

The 'vital' supper

Delegates had a taste of Setswana hospitality at Wednesday's gala dinner, reports **Gorata Moloi**



In Setswana culture, "the arrival of a guest is always a cause for celebration and feasting". This expression is used to show appreciation to guests by treating them to a meal and extending cultural hospitality to them. It is, therefore, not surprising that the Honourable Minister of Labour and Home Affairs, Mr. Edwin Jenamiso Batshu, hosted a successful dinner party in honour of all delegates who are attending the 9th Africa Symposium on Statistical Development (ASSD).

In his statement, the Minister showed appreciation for the presence of the delegation at the dinner.

He further stated that the dinner gave the delegates an opportunity to sit together and share their experiences and challenges.

"This is one of the ways of sharing experiences and collectively moving the ASSD agenda.

"This further calls into action the need for standardisation and harmonisation of processes and approaches, which definitely need our utmost attention," Batshu emphasised.

He further stated that it is an honour for Botswana to be hosting the 9th Africa Symposium on Statistical Development, which is focusing on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS).

"There is a need to accelerate CRVS enhancement," the Minister said. Batshu called on delegates to undertake in-depth assessments of the state of their respective

national civil registration systems.

"This a clarion call to all of us gathered here this evening, to accelerate the development of strategic plans for improving CRVS," he said.

Furthermore, the Honourable Minister challenged Africa to always endeavour to do better, and plan better, as this would enable countries to avoid random and recurring errors influenced by development that is informed by unreliable and outdated vital events and statistics.

He said initiatives such as the ASSD are one of the ways of doing away with glaring data gaps in monitoring progress in Africa, for example Policy Evaluation, Income Statistics and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

He said it is imperative that the African statistics community meet to share best practice in the planning and management, execution, processing, analysis and dissemination of data.

Minister Batshu also showed his gratitude to the sponsors and development partners, such as United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), World Health Organisation (WHO), African Union Commission (AUC), African Development Bank (AfDB), Inter-American Development Bank and Botswana Couriers by handing over tokens of appreciation for the support and contributions in making the symposium a success.

‘Data must enable us to reach the neediest’

Obakeng Sukube reports on how the improvement of civil registration can result in better quality vital statistics

Civil Registration (CR), a verification that a person exists legally that details the characteristics of that particular person, is important in informing public policy, planning and service delivery of a country.

In this sense, there is a strong link between CR and official statistics. This was said by Gloria Mathenge on behalf the regional Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) Secretariat.

Mathenge showed how official statistics can be used for policy and decision making. “Another highly important demand for official statistics is to do away with releasing defunct statistics, there is a high demand for data that is timely, accurate and cost effective to acquire,” Mathenge said.

She also highlighted “timeliness” as one of the important pre-requisites for vital statistics from CR. She said, in addition to protection of privacy of vital information, it is important to make sure that there is a sense of urgency in recording vital events, in the transmission of registration records and, most importantly, properly designed forms for easy extraction of statistical information and the recording of the required variables.

When talking about the status of vital statistics (VS) from CR in Africa countries, Mathenge said: “Though CR has existed in many countries of Africa for some time, the systems have not been used to generate VS. Only few countries generate an annual VS report based on registrations [events registered within the first year of occurrence].” She told the seminar there is a limited number of countries that compile an annual report of causes of death based on CR records. In that sense, some of these countries rely heavily on alternative sources of data to generate population-based estimates and indicators.

With regard to challenges and barriers in the production of VS from CR, Mathenge said there were many issues, one being the CR legal framework, late and delayed registration and low levels of registration. “Some of the hindrances to production of vital statistics are because the law does not provide for compulsory compilation of VS,” she explained. “The Statistics Act doesn’t provide for compilation of statistics from CR and delayed registration makes it impossible to generate annual



and current vital statistics,” she added.

When looking at the basic requirements of production of statistics from CR, Mathenge said the legal framework was an instrument for provision of compulsory registration of vital events and compilation of VS from CR.

She elaborated further that the Statistics Act should provide for compilation of statistics from CR and be detailed to highlight the responsible authority, necessary infrastructure and even the modalities for compilation of VS. “This law should designate the authority responsible for compilation of VS from CR, the infrastructure necessary for compilation of VS, the processes and modalities for compilation of VS including institutional responsibilities and the nature as well as periodicity of the VS report.”

She said there has to be modalities set for coordination and collaboration between the CR Agencies and the VS compiling office. Mathenge spelt out some of the specific areas of collaboration and she highlighted that identifying statistical variables to be collected from civil registration and designing of CR data collection forms are significant. “In addition, other areas to be of focus include clear procedures on flow of records from the registration centre to the VS compiling office, issues of timelines and procedures for all to comply with and the involvement of staff from VS in improvement of data quality,” she said.

When concluding her discussion, she told participants about the demands of the global development agenda. Referring to the post-2015 development agenda, Mathenge urged everyone to recognise the data revolution and to leave no one behind.

“Let’s fully integrate statistics into decision making, promote open access, the use of data and ensure increased support of statistical systems.”

“Data must enable us to reach the neediest, and find out whether they are receiving essential services,” she said, as she left the podium.

A 'ladder for development'

The ASSD provides the chance to deliberate on challenges around registration processes for vital events to help complete registration systems, reports **Kgaugelo Motloutse**

"Sustainable development requires sustainable statistics," said a representative from the United Nations Statistics Division to delegates from other African countries. The delegates were at the 9th African Symposium on Statistical Development (ASSD) held in Gaborone, Botswana.

The members of the various countries are gathered to assess the Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) systems and to develop plans for improvement. These assessments will assist countries to improve their systems and to ensure they meet international standards.

The theme for the meeting is "Promoting Use of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) in Support of Advancing Good Governance in Africa".

The objective is to mobilise member states to generate reliable civil registration records in response to the requirements of institutions engaged in the provision of legal, administrative and social services as well as production of vital statistics for the purpose of planning and monitoring development.

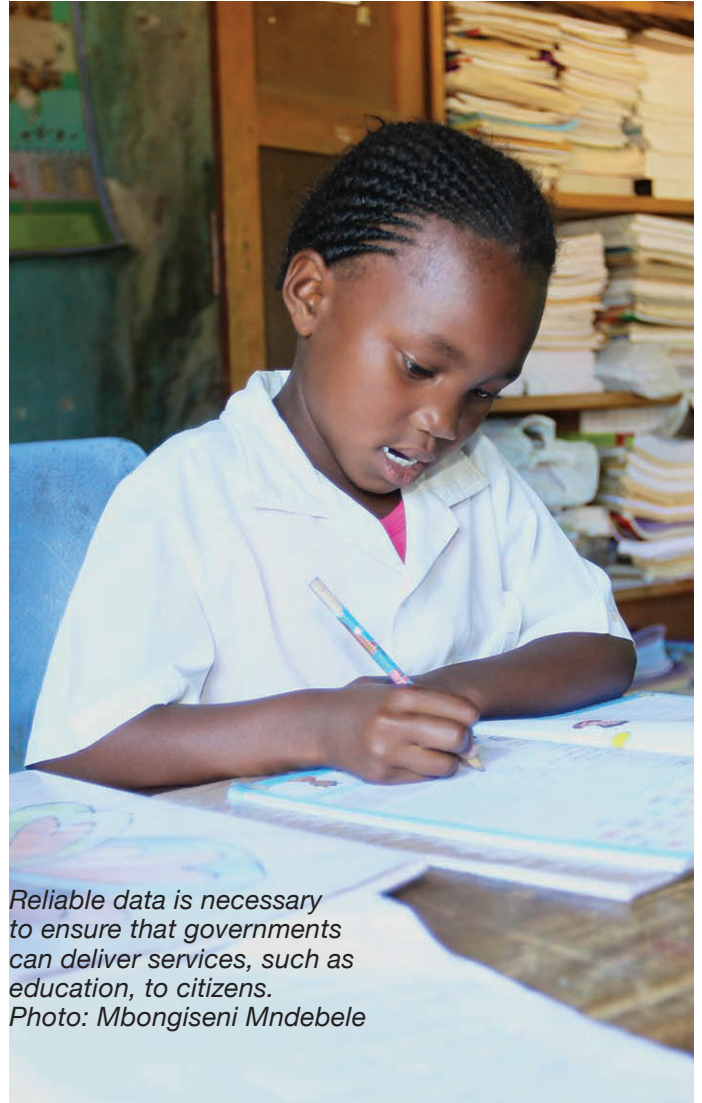
"This event presents us with an opportunity to look back to where we come from and ask ourselves the critical question, have we made good inroads?" said Pali Lehohla, the Statistician-General (SG) of South Africa and ASSD Chairman.

The symposium will ensure that continuous mobilisation for undertaking of population censuses in Africa is taken into the 2020 round of population and housing censuses.

The other specific objectives of the symposium are to:

- ★ To review existing business processes of CRVS systems — including their linkages and inter-operability with other systems, identify challenges therein and discuss new processes for improved and efficient use the records, documents and data emanating from the system for good governance.

- ★ To review the status and progress made in conducting country-level assessment studies and preparation of strategic plans as per the resolution of the second



*Reliable data is necessary to ensure that governments can deliver services, such as education, to citizens.
Photo: Mbongiseni Mndebele*

CRVS ministerial conference;

- ★ To review progress made in the implementation of the African Programme of the 2010 Round of Population and Housing Censuses

Delegates will deliberate on challenges around existing processes in the registration of various vital events and discuss strategies that would increase efficiency and help complete registration systems.

"The symposium in Gaborone should be used to quantify progress, compare notes on what works and what does not, identify hurdles and agree on an improvement plan that all shall be proud to present to the Third Conference of Ministers responsible for CRVS", said Lehohla.

CRVS is a ladder for development in Africa. "We need to quench thirst for better statistics as this is a precious need," added Lehohla.







Training institutions have an important role to play, writes **Irene Simon Edward**

Training institutions, especially universities were described as a medium for teaching, research and conservation or preservation of knowledge and of good practices that aid in certifying scientific, scholarly and professional competence.

In a presentation made by Professor Gideon Rutaremwa of Makerere University in Uganda, he said the university has over the years survived because of ideas, beliefs, reasons and views that are the raw materials out of which the existence of thinking beings is made.

He recognised universities as institutions that serve humankind as the future depends upon the progress of culture, science and technology. He, however makes distinct features or principles that must be observed by these institutions which are:

- ★ They must be morally and intellectually independent of all political authority and power

- ★ They remain a custodian of the humanist tradition whose constant aim is to attain universal knowledge to fulfil their vocation.

On building knowledge for Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS), the Associate Professor and Director mentioned in his presentation that training needs to be more focused and not generalised as it is the norm in current practice.

He said there is a need to understand all the economic, political and cultural forces that are at work in social real-

ity and influence the development of science and scholarship as they relate to CRVS.

“Most institutions, Makerere University being one of them, impart knowledge on CRVS through academic disciplines such as Population Studies, Demographics, Statistics, Quantitative Economics, Actuarial Sciences and Population as well as Reproductive Health, among others, both at undergraduate and post-graduate level, which is a significant role played by academic institutions in equipping especially young and aspiring statisticians,” he explained.

In concluding his deliberation he said delegates should be concerned about how training institutions can be engaged in conferences focused on CRVS, such as ASSD, because these would afford answers to some of the questions that remain in educational institutions: How the Young African Statistician can be adequately equipped to face challenges and to respond to diverse educational and intellectual needs of a knowledge driven society?

Responding to the statement made about whether higher education is a public or private good, a representative from Cote D'Ivoire said it was fitting that private schools focus more on professional education, while public schools may be used as a medium to impart knowledge on CRVS.

However the Statistician-General from South Africa, Pali Lehohla, saw a need to have a few number of statistics-based and focused institutions that will help impact knowledge on CRVS.

PHC 2010: Africa counts!

Kgaugelo Motloutse reports on the assessment of the 2010 Round of Population and Housing Censuses in Africa

"Involvement in the censuses of national leadership, census committees composed of several Ministers and chaired by the Prime Ministers and other Committees from National to District Level, ensured smooth operation of the census activities at all levels," said Oumar Sarr, African Center for Statistics at the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA).

He presented on the Assessment Report on the 2010 Round of Population and Housing Censuses in Africa at the African Symposium for Statistical Development (ASSD).

Countries that conduct census projects held consultations with stakeholders to ensure that the census project met the needs of users.

Over 61% of countries that conducted the census project implemented new technologies, while 55% improved logistics and coordination. About 48% of the countries improved on the quality of the data, while 39% met the deadline.

Sarr indicated that Eritrea, Guinea, Madagascar and Somalia are likely not going to conduct a census during 2014 and beyond.

"For the remaining countries that have not yet undertaken their censuses they need to identify strong champions, within their country as well as outside countries," said Sarr.

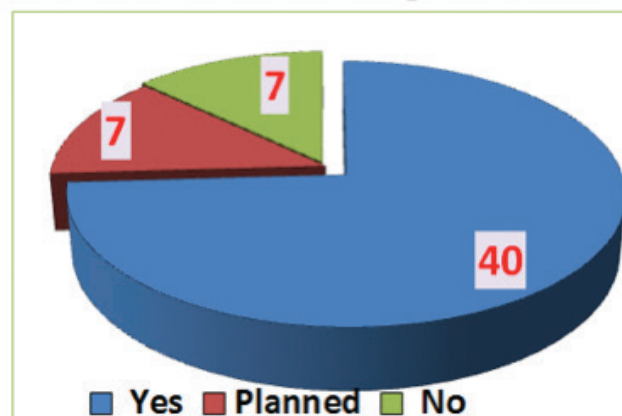
Some countries faced challenges as there was a lack of continuous flows of funding from government and donors as well as a lack of proper infrastructure and experienced staff.

Over 81% of countries had challenges of costs, while 42% has issues with timeliness during the census process. About 23% had challenges with data quality, while 13% had problems with the response rate.

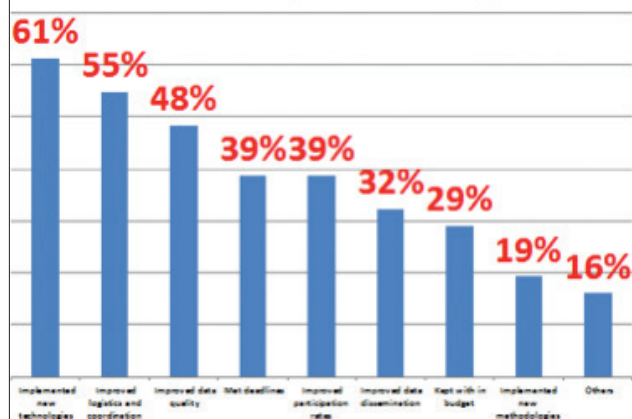
"For the coming 2020 round of PHCs, let's keep the momentum. We need to develop skills to master new technologies and methods through workshops and seminars, have technical materials," said Sarr.



Census undertaking Status



Successes during the census process



ISIBANE

Editor: Kgaugelo Motloutse
 Production: Cheryl Taylor
 Contributors: Gorata Moloi, Obakeng Sukube, Irene Simon Edward
 Photographs: Otsile Molefe

Africa needs deep precious water

The continent needs a special deep precious water to harmonise statistical activities within Africa, according to Ms. Gloria Mathenge's report on the ISlballo Young African Statisticians (IYAS). Mathenge said this deep precious water is a Strategy for the Harmonisation of Statistics in Africa (SHaSA).

She said Young African Statisticians (YAS) was created at the 57th session of the ISI and YAS participated in the construction of this deep precious water — SHaSA. Mathenge said, "They are the future and the change agents who bridge between educational institutions and the work environment."

She said as YAS, there are challenges, particularly development challenges in Africa including political, economic, social and cultural integration.

"The IYAS requires a paradigm shift in the way statisticians are trained in technical skills, the way they conduct research, the way they apply research findings and even the way the skills are nourished and deployed," Mathenge said.

When talking about areas of importance of SHaSA, Mathenge said they have identified 14 priority areas of SHaSA and only two — Census and CRVS — are showing developments. Within the CRVS area, they trained five YAS for CRVS system assessment from African countries such as Rwanda, Kenya, South Africa, Cameroon and Egypt.

"From the five YAS that we trained, two have participated in the CRVS assessment and development processes and the other three are placed at the European Commission for Africa (ECA) as part of the technical team on CRVS at Kenya, Togo, and Uganda," Mathenge said.

She said this change will bring about certain deliverables such as a paradigm shift in human resource development and a new pan-African intellectuals.

"This is the instrument for the paradigm shift, this is the deep precious water we need for Africa's thirst for development, this is SHaSA" Mathenge said. — *Obakeng Sukube*

Vendredi 21 Février 2014		
Session IX: Trajectoire pour la Stratégie Statistique de l'Afrique		
Président de Session : BAD		
09:00-10:00	Objectifs – l'objectif de la session est de discuter des exigences statistiques et de la trajectoire à suivre pour la statistique, en soutien à l'agenda 2063 de l'Union Africaine, en complément à la Stratégie pour l'Harmonisation des Statistiques en Afrique (SHaSA)	
	Présentation I : Système Statistique Africain en soutien à l'Agenda 2063	CUA
	Discussions Générales	
10:00-10:30	Présentation II : Nouvelle résolution sur la sous utilisation des statistiques sur le travail et l'emploi	OIT
	Discussions Générales	
10:30-11:00	Pause- Café/Thé	
Session X: Session de Clôture		
Président de Session : Botswana		
11:00-12:00	Projet de recommandations du symposium	Secrétariat SADS
	Discussions Générales	
12:00-13:00	Clôture	

Friday 21 February 2014		
Session IX: African Statistical Strategic Path		
Chair: AfDB		
09:00-10:00	Objectives – The aim of the session is to discuss statistical requirements and the statistical trajectory to be pursued in support of the African Union's Agenda 2063, to complement the Strategy for the Harmonisation of Statistics in Africa (SHaSA)	
	Presentation I: African Statistics System in Support of Agenda 2063	AUC
	General Discussions	
10:00-10:30	Presentation II: New resolution on statistics on work, employment and labour under-utilisation	ILO
	General Discussions	
10:30-11:00	Coffee/Tea Break	
Session X: Closing session		
Chair: Botswana		
11:00-12:00	Draft recommendation of the Symposium	ASSD Secretariat
	General Discussions	
12:00-13:00	Closing	