



## BOTSWANA CASE STUDY REPORT

# Evaluation of UNICEF Work in Strengthening Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems





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This report, 'Botswana Case Study Report. Evaluation of the UNICEF Work in Strengthening Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems' was prepared by Vasumathi Anandan and Ann Livingston. Eduard Bonet Porqueras, Evaluation Specialist at the Evaluation Office, managed the overall evaluation with support from Beth Ann Plowman, Senior Evaluation Specialist at the Evaluation Office. Edward Isaac Freeman provided technical advice and guidance as external expert.

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Acronyms	iv
Executive Summary	1
<b>1 Introduction</b>	<b>3</b>
1.1 Overview of the situation	3
1.2 Methodology	3
<b>2 Country context on civil registration and vital statistics</b>	<b>5</b>
2.1 Country context	5
2.2 Intervention logic to strengthen the CRVS system	8
2.3 Mapping of strategies used	9
<b>3 UNICEF’s work in civil registration and vital statistics</b>	<b>13</b>
3.1 Programming	13
3.2 Measurable contributions	14
3.3 Outputs and strategies	14
<b>4 Key observations</b>	<b>17</b>
4.1 Relevance	17
4.2 Effectiveness	17
4.3 Coherence	18
4.4 Innovation	18
<b>5 Conclusions and considerations</b>	<b>19</b>
5.1 Limitations of this case study	19
5.2 Lessons learned and good practices	20
5.3 Issues for future investigation	20
<b>Annexes</b>	<b>22</b>
Annex 1 Data for evidence story	22
Annex 2 List of documents reviewed	23



## LIST OF ACRONYMS

<b>ADB</b>	African Development Bank
<b>APAI-CRVS</b>	Africa Programme on Accelerated Improvement of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics
<b>ASSD</b>	African Symposiums on Statistical Development
<b>BDRS</b>	Birth and Death Registration System
<b>COAR</b>	Country Office Annual Report
<b>COVID-19</b>	Coronavirus disease
<b>CR</b>	Civil Registration
<b>CRVS</b>	Civil Registration and Vital Statistics
<b>DCNR</b>	Department of Civil and National Registration
<b>DHS</b>	Demographic and Health Survey
<b>e-CRVS</b>	Electronic Civil Registration and Vital Statistics
<b>GDP</b>	Gross Domestic Product
<b>GITEV</b>	Inter-ministerial Group for Civil Registration and Vital Statistics
<b>ICT</b>	Information and communications technology
<b>ID</b>	Identity document
<b>ID-M</b>	Identity Management
<b>MICS</b>	Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey
<b>MTSP</b>	Mid-Term Strategic Plan
<b>NIS</b>	National Identification Systems
<b>OVC</b>	Orphans and Vulnerable Children
<b>SDG</b>	Sustainable Development Goal
<b>SADC</b>	Southern African Development Community
<b>SMS</b>	Short Message Service
<b>SOBERS</b>	Social Benefits Registration System
<b>SP</b>	Strategic Plan
<b>T4D</b>	Technology for Development
<b>UNCT</b>	United Nations Country Team
<b>UNDAF</b>	The United Nations Development Assistance Framework

Acronyms continued ►

◀ **Acronyms** [back](#)

<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>UNECA</b>	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
<b>UNFPA</b>	United Nations Population Fund
<b>UNHCR</b>	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children’s Fund
<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organization



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The development and maintenance of the civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) system in Botswana is one of the success stories in Southern African Development Community (SADC) in the sub-Saharan Africa region. In addition to almost universal coverage in birth registration, Botswana has also succeeded in digitizing its national identity card system and CRVS systems. These two systems are operating efficiently and are mutually interoperable. This interoperability is currently being extended to include other registries of services beneficiaries operated by different government agencies.

This case study attempted to discern the level of UNICEF engagement in strengthening CRVS in Botswana. The study mapped national strategies to strengthen CRVS as well as UNICEF interventions, including partnerships and collaborations. The country has consistently engaged with UNICEF over the past decade to develop analytical products and reach the 'last-mile' through mobile innovations and campaigns. The case study found evidence that UNICEF has

consistently contributed to this development by supporting tested 'proof of concepts' in remote areas to reach the most vulnerable children to provide them access to CRVS. UNICEF developed innovative solutions for the population in most remote parts of the country: simple, cost-effective mobile registration units that worked well in low-resource environments with poor connectivity and other constraints. UNICEF efforts to identify and help alleviate the bottlenecks to complete birth



registration for children in remote regions helped vulnerable children who otherwise face exclusion. At the same time, while interventions have been useful in reducing the rural and urban divide in birth registration, inequities still persist.

UNICEF advocated with the Government to invest in institutional capacity and decentralization through 'child protocols', and the Government indeed increased the number of civil registration authorities as well as the number of trained registration officers. UNICEF analytical support to identify bottlenecks and challenges has helped the country strategize and prioritize its programming to be inclusive and reach the most vulnerable children. UNICEF has also influenced registration officers' training in braille and sign language to provide access and inclusion to individuals with disabilities. These engagements with Botswana to strengthen the CRVS system are documented in the context of the criteria for this evaluation and UNICEF programming areas.

The period under consideration for the case study is from 2014 to 2020, which corresponds to the last two UNICEF strategic plans (2011-2017, 2018-2021). The last section provides insight into the potential areas of investigation moving forward, especially the secondary impact of social policy, health and data. Amidst the ongoing coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, some recommendations and exploratory areas that may benefit the evaluation are identified.



# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Overview of the situation

The Republic of Botswana has a well-developed and fully functioning civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) system. The country has a robust legal and institutional framework to ensure universal registration of all vital events, including birth, marriages and death, and issues related documentation/certificates as proof of registration at the decentralized level in real-time. The Department of Civil and National Registration and the Ministry of Health are the authorities in charge of birth registration and provide an institutional framework for civil registration. There is a legal mandate to register births with health officials immediately after a child is born, with a grace period of 60 days after birth. Similarly, it is mandatory to register births, deaths, marriage, change of name, divorce and national identity – the latter within 60 days after turning 16 years old.

Previously, Botswana had a highly centralized organizational structure. This proved to be a challenge, since Botswana is one of the most sparsely populated countries in the world, with only four people per square kilometre. The country lacked the institutional capacity to make registration accessible to everyone. Accordingly, over the past decade, Botswana decentralized its civil registration system to its 12 districts and 24 sub-districts. The country introduced a real-time computerized registration system connecting all civil registration focal points, and extended

facilities to complete real-time death registration and issuance of birth and death certificates across health facilities.

Currently, a person can register a child's birth in the country's birth registration system and the national identification (ID) register. The national ID register system generates a unique identification number, which is also used as a birth registration ID number, linked to the CRVS systems and printed on the birth certificate. Botswana's CRVS records and the national ID systems are entirely digitized, which is key to integrating the systems in real-time and ensuring interoperability with the functional ID systems such as the social registry.

## 1.2 Methodology

This report was produced using information obtained from an in-depth desk review and it was complemented with the information obtained from key informant interviews. The selection of Botswana as a case study for the evaluation was done according to several criteria explained in the evaluation report.<sup>1</sup> The evaluation methodology used for this country case study is based on theory-based contribution analysis and is used to elaborate on the relative influence/contribution of the UNICEF Country Office to a known, discernible change or result. For this evaluation, those known, discernible changes are based primarily on the access, inclusion and coverage of birth registration as officially established over an observed period of time, from 2014 to 2020

<sup>1</sup> See the report here: <https://www.unicef.org/evaluation/reports/detail/16474/evaluation-of-unicef-work-in-strengthening-civil-registration-and-vital-statistics-systems>, accessed in 29 November 2021.

(pre-COVID-19). While the analysis is based on these years, elements from before 2014 have been included whenever it has been appropriate to bring a historic context and perspective to the main developments during the observed time period. Progress in rates of registration of other vital events is also considered.

The analysis aims to provide detailed information on the actions of UNICEF, the government and other partners in order to adequately tell the 'contribution story'. To that end the analysis is centred on elaborating the CRVS-strengthening logic of intervention of the national stakeholders as well

as that of UNICEF in Botswana. The methodology focuses further on the analysis, which aims to verify the steps and assumptions in the logic of intervention, their realization in practice, and other major factors contributing to the results. This way, the analysis provides a granular view of what works specifically related to the strengthening of the CRVS systems. Based on observed results, this report focuses on why and how the result was achieved, whether UNICEF-supported efforts influenced or made an important contribution to the observed result, and what role that intervention played vis-à-vis those of other actors.



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# 2 COUNTRY CONTEXT ON CIVIL REGISTRATION AND VITAL STATISTICS

## 2.1 Country context

Botswana, officially known as the Republic of Botswana, is an upper-middle income country with a gross domestic product (GDP) of 18.99 billion US dollars. Located in the southern part of Africa, it is landlocked and shares its borders with South Africa, Namibia, Zimbabwe and Zambia. Botswana is a member of the African Union and the Southern African Development Community. The state of CRVS in Botswana is comparable to that of neighbouring Namibia, which also has digitized CRVS systems, clear national policies, strong political will, robust institutions and a legal framework for complete integration and interoperability of the foundational ID systems.

**Capital city:** Gaborone

**Official working language:** English and Setswana

**Territorial size:** 581.700 km<sup>2</sup> (World Bank, 2018)

**Total population:** 2.25 million (World Bank, 2018)

**Ministry responsible for civil registration:** Department of Civil and National Registration, Ministry of Health



**Ministry responsible for national identification:**

Ministry of Labour and Home Affairs

**Mandatory birth registration:** Yes, within 60 days of child's birth (since 2003)

**Birth registration coverage:** 94.7% births registered of children under five years old (2017 demographic health survey estimate); 100% (administrative data, Government of Botswana, 2018)

**Institutional birth rate:** 99%

**National ID coverage:** Over 90%

**National ID mandatory:** Yes, within 30 days of turning 16 years of age.

The *Birth and Death Registration Act* (Chapter 30.01) provides the legal framework for birth registration in Botswana. There is a legal mandate to register births with health officials immediately after a child is born, within a grace period of 60 days. Similarly, it is mandatory to register deaths, marriage, change of name and divorce, and to apply for a national identification card.

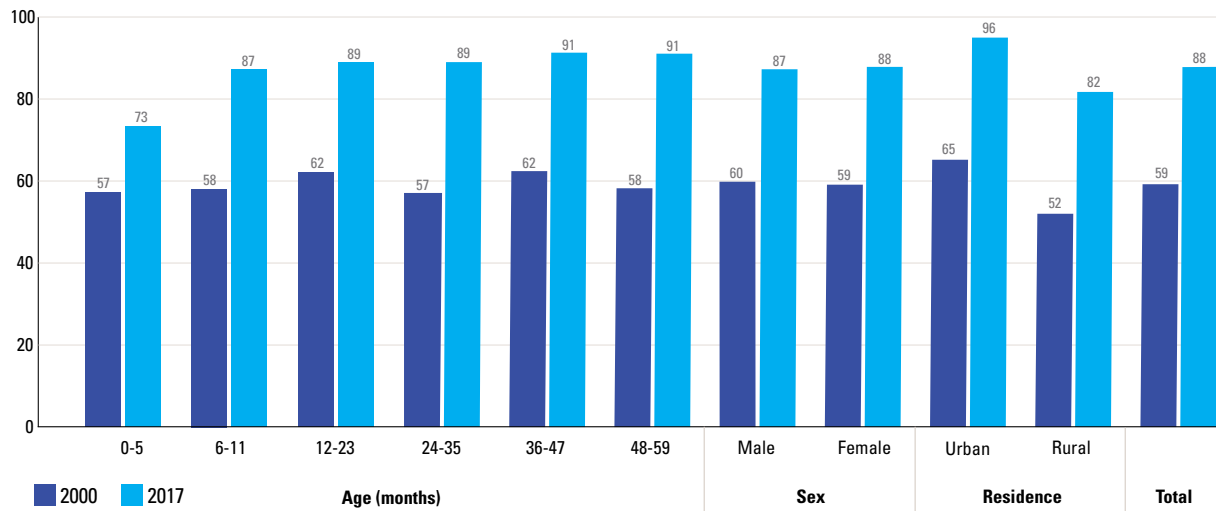
**CRVS indicators**

Data from the last demographic and health survey (DHS) in 2017 show an observable difference in birth registration rates between urban and rural areas, at 95 per cent and 81.5 per cent, respectively. Similarly, there is a significant difference in birth registration rates between the 0-6 months age group (73 per cent) compared to the 48-59 months age group (91 per cent). These data, if accurate, are hard to explain, given that Botswana has a high institutional birth rate, and it would be easier to register children at birth rather than wait. Unfortunately, it is impossible to compare these data with previous DHS results, since the last DHS took place in 1988 and did not include birth registration estimates.

Botswana's last multiple indicator cluster survey (MICS) was completed in 2000. While this is prior to the period considered by this evaluation, the data nevertheless provide a view of the progress made. In 2000, the birth registration rate was only 59 per cent for children under five years of age, with observed variations across districts and between rural and urban categories. For instance, children in the district of Ghanzi were less likely to have their births registered. The survey attributed low birth registration rates to: 1) a relatively large proportion of mothers (13 per cent) who did not know that births had to be registered, and 2) the long distance parents were required to travel to complete the birth registration process. The cost of birth registration was another reason cited for low birth registration.



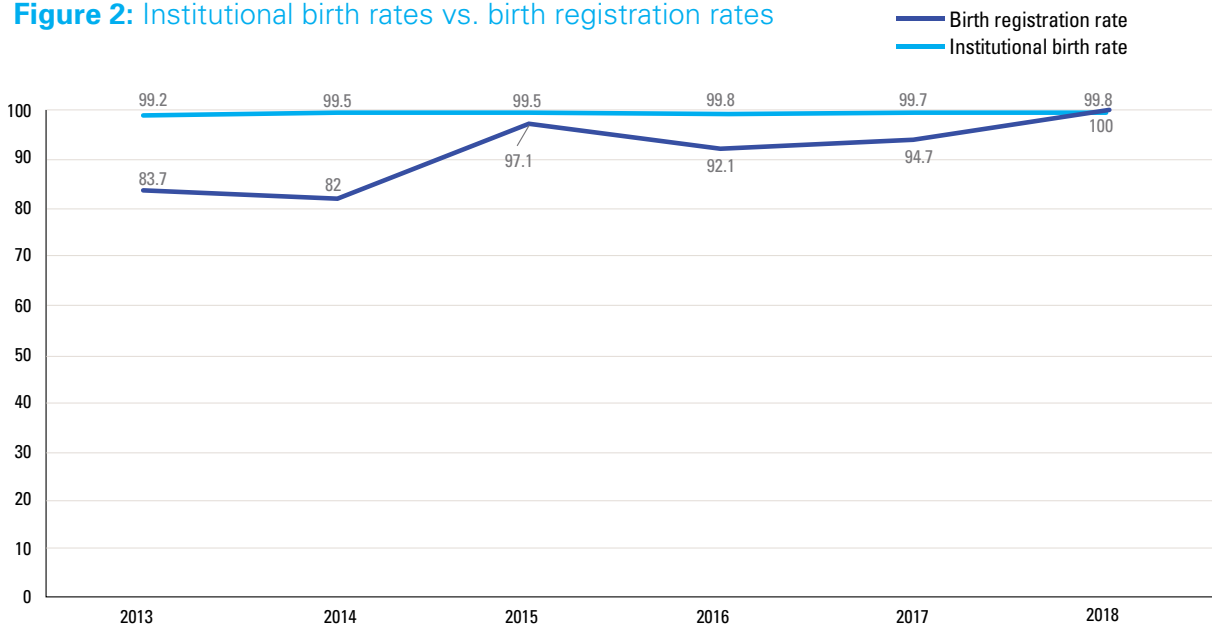
**Figure 1: Percentage of children under five years old who have their birth registered in Botswana, 2000–2017**



The Vital Statistics Report, 2018<sup>2</sup> published by the Government of Botswana indicated almost universal birth registration and a high percentage of institutional births, at 100 per cent and 99.8 per cent, respectively. These data would appear to suggest that the country has closed the birth

registration gap. However, the report was published less than a year after the DHS survey, which as noted reported the birth registration rate at 94.7 per cent. Figure 2 shows the institutional birth rate plotted against the birth registration rate over time.

**Figure 2: Institutional birth rates vs. birth registration rates**



Source: Vital Statistics Report, 2018. Statistics Botswana

<sup>2</sup> Statistics Botswana, 'Vital Statistics Report 2018', Statistics Botswana, Gaborone, 2020.

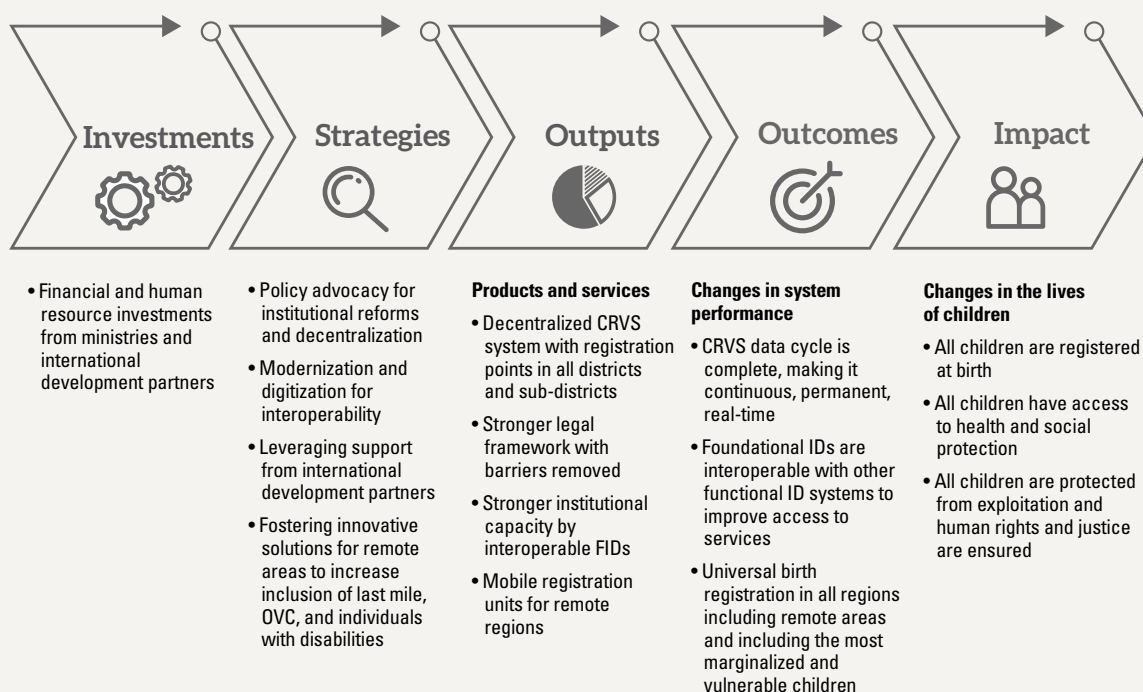


## 2.2 Intervention logic behind efforts to strengthen the CRVS system

Over the past decade, Botswana has implemented a number of strategies designed to increase access, inclusion and coverage of CRVS. First, the Government amended the legislation governing CRVS, making registration mandatory for all and waiving any fees or penalties. Second, it decentralized the institutional structures governing CRVS – a crucial step in a sparsely populated country like Botswana. (Previously, parents were required to travel to registration points at their own

cost.) Third, the country’s strategy to digitize and integrate its foundational ID systems (CRVS and national IDs), including digitizing the retroactive data, was critical in achieving universal coverage. Lastly, with the help of international partners including UNICEF, Botswana fostered and scaled up CRVS innovations to reach populations living in remote areas as well as orphans and vulnerable children (OVCs) and other marginalized groups, including individuals living with disabilities. Figure 3 provides a detailed overview of the intervention logic behind Botswana’s efforts to strengthen its CRVS system.

**Figure 3:** Elements of the intervention logic behind Botswana’s efforts to strengthen CRVS





These strategies resulted in a decentralized CRVS system with registration points in all districts and sub-districts, including mobile registration units for remote areas and more robust institutional capacity and individual capacity. The near-universal birth registration rates and digitized interoperable foundational identification systems were critical outcomes of these strategies. The success of these strategies has resulted in most children being counted, thus eliminating birth registration as a barrier to accessing health and social services.

The following sections take a closer look at the intervention logic, mapping the strategies and documenting the specific products and outputs of each partner's strategies.

## 2.3 Mapping of strategies used

Over the past decade, Botswana has benefitted from increased investments in strengthening its CRVS systems from various international organizations. The Government's current strategies to strengthen CRVS can be mapped under four main categories:

1. **Strengthening the institutional and legal framework for CRVS**
2. **Modernization and digitization of its foundational IDs**
3. **Leveraging international partnerships**
4. **Inclusion of marginalized and vulnerable groups in CRVS systems**

### Strengthening the institutional and legal framework for CRVS

Botswana established the Department of Civil and National Registration (DCNR), within the Ministry of Labour and Home Affairs (MLHA), in 2003, with the mandate of delivering registration services for civil registration (CR) and identity management

(ID-M), among other. The DCNR worked with several national agencies and international organizations to establish a legal framework comprising six acts of parliament, namely: 1) the Birth and Death Registration Act; 2) the National Registration Act; 3) the Marriage Act; 4) the Married Persons Property Act; 5) the Change of Name Act, and 6) the Societies Registration Act. The establishment of this agency was an important precursor to implementing CRVS reforms and achieving the results witnessed to date.

In 2013, the Government of Botswana conducted a comprehensive assessment of CRVS and identity management systems in response to an African ministers' resolution calling upon African governments to fast-track CRVS systems improvements. The four institutions that conducted the assessment (Ministry of Health, Ministry of Labour and Home Affairs, Administration of Justice and Statistics Botswana) have legal and administrative responsibilities to deliver and manage services associated with the four key vital events, namely birth, death, marriage and divorce. This assessment was completed with the financial support of development partners, including the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the African Development Bank (ADB), and the World Health Organization (WHO).

### Modernization and digitization of its foundational ID systems

The political will and the policies adopted by the Government have enabled the country to undertake the digital development and modernization of its foundational identification systems. Botswana is currently working on making foundational IDs<sup>3</sup> and functional IDs<sup>4</sup> completely interoperable. In 2015, Botswana set a goal of making CRVS institutions capable, sustainable and modern by 2020 with these

<sup>3</sup> The term foundational ID refers to CRVS and the national ID card system, which are under the law responsible for conferring legal identity and providing legal proof thereof.

<sup>4</sup> The term functional ID refers to all government systems processing personal legal identity information with the purpose of providing specific government services or accessing specific rights.



key actions: legal framework, monitoring and evaluation of CRVS institutions, skilled staff for the new environment and modernization and automation of CRVS processes to build robust CRVS systems with universal coverage. To achieve

this, the Government adopted a five-year strategic investment plan, the Botswana CRVS and Identity Management Investment Plan, 2015-2020, with the following outcomes and success indicators:

**Table 1: Botswana CRVS and Identity Management Investment Plan, 2015-2020**

Outcomes	Success indicators
1. One legal identity to secure civil rights and services for all	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Registration documents issued to all the registered</li> <li>2. All registration processes automated</li> <li>3. Standardized and harmonized registration processes</li> <li>4. All systems linked</li> <li>5. Increased usage of national service points</li> <li>6. Vulnerable groups have access and use of registration services</li> <li>7. National population register is part of the e-government system</li> </ol>
2. Availability of disaggregated data and indicators for evidence-based decision-making and good governance	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Complete and reliable civil registration</li> <li>2. Improved civil registration data integrity and accuracy</li> <li>3. CRVS systems are integrated, interoperable and fully utilized</li> <li>4. Official statistics are published according to international standards</li> <li>5. Production and dissemination of an up-to-date annual vital statistics report generated from a civil registration source</li> </ol>
3. Improved service delivery and accountability of the state	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Registration points established in rural areas (replace with decentralized services to remote and difficult-to-reach areas)</li> <li>2. Integrated planning, implementation and coordination structures established</li> <li>3. The 'people we serve' are satisfied</li> <li>4. Empowered government agencies for evidence-based decision-making and good governance</li> </ol>
4. Institutional excellence	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Enabling CRVS legislation passed and implemented</li> <li>2. Performance of CRVS institutions monitored and evaluated</li> <li>3. Skilled staff for new environment</li> <li>4. Modernized and automated processes as part of the government modernization program</li> <li>5. Modern, accessible and set standards of office facilities</li> <li>6. Performance culture is all about the 'people we serve'</li> </ol>

Source: own elaboration, World Bank, ID4D Country Diagnostic: Botswana, 2016



The outputs of the above strategy are documented in the following section. Data published as of 2020 were not sufficient to map results against goals and targets; there are, however, significant, observable changes that have been documented.

### Leveraging partnerships and international collaborations

Despite a number of competing Government priorities, political commitment at the highest levels has ensured sufficient funding for various CRVS initiatives. In the past, the DCNR was proactive in establishing partnerships and collaborations with development partners and non-state actors to improve the delivery of registration services and the quality of the data collected. Currently, the DCNR is collaborating with UNFPA, UNICEF, the World Bank, WHO, and the ADB. Collaboration extended to civil society organizations such as the Project Concern International funded by USAID, the Masiela Trust Fund, the Marang Children's Trust, and the SOS Children's Village to conduct universal birth registration campaigns.

These partnerships helped to improve birth and death registration, especially in remote areas. In 2014, UNICEF undertook a campaign in Maun in collaboration with DCNR to register vulnerable children and orphans. Similarly, in 2015, the DCNR enlisted the World Bank's support, in collaboration with the University of Botswana, to document good practices relating to civil registration and identity opportunities to strengthen management. Within the country, some of the important internal partners include but are not limited to the Ministry of Health (responsible for documentation birth and death events); the Administration of Justice (responsible for divorce administration) and Statistics Botswana (which is responsible for the compilation, analysis, and release of vital statistics). All these partners and stakeholders assisted in strengthening CRVS processes and sustaining the modernization of CRVS systems in the country.

### Inclusion of marginalized and vulnerable groups

#### **National universal registration campaign:**

Botswana developed and implemented a national universal registration campaign using robust information, education and communication strategies to strengthen CRVS. The communication tactics ranged from print media (newspaper advertisements, flyers, posters) to electronic media (radio and TV) and engagements at national and community levels. During the Kgotla meetings at the community and village levels, 'edutainment' materials were packaged with crucial messaging on the importance of civil registration, vital statistics and identity management.

In 2011, this first-generation universal birth, death and national registration campaign was launched to conduct awareness-raising around birth registration in remote areas. This project focused on registering of vulnerable groups, especially those who did not have the required documents for registration. A registration assessment committee was established to facilitate the implementation of this project. This campaign introduced a waiver of late registration penalty fees and prioritized applications from vulnerable groups.

**Following this, in 2015, the second-generation civil registration campaign** was conducted as a collaborative effort between the Department of Civil and National Registration and Project Concern International, with financial support from USAID, the Masiela Trust Fund and the Marang Child Network. The campaign aimed to ensure universal birth registration and the issuance of official birth certificates to children living in difficult circumstances by the end of 2015. Lastly, the campaign sought to create awareness at both the national and individual levels on the value of identity management in order to stimulate demand.

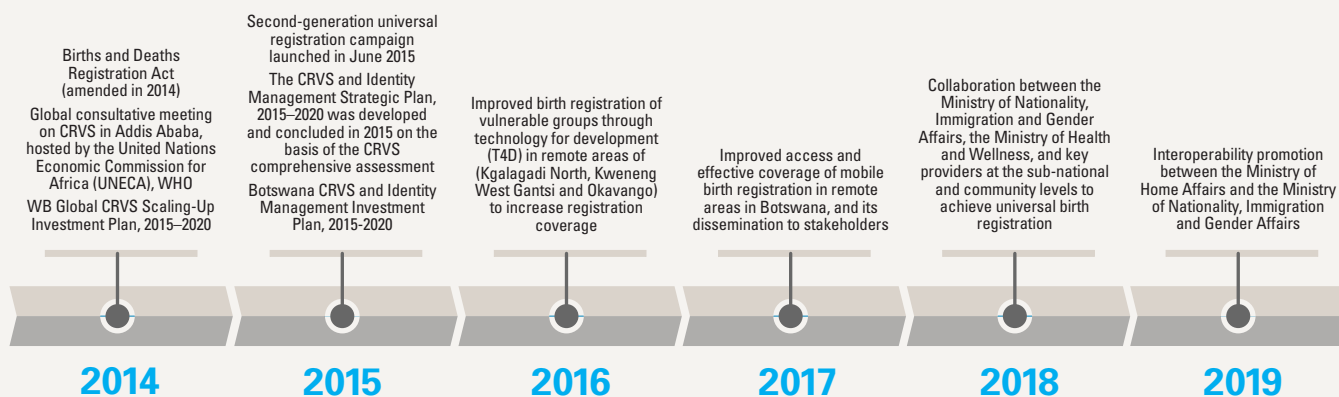
#### **Testing innovations and technology for**

**development:** UNICEF and the Ministry of Nationality, Immigration and Gender Affairs worked together to improve birth registration of vulnerable groups through technology for development

(T4D) in remote areas (Kgalagadi North, Kweneng West Gantsi and Okavango). These strategies aimed to increase birth registration coverage and improve access through mobile birth registration in remote areas. While innovation for inclusion was an important strategic approach of UNICEF in

Botswana over two strategic plans, since 2019 more weight has been given to technical support and advisory interventions, promoting interoperability between the DHIS2 and the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Ministry of Nationality, Immigration and Gender Affairs.

**Figure 4:** Timeline of key events in CRVS systems strengthening in Botswana



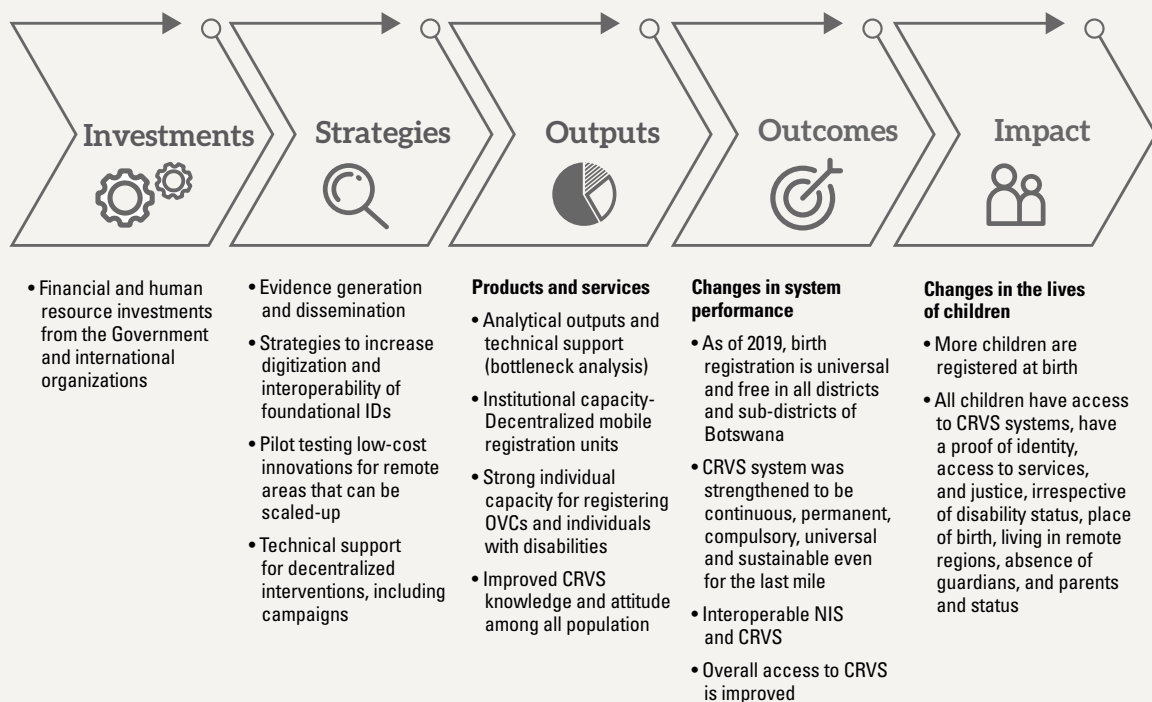
# 3 UNICEF'S WORK IN CIVIL REGISTRATION AND VITAL STATISTICS

## 3.1 Programming

The main focus of UNICEF engagement in CRVS in Botswana, given the country's massive scale and the sparse population, was to reach OVCs, including through innovative, low-cost solutions. As part of this effort, in 2017 UNICEF produced a landmark analytical output, a bottleneck analysis of birth registration in Botswana, which was

key in developing a strategy to reach the 'last mile.' UNICEF investments, engagement, and contribution in this area was direct, long term and substantial. UNICEF participated in other areas such as partnership and communication for development; however, these contributions were not as substantial.

**Figure 5: Elements of the intervention logic behind UNICEF efforts to strengthen CRVS in Botswana**



Source: UNICEF RAMs, UNICEF COARs and UNICEF PSNs (2014-2020)



## 3.2 Measurable contributions

UNICEF has supported knowledge and evidence generation and analysis through qualitative and quantitative research. The 2017 bottleneck analysis was extensive and included a desk review, interviews, focus group discussions and data from five regions to represent urban, rural and remote communities. Bottlenecks were identified and mapped into four programming domains – supply, demand, quality (of data) and enabling environment – with accompanying recommendations for each area.

In 2019, UNICEF child protection programming changed course in the spirit of the renewed focus on systems strengthening. With most of the main bottlenecks to birth registration having

been addressed, UNICEF pivoted toward a more upstream, facilitative role. Currently, UNICEF is looking to identify opportunities to use the newly developed NIS in the Demographic and Health Information System DHIS2 to all vulnerable children with birth registration. In addition, UNICEF is actively encouraging interoperability between the Ministry of Health and Welfare and the Ministry of Nationality, Immigration and Gender Affairs in order to promote efficiency.

The organization's financial investments mainly relate to conducting 'proof of concept' activities in remote areas, training of registration officers, support for communication campaigns and the inclusion of individuals with disabilities (training of registration officers in sign language and braille).

**Figure 6:** UNICEF annual financial investments in CRVS, 2014-2019 (in USD)

UNICEF Botswana					
2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
154,039	54,510	140,213	30,535	2,279	

Source: UNICEF, Vision funds utilization reports, own elaboration

In addition to financial data from UNICEF, there is evidence in Government of Botswana reports (2014) that UNICEF donated \$45,000, of which \$20,000 was used for the registration of vulnerable groups. In 2015, UNICEF helped the Government purchase computers and seven printers to register and issue certificates to vulnerable groups, which were allocated to districts with remote area dwellers to improve their registration capacity. There is evidence that during the second-generation universal registration campaign, UNICEF allocated part of the funding for communication materials (booklets and flyers) though the exact amount is unknown.

## 3.3 Outputs and strategies

This section takes a closer look at UNICEF contributions toward ensuring universal birth registration in Botswana. The overall approach draws on the organization's global expertise and well-established global strategies including capacity development, evidence generation, policy dialogue and advocacy, partnerships, South-South cooperation, innovation and cross-sectoral linkages.



## 1 Landscape

UNICEF child protection has been at the forefront of efforts to ensure children from the most remote regions of Botswana are included in the CRVS system. These efforts have included advocacy, analysis and evidence-generation as well as creating demand for CRVS through universal registration campaigns. UNICEF has also worked on the ‘supply side’ by testing ‘proof of concepts’ and other T4D innovations and providing technical assistance to the implementation of existing child protection programmes. UNICEF advocacy supported a solid continuum of prevention, early intervention and response services, including efforts to facilitate universal birth registration through collaboration with the Ministry of Labour and Home Affairs and relevant line ministries, as well as essential service providers at sub-national and community levels. There is evidence that the Government of Botswana’s efforts to train registration officers in braille and sign language were in part influenced by UNICEF advocacy.

## 2 Provide every child with a certificate upon birth

UNICEF supported the Ministry of Nationality, Immigration and Gender Affairs, in collaboration with Botho University, to develop a birth registration system within the four sub-regions of Kweneng West, Kgalegadi North, Gantsi South and Okavango. This intervention was designed to help the DCNR officials achieve universal birth registration through the issuance of birth certificates on the spot to beneficiaries in remote areas.

UNICEF identified mobile solutions to reach the last mile, achieve universal coverage, and

eliminate late registration to achieve real-time reporting in CRVS data by 2020. UNICEF continued its partnership with the Ministry of Home Affairs to improve birth registration, particularly among orphans and vulnerable children in remote regions from 2015 to 2018.

## 3 Link birth registration to social services

In 2015, birth registration in remote regions was prioritized, since children without CRVS documentation could not access Government social programmes. With UNICEF support, the Government of Botswana was able to finalize ‘the child protocols’, which improved institutional capacity for birth registration. This policy had a secondary impact on efforts to improve vaccination and reduce malnutrition in remote regions.

## 4 Invest in safe and innovative technological solutions to facilitate birth registration

Evidence from the period prior to the scope of this evaluation (2014-2020) shows that in 2010, UNICEF Botswana and its partners in various countries (Uganda, Ghana, Tanzania) introduced information and communication technology (mostly mobile technology solutions) for birth registration in remote regions. UNICEF Botswana conducted a mission to Mozambique to exchange knowledge and best practices in CRVS and explore options for using innovations and technology for achieving universal coverage. Following this, in 2015, UNICEF began to scale up mobile birth registration units in remote communities, an effort which remained a priority for several years. It was through UNICEF advocacy and technical assistance that the country’s first mobile birth registration began working in its most remote district.<sup>5</sup> This cost-

<sup>5</sup> Mobile birth registration is an effective and innovative combination of community mobilization and mobile technology, birth registration, and issuance of certificates on-site.



effective innovation ensured that individuals who lived in remote regions did not have to travel to reach the registration points.

UNICEF also worked with the Ministry of Nationality, Immigration and Gender Affairs to test other new and cost-effective models for increasing birth registration. Following the massive sweep exercise in 2015 to improve birth registration, UNICEF supported the design and proof-of-concept for 'mini-sweeps' in remote regions to increase access to CRVS. This exercise relied on community engagement to identify the unregistered children and those who did not have birth certificates. Based on these successful pilots, the Department of Civil and National Registration conducted mobile birth registration campaigns in remote regions.

In addition, in 2018, UNICEF engaged with traditional leaders in Botswana to combat certain social norms and cultural practices that perpetuate exploitation and abuse of children. Though this activity may not be directly related to CRVS strengthening, establishing trust in the community for each component of the programme has a cascade effect on the other areas. In this case, community engagement was useful to establish trust while identifying OVC living without guardians for birth registration.

In 2019, following evidence that the country had achieved universal birth registration, UNICEF announced a strengthened focus on systems strengthening. Efforts will include identifying opportunities to use the newly developed NIS in the DHIS2 to increase birth registration. According to the country office, this entails cross-sectoral engagement to ensure that the NIS creates links to various health-related programmes – specifically integrated management of childhood illnesses, prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV, and birth notification/registration. An integrated approach will ensure comprehensive data collection, analysis and collective decision-making at the individual, district and national levels. Currently, there is an absence of a comprehensive outlook on health information systems. UNICEF aims to foster a holistic approach. It is however too soon to see outputs/results for this period of programming.



# 4 KEY OBSERVATIONS

## 4.1 Relevance

UNICEF has demonstrated responsiveness to the needs of rights-holders and duty-bearers, showing a keen understanding of context and adapting as needed. The main area of improvement was the inclusion of vulnerable and remote populations in order to achieve universal coverage, and although this was a small area of programming, UNICEF has consistently contributed toward inclusion of marginalized populations in CRVS.

## 4.2 Effectiveness

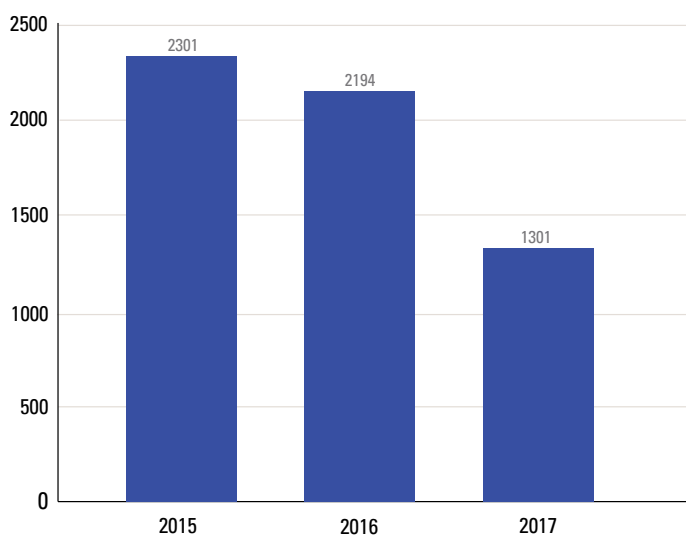
UNICEF has made identifiable contributions to CRVS system strengthening, particularly focusing on birth registration of marginalized groups.

Of particular note in this regard is the effort mentioned under 3.3 above to develop a birth registration system within the sub-regions of Kweneng West, Kgalagadi North, Gantsi South and Okavango.

Two vulnerable groups that have directly benefitted from UNICEF programming are:

**OVCs in remote areas:** UNICEF programmes have helped OVC living in remote regions to receive birth certificates through mobile registration units. These efforts also strengthen social policy and social protection systems and service delivery to reduce vulnerability, improve equity and ensure protection for all children, since access to CRVS and foundational IDs opens up a gateway to government programmes and services.

**Figure 7:** Birth certificates issued in remote regions with UNICEF support





**Individuals living with disabilities:** UNICEF advocacy influenced the Botswana Government to train registration officers in sign language and braille to make the registration process accessible and inclusive to individuals with a disability. This aligns with the United Nations' disability inclusion strategy (UNDIS0, Article 9 (accessibility) and Article 31 (statistics and data collection) adopted in 2019. Unfortunately, there are no additional results or reports on this effort. This could have been a useful experience to document in order to generate lessons learned on making delivery systems (health and social) more accessible for all individuals.

### 4.3 Coherence

UNICEF has engaged in strategic partnerships around CRVS and worked effectively with partners through coordination and synergized implementation. UNICEF interventions have been aligned with national priorities set in the strategic plans of the Government, and with the strategies of other key organizations in the country, such as the World Bank. There is evidence of a high level of engagement from various international organizations and ministries. The various levels of UNICEF (country, regional, headquarters) have worked consistently with the Government to provide advocacy, technical solutions, innovations for strengthening CRVS in the 'last mile', and advice on interoperability. However, more information is needed on the level of engagement and whether UNICEF played a convening role or an observing role in some of these strategic partnerships.

### 4.4 Innovation

UNICEF introduced and used new digital solutions (mobile registration units) and enhanced capacities to strengthen CRVS systems. UNICEF played a vital role in testing and scaling up innovative solutions for the 'last mile', which was instrumental to reaching universal coverage. Hurdles remain, including a lack of institutional capacity, insufficient resources and low bandwidth (connectivity). UNICEF work in this area included training registration officers and purchasing laptops and printers for mobile birth registration. However, the evidence on this is pieced together from COARs; there are no separate project reports that document these efforts. Evidence on these kinds of experiences will be crucial and highly valued going forward as countries globally move toward digitization and interoperability and reaching the 'last mile'.



# 5 CONCLUSIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS

Unlike many African countries, Botswana has high coverage of birth registration, and is one of the few African countries to integrate its CRVS and national ID systems successfully. The country's CRVS systems date back to 1916, and Botswanans have a national identify card (known as an Omang) issued to individuals aged 16 and above. Botswana has made its foundational identification system (CRVS and national identity documents) more inclusive since its independence in 1966. More recently, the country implemented a series of reforms to modernize, digitize and decentralize its CRVS systems. The biggest challenge has been reaching orphans and vulnerable children (OVCs) in the so-called 'last mile'. The case study documents the Government's interventions and UNICEF contribution and engagement to include these marginalized and vulnerable children.

By including Botswana in the sample of case study countries, the evaluation will be able to examine the extent to which UNICEF has been strategic in supporting the strengthening of an established and functional CRVS system at national level. Perhaps most importantly, the Botswana case can illustrate the effectiveness of UNICEF support in reaching the most marginalized, especially OVCs.

## 5.1 Limitations of this case study

Given the state of universal birth registration and the high level of digitization of CRVS in Botswana, the case study focused on UNICEF programming for the 'last mile'. However, there are gaps in results reported, and these gaps constitute the main limitation of the study. Another limitation relates to household data: prior to 2017, the most recent DHS was in 1988, and the most recent MICS was in 2000. This makes it impossible to provide a comparative analysis or show improvement in CRVS coverage over time.

This case study is the result of an exhaustive desk review and contains gaps which could potentially be filled by key informants. For example, there was limited documentation on human resource investments, country office structure and monitoring data on national strategic plans. Details about the CRVS financial investments could not be tracked in the SIC and PIDB codes but there was some information synthesized from COARs (2014-2019).

This being said, the absence of these qualitative indicators is not a reflection of the lack of UNICEF engagements. Overall, the evidence suggests that UNICEF efforts have directly contributed to the CRVS strengthening.



## 5.2 Lessons learned and good practices

### A summary of good practices by UNICEF

Civil registration and vital statistics systems strengthening evaluation Case study on Botswana		
<b>Overall purpose</b>	Generate critical information for organizational learning.	
<b>Objectives</b>	Document good practices in the key programming areas of UNICEF engagement in strengthening CRVS systems at Botswana.	
Key observations		
Area 1 Organizational Change	Area 2 Stimulating Demand	Area 3 Innovations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>UNICEF introduced ICT, especially mobile technology solutions, for birth registration in remote regions.</li> <li>UNICEF purchased laptops and printers for mobile birth registration units.</li> <li>UNICEF allocated part of the funding for communication (booklets, flyers) and the rest to improve the overall implementation of CRVS.</li> <li>UNICEF efforts to test proof of concepts helped the Department of Civil and National Registration conduct mobile birth registration campaigns.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>UNICEF worked to make procedures easy, affordable, accessible and inclusive.</li> <li>UNICEF provided access to vulnerable or marginalized groups for universal birth registration.</li> <li>UNICEF influenced the Government to train officers in sign language and braille.</li> <li>UNICEF conducted outreach to achieve birth registration among vulnerable groups, including remote area dwellers, people living with disabilities, orphans, street children, and other vulnerable children.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>UNICEF introduced new digital platforms (mobile registration units).</li> <li>UNICEF role in testing and scaling up innovative solutions for the 'last mile'</li> </ul>

### 5.3 Issues for future investigation

Botswana has achieved universal coverage of birth registration, with a completely digitized system; with integration and interoperability of CRVS and national ID systems. Further analysis of access and inclusion of populations into health, education, social protection and child protection services can show the direct and indirect consequences of a universal, robust CRVS system in children's lives.

#### The COVID -19 context and social protection

A potentially interesting area of inquiry in the COVID-19 context is whether the universal coverage and interoperability of CRVS was used to

accelerate the emergency response. To what extent have universal CRVS systems been beneficial for response to the pandemic, distributing relief and timely access to benefits and services, including in social policy, health and education? Botswana has a plethora of social protection programmes, but the COVID-19 pandemic has created several barriers to accessing them. An integrated, interoperable civil registration system should in theory help in outreach, identification and intake as well as registration in a timely manner to provide emergency relief.

**Health systems.** Botswana has the third highest prevalence rate of HIV/AIDS in the world. It may be



interesting to explore any correlation between civil registration and health indicators such as access to health care for children with HIV/AIDS, drug adherence, universal immunization and access to other health programmes.

**Child protection.** The pandemic has exacerbated income inequality and multi-dimensional poverty across the world. Given that UNICEF child

protection has strong programming in the country, the evaluation team could work with the child protection team to analyse the extent to which civil registration strengthening enhanced the protection of children during the pandemic. Has the CRVS system helped to prevent child marriage, the exploitation of children, and protecting vulnerable children in the country's remote regions?



## Annex 1 Data for Evidence Story

### Birth registration among children 0–4 years old

	2000		2017	
	% of children with births registered	No. of children	% of children with births registered	No. of children
<b>Age</b>				
0-5	57.1	326	73.4	31,055
6-11	57.5	308	87	21,891
12-23	61.8	618	89.1	49,543
24-35	56.6	558	88.6	51,163
36-47	61.7	605	90.6	48,373
48-59	58.1	520	91.1	47,584
<b>Sex</b>				
Male	59.7	1,477	86.7	127,193
Female	58.7	1,461	88.4	123,748
<b>Residence</b>				
Urban (City)	65.1	1,612	95.7	46,695
Urban (Village)			89.9	102,499
Rural	52.4	1392	81.5	101,747
<b>Total</b>	<b>59.2</b>	<b>2,938</b>	<b>87.5</b>	<b>250,941</b>

NOTE: the sampling methods of the two sources used may differ. MICS 2000 utilized two categories of residence: urban and rural, Source: Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2000 and Demographic and Health Survey 2017



## Annex 2 List of documents reviewed

Ministry of Nationality, Immigration, and Gender. Government of Botswana	Botswana Strategy for the Development of Statistics (BSDS), Civil Registration, and Vital Statistics. Progress Report – 2016
UNICEF Botswana	Botswana RAM 2011 – 2016
UNICEF CRVS Data Portal	Botswana Country Profile. <a href="https://data.unicef.org/crvs/botswana/">https://data.unicef.org/crvs/botswana/</a> , accessed in 14 June 2021
UNICEF Botswana	Botswana RAM 2017-2021
The World Bank Group	Botswana country profile. <a href="https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/28310">https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/28310</a> , accessed in 14 June 2021
World Bank Data Portal	Botswana country profile. <a href="https://databank.worldbank.org/views/reports/reportwidget.aspx?Report_Name=CountryProfile&amp;Id=b450fd57&amp;tbar=y&amp;dd=y&amp;inf=n&amp;zm=n&amp;country=BWA">https://databank.worldbank.org/views/reports/reportwidget.aspx?Report_Name=CountryProfile&amp;Id=b450fd57&amp;tbar=y&amp;dd=y&amp;inf=n&amp;zm=n&amp;country=BWA</a> , accessed in 14 June 2021
UNICEF	PASSPORT TO PROTECTION: Guide to Birth Registration Programming, 2013
UNICEF	A snapshot of civil registration in sub-Saharan Africa
Journal of Health, Population and Nutrition. Springer Link Open Access Journal	A multi-sectoral institutional arrangements approach to integrating civil registration, vital statistics, and identity management systems. <a href="https://link.springer.com/article/10.1186/s41043-019-0179-z">https://link.springer.com/article/10.1186/s41043-019-0179-z</a> , accessed in 14 June 2021
World Bank	Integration of civil registration and vital statistics and identity management systems: Botswana success story. <a href="http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/963541495179518711/Botswana-Integration-of-civil-registration-and-vital-statistics-and-identity-management-systems-Botswana-success-story">http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/963541495179518711/Botswana-Integration-of-civil-registration-and-vital-statistics-and-identity-management-systems-Botswana-success-story</a> , accessed in 14 June 2021
World Bank	Integration of civil registration and vital statistics and identity management systems: Botswana story. Full report.
Centre of Excellence for Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems	Linking civil registration and ID management in Botswana. <a href="https://crvssystem.ca/linking-civil-registration-and-id-management-botswana">https://crvssystem.ca/linking-civil-registration-and-id-management-botswana</a> , accessed in 14 June 2021
UNICEF Botswana CO	Country Office Annual Report 2019
UNICEF Botswana CO	Country Office Annual Report 2018
UNICEF Botswana CO	Country Office Annual Report 2017
UNICEF Botswana CO	Country Office Annual Report 2016
UNICEF Botswana CO	Country Office Annual Report 2015
UNICEF Botswana CO	Country Office Annual Report 2014
UNICEF Botswana CO	Botswana Budget Brief 2018 – Social Protection. <a href="https://www.unicef.org/botswana/media/301/file/Social-Protection-Budget-Brief-2018.pdf">https://www.unicef.org/botswana/media/301/file/Social-Protection-Budget-Brief-2018.pdf</a> , accessed in 14 June 2021
UNICEF	UNICEF Social Policy. <a href="https://www.unicef.org/botswana/social-policy">https://www.unicef.org/botswana/social-policy</a> , accessed in 14 June 2021



UN	United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy. <a href="https://www.un.org/en/content/disabilitystrategy/">https://www.un.org/en/content/disabilitystrategy/</a> , accessed in 14 June 2021
UN	Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disability. <a href="https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/CRPD/Pages/ConventionRightsPersonsWithDisabilities.aspx">https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/CRPD/Pages/ConventionRightsPersonsWithDisabilities.aspx</a> , accessed in 14 June 2021
IDRC CRVS Centre of Excellence	Compendium of Good Practices in Linking Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) and Identity Management System. <a href="https://www.data4sdgs.org/sites/default/files/2019-10/CRVS_Namibia_e_WEB.pdf">https://www.data4sdgs.org/sites/default/files/2019-10/CRVS_Namibia_e_WEB.pdf</a> , accessed in 14 June 2021



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