

## Civil Registration System in Bihar: Strengths and Challenges

Dilip Kumar\*<sup>1</sup>, B.K. Pandey<sup>2</sup>, Ajit Kumar<sup>3</sup> and Jayanta Kumar Basu<sup>4</sup>

**Abstract:** Speaking about the national scenario, despite the vision of ensuring cent percent birth registration within the country by 2020, the level of birth registration is still at 84.9 percent and death registration at 79.6 percent. But the state of Bihar is even below the national average with only three- fourth of the births and less than half of the deaths being reported to be registered. This is despite the fact that significant improvement in coverage of birth registration has been witnessed in Bihar – increasing from merely 26.2 per cent in 2007 to 73.7 per cent in 2017. But this is still far below the expected level and calls for an urgent attention. Death registration in Bihar is also far below the national average. The coverage has been almost constant from 2007 to 2016 with some fluctuations in between – ranging from 16.5 percent to 37.1 percent. The present paper analyses the strengths and challenges in Civil Registration System in Bihar for restructuring and strengthening the system to achieve 100% registration as per Vision 2020. A mix-method quick dipstick analysis was done to identify the strengths and challenges associated with the registration of births and deaths in Bihar. Based on the monthly coverage statistics the districts were clustered into two groups – five districts having the highest coverage and five districts having lowest coverage. One district was selected randomly from both the clusters (Purnia from high performing and Saran low performing districts). There being non-availability of updated standard operating procedure for civil registration in Bihar, the processes for birth and death registration varies widely. The monitoring role of the State, district and sub-district functionaries need further strengthening with particular focus on quality of data collected and using the information for decision making. Though there seems to be a demand for birth registration due to the perceived demand from the community for school enrollment, Aadhaar registration as well as availing benefits from other schemes and programmes; the same does not hold true for death registration.

**Keywords:** Civil Registration, Vital Statistics, Births Registration, Death Registration.

### Introduction

The need for a complete and up to date Vital Statistical System to yield reliable data on vital events hardly needs any emphasis (Maharatna A and Sinha A, 2017). It is globally recognized that registration of birth is a fundamental right of every child and is the first step towards establishing his or her legal identity (Nichols EK and et al., 2015). There is no denial of the fact that the information on vital event is not only essential for socio-economic planning and development, but also to evaluate the effective implementation of various public schemes and programs (James KS, Kavitha N and et al., 2017).

In the Indian context, Civil Registration System (CRS) is the main source of data on vital events. It is a unified process of continuous, permanent, compulsory and universal recording of the vital events and characteristics thereof. The Registration of Births and Deaths Act, 1969 (Act No. 18 of 1969) provides for the compulsory registration of births and

---

\* Corresponding Author

<sup>1</sup> Associate Professor, Population Research Centre, Patna University, Patna. Email: dilip360@gmail.com

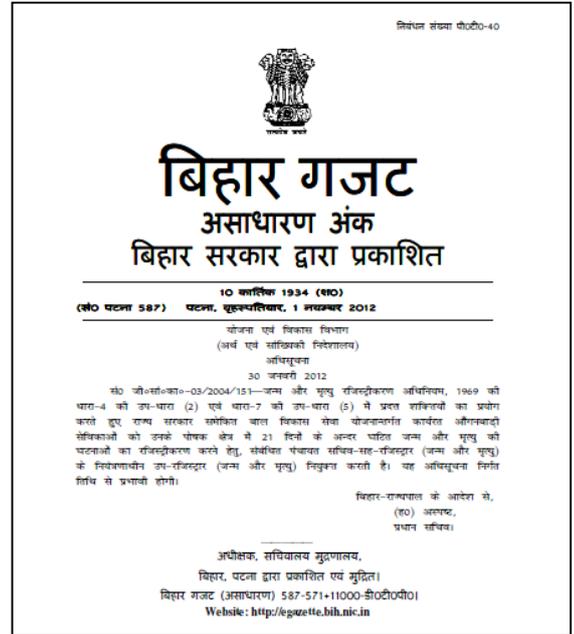
<sup>2</sup> Honorary Director, Population Research Centre, Patna University, Patna. Email: binodkumarpandey59@gmail.com

<sup>3</sup> Research Investigator, Population Research Centre, Patna University, Patna. Email: ajkr0101@gmail.com

<sup>4</sup> Technical Consultant, Government of Bihar, Patna. Email: jayantakumar.basu@gmail.com

deaths. This Act provides for uniform law across the country on the registration of births and deaths as well as compulsory reporting and registration of all births and deaths. However, the implementation of the Act was the responsibility of the State Governments. The Act was enforced in Bihar from April 1970.

In exercise of the powers conferred by Section 30 of the Registration of Birth and Deaths Act, 1969, (18 of 1969) the state Government of Bihar enacted the Bihar Registration of Birth and Death Rules in 1999. In 2012, in the light of strengthening civil registration system further, the Government of Bihar in exercise of the powers conferred by Section 4 (subsection 2) and Section 7 (subsection 5) of the Registration of Birth and Deaths Act, 1969, took an innovative approach to notify the *Anganwadi Sevika* as Sub-Registrar (Births and Deaths) in their catchment area and authorized them to do registration of births and deaths events within 21 days under the provision of RBD Act, 1969. As a process of further strengthening the registration of vital events, the online process of birth and death registration was initiated in 2015 by the RGI and implemented in the state since 2017.

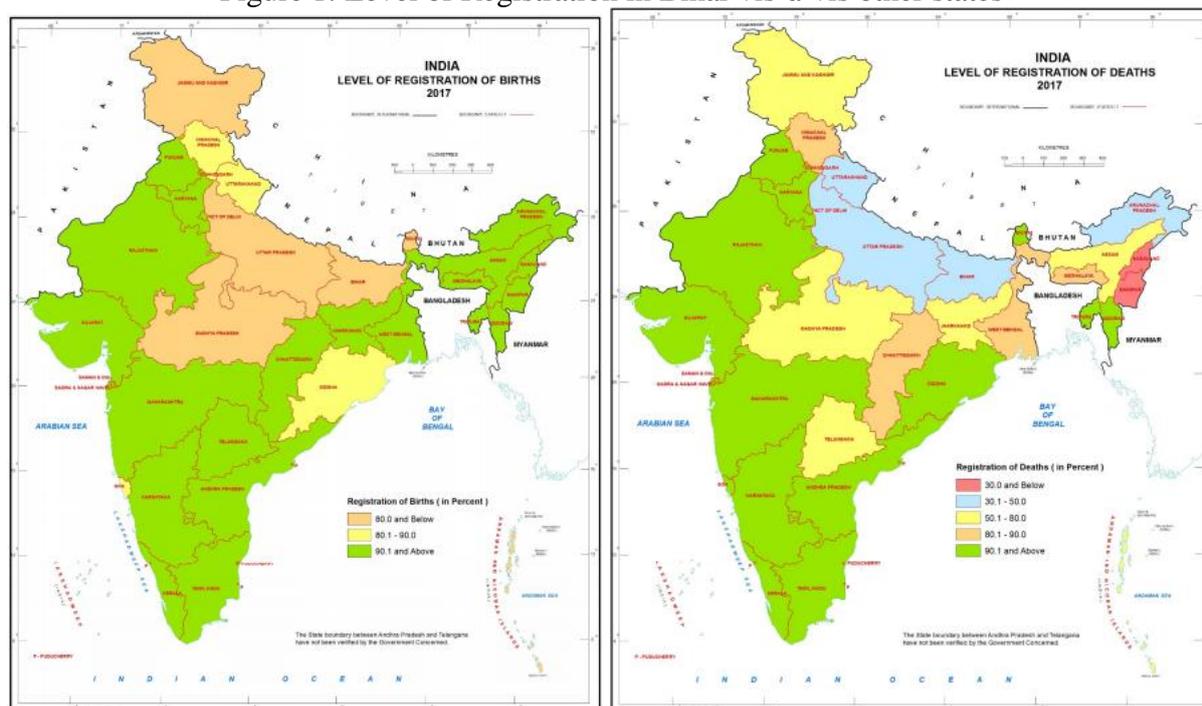


The online system of birth and death registration has given an impetus on increasing access to registration as well as brought in greater transparency and accountability to the entire process (ORGI, 2017). The chronology of events indeed demonstrates the political will of the Government of Bihar in ensuring registration of births and deaths and is notable steps for realizing the vision of ensuring cent percent birth registration within 2020. The political will and policy mandate of the Government of Bihar is further reiterated through several schemes and programmes of the Government of Bihar, e.g. *Mukhyamantri Kanya Utthan Yojana*, where birth registration is conditionality for availing the benefit of the scheme.

## Background and Context

Speaking about the national scenario, despite the vision of ensuring cent percent birth registration within the country by 2020, the level of birth registration is still at 84.9 percent and death registration at 79.6 percent. The levels of birth and death registration in Bihar vis-à-vis other states is presented in Figure1. But the state of Bihar is even below the national average with only three-fourth of the births and less than half of the deaths being reported to be registered.

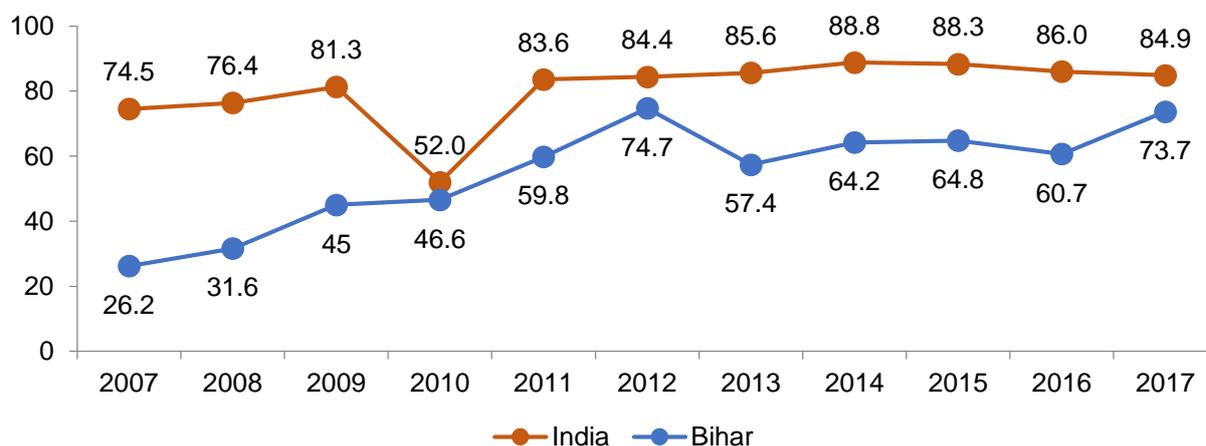
Figure 1: Level of Registration in Bihar vis-à-vis other states



Source: Vital Statistics of India Based on the Civil Registration System, 2007 to 2017, Office of the Registrar General, India

This is despite the fact that significant improvement in coverage of birth registration has been witnessed in Bihar – increasing from merely 26.2 per cent in 2007 to 73.7 per cent in 2017 (Figure 2). But this is still far below the expected level and calls for an urgent attention.

Figure 2: Trend on Birth Registration Bihar vis-a-vis National Average

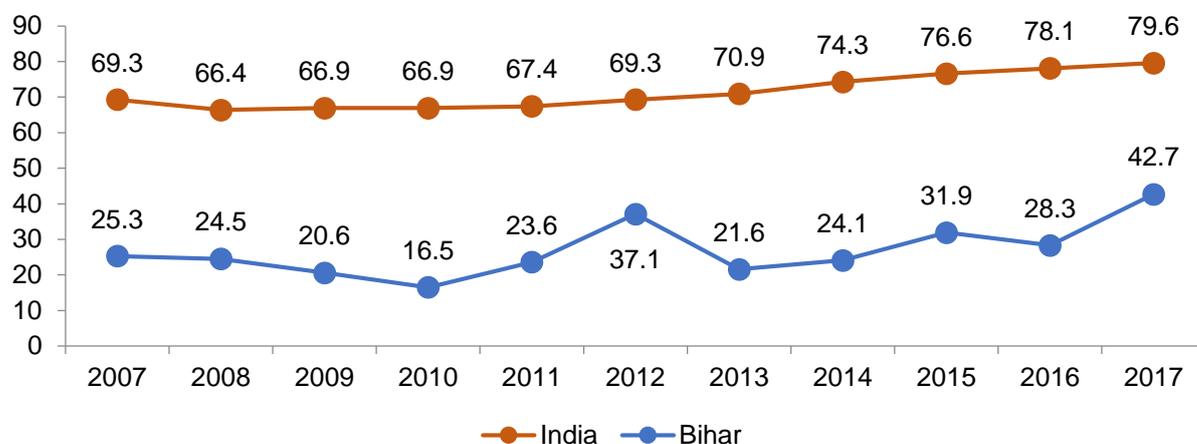


Source: Vital Statistics of India Based on the Civil Registration System, 2007 to 2017, Office of the Registrar General, India

The trend, however, is not very promising in terms of death registration. Death registration in Bihar is far below the national average (Fig.3). The coverage has been almost constant from 2007 to 2016 with some fluctuations in between – ranging from 16.5 percent to 37.1 percent. The coverage is still less than half of the total number of reported deaths,

despite the fact that a significant improvement was witnessed in 2017, which again calls for concerted action on behalf of the state Government.

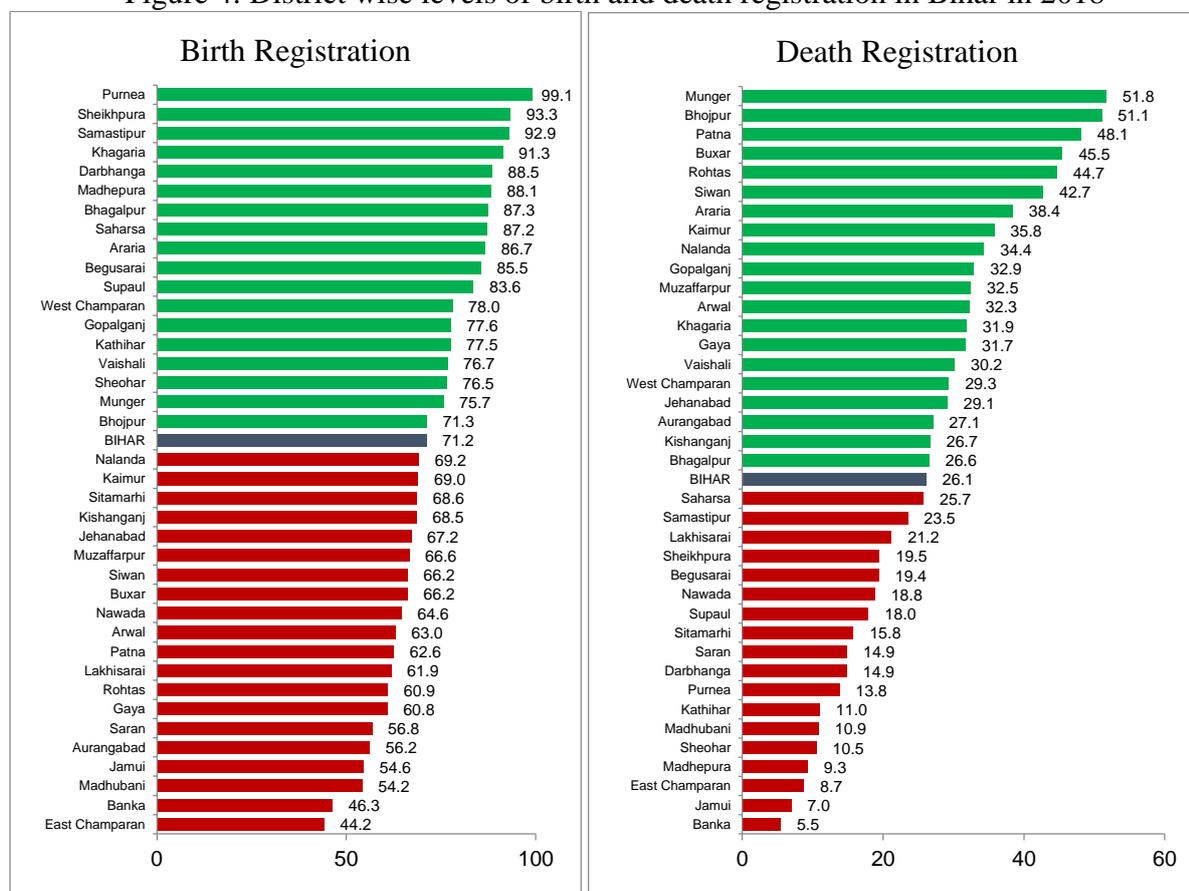
Figure 3: Trend on Death Registration Bihar vis-a-vis National Average



Source: Vital Statistics of India Based on the Civil Registration System, 2007 to 2017, Office of the Registrar General, India

Levels of registration also vary substantially between districts. For example, in 2018, the level of birth registration ranged from as high as 99.1 percent in Purnia to as low as 44.2 in East Champaran. Similarly, in case of death, the level of registration varies significantly ranging from 51.8 percent in Munger to as low as 5.5 percent in Banka. While selecting the districts for in-depth study for this research, based on monthly coverage statistics the districts were clustered into two groups – five districts having the highest coverage and five districts having lowest coverage. One district was selected randomly from both the clusters. Accordingly, Purnea and Saran were selected respectively. It is observed that the district performing well in births registration system may not perform equally well in death registration system. For example, Purnea topped the list in births registration in 2018 but in case of death registration it ranked 8<sup>th</sup> from the bottom. Such disparity usually relates to supply side: the districts with good governance, political will and infrastructures (including human resources) have a good civil registration system. It also relates to the demand side: the districts with low literacy and relatively poor socio-demographic indicators have lower demand from the communities for death registration. The effect is usually more from demand side in this case. This is evident from the graphs presented in Figure 4. Therefore, a need was felt to identify the strengths and limitations associated with CRVS as well as understand the reasons for inter-district variations in terms of level of registration.

Figure 4: District wise levels of birth and death registration in Bihar in 2018



Source: Directorate of Economics and Statistics, GoB, CRS portal

### The Approach and Methodology

A qualitative quick dipstick analysis was done to identify the strengths and challenges associated with the registration of births and deaths in Bihar. Based on the monthly coverage statistics the districts were clustered into two groups – five districts having the highest coverage and five districts having lowest coverage. One district was selected randomly from both the clusters. According, Purnea and Saran were selected respectively. Within the district, two blocks were selected – one from rural and one from urban. This was a purposive sampling and was selected based on the suggestions of the District Statistical Officer of the respective districts. Key Informant Interviews were conducted with the stakeholders at various levels and Focus Group Discussions were conducted with the families who had already registered their birth and those who had not registered their birth. The key stakeholders interviewed included the District Magistrate, District Statistical Officer, Block Statistical Supervisor, and Registrars at PHC, District Hospital, Nagar Nigam/Nagar Nikay, Gram Panchayat and the Anganwadi Sevika (Sub Registrar).

## **Brief Profile of Purnia and Saran**

### ***Purnia***

Purnia district covers 3229 sq. kms of the state of Bihar. The district forms the north eastern part of State. It is bordered by Araria and Kishanganj in the north, Katihar and a little portion of Bhagalpur district in the south, the state of West Bengal in the east and Madhepura district in the west. The district is divided into 4 sub divisions, 14 Blocks, 251 Gram Panchayats, and 1296 villages. As per 2011 census, the total population of Purnia district is 3,264,619 of which 1699370 are male and 1565249 are female. Hindus constitute 60.94 percent of the population in the district followed by Muslims 38.46 percent. Proportion of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes population to the total population of the district is only 11.98 and 4.27 percent respectively. With a decadal growth rate of 28.3 during 2001-2011. The urban area of the district has attained a higher decadal variation of 54.2 percent as compared to that of rural area at 25.8 percent. At the sub-district level, the decadal variation varies from the highest of 34.7 percent in Srinagar to the lowest of 23.6 percent in Dhamdaha. The district has registered a literacy rate of 51.08 percent. As regards to rural and urban areas of the district the literacy rates have been registered 48.38 percent and 72.74 percent respectively. For the district as a whole, the literacy rate of males is much higher than that of females. The gap in the male-female literacy rates has been 16.72 percent point as it is 59.06 percent male and 42.34 percent female respectively.

### ***Saran***

Saran district covers 2642 sq. kms of the state of Bihar. It is bounded by the districts of Siwan, Gopalganj, West Champaran, Muzaffarpur, Patna, Vaishali and Bhojpur of Bihar and Ballia district of Uttar Pradesh. The district is divided into 3 sub divisions, 20 Blocks, 330 Gram Panchayats, and 1767 villages. As per 2011 census, the total population of Saran district is 39,51,862 of which 20,22,821 are male and 19,29,041 are female. Hindus constitute 89.45 percent of the population in the district followed by Muslims 10.28 percent. Proportion of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes population to the total population of the district is only 12.18 and 1 percent respectively. With a decadal growth rate of 21.6 during 2001-2011. The rural area of the district has attained a slightly higher decadal variation of 22 percent as compared to that of urban area at 18.3 percent. At the sub-district level, the decadal variation varies from the highest of 29.7 percent in Dariapur to the lowest of 11.1 percent in Maker. The district has registered a literacy rate of 65.96 percent. As regards to rural and urban areas of the district the literacy rates have been registered 65.04 percent and 75.13 percent respectively. For the district as a whole, the literacy rate of males is much higher than that of females. The gap in the male-female literacy rates has been 22.61 percent point as it is 77.03 percent male and 54.42 percent female respectively.

## **Key Processes - Birth and Death Registration**

### ***Processes for Registration within 21 days***

Birth and death registration within 21 days is free of charge. In case of rural areas registration is mainly done at the public health facility comprising of the PHC, Referral Hospital, District Hospitals, Medical College & Hospital, and Sub Divisional Hospital for institutional births and deaths respectively and by Anganwadi Sevika for home based deliveries and deaths. While in case of urban areas, registration is done by Nagar Nigam, Nagar Parishad, Nagar Panchayat as well as District Hospital, Medical College and Hospital

and Cantonment Hospital in urban areas. It may be noted that despite the private health institutions have been notified for registering vital events through Nagar Nigam/Nagar Nikay and Nagar Panchayat, yet in reality this is not happening in the desired way.

### ***Processes for registration between 21 - 30 days***

Any registration of vital events beyond 21 days is considered to be delayed registration. Birth and death registration beyond 21 days but within 30 days of the event a nominal fee of Rupee Two is charged as fees from the beneficiaries. In case of rural areas, Gram Panchayat Secretary is only authorized to issue birth and death certificate where as in case of urban areas, Registrar of Births and Deaths at Nagar Nigam, Nagar Parishad, Nagar Panchayat and Cantonment Parishad is vested with the authority and the responsibility. It may be noted that application for registration of vital events beyond 21 days but within 30 days of the event does not require any other documentation, except for the application by the applicant along with proof of residence (Voter ID card) and Aadhaar card (if available).

### ***Processes for registration after 30 Days but within 1 Year***

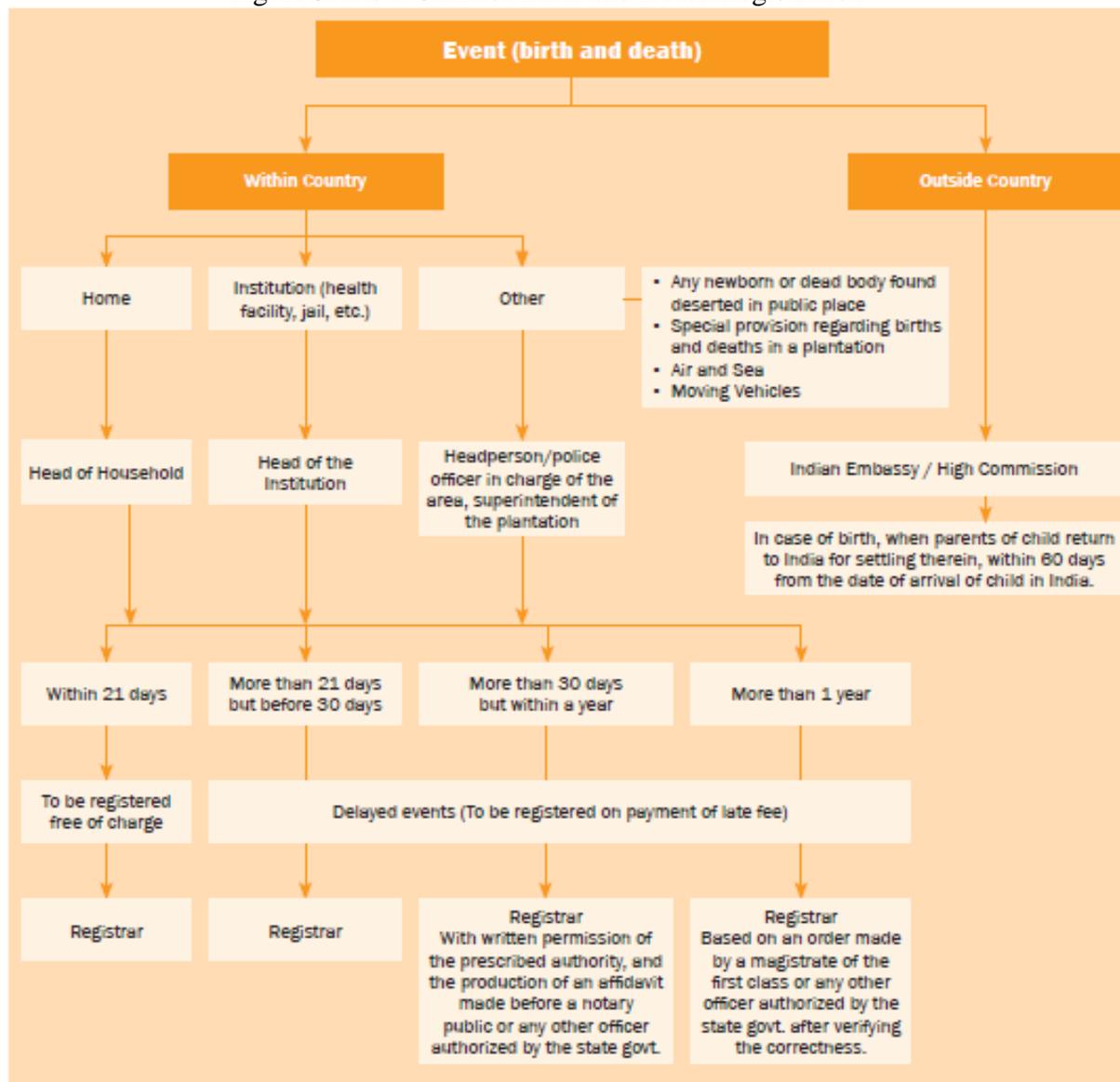
Birth or death event, information on which is given to the Registrar after 30 days but within one year of its occurrence, is registered only with the written permission of the prescribed authority and on the production of an affidavit made before a notary public and payment of a late fee of Rupee Five. In case of rural areas, the application may be given to the Panchayat Secretary or the office of the Block Development Officer and it is mandated that a written permission is required from the District Registrar/ Additional District Registrar of Births and Deaths. But it has been observed that the Block Development Officer is the verifying authority in case of Bihar. In case of urban areas, the application may be given at Nagar Nigam or Nagar Parishad or Nagar Panchayat or Cantonment Parishad as the case may be and it is mandated that a written permission is required from the Chief Municipal Health Officer/Administrator/ Chief Executive Officer of a Municipal Corporation or from the Chairman/Executive Officer/Administrator in case of a municipal area or from the Chairman/Executive Officer of a Cantonment area/Notified area as the case may be. Even in urban areas it has been observed that the verification of the vital event is done by the Block Development Officer.

### ***Processes for registration after 1 year***

Birth or Death event which has not been registered within one year of its occurrence the process of registration is similar to the one followed for registration beyond 30 days but within one year of its occurrence, with the only exception that an order is required by a magistrate of the first class after verifying the correctness of the event and payment a fee of Rupee Ten is charged. It may be noted that in some cases delayed registration was done by the district hospital and birth certificates were issued, which clearly is outside the purview of the health institutions. A flow cart depicting the birth and death registration process which is mandated to be followed throughout the country is mentioned below:

*As per recent notification by GoB (No. 18/Lo.Se.A-12-01/2016 (part)/15549) dated 19<sup>th</sup> November 2019, the process of delayed registration was brought under the purview of Bihar Right to Public Service (RTPS) Acts, 2011. Under this the process of delayed registration has to be completed within 6 working days. BSS is made responsible for verification of delayed registration for the period 30 days to one year, while BDO is made responsible for verification of delayed registration process beyond one year.*

Figure 5: Flow Chart of Birth and Death Registration



Source: Training Manual for Civil Registration Functionaries in India, RGI, 2012

## Discussion and Key Findings

### Targeting and Coverage

Targeting under Civil Registration System is based on the midyear population projection from Census 2000. Only decadal population growth rate and the birth rate of the corresponding year are considered for the projection purpose. But in the context of Bihar, where there are huge issues of out migration the target might be slightly on the higher side. As of Census 2011, while only 11,11,954 were reported to be migrating from other states to Bihar nearly 74,53,803 people are reported to migrate from Bihar to other parts of the country. Thus outmigration is an issue. While for the state as a whole the annual targets for vital registration is fixed by RGI the district and sub-district specific targets are not set either by RGI or the Directorate of Economics and Statistics. Government of Bihar. The targets calculated at the district and sub-district level is not based on rigorous scientific calculations. As a usual practice the district and sub-district wise targets are calculated based on the proportion of the district and sub-district population respectively to the total population. The targeting neither takes into cognizance of the decadal growth rate nor the CBR of the

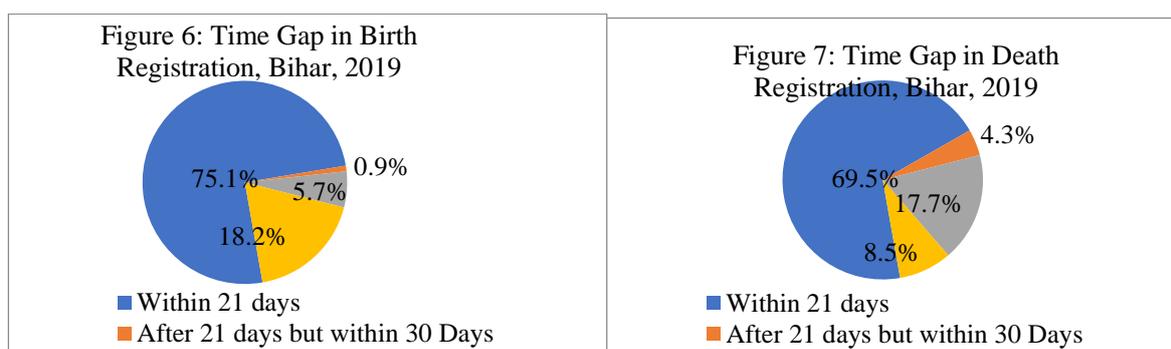
## Civil Registration System in Bihar: Strengths and Challenges

respective areas. Birth registration is mandated to be done at the place of birth but births does not necessarily take place within the district of residence. The coverage in areas with access to better health facilities is likely to be more as people from the nearby catchment area come to that place for institutional deliveries whereas the coverage will continue to be low at the area of permanent residence. For example, if in District-A the targeted number of live birth is 100 and the district despite its concerted effort could achieve only 60, it might be the case that the remaining 40 could be registered in some other districts or states. This is evident from the census findings of 2011. Out of 10,40,99,452 reported population of Bihar, only 7,73,72,475 (74%) were reported to be born in the place of enumeration. An analysis, of the birth registration by their permanent residence could be attempted to see if there are gaps in registration. (Refer Birth Report – B2 under the CRS portal). Level of Registration is defined as the percentage of registered births/deaths to the births/deaths estimated through SRS, determines the performance level of a State / with regard to functioning of Civil Registration System.

$$\text{Level of Registration} = \frac{\text{Number of Events Registered during the Year}}{\text{Number of Estimated Events for the Year}} \times 100$$

$$\text{Number of Estimated Events for the Year} = \text{Mid Year Population} \times \text{SRS Rate}$$

The coverage statistics reported comprises of both registration within 21 days as well as delayed registration, including those whose registration was delayed by more than a year (Figures 6 and 7). However, the target set aside under the Civil Registration System is only for the current year and thus realistically the coverage should be calculated considering only those births occurring in the current year. An analysis may be attempted for capturing the actual level of registration based on the number of events in the current year whose registration was done in the current year itself vis-à-vis the targets. The levels of births and deaths registration in Bihar in 2018 are 80.3 percent and 34.6 percent according to office of Registrar General of India. The level of reporting of births and deaths registration data in Bihar in 2018 is around 90 percent. In 2018, 2790 infant deaths were registered out of total 213989 registered deaths (1.30 percent). The under reporting of infant deaths in Bihar is one of major causes of lower Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) estimation. According to SRS-2018, IMR in Bihar is 32 (30 for males and 35 for females). Further, according to office of Registrar General of India, in 2018, 1157000 male births as against 1085000 female births were registered. This indicates that there is a minimal variation in registered male and female births. According to SRS-2018, the sex ratio at birth is 895 in Bihar (896 in rural and 883 in urban areas). On the contrary, in the same year 132000 male deaths are registered as against 82000 female deaths. Male death registration is always higher in Bihar as compared to their female counterparts. This is mainly because Bihar is a patriarchal society and property inheritances are mainly linked to the males.



Source: Directorate of Economics and Statistics, GoB, CRS portal

Table 1: Coverage of Birth Registration vis-à-vis Live Births

District	Live Births	Births Registered	Level of Registration	Births Registered within 1 year	Level of Registration excluding Registration beyond 1 year
Araria	71740	68118	95.0	63884	89.0
Arwal	10963	12301	112.2	10655	97.2
Aurangabad	45293	39565	87.4	36092	79.7
Banka	39600	26512	66.9	25974	65.6
Begusarai	72183	68729	95.2	57904	80.2
Bhagalpur	61920	71627	115.7	62844	101.5
Bhojpur	41433	53253	128.5	45132	108.9
Buxar	23763	31279	131.6	26383	111.0
Darbhanga	83751	96487	115.2	83080	99.2
East Champaran	100482	62663	62.4	56712	56.4
Gaya	75512	73337	97.1	57175	75.7
Gopalganj	42732	55510	129.9	46976	109.9
Jamui	44177	26732	60.5	24145	54.7
Jehanabad	15019	20818	138.6	17616	117.3
Kaimur	25340	31525	124.4	28919	114.1
Katihar	77419	66084	85.4	63748	82.3
Khagaria	44663	42622	95.4	39933	89.4
Kishanganj	44242	32100	72.6	29438	66.5
Lakhisarai	18938	16965	89.6	15719	83.0
Madhepura	55258	49507	89.6	48542	87.8
Madhubani	79600	68390	85.9	62067	78.0
Munger	23891	27401	114.7	23083	96.6
Muzaffarpur	87921	88602	100.8	68989	78.5
Nalanda	52247	54290	103.9	46854	89.7
Nawada	39142	39713	101.5	36490	93.2
Patna	71072	92968	130.8	67250	94.6
Purnea	89967	89431	99.4	84512	93.9
Rohtas	33320	49372	148.2	39704	119.2
Saharsa	49640	46059	92.8	42852	86.3
Samastipur	95076	111328	117.1	103530	108.9
Saran	71027	62301	87.7	58697	82.6
Sheikhpura	14927	16154	108.2	13796	92.4
Sheohar	14599	14090	96.5	11562	79.2
Sitamarhi	65491	65761	100.4	59947	91.5
Siwan	50449	61692	122.3	51555	102.2
Supaul	57705	52241	90.5	49235	85.3
Vaishali	66929	74785	111.7	68252	102.0
West Champaran	91351	85020	93.1	78715	86.2
BIHAR	2048782	2046517	99.9	1809146	88.3

Given the coverage of birth registration for 2019, there are some districts where more than 25 percent of the total births registered are delayed registration beyond one year. This comprises of districts like Patna, Muzaffarpur, Jehanabad, Sheikhpura, Gaya, Darbhanga, Gopalganj, Sheohar and Rohtas. It may be noted that in all these districts the coverage is less than the target. This implies that in these districts the institutional mechanism for birth registration has been underperforming to some extent. An attempt was made to triangulate the coverage statistics of birth registration with the HMIS report on the number of live births for

2018. The number of live births from January 2018 to December 2018 was considered and vis-à-vis the number of births registered was compared (Table 1). It transpires that the districts of Jamui, East Champaran, Banka and Kishanganj are lagging far behind even in terms of birth registration compared to the number of live births reported.

### ***Birth Registration beyond Public Health Facility***

As per the HMIS data of Bihar from January 2018 to December 2018, out of the total deliveries reported, almost 20 percent are reported to be home delivery and as per the mandate of Bihar Registration of Birth and Death Rules, 1999 and the notification thereof in 2012, the *Anganwadi Sevika* is empowered to register the births. An analysis of the 2018 coverage data reveals the following:

Total number of births registered within 21 days	:	16,94,784
Total number of births registered by AWW	:	53,883 <sup>5</sup>
Percentage of births registered by AWW	:	3.18%

This implies that birth registration by the *Anganwadi Sevika* is a weak link which needs to be strengthened further. Out of 80 percent reported institutional delivery, nearly 5 percent are reported to be held at private institutions. It has been observed that birth registration at private health institutions is not happening at scale. Most of the institutional delivery at private institution is either not registered or is registered both as current and delayed registration with the Nagar Nigam/Nagar Nikay. It was further observed that the private health facilities are not willing to cooperate and shoulder the responsibilities of birth and death registration. As discussed with the District Statistical Officers in both the districts the reluctance on the part of the private health institutions is due to the fact that many of them are not registered as health institutions under the Clinical Establishment Act and many fear that reporting the actual number of deliveries might have implications on their tax returns.

### ***Human Resource***

Human resource gaps were seen across all levels. However, the most crucial HR gap which has a significant impact on the level of registration is that of the Block Statistical Supervisors. In both the district visited, Purnia had only 8 Block Statistical Supervisors in position against 14 sanctioned and in Saran it was only 12 out of 20. Huge attrition rate of Data Entry Operator is another issue which is closely related to ensuring quality of data. In Bihar, most of the Data Entry Operators are outsourced and hired on contractual basis through NGOs. Being poorly paid, they are always in the lookout for better opportunities. Fallout of attrition is that most of the Data Entry Operators were found to be recruited recently and were not trained on the civil registration system.

### ***Quality***

There is no denial of the fact that the coverage of civil registration, particularly birth registration, has shown a significant progress over the years. But merely increasing the level of registration without much control in terms of quality as well as duplication might negatively impact the use of the civil registration data for programmatic intervention. There being no standard operating protocol, the processes for birth registration varies widely. For example, while the prescribed forms are used in some places, in others the labour register is used as a source of information, despite the fact that all the mandatory data fields are not available in the labour register. Thus the very premise of using the CRVS data for decision

---

<sup>5</sup> Based on the assumption that an amount of Rs. 1077670 was utilized towards payment of incentive for Anganwadi Sevika @ of Rs, 20 for registering each vital event (both birth and death).

making is compromised. Similar observations were made in terms of delayed registration. It was observed that delayed registration was done by the district hospital and birth certificates were issued; whereas as per the guidelines this is beyond the purview of district hospitals and only Gram Panchayat and Nagar Nigam are entitled with this right. Field interactions with various stakeholders suggested that chances of duplication exist as there is no structured mechanism of verification. One might get a birth certificate from health institution and could also apply for a delayed registration from Gram Panchayat or Nagar Nigam.

### ***Collection of Prescribed Fees***

As mentioned earlier, it was observed that many a times delayed registration was done by public hospitals. As per the provisions of the Bihar Registration of Birth and Death Rules in 1999 there is a prescribed fee for delayed registration. But this is also not charged because of ignorance. One free copy of birth / death certificate is issued to the informant under Section 12 of the RBD Act. Under the provision of Section 17 of the Act, any number of copies can be obtained by any one after paying the prescribed fee. The fee being very nominal is often not charged by the issuing authority.

### ***Monitoring and Coordination***

The District Magistrate is designated as the District Registrar and is mandated towards providing overall leadership for implementation of the civil registration system within the district. It was observed, that the District Coordination Committee meetings, which is held monthly will all Departments within the district, is the only platform where issues pertaining to civil registration is discussed. But currently, the programmes having overriding priority is the key area of discussion and civil registration has somewhat taken a back sit. The involvement of the District Magistrate and the role of the District Statistical Officer in bringing forward the issue around civil registration is a key for improving the level of registration. The platform gets all the more necessary because the entire implementation of civil registration in Bihar is handled by functionaries from Department of Health, Department of Social Welfare, the Department of Panchayati Raj and the Urban Development Department. The role of the Department of Planning and Development is only to lead the entire process and ensure coordination among all the departments for civil registration.

Though at the district level there is some amount of coordination between the District Statistical Officer and the Civil Surgeon, District Project Officer (ICDS) as well as Nagar Panchayat; at the block level the coordination mechanism is relatively weak. This is particularly true in terms of coordination with the Child Development Project Officer (CDPO). The Annual Survey reports compiled by ICDS as well as the Monthly Progress Report (MPR) are potentially useful source of information for triangulating birth registration statistics. Monthly meetings are held by the District Statistical Officer along with all the Block Statistical Supervisors where the coverage vis-à-vis targets are discussed. But there is no structured mechanism for conducting these monthly meeting. Monitoring visits are done by the District Statistical Officer as well as Block Statistical Supervisors. But these visits are mostly done in public health institutions once a month as scheduled by DES, where the number of deliveries as per the labour register and the number of births registered are compared. No serious attempts are made to validate the quality of information. In the absence of a structured mechanism or checklist for these monitoring visits, significant variations were observed.

The role of the Block Statistical Supervisor under the ambit of civil registration is essentially monitoring at the block level. But they are often challenged by the fact that the

## **Civil Registration System in Bihar: Strengths and Challenges**

Block Statistical Supervisor does not have access to the CRVS portal. Thus they do not have access to the reports and cannot make programmatic decisions. However, access to the CRVS portal is not a sufficient condition for monitoring. It was observed that the CRVS portal has a set of 22 customized reports for birth registration, 21 for death registration and 7 for still births. But those are not being used for decisions making or for monitoring. It was observed that there is no orientation manual on the reporting functionality of CRVS and no training was conducted to that end. It is suggested that an orientation manual could be developed and the functionaries trained on how to use the customized reports.

### ***Capacity gaps***

As mentioned earlier, capacity gaps among front line functionaries, especially the Data Entry Operators exists at large. This is all the more critical because, the Data Entry Operators in Bihar do not use their own login credentials for logging into the portal, but uses the login credential of the Registrars. Thus any incorrectness in terms of data entry would lead to incorrect registration. It was observed that most of the Data Entry Operators work in silos and even if they have any doubts or confusions regarding data entry there is no clear understanding on how to resolve it or escalate it to a higher level. Thus a structured mechanism for resolving technical challenges needs to be put in place. Further the role of the Block Statistical Officers in terms of monitoring the implementation of civil registration in Bihar needs further strengthening. This calls for developing standard operating procedure and refresher training of all the functionaries.

### ***IEC***

The need and importance of civil registration particularly that of birth registration is well perceived by the community. This is despite the fact not much effort has been put forward by the district authorities in terms of IEC. Hoardings on civil registration were once supplied by the Directorate of Economics and Statistics but were not visible in any place. However, interaction with various stakeholders as well as the community suggests that birth registration being a requirement for school enrollment, for Aadhar registration, as well as for availing the benefits from some schemes and programmes, like *Mukhyamantri Kanya Uttan Yojana*, *JSY* the community is interested towards registering the birth of their child. The awareness is however much lower in case of death registration. It transpired that only if the dependent of the deceased has some vested interest then only they feel a need for death registration. This includes claim from life insurance, inheriting the title for land holding, etc. Thus there has to be some emphasis on IEC. However, there are certain myths and misconceptions associated with birth registration as well. In some society there is a custom of not giving the name of the child just after birth. But they feel that the name of the child is a necessary condition for birth certificate. This is a reason why they are not inclined to have the birth of the child registered within 21 days. This holds particularly true for home deliveries as well as institutional deliveries from private facilities.

### ***Time gap between Registration and Issue of Certificates***

With the onset of online registration, birth certificates are no more printed on the day of registration but are issued on demand. As a result, no constructive observation could be made on the time gap between registration of births and issue of certificates. However, as discussed with the various stakeholders as well as beneficiaries it takes around a week's time to a month for issue of certificate. In case of delayed registration however, it takes a longer time even to register the vital events as there are several processes of affidavit made before a first class Magistrate or a Notary Public or an Executive Magistrate as the case may be.

### ***Grievance Redressal Mechanism***

Apparently there is no grievance redressal mechanism observed. In the absence of proper IEC activities pertaining to registration of vital events, this makes it even more complicated for the applicants.

### **Recommendations**

#### ***Developing Standard Operating Procedure and Strengthen Capacity of various Stakeholders at different levels:***

There being non-availability of updated standard operating procedure for civil registration in Bihar, the processes for birth and death registration varies widely. As mentioned earlier, while the prescribed forms for civil registration are used in some places, in others the labour register is used as a source of information for birth registration. Similarly, while delayed registration is not within the purview of health institutions yet at some places it is being done and birth certificates are issued. These calls for standardization of civil registration processes through the development of Standardize Operating Procedure (SOP) as well as capacity building of the stakeholders through refresher trainings.

#### ***Strengthen Monitoring and Nuanced Data Analysis:***

The monitoring role of the state, district and sub-district functionaries need further strengthening with particular focus on quality of data collected and using the information for decision making. Apart from the overall coverage statistics and the progress in level of registration, the reporting functionality of the CRS portal is hardly put to effective use. Review meetings at all levels may be informed with nuanced data analysis. There is a need to orient the stakeholders on the reporting functionality of the civil registration system. As discussed earlier, the coverage statistics may be disaggregated by timing of registration, place of registration etc. to provide very constructive prescription for strengthening registration system.

#### ***Realistic Targeting and Coverage:***

Despite the fact that the state-wise targets for civil registration is set by Register General of India yet the targets set for the districts and the sub-district level needs to be worked out based on some scientific methodology. As discussed earlier, the aspects of migration, live births reported by the health management information system, etc. may be taken into consideration. A small scale sample survey may be administered on a test case covering few of the districts to assess the level of birth and death registration.

#### ***Advocacy and Communication:***

Though there seems to be a demand for birth registration due to the perceived demand from the community for school enrollment, Aadhaar registration as well as availing benefits from other schemes and programmes; the same does not hold true for death registration. There has to be some emphasis on public education, information and communication for effective civil registration. The need and importance of timely registration, the mechanism and processes for civil registration as well as grievance redressal mechanism should be emphasized. Messaging on importance of registration through ANC messaging; outreach through religious and community leaders as well as linking incentive schemes may be continued.

### References

- Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Govt. of Bihar, Civil Registration System Report, 2017- 18, Available from: [http://crsorgi.gov.in/web/uploads/download/FAQ\\_of\\_CRS.pdf](http://crsorgi.gov.in/web/uploads/download/FAQ_of_CRS.pdf), accessed on January 30, 2019.
- James KS, Kavitha N, George A, Kulkarni PM, Prasad S, Kumar S., 2013, Preliminary assessment of the quality of civil registration system in Kerala, Odisha and Rajasthan. New Delhi: UNFPA, Available from: <http://india.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/ReportonCRS-Final.pdf>, accessed on July 27, 2017.
- Maharatna A, Sinha A. Long-term demographic trends in North-East India and their wider significance, 1901-2001. Kolkata: Institute of Development Studies; 2011. Available from: <http://idsk.edu.in/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/OP-26.pdf>, accessed on July 27, 2017.
- Nichols EK, Giles D, Kang'oma S, Mwalwanda L, Onaka A, Notzon F., 2015, Rapid assessment of Malawi's civil registration and vital statistics system. Public Health Action, 5: 162-4.
- Office of the Registrar General of India, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India., 2017, Civil Registration System in India. Available from: <http://crsorgi.gov.in/about-us.html>, accessed on July 27, 2017.
- Office of the Registrar General of India, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, 2019, Sample Registration. Available from: [http://www.censusindia.gov.in/Vital\\_Statistics/SRS/Sample\\_Registration\\_System.html](http://www.censusindia.gov.in/Vital_Statistics/SRS/Sample_Registration_System.html), accessed on July 27, 2017.
- Office of the Registrar General of India, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India. 2014, Vital statistics of India based on the civil registration system, New Delhi: ORGI; 2016. Available from: [http://www.censusindia.gov.in/vital\\_statistics/SRS\\_Reports\\_2014.html](http://www.censusindia.gov.in/vital_statistics/SRS_Reports_2014.html), accessed on April 24, 2017.
- Office of the Registrar General of India, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, 2015, Vital statistics of India based on the civil registration system. New Delhi: ORGI; 2017. Available from: [http://www.censusindia.gov.in/vital\\_statistics/SRS\\_Reports\\_2015.html](http://www.censusindia.gov.in/vital_statistics/SRS_Reports_2015.html), accessed on October 23, 2017.
- Office of the Registrar General of India, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India. Sample Registration System. Available from: [http://censusindia.gov.in/vital\\_statistics/SRS/Sample\\_Registration\\_System.aspx](http://censusindia.gov.in/vital_statistics/SRS/Sample_Registration_System.aspx), accessed on July 27, 2017.
- Office of the Registrar General of India, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India. Presentation on CRS. Available from: [http://crsorgi.gov.in/crs\\_software\\_Presentation.pptx](http://crsorgi.gov.in/crs_software_Presentation.pptx), accessed on July 20, 2017.
- Office of the Registrar General of India, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India. FAQs on CRS. Available from: [http://crsorgi.gov.in/web/uploads/download/FAQ\\_of\\_CRS.pdf](http://crsorgi.gov.in/web/uploads/download/FAQ_of_CRS.pdf), accessed on July 27, 2017.
- Office of the Registrar General of India, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India. SRS Statistical Report 2015. New Delhi: ORGI; 2016. Available from: [http://www.censusindia.gov.in/vital\\_statistics/SRS\\_Reports\\_2015.html](http://www.censusindia.gov.in/vital_statistics/SRS_Reports_2015.html), accessed on July 29, 2017.

Office of the Registrar General of India, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India,  
“Training Manual for Civil Registration Functionaries in India, 2012.