

## **Final Record of the Proceedings**

### **Session 1: Fragile States**

**Chair: Luay Shabaneh, Palestine**

1. The chair opened the session by commenting that the issue of statistics and fragile states is a timely one as the official statistical community has not yet addressed it. He outlined the aim of this session, which is to develop some thoughts and recommendations on how the international community can assist fragile states in developing their statistical systems. Fragility often causes countries to think short-term rather than long-term and embark on non-traditional activities.
2. The representative from South Africa first acknowledged the participants in a recent Kigali meeting on fragile states, the Rwandan authorities for hosting the event, and PARIS21 for supporting it. His presentation was a report on the results from that meeting. He commented that participants developed a framework/guidelines for intervening in fragile/conflict situations, based on the best practices of several countries: Afghanistan, Angola, Cambodia, Mozambique, Rwanda, Somalia, South Africa, and Sudan.
3. He provided indicators of state vulnerability, sorted by political indicators (*e.g.*, criminalisation and/or delegitimisation of the state, widespread violation of human rights, intervention of other states), social indicators (*e.g.*, demographic pressures, massive movement of refugees), and economic indicators (*e.g.*, uneven economic development, severe economic decline). He then argued that statistics can be an instrument for peace. In conflict situations, statistics are risk mitigating (playing a diagnostic, therapeutic, and restorative role). In post-conflict or non-conflict situations, statistics are risk management (playing a diagnostic and preventative role). Based on the country case studies, it is clear that the census plays a central role, a crucial first step, in creating state legitimacy. Statistics in themselves are a public good that can assist and entrench democracy.

### ***Discussion***

4. Discussion from the floor began by questioning whether fragile states should focus just on the census when other sources of statistical information could also be brought into the picture. While some participants felt it would be unrealistic to expect countries in these situations to produce data beyond the census, the chair cautioned that statistical offices risk becoming irrelevant if they do not respond to specific new demands from users in conflict situations, which go beyond data collected in censuses. Participants also considered the utility of a Monitoring and Observation Committee (MOC), as was employed in the Sudan. While the MOC is intended to ensure legitimacy of the census, it can also be viewed as too susceptible to political influence. The South African representative argued that MOCs are necessary to ensure legitimacy and security of the conduct of the census. The MOC also made sure that financing was available for the census. The absence of such a structure made the statistical offices themselves very vulnerable. The Ethiopian representative noted the importance of the census being conducted scientifically. The IMF representative highlighted three types of situations of ensuring objectivity in a census: (1) South Africa where it was done internally; (2) Sudan where an external board oversaw the process; and (3) Timor-Leste where there was absolutely no internal capacity to conduct the activity. He argued that the census is a critical first step but not the only one: statistics on wealth creation activities such as external trade, assets and aid flows, for instance, are also necessary. Census numbers can also be disputed depending on the dates it is conducted. The PARIS21 Secretariat Manager recommended that the international community



remain flexible in looking at the conduct of censuses, which can be viewed suspiciously and with controversy.

5. The chair then asked participants to consider the role of the global statistical system in addressing statistical needs of fragile states. The Middle East representative urged the international community to avoid going over the head of the national statistical office (NSO) and thereby undermining them. We need to build partnerships between international organisations and the national statistical system. The representative from Ghana called on the international community to do advocacy work at the highest levels so that politicians understand that censuses are critical for informing policy design. He also highlighted the need for data from civil registration to provide population flow data (as well as the population size and distributions from censuses). The Southeast Asia representative called on the international community to help countries establish an independent and stable national statistical system, design a strategy, and build capacity through training.

6. The Eurostat representative encouraged countries in situations of fragility to develop a roadmap such as that designed for an NSDS to pave the way forward. The EFTA representative commented that, while it is normal for statisticians to measure the bad qualities of society (poverty, unemployment, numbers killed, etc.) and to pass these important messages to politicians, they should also recognise that they have a positive role to play in presenting positive messages such as increased numbers of schools and hospitals in post-conflict situations. The UNSD representative added that the role of the global statistical system is to help ensure independence of national statistical offices, which is even more difficult in fragile situations. Bringing in the UN to help is already a political statement. The World Bank representative said that they can provide finance or to manage funding from others and indeed it is easier to get resources for fragile states. A new catalytic fund (the Statistics for Results Facility – SRF) intends to support fragile states. It will be a challenge to show results in these countries. In fragile states, the needs are so much more apparent, so it's relatively easy to argue for a census. The representative from the African Development Bank announced that they have a Fragile States Facility, which provides additional resources for such countries to restore productive capacity. The Bank is helping them build capacity and establish collaboration with the international community. The OECD representative informed participants that the Development Assistance Committee hosts an International Network on Conflict and Fragility. It is not a donor-only body, as more and more fragile states are participating. She said that this community is ready made to take the statistical community's dialogue on board. Some of the Network's work is the delicate issue of definitions, the promotion of non-discrimination, and service delivery to the full population. Donors are not aware enough of what is happening on the ground and are faced with widely different statistics, such as on populations affected, child soldiers, etc. Statistics are therefore key to informing them. The chair closed by thanking participants for the rich discussion and commented that there is still room for much further discussion.

## **Session 2: Civil Registrations**

### **Chair: John Cutler, Health Metrics Network**

7. The chair began the session by thanking the PARIS21 Secretariat, the Steering Committee members, and representatives from Ethiopia and Ghana for enabling this session and for their interest in civil registration (CR). He acknowledged the commitment of various international organizations in the field and other innovative efforts that may be possible through private sectors such as the insurance industry. HMN puts high value on the development of civil registration as a basic human rights as well as key population-level data source important for tracking progress towards defined goals in various sectors including health.



8. The HMN delivered an introductory presentation covering common ground between PARIS21 and HMN, focusing on the idea of “better outcomes”. Highlights of her presentation included:

- The Civil Registry is critical for Health Information Systems and provides information on who is born, who dies, and why?
- An estimated 40% of births are not registered.
- It is estimated that two-thirds of deaths are unregistered.
- Maternal Mortality information could be provided through good civil registration systems-census is only once in 10 years, and the sample size of surveys are usually too small

9. The HMN representative then considered the weaknesses in the civil registry, including a lack of resources, legal framework, infrastructure, commitment, etc. This leads to a vicious, rather than virtuous, cycle of under-development.

#### *Country Presentation: Ethiopia*

10. The Ethiopian representative then delivered a presentation on her country’s experience in civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS). Historically, weak coordination in CRVS — despite the legal provisions for its establishment — has plagued the Ethiopian system. The Central Statistical Agency (CSA) has made various attempts to lay a foundation for the CRVS. A series of three experimental vital registration surveys have been conducted starting from 1977 followed by a continuous sample vital registration/ dual records in 1986 and 1988. After a technical review of the experimental system all efforts were shifted to the principles and recommendations of the UN that provided guidelines and methodologies for the establishment and development of CRVS system in developing countries in 1999. Intense work is being done to promulgate the new civil registration law through a federal office with connection to the county level, but the lack of a centralized system or adequate technology makes management of the system challenging. She commented that obtaining political will for the process is necessary before beginning.

#### *Commentary on the Ethiopian Experience*

11. The discussant from UNFPA–Ethiopia CO commended the initiatives and efforts being made by Ethiopia in implementing the conventional methods and approaches available as per the UN recommendations and principles. However, he commented that the CSA has not been proactive in the preparation of the civil registration law and also commented that it should be prepared to play a big role in the endorsement process. He expressed some pessimism on the current attention given for CR&VS by the CSA, considering other commitments and also its preparation and readiness in shouldering the huge responsibility in establishing the vital statistics system in the country. And this was the big challenge outlined by the discussant. In the end, the discussant reminded the CSA; that considering the federal and decentralized administrative system currently prevailing in the country; the CSA should be able to make the necessary technical and institutional preparations in properly advising the government and in supporting regions in the establishment and development of civil registration and vital statistics systems in the country.

#### *Country Presentation by Ghana*

12. The representative from Ghana defined the current system in the country as the heir to the traditional colonial system. All CRVS information is fed back into the Ghana Statistical System (GSS). In the case of deaths, the police have to be involved. Cemeteries are not controlled and so often deaths can go unnoticed. He summarized estimates of the effectiveness of the CR in Ghana then ways to improve.



### *Commentary on the Ghana Experience*

13. The representative of UNFPA–Ethiopia said that Ghana is similar to many other countries in that there is a need for change. He commented that in Ghana 45% of births are still not captured. The 1965 Law is not aligned to current realities, and the institution is still too colonial-based. There is an institutional diffusion of responsibilities and resources. CRVS build on a colonial system that should be overhauled.

### *Civil registration work by HMN and partners*

14. The HMN representative summarized recent work they have done in CRVS. They organized a technical brainstorming meeting with Ethiopia, Ghana, Sierra Leone, and Zambia this past March focusing on countries with low coverage. Another CRVS event will be held in collaboration with the World Bank in June. HMN, WHO, and its partners have developed a roadmap that is currently being pilot tested and are in the process of developing tools based on the UNSD handbook that will include two or three case studies. They also intend to provide assistance to countries in articulating the need for CR systems. She then highlighted areas where PARIS21 could be effective, namely in helping produce case studies, facilitating country Work implementation, participating in HMN regional workshops, being involved in future events such as the Tanzania Workshop, and making CRVS visible in the NSDS.

### **Discussion**

15. Discussion from the floor offered a few other opportunities to discuss CRVS. The IFORD representative mentioned a workshop to be organized in Yaoundé on the topic (24-26 November 2009 Systèmes d'état civil en Afrique; enjeux, état des lieux et défis). The EFTA representative announced a course in administrative registers for Mediterranean countries. An October 2009 meeting in Istanbul will be held and focus on Norway, Sweden, and the Netherlands since these are the most advanced CRVS systems. The representative from Palestine referenced the need to invest in the infrastructure for a CRVS system, and the UNDP representative called for more advocacy to raise the profile of CRVS. The PARIS21 Secretariat Manager reiterated the Secretariat's desire to work with HMN and other partners in integrating CRVS and the wider health information system into the NSDS.