



South Africa's Minister of Home Affairs addresses the press ahead of the ministers' meeting. Photograph: Mbongiseni Mndebele

# Minister calls for action

*Africa is in need of synchronised civil registration, says South African Home Affairs Minister Dr Dlamini-Zuma.*  
**Thabo Mokgola reports**

A comprehensive and institutionalised civil registration system in Africa will go a long way in ensuring the development of a regional framework to register important events in life, such as births, deaths, marriages and divorces, says Home Affairs Minister and incoming African Union Commission (AUC) Chairperson, Dr Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma.

Addressing media ahead of the ministerial conference on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics, Dr Dlamini-Zuma emphasised the importance of such an approach, saying it will play an integral role in developing countries in relation to planning.

This would include planning for healthcare, universal education, realisation of Millennium Development Goals as well as African integration.

"This is important because up to now there has not been a uniformed civic registration in all the countries in the continent. Some countries do a census once in 10 years and that is it," Dr Dlamini-Zuma said.

A synchronised civil registration system, the minister added, would facilitate the free movement of goods and people and a uniformed framework would facilitate easy integration.

"We talk now of integration of the

continent but integration is not just about infrastructure but about people. You cannot have free movement of people if you do not know who is moving from where," Dr Dlamini-Zuma explained.

Today's ministerial meeting, which comes hot on the heels of the meeting of experts, will assess progress from the inaugural gathering held in Ethiopia in 2010, share best practices, look at the way forward as well as create awareness

on the importance of CRVS.

Minister Dlamini-Zuma singled out the latter as an integral aspect in the success of CRVS.

"You can have everything in place, including finances and the laws but if the population is not aware and conscious about the need and the importance of civil registration we will not succeed," she said.

Speaking at the same briefing, United

Nations Economic Commission for Africa's (UNECA) Director for African Centre for Statistics, Dr Dimitri Sanga said, at the Ethiopia meeting, ministers mandated the technical team to undertake a thorough assessment on the state of civil registration in different African countries, a report which will be presented at this meeting.

"The situation is quite diverse. In some countries birth registration is

below 10% and this is critical because any measure that we will be taking needs to be attached to targets because when ministers meet they are able to mobilise human, financial and technical assistance to make sure that these African countries improve on birth registration," Dr Sanga said.

The second step would be to set targets for these countries and cooperate with them in assessing their specific challenges and once diagnosed, support mechanisms would have to be devised to remedy the situation, said Dr Sanga.

Furthermore, civil registration was far more than registration of births, deaths, marriages and divorces.

"It is a human rights issue," he said, citing issues of the utilisation of child soldiers by the militia in war-torn countries.

When putting together post-war programmes to facilitate the reintroduction to education and training, Dr Sanga explained, there needs to be certainty with regards to age authenticity.

"For that you need to be in possession of a birth certificate for us to ascertain that you are dealing with young people," he said, adding that this phenomenon was extended to issues such as early marriages and court appearances by minors.

## Conference logo launched

A new logo for Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) conference was unveiled to the media a week ago, ahead of the ministerial conference starting today, writes *Kgaugelo Motloutse*.

The South African Department of Home Affairs Director-General Mkusele Apleni and the Statistician-General Pali Lehohla attended the briefing.

The logo depicts 54 people representing African countries and tells a story of unity, strength, and saving lives.

At issue is what experts describe as "scandal of invisibility", a continent-wide problem. "The scandal of invisibility is so huge that children are born and die even before they get known. Adults roam the country without their existence ever being recorded," said Lehohla.

Now, African ministers who are responsible for civil registration meet in Durban to deliberate on the CRVS

and discuss plans being recommended by the experts.

The CRVS conference is taking place under the auspices of UNECA and the Home Affairs is a lead department. It is expected that the conference will confront challenges caused by the absence of the reliable vital events data such as births, deaths, marriages and divorces on their citizenry on the African continent.

"Such statistics enable government to plan holistically for their national development and planning with a view to providing quality services to their citizenry," said Apleni. At the media briefing ahead of the conference, Apleni said that for any country to plan accurately, it first needed to know how many citizens it had. "It is important to know how many people are on the continent, particularly as African countries try to work together and toil through the challenges," he said.



# Long road ahead

The UN's Economic Commission for Africa highlighted some of the challenges facing countries. Sivuyile Mangxamba reports

The state of civil registration in Africa was far from desirable, said the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) this week ahead of 2nd Conference of African Ministers Responsible for Civil Registration.

The African ministers conference kicks-off today in the south-eastern port city of Durban, South Africa, and President Jacob Zuma is due to open the convention.

A comprehensive legal framework was needed to deal with the complexity of civil registration and vital statistics,

said ECA chief representative Raj Gautam Mitra.

"One of the essential features of a civil registration system is its universality in terms of the coverage of entire population, regardless of geographic location," said Mitra, adding that Africa's legal framework did not cover all events.

Many countries have a separate legislation for different events, said Mitra in his state of civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) systems in Africa report.

A system of CRVS registers vital events like births, marriages, divorces, deaths, and causes of deaths among



"One of the essential features of a civil registration system is its universality in coverage of the entire population, regardless of geographic location"

others. While live births and deaths are compulsory registered in all countries, the ECA report indicates that only 24 countries out of 43 covered foetal deaths.

"Foetal deaths... (sic) are an important source for measuring perinatal mortality and pregnancy outcomes, which are crucial indicators for measuring status of mother and child health," said Mitra.

African ministers descend onto the Durban International Convention Cen-

tre this morning to look closely into the civil registration system and deliberate and ratify recommendations by an African expert group that has highlighted key challenges.

In the majority of the African countries, the ECA says civil registration laws were enacted during the colonial era and over time had not been reviewed or updated to keep up with the ever changing environment.

Law makers, the ECA report suggests,

also have to look at the legal framework regulating vital statistics.

"The legislation of vital statistics should clearly define the concepts and elaborate the procedures of compilation, processing, tabulation, reporting, and dissemination of the collected data," said Mitra.

There were various bottlenecks that affected effective implementation of CRVS system ranging from inadequate coordination and planning, to budgeting for the function on a yearly basis.

About 10 countries did not have recurrent budgets allocated by their governments.

"One would not want to paint a rosy picture about the CRVS system on the continent. We have a very long road ahead of us," Mitra told the CRVS Daily on the sidelines of the conference.

Universality of the CRVS also came under the spotlight, where again communities in rural areas, nomads, and internally displaced people tended to be excluded from civil registration system. "We have to look into this," said Mitra, adding that almost all countries used birth registration for key service delivery milestones.

As the ministers begin their deliberations, it would seem they have their work cut out and the continent awaits the outcome.

# Building a better future

In opening the meeting of African experts on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics, speakers emphasised the need to leave a legacy for future generations. Bongwiwe Ngcobo reports

What cannot be measured cannot be improved," said KwaZulu-Natal Premier Zweli Mkhize.

The Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Conference kick-started in Durban at the International Convention Centre on Monday, with experts on civil registration from African countries completing registration.

The week-long conference follows the First Conference of African Ministers Responsible for Civil Registration held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in August 2010.

"Do not relieve yourself in the well, because next time you will have to drink from the well." This is a translation of a Sotho saying about legacies. Legacies have to be built, legacies have to be protected, legacies have to be secured and right here at this conference we are building a legacy," said South Africa's Statistician-General Pali Lehohla. He said the conference aims to protect a legacy of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics to ensure that future generations will be properly recorded.

Lehohla credited the late Mahlathini for his music that pays tribute to prosperity, and explained that those songs captured the essence of the meeting.

"One of the outcomes of this conference should be to have an understanding on the importance of civil registration and vital statistics. We will share our experiences with you and we look forward to learning from you. Welcome to South Africa," said Home Affairs Director-General Mkhusele Apleni.

"It is crucial that in the next three days we discuss all issues pertaining to civil registration and vital stats to help your ministers plan effectively" said the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa's Dr Dimitri Sanga.

He said the much-needed political support, following the first ministerial meeting, has been secured with new programmes that provide guidance to accelerate improvement in civil registration and vital statistics in all African countries.

The commission said data obtained from countries will serve as basis to monitor progress, he explains that the nature of challenges in each country with regards to CRVS will vary and that is why building partnerships



"Legacies have to be secured and right here at this conference we are building a legacy," South African Statistician-General Pali Lehohla (above)

is key in the improvement of CRVS in the continent. The conference will also highlight the role of the health sector as an important provider of information.

"The problem of civil registration is related to human rights and the stability of our continent depends on it," said Director of Statistics in African Union Commission, Dossina Yeo.

Director Yeo says CRVS is important because it is an indication that there is good governance in a country. For

development in Africa, its important to ensure that the process of CRVS is managed properly. This will allow Africa to have a good agenda on the integration of different people in Africa. It is a strong view of the African Union Commission that we need to make sure nothing paralyses the efforts of integration within the African continent.

"I would like to invite all partners to work together and bring international support to be able to have a very strong system of CRVS in the continent," said Yeo.

Drw Charles Lufumpa, Director of Statistics at the African Development Bank, said the meeting comes at a time when African countries are increasing efforts to ensure that all resources are used to improve the lives of Africans. He said CRVS play a critical role in providing information for policy development management.

"CRVS contributes to the planning of education, health and it remains underdeveloped and we are here to bring about improvement in this regard and

the African Development Bank is committed to efforts of improving CRVS in the continent," said Lufumpa.

He said promoting access to statistics is key and that the bank is providing support to African countries to enhance data management. Lufumpa said the status of CRVS of each country will be reflected in the banks's lending strategy and that it is important that countries draw up well-budgeted plans to ensure effective implementation in improving CRVS.

## Streamlining civil registration

Mbongiseni Mndebele reports on the business of CRVS, which is critical to addressing development, discrimination, integration and poverty on the African continent

Delegates from across African countries this week met at Durban's International Convention Centre, South Africa, to deliberate on new and improved measures of collecting and processing of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) data across the continent.

CRVS are critical to monitoring development efforts and to the advancement of Millennium Development Goals (MGDs) in Africa and as such, improved CRVS strategies and methodologies are required to assist in promoting governance, leadership and regional integration.

Concerns have, over the past, been raised over the poor collection of statistical data on CRVS in many African countries. In Swaziland, for an example, it is difficult to establish the 'cause of death' when occurred outside the country's health institutions. It is critical that countries 'lobby and involve' health authorities in decision-making processes when dealing with civil registration matters.

In Sierra Leone, medical doctors and practitioners certify causes of death with the country's home affairs department acting as the supervising authority. "Doctors identify the cause or causes of death, issue the death certificates and forward it to a central registration bureau", Alhaji Samuka Nallo from Sierra Leone during a discussion on the improvement of CRVS in Africa.

On the causes of death in South Africa, the Department of Home Affairs provides the information. Said the Stat-



The data derived from civil registration is essential for measuring progress towards Millennium Development Goals. Photo: Mbongiseni Mndebele

istician-General of South Africa, Pali Lehohla, "doctors do not write well and often do not declare HIV-related deaths because some insurance companies may not pay up claims. We then maybe need to come up with legislation."

"Statistics South Africa is now training doctors on how to fill in death certificate forms. As such, this must become a curriculum for all medical doctors. Stats SA, the Department of Home Affairs and the Department of Health are working closely together to ensure that statistics are compiled correctly", Lehohla told the conference.

Zimbabwean delegate and the country's Registrar-General, Mr. Mudede said the Ministry of Social Services in his country is responsible for the registration

of homeless children, including refugees.

"It is very unsafe for any country to have people from outside, but cannot be accounted for. Anybody who comes into Zimbabwe must be registered within six months. We do register refugees as non-citizens. However, we cannot grant them citizenship status. We still have the view that, at some stage, they will be repatriated to where they come from. You cannot repatriate someone who is not registered. You have to register them. Refugees must be on our database. We must be able to trace them. You cannot have a number of people in the country and you do not know them. We must have them on the database. If we do not do that, it is detrimental to the system or security system," said Mr. Mudede.

## Behind the scenes ...

A sneak peak at the planning of the CRVS conference courtesy of Bongwiwe Ngcobo

Delegates landed on South African soil at King Shaka International Airport on 2 September 2012, they were whisked away to their respective hotels and in no time were accredited and ready to begin with the plenary discussions for the 2nd Conference of African Ministers Responsible for Civil Registration.

The environment is calm and relaxed at the Durban ICC, it all seems so effortless and you can't help to wonder, how did the organising committee manage to pull off an international conference without the usual crisis mode that you find in conferences of this magnitude.

We soon discover that planning started immediately after the announcement of South Africa being the next host country in October 2010.

"With the secretariat of the conference based in Addis Ababa, it was important that communication is started early with all role players to get all the paperwork out of the way," said says Department of Home Affairs Chief Director Thomas Sigama, and Project Director for CRVS conference organising committee.

Sigama explains that the secret to achieving such success in the organising of this conference is due to ongoing consultation that the local organising committee had with previous organisers. The aim of consulting was to learn from their experiences, to see what worked and what didn't work. The consultation worked like a charm as it gave a projection of what the budget should look like and how it should be allocated.

"Safety and security is a priority when organising such a gathering and we had to work closely with immigration to ensure tight security systems at all points of entry so that only the right people are let in and that they are who they claim to be," said Sigama

Attempts to get Sigama to give detail about what could be going wrong with logistics for the conference failed, as he didn't fall for the trick of the "off the record comment".

It all comes to light that the conference is just a pure case of success based on hard work and planning as Home Affairs Director General Mkhusele Apleni explains that the responsibilities of a host country include prioritising Health, Safety and Hospitality among other things.

In his calm demeanor, the DG as he is often referred to, explains that an Inter-Ministerial Committee was formed to sphere head the planning with Home Affairs being the chair. The committee is made up of representation from the police, state security, health, social development and transport as well as official representation by Statistics South Africa and Government Communications and Information Services.

Apleni confirms that of the 54 Ministers, 45 confirmed attendance and that there has been no complaints or disasters thus far.

Delegates can look forward to a welcome cocktail event on Wednesday, hosted by Ethekwini Municipality and a Thursday Gala Dinner courtesy of the KwaZulu Natal Province, the home of the great King Shaka.

## Civil registration is a basic human right ...

Home Affairs Deputy Minister tackles Civil Registration and Vital Statistics

"We are gathered here to carry out an important mission, the promotion of infrastructure and showcasing CRVS approaches within the African continent," said Home Affairs Deputy Minister Fatima Chohan in her welcoming speech at the opening of the Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Conference at the International Convention Centre on 3 September 2012.

The deputy minister said CRVS is about development, success and prosperity.

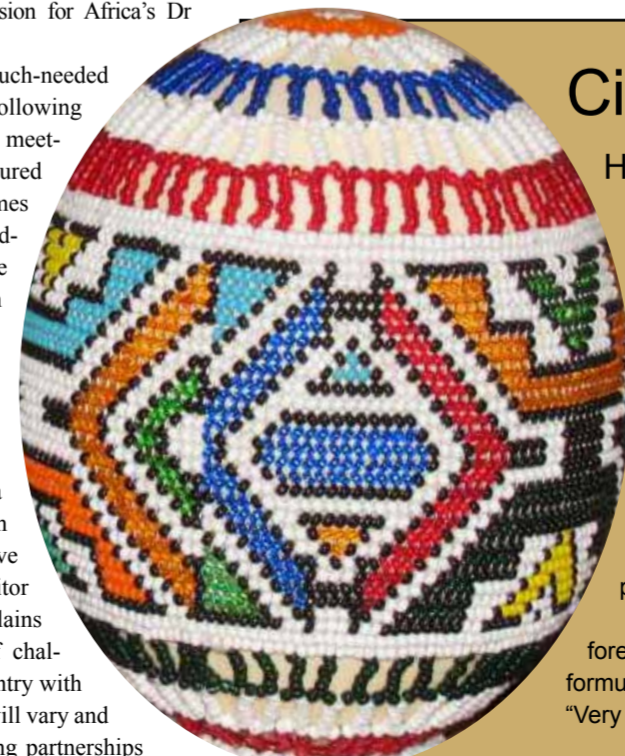
She said a country without a proper registration system cannot begin to claim to be democratic and will not be able to deliver relevant services.

Chohan said these statistics are crucial, they form the basis of what needs to be done and how it should be done. Lack of correct data makes it impossible to plan and government needs to plan and deliver the right services to the right people.

The deputy minister said proper registration of our people is a human right, "there needs to be a record about a person's life to be able to know what their needs are".

Chohan said without accurate statistics, government will build soccer fields where there should be hospitals, therefore CRVS is crucial in the planning process to provide direction and for evidence based decision making and policy formulation.

"Very rarely does history ever provide an opportunity for a people such as yourselves to change the future," said Chohan.



# AFRICA Saluting CRVS in Durban!



**Unity, Strength, Saving Lives**

## What you said ...



### Ms EG Thomas — Liberia

"The conference is important because the mortality and marriage registration is being emphasised. ... It is important to make understand is happening in the government through statistics, and Liberia does so through conducting the census. The last census campaign that was covered in my country was in 2008.



### Mr K Monyobi — South Africa

The presentations are good because it is relevant to the objective of conference, but when coming to discussions that are being addressed, you find that issues are not making any headway.



### Mr SC Werena — UNHCR

From the International Relations aspect, we tried to see what kind of input will have an impact in terms of the Civil Registration and Statistics. How could we influence elements such as refugees, death and civil registration, which have been partially addressed and the aspects that have contributed to it.

# Young statisticians call for swift action

By Thabo Mokgola

Young statisticians have called on African countries to respond to civil registration challenges with the same urgency similar to the ones adopted following terror attacks in the United States, Kenya and Tanzania in early 2000.

According to Waithira Mathenge from the Young African Statisticians (YAS), following attacks on the World Trade Centre in 2001, the US put in place the Patriot Act within 58 days, which called on travellers towards that country to possess machine-readable passports, leading to countries across the world adopting similar measures.

In their presentation on Tuesday as part of technical preparations ahead of the Ministerial CRVS today, the YAS called for similar swift responses to ensure adequate and secured legal, administrative and statistical systems pertaining to civil registration.

"Why don't we address civil registration with equal urgency? Does life have equal worth?" asked Mathenge, adding that urgent action is not premised solely on a country's economic status.

She defined the phenomenon as an emergency in an emergency. Within this emergency, a lesson learnt is the systemic failure of civil registration systems.

"We need to advise our governments that the priority is on civil registration followed by secure security as well as

national identity systems....Africans need to take lead in addressing their problems," said Mathenge.

CRVS is a multidisciplinary sector that requires a broad engagement from young scholars in various fields, she added.

YAS concurred that civil registration is about saving lives and no course in the world deserves greater attention than that devoted towards preserving the life of a human being.

"In fact, life and every institution that

has found reason for existence has placed this as the organising principle- protecting life. But, how can one protect the life of a human whose existence is not recognised or known at all?" they inquired.

In their few lessons for a success in CRVS, YAS states that, amongst others, Africa possesses instruments and quality systems for change; and that governance, statistics and information infrastructure is key to Africa's burning quest for change and development which starts with

knowing and recording who Africans are. Mathenge stressed that with member states' willpower and priorities are key in the implementation of improved CRVS systems.

"It is not necessarily a resource issue but about priorities. It takes a resourceful government to have in place national identity systems and, equally machinery for that," she said, explaining that this conference provided a platform for such action.

## Taking a stand

A young statistician at the 2nd Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) conference has likened the poor state of civil registration records on the continent to a national emergency.

Gloria Mathenge, 26, who is seconded to the ECA, urged African governments to move swiftly and improve civil registration system. "CRVS is as emergency for Africa and it should be treated as such," said Mathenge.

Inadequate systems posed a threat to national security, said Mathenge, a Kenyan national based at the ECA headquarters in Addis Ababa. "It is a futile process to secure travel documents and national identity systems, if the source documents are not secured," said Mathenge.

This comes as ministerial conference begins today and will be chaired by Home Affairs Minister and Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Dr Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma.

A poor systematic failure of civil registration system had potential for negative impacts in the proportions of national emergencies. And young statisticians have taken a stand. "CRVS is about saving lives," said Mathenge.

Political will was crucial in ensuring that civil registration was accorded the status it deserved. "We need to advise our governments appropriately. Let's advise our leaders that civil registration is a priority," said Mathenge.

There is growing consensus that what cannot be measured cannot be fixed and African ministers were being urged to place civil registration firmly on the continental agenda. "We have to take a lead in civil registration ... it's not about resources but about political will," she said, adding that civil registration was a challenge that needed to be treated as an opportunity.



# Private sector has a role to play

By Obakeng Rathogo

Private sector organisations at the Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) experts' meeting have moved to dispel myths that their only motive was profit at any costs without due regard to other societal needs.

De la Rue and the Cybersoft Ethiopia made presentations on the second day of the CRVS conference during the 5th ses-

sion, in a concerted effort to demystify perspectives related to private sector business transactions.

De La Rue is the world's largest integrating commercial banknote printer which also offers a range of specialist services and software solutions including government identity schemes, product authentication systems and cash management processing solutions.

They have factories in Angola, Senegal

and South Africa and believe that "counting everyone means everyone counts."

De La Rue organisation has many different applications apart from the identity card project that aims to enhance the Information Communication Technology system (ICTs) in the African continent. As they firmly believe that it is in the idea of what data is and how it's managed.

Product Manager at De La Rue, Bill Taylor said that the management of data

is the most important way to start in the vendor perspective approach because this is a commercially complex environment populated by a diverse?

"The aim of private sector is to partner with local organisations which are your 'Local Integrators', because we provide the glue that puts all this together for security and risk management," he explained.

Cybersoft Ethiopia representative presented and elaborated on the cybersoft

## Inter-American Development Bank focuses on ID management

"No cookie-cutter solution to CRVS" says the Inter-American Development Bank, Bongwiwe Ngcobo reports

The Inter-American Development Bank (IADB) a sister organisation of the African Development Bank recently approved a new registry for social and economic development.

"The right to an identity is the most basic of human rights and it gives rise to other rights," said Mia Harbitz, Senior Specialist of the Institutional Capacity of the State from the Inter-American Development Bank.

Harbitz was addressing the house of specialists at the second day of the Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Conference in Durban. The IADB says CRVS is important for development because it is critical to know the identity of the person receiving a service and the one providing a service.

"No institution can lend money to someone who doesn't have an identity, meaning people struggle to access basic services," said Harbitz

The social development programmes coordinated by the IADB discovered that in Latin America, 11% of children are not registered by the age of five, this percentage is even higher in poor population. A child without a birth certificate gets two vaccines less than the one with a certificate.

The IADB found that under registration is mostly caused by extreme poverty conditions where people cannot afford to travel long distances to civil registry. There is also gender discrimination on single mothers who want to register their children and to make matters worse, there is widely a problem of inadequate resources to provide the service.

Harbitz says: "Civil Identification is a matter of national importance in any country because Identity Management is a sovereign responsibility and there is no cookie cutter solution, but in our quest to find the solution, we need to take into consideration international standards and that is why we are here today."

The IADB embarked on a series of Identity Management workshops with member countries because no country is the same and the workshops help to develop some kind of a tailor made plan than meets the needs of that country and addresses its particular challenges.

"The alarming worldwide 40% (or 50 million) of unregistered births can be reduced by shortening the distance to civil registry, especially in poverty stricken communities, as well as strengthening communication and coordinating with other public services among other things" said Harbitz.

# Call for registration of refugee child births

Africans could not afford to overlook the needs of refugees for civil registration, experts were told on this week. Thabo Mokgola reports

Refugee children, like other children, have a right to be registered at birth; delegates at the meeting of experts held at the Durban ICC heard have been told.

Addressing delegates on the first day of the meeting, UNHCR's Millicent Mutuli said the commission had carried out a review of birth registration of refugee children in 28 of the 45 countries hosting refugees in the continent currently, looking at existing legal frameworks and practices; documentation; constraints; and even good practices.

She explained that Africans could not afford to overlook the needs of refugees for civil registration, particularly birth registration if the need to ensure universal birth registration and the African integration agenda is to be achieved.

"There are significant yet avoidable barriers to birth registration. We have seen that the legal framework does exist in some countries but still does not meet the current needs. Where laws and policies exist, there is a sufficient gap between the law, the policy and the practice," she said, adding that there were policies that excluded refugees.

Ms Mutuli said there was plenty of evidence of good practice and stronger commitment to include refugees in birth registration processes. However, she adding, there still exist a need for measures to ensure equal access; enacting, updating and implementing policies on birth registration to ensure the timely registration of refugee children; and a need to associate birth registration with other compulsory programmes.

In relation to the review undertaken, on the issuance of birth certificates it was revealed that in three of the 28 countries a 100 percent of newborn refugees were registered and issued with birth certificates

while statistics in at least nine countries revealed some refugee camps with relatively high birth registration rates, ranging from 80 to 95 percent.

In other countries, it was revealed, some camps recorded high rates of refugee birth registration whereas others did not reveal any records, leading to inconsistencies.

"Of great concern to us is that of five of the countries examined, or 17 percent, there was no registration. None of the refugee children born in those countries was registered and issued with certificates," she said, adding that this included two countries that had suspended birth registration.

In some of these countries, however, it had been noted that resource limitations and lack of infrastructure had contributed to the negative findings.

Significantly, in 10 countries, child birth registration in urban areas was better



The children of refugees have a right to be registered, according to delegates at the experts' meeting

that in refugee camps. A review of the legislative imperatives in assessed countries revealed legal provisions for birth registration were in place though there may be a need for them to be updated to deal with the realities on the ground.

"In some countries the law makes separate provisions for nationals and non-nationals, and in one country the separate provision for non-nationals did not include refugees. In yet another country, there is no legislation governing birth registration for either refugee children or nationals and birth registration remained low as a result of government policy which did not include refugees," explained Ms Mutuli.

Part of the UNHCR review considered the types of documentation issued out to refugees after birth. In three countries, while the law provided for birth registration, it did not provide for the issuance of

birth certificates to refugees whereas in other countries the birth registration process did not automatically provide for the issuance of birth certificates to refugees.

In others, the birth registration process did not include the issuance of birth certificates, obliging families to make separate applications for them, negatively impacting on the ultimate issuance of such documents.

In two countries where there were no birth registration programmes for refugees, they only issued birth notifications which would not suffice where basic services are accessed through a birth certificate.

The findings also revealed moves underway in certain countries to optimise linkages between compulsory programmes and refugee child registration processes although these had not been applied in the refugee context.

# A tool for service delivery and nation-building

By Mathando Sharon Lukoto

Civil registration is one of the foremost tools for monitoring service delivery and nation-building in post conflict situations, conference delegates heard this week.

The expert group, which meet in Durban from Monday till yesterday, heard that countries emerging out of conflict were taking first steps in restoring civil registration records.

"There is a need to back up records as they can be easily destroyed during war, leading to the public not receiving proper services from the government," said Amani Felicien.

A case study from Ivory Coast, a country struck by civil war, shared its experience on how it went through difficulties of recovering information on the civil registers.

It was also revealed that in post-war reconstruction, civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) often legged behind in terms of resource allocation.

"War leaves people of a country without food and water, which is essential for human life. Most of the funding allocated by government is assigned to projects that meet human needs, leaving the restoration of civil registers behind," said Amani Felicien.

"There are millions of Africans with-

out birth certificates, IDs and passports," said Amani Felicien. However in post conflict countries there was simply no administrative civil infrastructure to carry out civil registration.

The dilemma for post conflict countries is how to ensure that civil registration forms part of the African reconstruction agenda.

These documents are of importance for service delivery by the government

For children to have better schools, better health institutions and social grants to be accessible to all who are in need, children need to be registered in time because everyone counts. In most African countries births take place at home, which causes the registration process not taking place within the stipulated 30 to 60 days.

Some countries were now introducing new innovations to deal with the issue of civil registration.

Considering its huge population, the Nigerian government is using a web-based tracking tool called RapidSMS.

All 774 deputy chief registrars at the local area councils report twice a month. This has assisted the government as it can easily track down the council that is not reporting progress.

As post-conflict countries normalize, the emerging view is that an effective

## CRVS daily editorial team

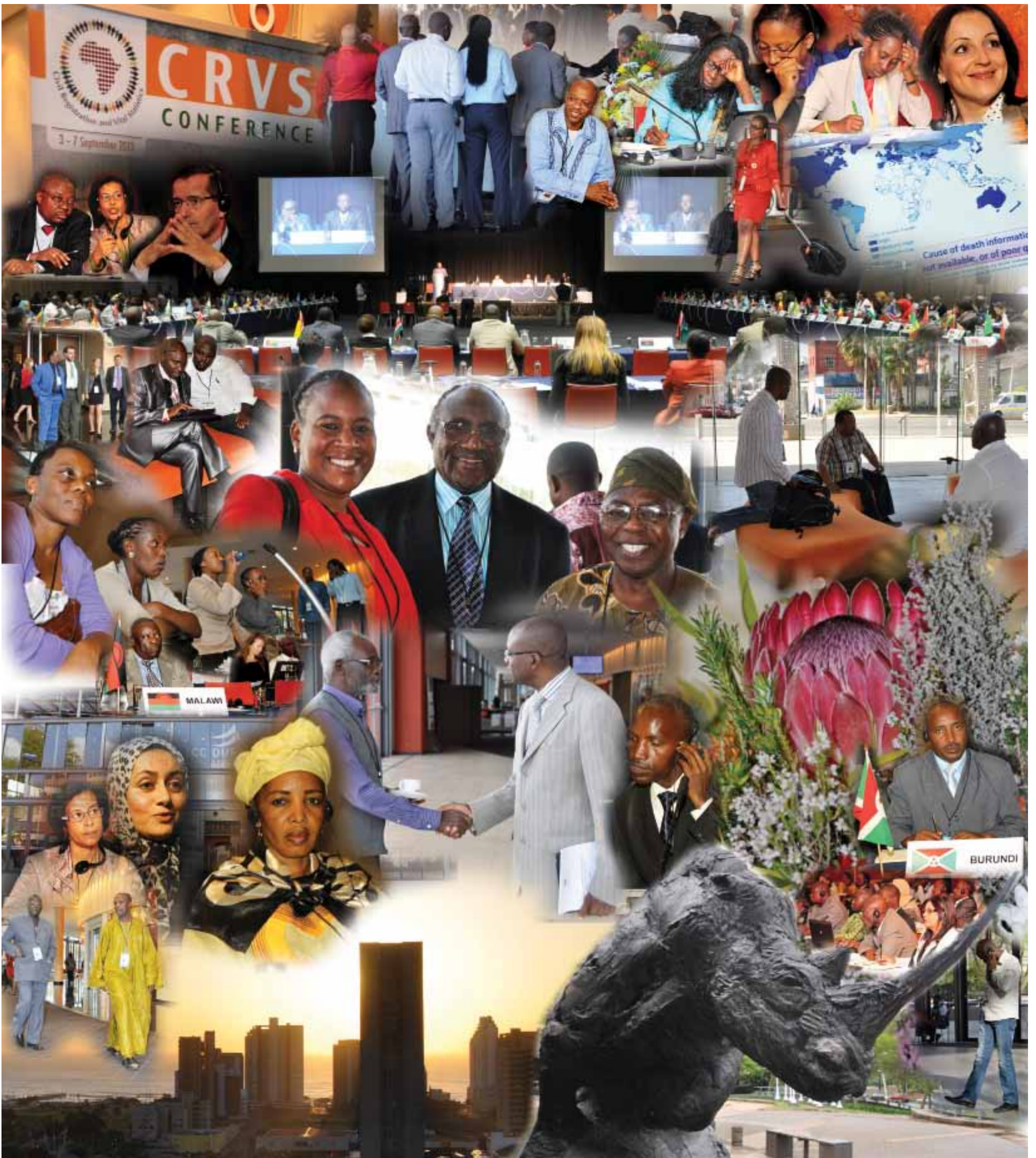
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# Planning the CRVS road into AFRICA

THE JOURNEY CONTINUES... 2010 2012

