CHAPTER - I

CIVIL REGISTRATION SYSTEM - AN INTRODUCTION

1.1 The requirement for a complete and up to date Vital Statistical System to yield reliable data on vital events hardly needs any emphasis. These data are essential for socio-economic planning and development and also to evaluate the effective implementation of various public schemes and programs. The main sources of data on vital events in India are Civil Registration System (CRS), Sample Registration System (SRS) and Population Census. Though the Population Census is the main source of information on population and its characteristics; however, being a decennial exercise, it does not provide the measure of changes in population from year to year. The measures of fertility and mortality derived from Census are centered on the midpoint of the decade and as such do not provide yearly change in the population. Of the other two sources of vital statistics for getting the vital rates on a regular basis, the SRS has been designed to provide reliable estimates at National and State level. Robust estimates of vital rates at District level on an annual basis through sample survey are difficult to obtain on account of prohibitively large sample size and variety of resultant factors such as controlling of non-sampling errors etc. CRS is thus the only source for providing vital rates at district level. Rather, a complete CRS can provide these rates at all administrative levels.

1.2 The Civil Registration System (CRS) may be defined as a unified process of continuous, permanent, compulsory and universal recording of the vital events and characteristics thereof, as per legal requirements in the country. In India, the Civil Registration System covers registration of births and deaths. Civil registration system provides the best source of information on the vital rates at all levels. Ensuring cent percent coverage of vital events by registration machinery can help in getting the critical vital statistics, equally important for planning and research. Therefore, emphasis should also be given to the proper monitoring of the activities under the system. Civil registration system is considered to be complete if it covers 90 per cent or more of all births and deaths taking place within a country or area.

1.3 The registration records are primarily useful for their value as legal documents and secondarily as the source of vital statistics. Civil registration as a source of vital statistics is relatively less expensive, as the statistics generated from the registration records are the by-products of an essential administrative process. The registration records can also generate current and continuous statistics, which can be more accurate than any other method of data collection apart from being a continuous source of such data. However, the accuracy of the vital statistics obtained through the registration system depends much on the completeness and promptness with which events are registered and the correctness of the information in the registration records. The improvement in the system of registration of births and deaths is critically dependent on the importance given by the respective States and District administrations to this work and regular monitoring by them. Besides, the level of awareness among the general public about the utility of birth or death certificate is also equally and crucially important.

1.4 Vital statistics obtained through registration records at different administrative levels enable estimation of the size, structure and geographical distribution of the population except for migration. Vital statistics also enables the projections for coming years on the basis of probable trends of fertility and mortality as derived from these vital statistics and their interactions with social, economic and other demographic factors. The vital statistics data generated through an effective Civil Registration System is of immense use for formulation of various development and welfare programmes/ schemes and increases their effectiveness at State and District level. The Civil Registration data acquires paramount importance in the wake of 73rd and 74th amendments to the constitution of India, as it can provide data at local level for micro level planning, monitoring and evaluation of schemes. At national level, the vital
statistics data generated through Civil Registration is also quite useful for medical research and in the study of sex ratio, mortality and morbidity rates and also in the study of causes of deaths.

Registration of births and deaths in India

1.5 In India, the registration of births and deaths is carried out under provisions of the Registration of Births and Deaths (RBD) Act, 1969. The registration is done by the Registrar of the local area, appointed by concerned State/UT Government.

1.6 Provision for registration of births and deaths and the mechanism thereof had been in existence in India for more than a century. Earlier, the work of registration of birth and death was carried out under various laws and byelaws existing at that time in different parts of the country. The need for improvement in the vital statistics system was felt for long and, therefore, after detailed deliberations at various levels, the Registration of Births & Deaths Act, 1969 was enacted providing compulsory registration of births and deaths in India. Since then, this Act has been enforced uniformly across all the States and Union territories (UT). This Act provides for registration of births and deaths and publication of statistical reports annually based on the civil registration data. The enactment of this Act has provided a common framework for putting in place an effective system of registration of births and deaths in the country.

1.7 The registration work at various levels in States/UTs is performed by different Departments. The existing organizational set-up involved in the work of civil registration at various levels in different States/UTs is given at Annexure-A. A uni-linear hierarchy exists in 11 States/UTs where single department is involved at all levels of registration. In 9 States namely Assam, Chandigarh, Haryana, Lakshadweep, Meghalaya, Odisha, Punjab, Sikkim and A&N Islands; Health Department is involved at all levels of registration. Panchayat department in Kerala, and Local Administration Department in Puducherry are responsible for execution of this work at all levels. At present, Health Department supervises the civil registration work at State level in 21 States/UTs, Department of Planning, Economics & Statistics in 13 States/UTs, Department of Panchayats in Kerala and Local Administration Department in Puducherry.

1.8 In order to simplify and speed up the process of registration and to bring in uniformity in birth and death registration formats, the registration system was revamped in the year 2000. Under the revamped system, the procedure for registration of births and deaths was also modified to some extent and the forms were redesigned. Most of the tables that are to be part of the Annual Report of the Chief Registrars on registration of births and deaths under revamped system would be based on the information of place of usual residence of mother in case of births and place of usual residence of the deceased in case of deaths. The revamped system became operational in 2000 in all States/Union Territories except Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Gujarat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Odisha, Punjab, Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh. It was implemented in Assam, Arunachal Pradesh and Odisha in 2001, Haryana in 2002, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh in 2003, Gujarat and Punjab in 2004 and Jharkhand in 2009.

Statistical Reports

1.9 System of registration of births and deaths is constantly generating statistical information at the local level. The information contained in the reporting forms is consolidated by the Registrar for onward transmission to the Chief Registrar of concerned State/UT. She/he, in turn, is required to submit an Annual Report on the working of the Act and a Statistical Report to the State Government by July and
December respectively of the following year to which the report relates. The Chief Registrars are also required to send a copy of these Reports to the Registrar General, India, Govt. of India.

1.10 Based on the Annual Reports prepared by the States/UTs, the Office of the Registrar General, India, brings out an annual comprehensive report entitled “Vital Statistics of India based on Civil Registration System”. These reports have been brought out since 1958 (Before the enactment of Act, only statistical reports were brought out). However, some of the States are not bringing out their Annual Statistical Reports in time, and this in turn, delays the publication of the corresponding national report. It has also been observed that some States also do not include all the prescribed tables in their reports thereby creating a limitation while bringing out the national report. However, notwithstanding all these constraints, this report provides vital indicators including the District-wise registered births and deaths along with infant deaths with sex-wise and rural-urban break-up of registered events for the year 2017.