

Development among most countries in Africa has been distorted by inconsistency in policy direction resulting from lack of access to quality population data. The main sources of population data namely, census, vital registration and population registers are undermined by factors such as illiteracy, socio-cultural beliefs and practices, poverty, religion and ethnicity. As a result, activities and projections are guided by conjecture which largely explains the failure at sustainable development in less developed societies. This situation is exacerbated by lack of commitment among governments in relevant societies to prioritize generation of reliable population data. For instance, experience shows that censuses are not regular in most less developed countries coupled with the politicization of figures.

With specific reference to vital registration systems, Africa has a negative record in terms of information on births, deaths and migration. The major issue about vital registration is that most events take place outside orthodox facilities where they are not recorded. In most traditional societies, a large number of women give birth, with the aid of Traditional Birth Attendants (TBAs); in religious homes; and their individual family homes, without any form of record. This situation is more pronounced in countries like Nigeria where about 65% of its population reside in rural areas. Similarly, deaths that occur in homes and unorthodox facilities are not recorded officially. In some situations, the bereaved consider it a waste of time to register such an event.

Migration is one of the least recorded activities among individuals and groups in developing countries. Although registration of human movement is a condition for international migration, a large number of emigrants illegally immigrate into other locations. Comparatively, records of internal migration are by far less than for the former. This paper attempts to suggest strategies that can sensitize individuals and groups to view vital registration as the most viable option to sustainable development. For instance, since births that take place in orthodox facilities are recorded, advocacy and re-orientation of Traditional Birth Attendants (TBAs) with regard to keeping record of maternal outcomes should be emphasized. Although the latter may not be able to give accurate information on the causes of deaths related to pregnancy due to the seemingly non-scientific approach adopted by these practitioners, at least the number of maternal events (either positive or negative) can be made available.

Similar approach is also to be extended to mortality related records. To generate information on deaths outside institutional settings, traditional healers, medicine men, spiritualists, faith based groups and community elders should equally be sensitized to appreciate the need for such records. Registering migration is easier except for migrants who move to new locations illegally.

The next step would be to suggest ways of ensuring that identified approaches such as advocacy, sensitization, among others are presented in compelling and convincing manner for necessary impact. The present study would highlight procedures and best practices that lead to the achievement of attitudinal and behavioral change, in this regard, without infringing on the collective sentiment of relevant societies.