useful by 38 per cent.

Question 12: The presentation of new study methods and approaches was rated very useful by 52 per cent and useful by 43 per cent; the remaining 5 per cent did not answer the question.

Question 13: Regarding the benefit derived from the Workshop for their work in the long term, 72 per cent of the participants responded that it had been very useful and 29 per cent said that it had been useful.

Question 14: In terms of the benefit derived from the Workshop as an opportunity for the exchange of ideas, information and views, 26 per cent rated it very useful and 19 per cent, useful, while 5 per cent did not answer the question.

Achievement of the objectives of the Workshop	Yes	No
	100%	0%

Question 15: The answer to the final question, namely whether the Workshop had achieved its objectives, was positive in all cases.

In your opinion, what will the long-range national and regional repercussions of the Workshop be?

1. They will be to help improve and develop civil registration and vital statistics systems both nationally and locally, and in particular within the State, as a result of the experience acquired through the mutual information of participants at this Workshop.
2. The participants feel that it will contribute towards the creation of a new machinery that will enhance the performance of civil registration agencies in the countries of the region.
3. It is felt that there is a need to create a machinery for follow-up of implementation on the part of higher official bodies.
4. The Workshop will help to provide knowledge of ways of limiting contradictions and inconsistencies in published data.
5. The available handbooks furnished to the participants the most up-to-date world-wide experience on methods of creating and maintaining civil registration and vital statistics systems and on coordination among specialized agencies.

Please mention activities that might be considered essential, both for ESCWA and for the United Nations Statistics Division

1. Continuation of the training process in the fields of civil registration and vital statistics.
2. The holding of further workshops, each having a focus on certain topics or training modules, in order that they may be studied in greater depth through countries' experience in the areas in question (detailed study). It is proposed that such workshops be held annually, it being borne in mind that specialized training courses might be more beneficial than general workshops. This might make it possible to arrive more quickly and more efficiently at the desired result, which is to contribute to the establishment of a sound infrastructure in the fields of civil registration and vital statistics in the ESCWA member States.
3. Assistance to the agencies concerned in the different countries in increasing statistical awareness regarding civil registration and vital statistics processes among all persons working in those agencies, and the creation of a machinery to monitor the progress made in that area. It is suggested, for example, that a workshop be held on "How to take advantage of the registration of vital events and use vital statistics in planning and decision-making".
4. Assistance in arranging exchanges of visits between the agencies concerned with civil registration and vital statistics in the countries of the region and between those agencies and their counterparts in countries advanced in that field, with a view to looking at their experience and benefitting from it.
5. Continued translation of important studies and other materials relating to the field, considering how important it is to be able to make use of them in the Arab region.
6. Assistance to countries in exchanging scientific and practical experience relating to the preparation and dissemination of vital statistics in table and bulletin form on a broader scale than that contained in the manuals and booklets prepared by the United Nations Statistics Division.
7. Providing of studies on the experience and know-how of countries advanced in the field.
8. The need to hold specialized workshops for technicians and persons expert in the field of computer science so as to remain abreast of the constant and ever-quickenings developments taking place in information technology in connection with civil registration and vital statistics.