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SNAPSHOT

OF CIVIL REGISTRATION AND VITAL STATISTICS SYSTEMS OF

NIGERIA



ECA

Program Information

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Housed at the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), the Centre of Excellence for Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) Systems is a global knowledge and resource hub that actively supports national efforts to develop, strengthen, and scale CRVS systems. It collaborates with organizations and experts to broker access to information and expertise, including global standards, tools, research evidence, and relevant good practice.

The Centre of Excellence was established with funding from Global Affairs Canada and IDRC and contributes directly to the work of the Global Financing Facility, a key financing platform of the UN Secretary General's Global Strategy for Women's, Children's, and adolescents' health.

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This publication was authored by Yacob Zewoldi, a consultant for the Centre of Excellence for Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems.

International Development Research Centre
PO Box 8500,
Ottawa, ON Canada Tel 1 613-236-6163
Email: crvs@idrc.ca
www.CRVSystems.ca

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Introduction

This report provides a brief introduction to the civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) systems in Nigeria.

The information was collected through a questionnaire completed by the National Population Commission and the Federal Ministry of Health in December 2018 and supplemented by a desk review of available documents. The report presents country background, selected indicators relevant for CRVS improvement processes, stakeholders' activities and resources available and needed to strengthen CRVS systems, coordination, among others.

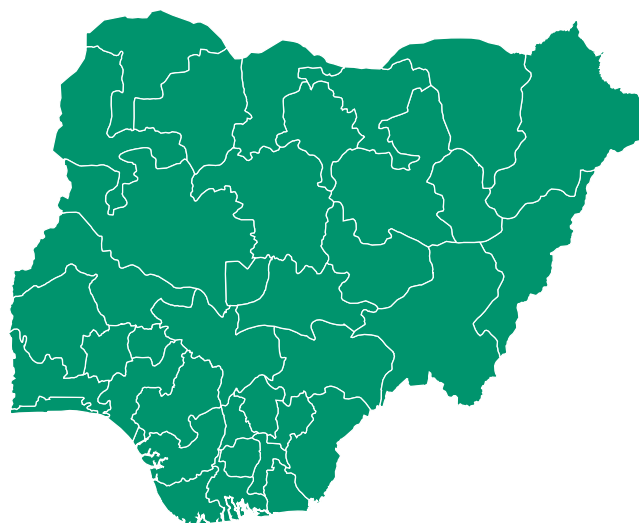
Brief country profile

Nigeria is a country located in West Africa bordering Benin to the west, Cameroon and Chad to the east and Niger to the north. It has a coastline along the Atlantic Ocean and a total surface area of 923,768 square kilometres.¹ Nigeria has a varied topography. In the south, it has lowlands which stretch into the hills and plateaus in the central part of the country. In the southeast, there are mountains while the north consists mainly of plains.²

Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa, with a mid-year population estimate of about 196 million in 2018 and a 2.58 percent average annual rate of population increase (2015–2020).³ Nigeria is the seventh most populous country in the world.³ In 2018, about half of Nigerians were urban dwellers.

- Capital city: Abuja
- Official working language: English
- Ministry responsible for civil registration: Presidency
- Civil registration agency: National Population Commission (NPopC)
- National statistical office: National Bureau of Statistics (NBS)

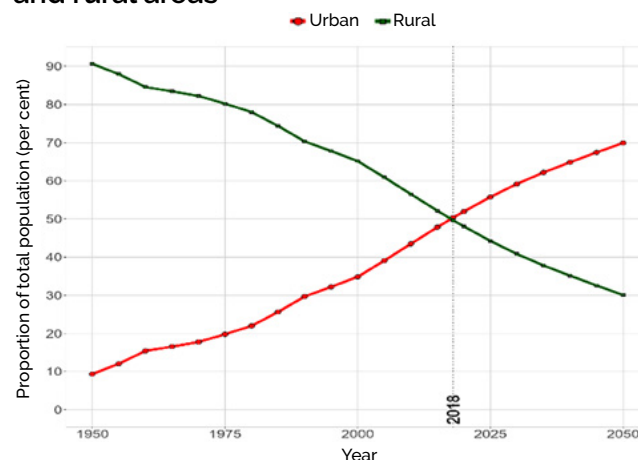
Nigeria



Disclaimer: The boundaries shown on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

Nigeria is a federal republic with 36 self-governing states and a federal capital territory. Each state is further divided into Local Government Areas (LGAs). Currently, there are 774 LGAs.

Figure 1: Percentage of population in urban and rural areas



Source: 2018 United Nations, DESA, Population Division.
Licensed under Creative Commons license CC BY 3.0 IGO.

CRVS dimensions

Births

Completeness of birth registration ⁴	30% (2017) ⁵
Children under 5 years of age whose births were reported as registered with a civil authority	46.8% (2016-7) ⁶
Births attended by skilled health professionals	43% (2016-2017) ⁶
Women aged 15-49 who received antenatal care from a skilled provider	65.8% (2016-17) ⁶
DPT1 immunization coverage among 1-year-olds ⁷	64% (2016) ⁸
Crude birth rate (per 1,000 population)	39 (2016) ⁸
Total fertility rate (live births per woman)	5.4 (2016) ⁸
Adolescent fertility rate (per 1,000 girls aged 15-19 years)	109 (2016) ⁹
Population under age 15	44% (2017) ¹⁰

Deaths

Completeness of death registration ⁴	10% (2017) ⁵
Crude death rate (per 1,000 population)	12% (2016) ⁸
Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 live births)	65 (2017) ¹¹
Under five mortality rate (per 1,000 live births)	100 (2017) ¹¹
Maternal mortality ratio – adjusted (per 100,000 live births)	814 (2015) ¹²

Marriages and divorces

Marriage registration rate	Not available
Women aged 20-24 first married before age 15	28% (2016-2017) ⁶
Women aged 20-49 first married before age 18	43% (2016-2017) ⁶
Divorce registration rate	Not available

Vital statistics including causes of death data

Compilation and dissemination of civil registration-based statistics	Not available ¹³
Medically certified causes of death data	Not available

Civil registration system

Legislative framework

The National Population Commission (NPopC) has the mandate to establish and maintain a machinery for continuous and universal registration of births and deaths throughout the nation under the Commission's Act CAP 67 I of the Federation of Nigeria. The Commission is one of the executive bodies mentioned under section 153 of the 1999 Constitution as amended. The functions of the Commission include Censuses and Surveys, Civil Registration and Migration, among others. The promulgation of Compulsory Registration of Births and Deaths etc. Act No 69 of 1992 prescribed the authority to register vital events of citizens, non-Nigerians and refugees to the National Population Commission. The law also empowered the commission to establish vital registration systems across the nation. The vital events referred to in the legislation were live births, deaths, stillbirth, marriages and divorce.¹⁴ This mandate of the Commission was further strengthened and recognized under section 24 of the 3rd schedule of the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

The civil registration law act mandates that birth registration is done within 60 days of the birth, and registration of a death within within 48 hours. A penalty for late registration is required by law, but not enforced.

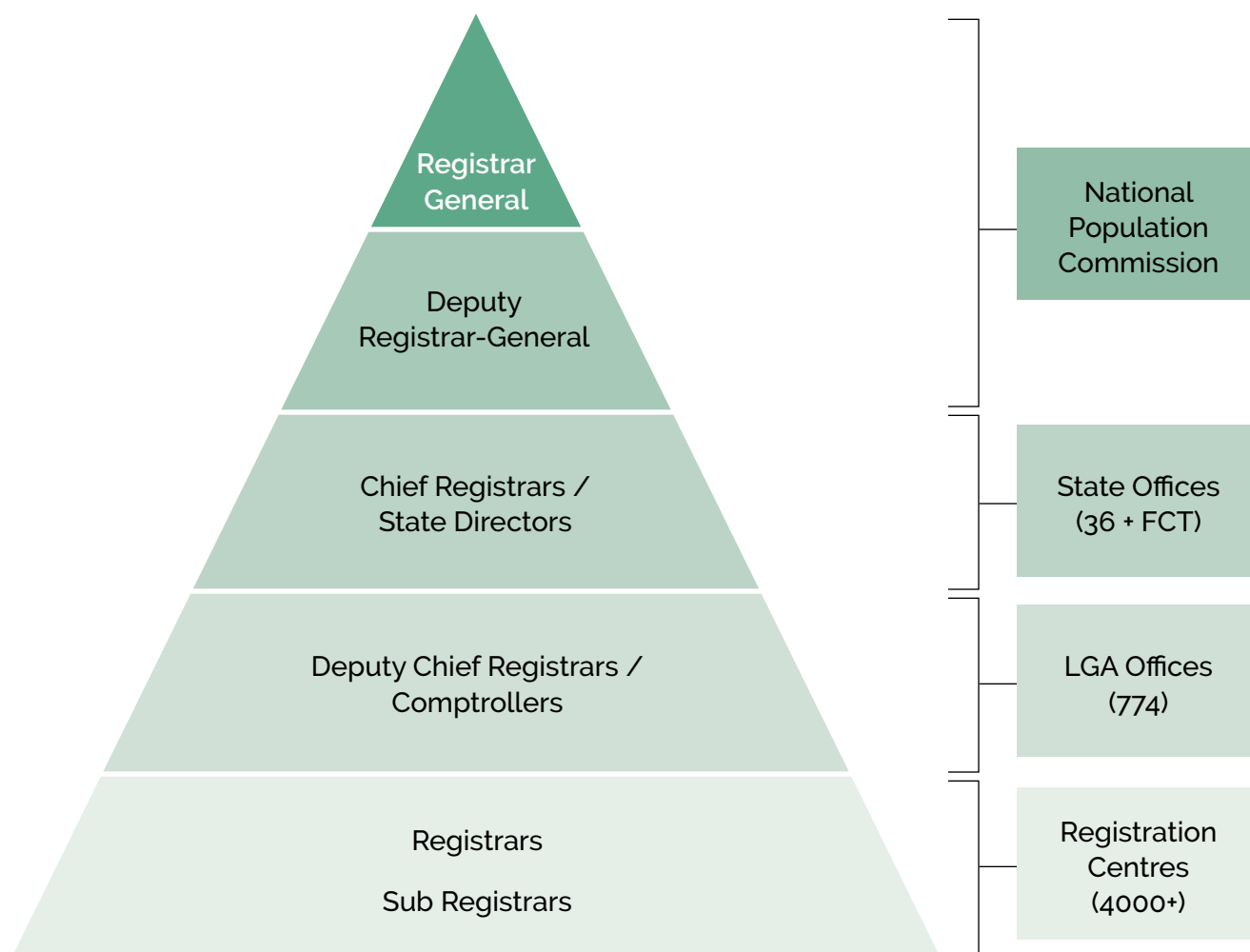
Management, organization and operations

The CRVS system in Nigeria is centralized. The NPopC as a statutory government agency is headed by a Chairman who is the Registrar-General. The duties of the Registrar-General (Chairman, NPopC) are spelt out in part II section 2 of the Birth, Death, Marriages, etc. (Registration) Regulations 1996. These include: (a) enforce the provisions of the Act; (b) issue general directions regarding registration of births and deaths as may be necessary for the efficient implementation of the Act; (c) co-ordinate and unify the activities of registration of State officials involved in the implementation of the provisions of the Act and these Regulations; (d) in furtherance of paragraph c of this Regulation, issue directives to the Chief Registrar of each State of the Federation and Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, with reference to the performance of their duties under the Act and these Regulations; (e) report any violation of the provisions of the Act or any law or any event covered by these Regulations; and (f) carry out such other duties as the Commission may, from time to time, direct.

The civil registration hierarchy is as follows:

- **Deputy Registrar-General:** The Deputy Registrar-General, heads the Vital Registration Department and oversees the operation of the registration system throughout the country.
- **Chief Registrar:** Each State has a Chief Registrar, also called a State Director, who supervises the system in the Local Government Areas (LGAs). The Chief Registrar co-ordinates the registration system and forwards monthly and annual reports to the Registrar-General.
- **Deputy Chief Registrar:** The Deputy Chief Registrar, also called Comptroller, is the officer in charge of LGA's civil registration system. The Deputy coordinates and supervises at least five registration centres under him/her and reports to the State Director.
- **Registrar:** This is the officer who registers vital events and issue certificates at local registration centers.

Figure 2: Civil registration system hierarchy in Nigeria



National CRVS systems coordination mechanisms

Collaboration and coordination is weak among key CRVS systems stakeholders. This has contributed to the inefficiency and duplication of efforts in areas of civil registration, data processing, access, use and reporting among stakeholders. The Strategic plan is envisaging the following activities to improve coordination and collaboration among ministries, departments and agencies:

- Set well-defined formal communication practices, smooth coordination and collaboration mechanisms between the vital statistics department of NPopC agencies such as NBS, Immigration, National Planning Commission, Independent National Electoral Commission, police, health authorities, religious organizations, civil society groups, National Identity Management Agency etc.;
- Organize annual interactive sessions with the National assembly committee on Population and CRVS system laws and policies; and
- Collaborate with Federal Ministry of Health to create a standing committee on the implementation of ICD coding across all public health institutions.

Memoranda of understandings (MOUs) are important tools for coordination. NPopC has signed a MOU with the Federal Ministry of Health mandating that all health facilities within States and LGAs support the registration of vital events occurring within their institutions and provide such records to the local Registrar for recording and certification. This is similar to the MOU between NPopC and the Federal Ministry of Education to enhance the integration of vital registration processes into the education sector.

Administrative level registration centres

There is one registrar for every registration center whose catchment area could be made up of a group of localities, covering both communities and health facilities. The registrar is supported in the notification and registration processes by local prominent persons such as traditional rulers, religious leaders, ward heads, village elders, health care providers and others. There are a total of 4000 local registration service centres in the country.

Accessibility of civil registration services

According to the estimate provided by NPopC, the average maximum distance to be covered by an informant to register an event with the local registration office is about 5 kilometres. This distance can be covered in less than one hour on foot.

Registration is free for all events. Certificates are issued free of charge for births, if claimed within the 60 days stipulated by regulations. Free certificates are provided for deaths if registered within 48 hours. Penalties are levied on late registrations.

Registration of vital events

Currently, NPopC provides registration services for live births, still births and deaths. Definitions of these vital events are aligned to international recommendations. NPopC has not yet started registration of marriages and divorces.

Backlog of unregistered births

There is a huge backlog of unregistered vital events in Nigeria. NPopC estimates the backlog of births at 70 percent. UNICEF is assisting in the registration of the births of children under 5 years of age.

Interface with other sectors and operations

The interface of the CR system with health, the national ID system and others is presently very weak. The CRVS *improvement strategic plan: 2019-2022* aims to provide a robust, efficient, effective and integrated CRVS data management system at each level of the governance system through interfaces with other national institutional databases such as the National Identity Management Agency (NIMC), NBS, Federal Ministry of Health, Nigeria Immigration Services (NIS) and others.

Vital statistics system

Vital statistics

The department of civil registration and vital statistics of NPopC is responsible for compiling and disseminating civil registration based vital statistics. The last report published was the *Births, Deaths and Still birth report 1994-2007*¹⁵ and since then, no other report has been published.

Causes of death

The Death Registration Form D1, completed by a local registrar, collects information on death certification and cause of death. Extract of the D1 form is given below. This form is applied both to health facility and community deaths.

The manual of births and deaths registration provided to each registrar mentions that a qualified medical practitioner who has attended to a person during his last illness in the medical centre or at home shall provide an informant a medical certificate or notification for registering the event at the Registrar's office. The cause of death as stated in the certificate shall be entered on the death registration form and in the Registers along with the indicated codes.

Cause of death categories and codes

Accidents and Injuries	01
Child birth and pregnancy	02
Complications, Fevers	03
Digestive Disorders	04
Disorders of the Respiratory System	05
Disorders of the Central Nervous System	06
Disorders of the Blood Circulatory System	07
Other Ailments	08
Senility	09
Disorders of the Urinary Tracts	10
HIV/AIDS	11

Source: NPopC Manual of Births and Deaths

Figure 4: Extract of the D1 form

13. (a) Is Death certified by a medical Doctor? Yes/No
(b) Cause of Death _____

Nigeria is about to implement verbal autopsy (VA) to determine probable causes of deaths occurring in the communities. The Federal Ministry of Health in collaboration with relevant stakeholders is revising the Maternal and Perinatal Death Surveillance and Response (MPDSR) guideline and tools into a Community-Based Maternal & Perinatal Death Surveillance and Response (CBMPDSR), such that all perinatal deaths that occur in a specified geographical area, be it at home or in transit to a facility, are captured. The NPopC registrar is a member of CBMPDSR Committee.

Digitization

Computerization

The registration of births and deaths in Nigeria is paper-based at all of the lowest registration centres. At the regional level, the information is entered into the national database, but this process is very slow, thus creating a large backlog of unprocessed registers.

Mobile technology application

Since January 2011, NPopC has been implementing a mobile-phone based platform called RapidSMS for the monitoring and reporting of birth registration data and real-time updates centre by centre. The system was designed to rapidly identify disparities in registration and facilitate appropriate action.¹⁶

Sample registration forms

Sample registers and certificates of vital events are not available online.

Improvement initiatives and external support

Improvement plan and budget

Strategic plan

Assessment of the current situation of CRVS in Nigeria was undertaken in two stages, first using rapid assessment in 2012 which provided a quick overview of how well the overall CRVS systems in Nigeria were functioning. This was followed by a comprehensive assessment, conducted from December 2013 to July 2014, as an in-depth investigation into the weaknesses and strengths of the CRVS systems. The National Strategic Action Plan on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems was first developed in 2014 for the period of 2015 to 2019 by NPopC in partnership with UNICEF, WHO and ECA. It was revised in 2016 to cover the 5 years from 2018 to 2022. The plan was approved by the President in 2017.

Budgetary allocations and requirements

- Total budgetary requirements for 2019: The government budget has yet to be appropriated by the National Assembly.
- Expected budgetary allocation is from government subvention.
- Support from Development Partners are in both cash and in-kind: UNICEF is the main organization that has been supporting the civil registration system improvement in Nigeria for several years. In 2018, UNICEF supported NPopC with USD 300,000 (107,654,351 Naira). It also provided about 31,000 printed materials for registration activities; 40 reams of birth registration forms B1 and 609,000 booklets of birth certificates.

Activities identified as high priorities

High priority areas in the strategic plan lacking funding	Estimated cost	Expected government allocation
Policy and legal environment	Not available	Not available
Registration practices coverage and completeness	Not available	Not available
Death certification and cause of death	Not available	Not available
Mortality coding practices	Not available	Not available
Data management	Not available	Not available

NPopC could not provide cost breakdown, as the budget lines for the high priority areas mentioned here are lumped with other activities in the strategic plan. The expected government allocation for all activities in 2018 was USD 2,500,000 (i.e. 900,000,000 Naira), including the priority areas.

Support from development partners

International organizations	Kind of support
UNICEF	Registration of children under 5 years of age; support for ongoing media campaign; capacity building of registration functionaries, including health workers and head teachers
WHO and UNICEF	Technical and financial support for CRVS system assessment and development of CRVS strategic plan of action
WHO	Training in collecting and analyzing causes of death
USAID	Collection and publication of vital statistics

Other development partners that provided and continue to support the CRVS improvement initiative include the World Bank, European Union, International Organization of Migration and Plan International.

Proposals to improve coordination

Coordination was identified as a key element by NPopC in the national CRVS systems landscape. The Commission provided the following suggestions to improve working arrangements with national stakeholders and development partners.

National CRVS stakeholders

- Periodic meetings with all stakeholders;
- Brief stakeholders online on each stage of civil registration and vital statistics activities; and
- Organize seminars and workshops for the stakeholders on regular basis.

National institutes and development partners

- Organize quarterly meeting with all key CRVS stakeholders and development partners;
- Share CRVS reports with all development partners for their perusal; and
- Request input from development partners on the way forward on CRVS activities.

Resources

Websites

- National Population Commission (NPC): <http://population.gov.ng/>
- National Bureau of Statistics (NBS): <http://www.nigerianstat.gov.ng/>
- UNICEF — Nigeria: <https://data.unicef.org/country/nigeria/>
- WHO — Nigeria: <https://www.who.int/countries/nga/en/>
- WHO — Africa: http://www.aho.afro.who.int/profiles_information/index.php/

Additional materials

- The Nigerian Civil Registration and Vital Statistics System: Contexts, Institutions, Operation
- Maduekwe, N.I., Banjo, O.O. & Sangodapo, M.O. 2017. The Nigerian Civil Registration and Vital Statistics System: Contexts, Institutions, Operation. Social Indicators Research. 134: 651. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-016-1448-5>
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- Williams, Abimbola Onigbanjo. 2014. Assessment of the completeness of births and deaths registration in an urban Nigerian community. African Population Studies Vol 27, 2 Supp (Mar 2014)

Conclusion

The approval of the National Strategic Action Plan on CRVS: 2018-2022 reflects the Federal Government's commitment to improving the CRVS landscape in Nigeria. Development partners' support for developing the plan was also an indication of their interest to see a functional system within the specified period. Other strengths of the CRVS systems improvement initiative are compulsory and universal civil registration law and a strong mandate and structure of the NPopC to bring about the desired functional CRVS system throughout the country, among others.

The main challenges in implementing the strategic plan would be securing adequate financial and technical resources on time. The strong will mentioned above has to translate into action. Strong advocacy efforts at all levels are paramount to ensure the supply and demand of the system work well. Nigeria has high potential as the government is investing in new technology.

Strong laws and regulations are needed to build a viable system and the existing legal framework needs to be reviewed from time to time. NPopC needs to take advantage of these development to move from a paper-based to digital registration system. Marriage and divorce registration and generating statistics from it is critical. The interface with different sectors, in particular with identity management, and the use of unique identification numbers needs to be investigated and implemented as quickly as possible. NPopC has to develop a strong division and appropriate mechanism to handle huge and continuous vital data and generate and disseminate reliable vital statistics and causes of death data. The existing RapidSMS system is a good investment which needs to be strengthened and applied widely.



Endnotes

- 1 United Nations. 2018. *Demographic Yearbook — 2017*. https://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic-social/products/dyb/dyb_2017/.ST/ESA/STAT/SER.R/47.
- 2 Wikipedia. Geography of Nigeria. Accessed: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geography_of_Nigeria
- 3 United Nations. 2017. *World Population Prospects: The 2017 Revision, Volume I: Comprehensive Tables. Population Division*. https://esa.un.org/unpd/wpp/Publications/Files/WPP2017_Volume-I-Comprehensive-Tables.pdf
- 4 Birth or death registration completeness means the actual number of registered births or deaths divided by the estimated number of births or deaths in a particular country or area, in a specified time period usually a year. For further reading refer to ECA, ESCAP and Statistics Norway (2016).
- 5 National Population Commission (NPopC). Questionnaire completed by NPopC in January 2019.
- 6 National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). 2017. *Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2016-17, Survey Findings Report*. Abuja, Nigeria: National Bureau of Statistics and United Nations Children's Fund. <https://www.unicef.org/nigeria/sites/unicef.org.nigeria/files/2018-09/Nigeria-MICS-2016-17.pdf>
- 7 DPT1: Surviving infants who received the first dose of diphtheria, pertussis and tetanus (DPT) vaccine.
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- 16 UNICEF. 2012. *Nigeria — Using RapidSMS for Birth Registration*. Accessed March 22, 2019. <http://unicefstories.org/2012/10/17/nigeria-using-rapidsms-for-birth-registration/>



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