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UNITED NATIONS EXPERT GROUP MEETING ON THE METHODOLOGY AND
LESSONS LEARNED TO EVALUATE THE COMPLETENESS AND QUALITY OF
VITAL STATISTICS DATA FROM CIVIL REGISTRATION

Population Division

Department of Economic and Social Affairs

United Nations Secretariat

New York

3-4 November 2016

Background and objectives of meeting

A well-functioning civil registration system with information on births and deaths is the preferred source of data for vital statistics on fertility and mortality. Registration also helps to ensure that every person has a legal identity, facilitating access to the benefits and protections of the state. In the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the need for accurate and timely vital statistics has been reaffirmed. Goal 16 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) recognizes a direct link between civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) systems, legal identity and sustainable development. Moreover, one of the indicators to monitor the progress in the achievement of Goal 17 is tracking the proportion of countries that have achieved 100 per cent birth registration and 80 per cent death registration by 2030. As of 2015, the World Health Organization estimated that 72 per cent of births were registered whereas only one third of all deaths globally were registered.

The Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations, together with Statistics Korea (KOSTAT), Government of the Republic of Korea, as part of a joint technical cooperation agreement, are organizing an expert group meeting on “Methodology and lessons learned to evaluate the completeness and quality of vital statistics data from civil registration” that will be held at the United Nations Headquarters in New York from 3 to 4 November 2016. The purpose of the meeting is to (a) examine the state of vital statistics based on civil registration, with emphasis on low- and middle-income countries (LMICs), (b) review the state-of-knowledge with analytical methods to evaluate the proportion of actual vital events that are registered by the civil registration of vital statistics (CRVS) system and quality of vital statistics collected through civil registration, and (c) review lessons learnt from local and international experiences in applying these methods to various settings.

The meeting will bring together experts involved with the development and/or the application of direct and indirect analytical methods used to evaluate the completeness of the vital registration, and the quality of the information available. The meeting will also review recent progress and experience in OECD and LMICs focusing on the use of validation studies through record linkage to assess the completeness and quality of births and deaths records.

Core questions for each session include:

- What are the most appropriate methods available to evaluate the completeness and quality of births and deaths records?
- What are the strengths and limitations of the various methods?
- What are the lessons learned from recent experiences with the application of these methods to different settings?
- What recommendations can be provided to LMICs to best evaluate the completeness and quality of their vital statistics, both at the national and at the local level?
- What further methodological research would be desirable to address any pending needs?

Outcomes of the meeting:

- A report summarizing the conclusions, lessons learned, and any recommendations based on the evidence presented and discussions at the meeting.
- Two background papers published as technical papers of the Population Division on the state-of-knowledge on direct and indirect analytical methods to evaluate the completeness and quality of death registration, and recent experiences of the use of record linkage validation studies for CRVS evaluation.
- The expert group meeting will also contribute to inform the development of a new UN handbook providing operational guidelines for the evaluation of geographic coverage of civil registration and state-of-the-art methods available to assess the completeness and quality of vital statistics data from civil registration at the national and subnational level.