

Annex A – 1

i. Evaluation Context

Birth registration is the official recording of the birth of a child by the State, a fundamental human right and an essential means of protecting a child's right to a name and identity. Birth registration is part of a civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) system, which tracks major milestones in a person's life – from birth to marriage and death. It serves not only for legal and statistical purpose, but also provides a proof of age that is important in the fight against certain forms of abuse and exploitation, such as child marriage, trafficking of children and/or for children in conflict with the law. West and Central Africa is the region with the lowest birth registration rates in the world with only 53% of children under-5 registered. This equals to an estimated 47 million children under five not registered. The under-1 registration rate is even lower, standing at 47% and corresponding to an estimated 10 million children 0-11 months not registered. The region accounts for three out of ten countries with the lowest birth registration rates globally. The status of birth registration across the region varies widely, ranging from near complete rates (>85%) in Cape Verde, Congo, Mali and Gabon to less than a quarter of children (<25%) registered in Chad, Guinea-Bissau and Liberia. While countries with very low registration rates tend to bear the characteristics of fragile States with a long history of emergencies, several relatively stable countries in the region continue to have registration rates not exceeding 65%. In addition, while some countries in the region have demonstrated progress in birth registration, others are experiencing stagnating or declining rates. Furthermore, some high- and middle-income countries have relatively low birth registration rates and a number of low-income countries have relatively high birth registration rates. This is a highly atypical situation, as civil registration coverage generally improves with economic development

Since 2013, UNICEF has progressively invested in civil registration sector reform and routine registration with a particular focus on health platforms and administrative data indicate that registration rates in the region have increased accordingly. In 2018, for the first time in ten years, the regional birth registration average increased from 45 % to 53 % for children under five. This amounts to 6.5 million more children registered in 2018 as opposed to 2017 and is largely due to progress achieved in the most populous country in the region, Nigeria, where birth registration increased from 30 % in 2008 to 43 % in 2018¹⁵. Data and evidence also shows considerable progress in other countries in the region although this progress remains at the decentralized level, not necessarily having an impact on the national registration rate.

By 2021, it is expected that 66 % of children under 1 will have their births registered in WCAR, representing at least 12,5 million children in total within the region.

National Specific Contexts

Ivory Coast

For more than a decade, Côte d'Ivoire has experienced a succession of socio-political crises resulting from a deep socio-political division of Côte d'Ivoire in all its strata. They have been fuelled by structural inequalities in access to basic social services and development opportunities. This has resulted in significant regional disparities, mostly to the detriment of the North. The instrumentalization of identity issues has contributed to

the socio-political divide already perceptible in the early 1990s, in a context where a quarter of the population of Côte d'Ivoire was made up of immigrants, mostly from neighbouring countries.

The longest and most serious crisis began in September 2002 and affected the operations of the national administrative system : the Territorial Administration and all the other administrations (education, health, security, municipality, etc.) left the northern, western and central zones of Côte d'Ivoire (NOC) to join the south, which remained under the authority of the power that was in place. As a result of this movement, most of the civil registration centres were no longer functional.

Those that remained functional were managed de facto by civil servants who were not always qualified to assume these responsibilities with the required professionalism. Subsequently, this situation had a negative impact on birth registration in particular and on other civil status events in general.

Indeed, for the Government, "the unique identifier of individuals is the basis for enabling the State to carry out its sovereign missions (security, education, health, justice, etc.) more effectively and to develop the activities/services provided by the private sector in various fields, in particular telecommunications, banking, insurance and the digital economy ". To achieve this, the Government has been leading on the establishment of a civil registration system that ensures the continuous, permanent, compulsory and universal registration of civil status events. To this end, the implementation of the interoperability mechanism started with : **(i) a feasibility study** supported by UNICEF was followed by **(ii) a pilot in 15 municipalities** in Abidjan and the North region was implemented by the office of the Ministry of interior in charge of programming, monitoring and evaluation and the NGO Action Aid; **(iii)** Building on promising results achieved and the lessons learned from the pilot it was decided during the capitalization workshop to : **(a) improve registration tools; (b) extend the experience to other regions and (c) better engage the health sector** in the implementation of the new birth registration mechanisms; **(iv)** elaboration of the civil registration law.

The ambition of UNICEF and the Government is the scaling up of the mechanism during the first semester of 2020. This was hindered by the COVID 19 pandemic. One of the assumptions that underline the cross sectoral synergy between child protection and health sector is its positive outcome in increased timely birth registration and enhanced used of child health services particularly, immunization services, a more transparent and efficient management of civil registration with less fraud.

Liberia

Despite Liberia having signed and ratified the UNCRC in which Birth Registration is recognized as Child's Right, the implementation of this instrument has been patchy due to the lack of political commitment and insufficient resources. Since 1976, the conduct of birth and death registration has been determined as legal and mandatory in Liberia as per the Public Health Law. However, these registration systems have never been fully developed due to limited access, inadequate national budgetary allocation and lack of policy and standard operating procedure to guide the administration of the system. The right was adopted by inclusion in the Early Childhood Development Policy of Liberia in 2008 and fully domesticated with the passage of the Children's Law in 2011.

Civil Registration implementation has experienced many challenges, especially after the Liberian Civil Crisis and then the Ebola virus disease outbreak that affected heavily the health system in Liberia (2014-2015).

Liberia has initiated several processes for CRVS and identity management system strengthening including the Comprehensive CRVS Assessment of 2013 which informed the development of the CRVS Strategic Improvement Plan. The CRVS Investment Case was developed to emphasize how important CRVS is viewed as a component of the health sector. It serves as the foundation for other civil registration processes in any state, be it the

issuance of marriage and divorce licenses, passports, national identification cards, drivers' licenses, social security cards, voters' registration cards, etc. The Ministry of Health in the same year developed the Birth Registration Improvement Plan (2014-2018). In 2015, with support from the World Bank, the Investment Case for Improving Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Liberia was developed. Finally, in 2017, with support from UNICEF Regional and Country Offices, the Birth and death Registration and Certification Policy was developed. As a result, Birth registration services are more widely available than at any time in Liberia. Further with the push from World Bank and UNICEF, there is an acceleration of decentralized service delivery, which increased number of birth registration centers in health center, where close to universal coverage of birth registration exists at the district and county level. This has led to significant gains also seen in the LDHS 2019/2020 where birth registration rates have increased from 25 to 66 per cent for children under the age of 5. However while gains are made, sustaining the gains will be a challenge, coupled with other systemic issues such as capacity challenges, limited education and awareness, and weak enforcement.

Experienced challenges includes also the system for death certification and registration is worse; it lags behind birth registration in terms of resources and practice, though it makes sense to integrate the two, particularly through resource sharing. In addition, while birth registration documents an individual official existence, death registration declares that an individual has ceased and without the two, it cannot be said that any national registry is accurate. Another key area of challenge, overlooked in the past, has been the management of the system. Though birth registration services have been decentralized, there is no written policy to guide the day-to-day administration of birth and death registration services. Therefore, the development of a policy to implement the provisions of the Public Health Law is critical for consistency, improvement in services and realization of the birth and death registration goals and objectives.

Liberian legal identity landscape requires synergy, coordination and linkage between the three components of CR, VS and ID Management actors and their identification systems. There is also need for legal and policy review and harmonization of the fragmented laws to provide the framework for integration. There is need to develop modalities for interoperability, linkage of databases and data sharing, while upholding data protection and privacy. There is need for increased resource mobilization from the government internal resources and development partners for completeness of the birth, death registration and identity management, a commitment that the Hon. Minister of Finance and Development gave as an urgent and immediate intervention required to enable the government document its people. This can only be achieved as the government continuously records the life events of each individual, giving legal identity without discrimination, and utilizing the data obtained to provide quality and inclusive public service.

Guinea-Bissau

In Guinea-Bissau, it is through the civil registration system, notably birth registration (BR), that the Bissau-Guinean nationality is certified. In 2006, the rate of birth registration for children under five was 39% but it decreased to 24% in 2014 (MICS), placing Guinea-Bissau as the 8th worst birth registration record in the world. Children are usually registered at an older age. It should be noted that Birth Registration is free for all children until 7 years.

The Ministry of Justice (MoJ) is responsible for Civil registration (CR) in Guinea-Bissau. There are 55 civil registration services in the nine regions of the country. There is an urgent need to reform the CR Code (revision is ongoing) which dates from 1977 with up-to-date strategies.

Improving civil registration services and increasing access to registration, especially for vulnerable population, continues to encounter major challenges and remains also one obstacle to ensure that the rights of the population are fully enjoyed and that the society can achieve full citizenship and civic participation in Guinea-Bissau. The lack of formal registration remains a serious problem, particularly in the rural areas where, in some zones, civil registration services are practically inexistent. A clear example is the Bijagos islands, where there is only one service point, staffed by one employee per 32,424 inhabitants (census 2009).

The Ministry of Justice is working at systemic level, both at central and decentralized levels to increase access to BR services and improve the national Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) systems. UNICEF is the key partner in this process in various areas:

- **Advocacy** was reinforced for the revision of the Civil Registration Code to ensure a solid legal foundation that will facilitate the process of CRVS reform and access to services and the development of a clear Action Plan.
- **Capacity development** of civil registration services and **investments in infrastructure, rehabilitation and equipment**, were supported to ensure that facilities have the appropriate working conditions for operating, to provide effective response on the increased demand that the interventions have raised.
- **Strategic partnerships** were fostered between the Ministry of Justice and CSOs to increase awareness and promote community BR initiatives, targeting vulnerable families and communities, namely refugee children, children living in the islands, children in regions where rates continue to be extremely low, but also children from urban settings. Currently, partnerships with NGOs, CBOs, religious and traditional leaders, youth associations, private sector and environmental agencies are in place.
- **Integration of BR services in health and education facilities** was used to increase the civil registration system capacity, through formal agreements and decentralized interventions. This approach resulted in additional opportunities for BR of newborns as well as children who were not registered at an early age.
- **Innovations** were promoted in programming, including the use of technology to improve vital statistics data system (RapiPro).

A comprehensive assessment of the Bissau-Guinean CRVS system was conducted in 2018 which has provided key elements to guide the current legal reform process. Partnerships with key stakeholders to put civil registration (CR) in the national agenda and mainstream CR in other ongoing social responses has fostered important reform in the legal and policy frameworks. However, the much-needed reform of the outdated CR Code is still pending. UNICEF, with the support of the AUC, the European Union and the Portuguese Cooperation, has spearheaded and completed the process for the elaboration of the national CRVS Strategy and budgeted National CRVS Action Plan. The new CRVS Strategy and Action Plan (2018-2028), approved by the council of ministers in August 2019, addresses all aspects of the reform of the CR sector, including the increase in the number of qualified human resources and their optimization to guarantee the extension of services to remote areas and to scale up services.

As far as Togo is concerned, the birth registration rate of children under 5 years of age increased from 78% in 2010 to 82.9% in 2017; of which 79.2% are less than one (01) year old. In 2018, by decree was created the national mechanism for strengthening multisectoral coordination and civil registration policies, including Birth Registration. Currently, the civil status inventory is being finalized to feed into the development of a national plan on the subject and all initiatives are strongly supported through investment work on civil registration by technical and financial partners, as well as the civil society.

In 17/44 prefectures/boroughs, civil registry services have been strengthened and are responsible for the development and implementation of operational plans of action on the registration of children's births. These plans provide for the integration/interoperability of health and civil registration services, capacity-building of civil registrars, the involvement of community health workers (CHWs), traditional and religious leaders in mobilizing communities on the importance of birth registration for the protection of children and the procedures for systematic birth registration and the establishment of substitute judgements. The improvement of collaboration between the justice system and civil registry services is also addressed, as is collaboration with INSEED in the collection of data on birth registration.

In 13 of the country's 44 districts (29.54%), the health and civil registry services work together to ensure that births are registered within the legal time limits during vaccinations and on child health days, thus contributing to better protection of children's rights. The goal is to increase the number of municipalities with cooperation between health and civil registration services to 70 per cent by 2021. Regarding the use of new technologies, there is a pilot project for testing a computerized birth data management and storage system in Bassar, Kpendjal and West Kpendjal prefectures which is being finalized with the regional office and will be launched in October 2020.

At the national level, in February 2019, the Minister in charge of civil status installed the multisectoral technical committee on civil status, which includes representatives of civil society and traditional leaders. This committee took stock of the civil status situation (CRVS) in the country and submitted proposals to the supervisory authorities. In order to carry out this work with a better knowledge of the advances and challenges existing at the local level, this committee toured the whole territory to discuss with the main actors of the Civil Registry, including representatives of local communities and traditional and community leaders. Under the leadership of the government, a diagnosis of the Civil Registry system has been carried out and a session to share and discuss the results and recommendations is planned for 2020.

It should be noted that efforts still need to be made in terms of the availability of qualified human and technical resources for carrying out civil status events, in improving the quality of services and harmonising and reducing the costs of issuing birth certificates and establishing supplementary judgements, as well as in improving information management and coordination between sectors and actors.

Guinea

The diagnostic study of the civil registry system conducted in 2017 highlighted the weaknesses that characterize the civil registry system in Guinea, namely : (i) numerous weaknesses in the current legal framework (inconsistency of texts, not explicit on essential procedures, and conversely unnecessarily restrictive on other registration modalities), (ii) poor appropriation and application of texts by actors on the ground, (iii) a lack of

political commitment to civil status resulting in under-funding of the sector, (iv) the quantitative inadequacy and lack of qualified staff at the level of the structures concerned with civil status to provide support in the registration of civil status events, with the result that the poor quality of services can lead to the nullity of certain acts issued, (v) insufficient availability of inputs (valid registers, office equipment or logistics for a more effective advanced strategy), (vi) insufficient control of the civil registry services by the technical guardianship and prosecutors, with the result that fraud is on the increase, (vii) insufficient measures to ensure better integration of civil registration in other sectors such as health, education, community development actors, (viii) a lack of efficient collaboration between the various bodies responsible for registering civil status events (community organisers, court registrars, communes or civil status offices, NGOs, health centres and posts) and the structures in charge of vital statistics, and (ix) poor conservation of civil status archives due to a lack of adequate equipment and staff.

Guinea, which is part of the African Programme for the Accelerated Improvement of Civil Registration and Life Statistics Systems (APAI-CVRS), has made the reform of the civil registration system a priority issue, with the establishment in 2017 of the Intersectoral Coordination for the Reform and Modernization of the Civil Registry (CIRMEC) and the adoption of the National Strategy for the Reform and Modernization of the Civil Registry (2018-2022). This strategy was defined as one of the priority areas of intervention to strengthen interoperability between the different actors and in particular between health and civil status.

Indeed, in this field, it has been noted that : (i) data and information on births in health structures, vaccinations and civil status events are not shared and coordinated between the structures in charge of civil status and health, (ii) the civil status service stops at the commune level while the health service goes down to the village level with the implementation of the National Community Health Strategy, (iii) health personnel are very poorly involved in the management of civil status events and (iv) the non-existence of secondary civil status centres in health structures. The hypothesis put forward was therefore that the implementation of interoperability between civil registration and health services is a strategy that makes it possible to rapidly improve the geographical coverage of civil registration systems and to capture at least all births taking place in a health structure.

Following a pilot phase of interoperability mechanisms (in the region of N'Zérékoré) coupled with focused capacity building of health actors and a focused community engagement strategy at the most local level, the Ministry of Health signed the joint decree establishing the mechanisms for interoperability between the health and civil status systems in May 2019. In this decree, roles and responsibilities are clearly defined for the MATD and the Ministry of Health. Following this, a workshop to capitalize on experiences of interoperability between health and civil status implemented in the pilot region of N'Zérékoré was organized in June 2019 in Conakry, in order to highlight evidence and best practices in the field, and an action plan was developed to implement interoperability in UNICEF priority areas. Thus, the second half of 2019 saw the entry into the second phase: the implementation of the joint decree, based on lessons learned from the pilot experience in N'Zérékoré, in all convergence communes, the Labé region and the Conakry region.

Cameroon

According to the Cameroonian Government, the civil status is the foundation of a modern State, proof of a citizen's identity, and the best way of expressing sovereignty. It is also a precious source of data for national planning and the implementation of public policies. That is why, the Government embarked on a thorough reform of the functioning of the national civil status system.

The launching of the reform process took place in 2007 with the approval of the first PIP whose implementation served as the basis in 2010 for the Cameroon Civil Status Rehabilitation Program (PRE2C). On 6 May 2011, the

Law No. 2011/011 was enacted to amend and supplement certain provisions of Ordinance No. 81-02 of 29 June 1981 to organize civil status registration and various provisions relating to the status of natural persons. This Law introduces significant innovations in the national civil status system both at the level of the status of persons and at the institutional level. The National Civil Status Office (BUNEC), which is a Public Administrative Institution is henceforth the driving tool of the new civil status system. Its organization and functioning were laid down by Decree No. 2013/031 of 13 February 2013.

To improve its system of registration of civil status events, the Government subscribed to the APAI-CRVS continental Programme (Africa Programme on Accelerated Improvement of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics). This was aimed at the consolidation of the results of the analysis and the implementation of the Cameroon Civil Status Rehabilitation Program (PRE2C), paved the way for the introduction of international standards and computerization, in conformity with the approach of the APAI-CRVS pan African programme. After noticing the weaknesses and the poor functioning, an evaluation report was made, presenting a set of proposals and recommendations to the Government.

The additional evaluation of the CRVS system was done with the evaluation guide and the tools designed by the Regional Secretariat of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA). Further information was obtained from the studies conducted by the Cameroon Civil Status Rehabilitation Programme (PRE2C).

The evaluation report clearly shows the challenges that must be overcome in order to make the Cameroon civil status system efficient and operational. It equally includes some strong recommendations to address the problem of bottlenecks through a holistic and integrated approach. There are still some constraints that hinder the improvement of the civil status registration system and the production of civil status statistics. This situation is characterized on the field by:

- Difficulties relating to the coordination of civil status programs and activities;
- Weaknesses in ownership and application of instruments by the stakeholders;
- Inadequate awareness raising of the population (insufficient information, education and communication);
- Insufficient quantity and quality of civil status personnel;
- Insufficient supply of basic requirements (official registers, office equipment and logistics);
- The use of non-official registers;
- High costs of certificates whereas the law provides that they are issued free;
- Distance of civil status registries from the population;
- Low quality of service provided by the officials; Inadequate control of civil status services; Inadequate measures to guarantee the proper integration of the registration of civil status events in other sectors such as health, education, community development, etc.;
- Lack of collaboration between various structures responsible for the registration of civil status events and the production of statistics;
- The approximate management of civil status archives.

Based on evidences pooled from the situation analysis, many partners engaged to support the Cameroonian Government. Each partnering player joined the implementation of the reform based on his mandate and challenges that are faced by its targeted populations. UNICEF commitment aims at ensuring that every Cameroonian child enjoys the right to citizenship. A multilevel technical and financial support was provided to the civil registration system. The focus was on pilot implemented in two health districts located in the East and Far North regions. High-level advocacy conducted by UNICEF and other partners led to Government's decision to implement inter-operability between the health system and the civil registration system

Chad

In Chad, the birth registration rate for children under five years of age is 12% according to the 2015 EDS-MICS report. The report of the global evaluation of the civil registration system finalized in July 2017 highlighted the main challenges facing the civil registration system in Chad like the weakness of the legal framework; inadequate quality of human resources and lack of plans to build the capacity of civil registry staff; the lack of awareness of the importance of birth registration to parents; the lack of knowledge of birth registration procedures for birth certificates delivery; the weak capacity of the structures involved in civil registration; insufficient security of civil status documents ; the lack of digitalization system for civil registration; the lack of production of vital statistics; the lack of coordination between the different sectors involved in the issuance of birth certificates; the weak level of funding for activities related to civil registration...

It is in this way that the government of Chad provides the country with an operational institutional framework for civil registration of all events that is in conformity with international standards, accessible to all, with complete data, capable of providing a legal identity to each individual and producing statistics that are essential for socio-economic development at all levels by adoption of Ordinance No. 002/PR/2020 of February 14, 2020 and establishment of the Agence Nationale de Titres Sécurisés.

Equatorial Guinea

The civil registration system of Equatorial Guinea is still governed by the Civil Registration Law of June 8, 1957 and by the Decree of November 14, 1958 that regulates its application. The 1957 Law on Civil Status has been applied since 1980, in accordance with Decree Law No. 4/1980 which regulates the subsidiary application of Spanish legislation in the Republic of Equatorial Guinea. However, some exceptional measures are generally taken to adapt certain situations to local realities, thus avoiding a stricter application of the Spanish civil code. The official data from the Birth Registration indicates that 54% of the boys and girls are those who are registered according to the (EDSGE 2011), with a difference between urban areas (60%) and rural areas (47%). There are updated administrative data that improve these numbers. For the advance of until there is a new survey, the administrative data could not be confirmed.

Equatorial Guinea is part of the African Program for the Accelerated Improvement of Civil Registry and Life Statistics Systems (APAI-CVRS). The reform of the civil registry system is a priority, with the establishment in 2017 of the Intersectoral Coordination for Reform and Modernization of the Civil Registry (CIRMEC) and adoption of the National Strategy for the Reform and Modernization of the Civil Registry (2018-2022). This strategy was defined as one of the priority areas of intervention to strengthen interoperability between the different actors and between health and civil status.

The strategic plan to modernize the civil registration system undertaken by the Ministry of Justice, Worship and Penitentiary Institutions from 2016 has had the support and contribution of UNICEF, said contribution has been based on technical assistance and the mobilization of resources to provide equipment. It received its impetus in September 2018 with funds received from the US, from which a roadmap was drawn up in which objectives and achievements were established:

- a) Carry out an analysis of the bottlenecks and the political, economic and social-community impact of updating and modernizing the CRVS. Analysis of the situation of the civil registration system in the country. what includes; a review of the centers, identification of current challenges for the achievement of a universal registry, weaknesses in the implementation of a modern digital system. Analysis of current legislation, the professional competencies of officials, the very structure of the services, decentralization and coordination.
- b) Reinforcement of intersectoral coordination and administrative decentralization to achieve

universalization of the civil registry service. Likewise constituting an intersectoral Technical Committee. Said committee should ensure the technical work of the modernization of the civil registry system, the elaboration and follow-up of the national plan of the civil registry and vital statistics system and the proposal of a memorandum of understanding between MINJUST and MINSABS to cross-check computerized data from the systems. DHIS2 and SIREC in order to improve the vital statistics of the country. Along the same lines of strengthening coordination, local development committees were created, made up of all departments of the local public administration, the private sector, and civil society. The technical committee would be composed of the representation of the Ministries: Justice, Worship and Penitentiary Institutions, Health and Social Welfare, Social Affairs and Gender Equality, Interior and Local Corporations and National Security. The Equatorial Guinea Institute of Statistics (INEGE), CNIAPGE, CENADOGE and the National Committee for the Rights of the Child would also participate in said committee.

- c) Modernization of the country's legal framework, harmonizing it with international conventions and the AU through institutional and coordination mechanisms and focus on decentralization.
- d) Communication strategy for community dissemination of the benefits of birth registration to children. Campaigns for communication, information and community participation on the benefits of computerized birth registration, as well as the creation of awareness and the need to register children to exercise their right to identity. It is also about achieving behavior change in families and communities about social norms contrary to the CRC and accelerating the results on the birth registration of children.
- e) Design of the digital system architecture. Digitization of current and historical data. Telematic and digital system based on vital data. Strengthening of Administrative Records of Vital Facts. Establishment of objectives and impacts on universal civil registration. The digitization of historical and new records is in operation in 3 centers in the country.
- f) Training on the technological tools implemented for civil registry officials and technicians recruited for digital retrieval of historical records;

During the period of confinement due to the COVID pandemic, UNICEF has supported virtual meetings with the civil registration team. The exchanges with the departments of INEGE and CNIAPGE have been maintained.

At the end of April 2020, in order to give continuity to the SIREC project, UNICEF together with the SIREC team made up of (7 members, 2 computer creators and networks, 5 professional typists) studied the mechanisms that would allow them to continue supporting the actions of the project, in the digital recovery of the manual historical data of birth registration. The technicians prepared the equipment for the typing machines so that they can work from their homes during the confinement. They installed virtual servers to all the portable computers, replicated the application on each portable machine and the transfer of the books to each user and the exploitation of the data recorded to the server.

¹⁵ Nigeria DHS 2013 and 2018

