

Civil Registration and Vital Statistics System in Bahrain

Legal framework for the civil registration system

1. The registration of vital events in Bahrain is regulated through various decrees. The Decree No. 6 issued in 1970 specified definitions for live births, born dead (stillbirth) and deaths. The decree also specified the items to be registered, the informant for each event, the minimum duration between the date of occurrence and registration of the events, and the responsibility of the Ministry of Health in the registration process. Provision was also made on the registration of abandoned births and penalties for non-compliance to the law. In 1998, Decree No. 17 was issued to amend the previous decree. The new law revised some procedures to follow if births and deaths occurred abroad. Penalties for faulty report also increased from Bahrain Dinar 50 to 500.

Organisation of the civil registration system

2. The civil registration system in Bahrain is a centralized system and is carried out in two different ministries – the Ministry of Health is responsible for the registration of births, foetal deaths and deaths; and the Ministry of Justice and Islamic Affairs is responsible for the registration of marriages and divorces. The marriages and divorces for Muslims are registered at the Shariti'a Court; while the High Civil Court registers for all others.

3. The birth registration is done in the hospital. For children born in the hospital (around 98% of all births), the hospital is responsible for their registration at the Birth and Death Registration Office (within the Ministry of Health) and for obtaining a personal identification number for them. A child would not be discharged from the hospital if he or she did not receive an ID number, i.e., did not registered in the system. Births occurred outside of the hospital are also required to be registered according to the law. In this case, the midwife will transfer the mothers and children to the hospital for registration.

4. The law in Bahrain also requires that births to Bahrain citizens living abroad to be registered. For those born abroad, Bahrain embassies abroad are responsible for the reporting of the births. Those reports will be sent to the court for evaluation and a birth certificate will be issued. The issuance of an ID card needs a birth certificate and the ID is a must for any services provided by the government.

5. The report of deaths in Bahrain comes from multiple sources – public or private hospitals, relatives, and embassies abroad. Deaths occurred in the hospital (75% of all deaths) are reported directly to the Birth and Death Registration Office within the Ministry of Health and a death certificate will be

issued. For deaths occurred outside of the hospital, relatives are required to report to the Birth and Death Registration Office in order to obtain the death certificate. No burials are allowed without a death certificate. When a death occurs, the name of the person, the informant and medical description of the reason for the deaths will be provided to the Birth and Death Registration Office. The office will register the death and will also classify the cause of deaths according to the International Classification of Diseases, revision 10 (ICD-10). Similar to the registration of births, all Bahrain citizens died abroad are obliged to register with the Bahraini Embassies abroad.

6. Responsibilities of the local registration offices are recording vital and civil status events and safekeeping of the records; issuing certified copies of civil registration records; issuing burial permits; reporting civil registration data to higher level offices and publishing annual statistics.

7. To provide guidance in its regular work, local registration offices are provided with copies of current laws and regulations on civil registration and updated handbooks or instructions on civil registration. Staff working at the local level also receives regular in-service training and advice from higher level civil registration authorities. Technical and administrative supervision is provided by higher level civil registration authorities and from local government.

8. Once the registration of a vital event is done, the information is provided to the Central Informatics Organisation to be recorded and to be incorporated into the population register. The Directorate of Population Registry (under it the Civil Information Record Section) is the agency responsible for the recording of vital events. Once recorded, information on vital events is gathered, reviewed, coded and classified by the Social and Environmental Statistics Section under the Directorate of Statistics. Note that both Directorates - Population Registry and Statistics are under the Central Informatics Organisation.

Technical aspects of the civil registration system

Informants

9. The informant for the occurrence of a birth is the father or any other relative. For foetal deaths and deaths reporting, both the hospital (certificate) and the father (or any relative) should be present. Informants for the marriages and divorces are both husband and wife, while relatives of the involved parties in the marriage or divorce can also report the event if both the husband and the wife are abroad.

Requirements for registration

10. Documents required for registration of birth include medical certificate, witness, verbal or written declaration of informants, and identification card of parents. Medical certificate and verbal or written declaration of the main informant are needed for the reporting of foetal deaths and deaths. For deaths occur at home, public security (police) is also involved in the registration process. The documents required for the registration of marriages include certification of notice of intended marriage, religious marriage record and identification card for bride and groom. For divorces, the required documents are notification of the court or institution granting the divorce decree and marriage certificate.

Characteristics of vital events collected

11. Information that are linked to a birth record includes date and time of the birth, place of birth, sex, birth order, type of birth, weight at birth, gestational age and family address. Information related to the father includes name, age, nationality, religion, occupation and education attainment, while name, date of birth, nationality, religion, occupation, education attainment, duration of marriage, total number of children ever born live and surviving, and birth interval are gathered for the mother. The place and the name and title of the person who delivers the baby are also linked to the birth record. Note that some of the information related to the parents are not directly collected at the time of registration but rather compiled by linking with the population register through the use of the unique identification number.

12. For death registration the following are included: name, sex, age, occupation, religion, nationality, date and place of death, the address before death, source of notification, whether legal documents were examined for registration and cause of death. Identification of informant is also included in the death registration record.

Time allowed for registration and penalties for late registration

13. All vital events are required to register within a certain period. For example, births occurred in the country have to be registered within 7 days and deaths have to be reported within 48 hours. For births and deaths to Bahrainis occurred abroad, the time allowed for registration is 15 days if there is a Bahraini embassy or consulate in the country; otherwise 30 days are allowed for informants to ship the documents to the Ministry of Health in Bahrain by express mail.

14. There are certain incentives for people to register vital events as promptly as possible. For instance, births are to be registered as soon as possible so they can be vaccinated. Death certificate is also required for survivors to claim pension benefits. Once a marriage is registered, the couple is eligible for certain amount of marriage allowance, government housing for newly married couples and for

government interest-free loans for purchasing a house. There are certain incentives for early registration, for instance births registered within the first 7 days costs BD 0.5 for a certificate and the cost increases to BD 0.9 after that. If deaths registered within 48 hours, there is no cost for the issuance of a death certificate, while it costs BD 0.4 after that. (note: US\$ 1 is approximately BD 0.38) Although for events registered within one year, there is not so much difference in costs for the registration, any registration after one year would have to go through the court.

Coverage of the civil registration system

15. The civil registration system in Bahrain covers all geographic areas of the country. The system also covers all segments of the population, national or foreigners. The most recent quality assessment was in 2006 and the completeness for the registration of all five vital events was found to be close to 100%. The methods used for the assessment are dual-record systems (for all events) and a single-round retrospective maternal history survey (for live births).

Coordination

16. Independently from the civil registration system, there is a population register working in the country that was established in 1988 under the decree No. 11. The responsible agency is the Central Information Organisation (formally named Central Population Registry Directorate). The population register maintains a data bank for all residents living in Bahrain and all Bahraini citizens living abroad. The register links all personal details obtained from civil registration, establishment registry, and others. Personal identification cards are also issued by this agency.

17. The population register is not only a user of the civil registration system but also a data provider for the system. As a user, the population register obtains information on all the vital events registered in the civil registration system and takes necessary steps to adjust the population register accordingly. For example, one person will be added to the population register once a child is born and similarly, the deceased will be flagged in the population register once the civil registration system pass the information over. As a data provider, the population register provides detailed information related to the person experiences the vital events or those who are related to the person who experiences the event. For example, civil registration system obtains detailed characteristics of the deceased and of the parents of the newly born child from the population register so in-depth analysis can be done.

Source of vital statistics

18. Civil registration system is the main source of vital statistics in Bahrain. Both the Ministry of Health and the Central Informatics Organisation publish vital statistics; the most recent publications are available online and they are the *Health Statistics 2006*¹ (published by the Ministry of Health) and the *Statistical Abstract 2005*² (published by the Central Informatics Organisation). The former includes basic tables on the total number of births and deaths; births by sex, place of birth, age, and father (or mother)'s nationality; stillbirths by sex, father's nationality and gestational age; deaths by sex, age, nationality and cause of deaths. The latter includes an extensive list of tables that covers births, deaths, marriages and divorces. These tables are by presented by age, sex, characteristics of the person (or the parents if the event is live birth). Note that stillbirth is not covered in the *Statistical Abstract 2005*.

19. The 2001 Bahrain population census was used to obtain tables on fertility and mortality statistics. Questions related to fertility and mortality included duration of marriage, children ever born and children surviving to ever-married women. Tables produced included ever-married women by the number of children even born alive and children living, cross-tabulated by the following variables: nationality of women, age, duration of marriage, education attainment and employment status.³

20. The latest demographic survey in Bahrain was conducted in 1995 (Family Health Survey). It was conducted by the Ministry of Health of Bahrain, as part of the Gulf Family Health Project (GFHP), executed by the Executive Board of the Council of Health Ministers of GCC States. The survey was national representative, including a household health status survey, a reproductive health interview for ever-married women under 50 years of age and a child health survey for children under 5 years of age. The survey took two-stage stratified, cluster sample of 4550 households, based on the 1991 census as a sample frame. Note that the survey only covered de-jure population of Bahraini nationals.

21. For fertility estimates, the survey included a number of questions addressed to women of 50 years and under. The questions included the marital status of the woman, date of first marriage, time the couple started to live together, children ever born and living and their age and sex, children born alive and died and their sex age at death, and miscarriage, stillbirth and abortion a woman ever had. For mortality estimates, a question was asked on whether there was any household member died within the 24 months prior to the survey. The results of the 1995 Family Health Survey were published in 2000.⁴

¹ Available online at http://www.moh.gov.bh/PDF/hs2006/hs2006_e.html

² Available online at <http://www.cio.gov.bh/default.asp?action=category&id=238>

³ Census 2001 Part 2 – available online at <http://www.cio.gov.bh/en/default.asp?action=category&ID=67>

⁴ *Bahrain family health survey*, Tawfeeq Naseeb, Samir M. Farid, 2000.

22. There is no information whether any more recent sample surveys have been conducted in the country to obtain vital statistics.

Availability of vital statistics

23. Bahrain provided data to 33 tables out of 41 vital statistics tables requested by the United Nations *Demographic Yearbook* and relevant to the region, for the 10-year period of 1997-2006. Most of the data provided are rather up-to-date. (Refer to Annex 2 for the complete list of the tables)

24. A census was conducted in 2001 and data on children ever born and children living are available.

Difficulties and future plans

25. One area that currently needs improvement is the registration of birth. It is still a rather long process from the time that the mother is admitted into the hospital for delivery to the time that a new born child is registered. The registration form is sent from the hospital to the Birth and Death Registration Office through fax and sometimes the form gets lost. In order to improve in this respect, there is a plan to computerize the registration system in the three main government owned maternity hospitals so the information about the mother and the child is integrated into the system shared by the Birth and Death Registration Office the moment that mother gets admitted into the hospital. Such electronic system can improve the efficiency of work on both sides – the hospital and the registration office. It certainly will also reduce the risk of the paperwork being missing during the process.

26. The Government of Bahrain is also working on creating a Smart Card that can be used to store various information of a person. All residents living in Bahrain, citizens and foreigners, will be provided with this card. Finger prints, photographs, signature, medical details and the academic qualification of the person are also stored in the card. The card can be used as a driver's license, a health card, or even a credit card. Such card will also be used as a passport, which can go through the electronic border control gates at the border crossing.

27. Since the representative from Bahrain works with the Ministry of Health, detailed information regarding the registration of marriages and divorces is not available.

Source: Technical Report on the Status of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in ESCWA Region, United Nations, ESA/STAT/2009/9