

**Additional material to article**

*Interagency technical consultation on improving mortality reporting in Sierra Leone: meeting report*

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## **Suggestion Cards submitted during the Interagency Consultations on Improving Mortality Reporting in Sierra Leone**

Freetown, Sierra Leone. October 2015

During the course of the Consultations, participants were offered the opportunity to anonymously submit comments, suggestions and recommendations on improving mortality reporting in Sierra Leone. The cards are listed as they were received, with minimum text in parenthesis added for editorial purposes, and in no particular order.

### **Card 1**

In order for us to get an effective and correct birth and death registration:

- It should start at the village unit. Stakeholders and all partners should bring (their efforts) together to harmonize this initiative;
- The barriers of being paid for birth and death (registration) should be reviewed, paid to less privileged per event;
- Sensitization should be thoroughly executed, to educated people.

### **Card 2**

Need to input data into a system, District Health Information System 2 (DHIS2). Need to have an electronic system for birth and death registration.

### **Card 3**

There is an imperative need for those in authority to sensitize members of the communities, particularly on the village levels to be reporting deaths irrespective of the circumstances surrounding the deaths in question. Let there be a political will.

### **Card 4**

1. Communication:
  - Education (is needed);
  - Public knowledge is (insufficient) about the importance of death registration;

- Engage in Radio programs to educate the general public on the importance of the death registration;
- Community engagement is a key in education process (involvement of school, women and youth groups);
- Radio is the fastest and cheapest means of communication circulation in Sierra Leone.

## 2. Collaboration

- Encourage collaboration among institutions and partners that are involved in death registration process;
- Identify role and capacity of institution and partners in the death registration process to avoid duplication of resources and efforts.

### **Card 5**

For Birth and Deaths (Office): In your speech, Mr. Presenter, you said that when someone said that he has lost a loved one, the thing that can prove it is the death certificate. Now we have an outbreak which has reduced the number of population in our country. What strategies do you put in place towards data collection since the outbreak?

### **Card 6**

The District Councils are the ones that are lagging behind the Western Urban, because they Freetown City Council (FCC) have structure but no structure exists in the Districts of Kono, Kambia, Bongo and even Western Rural on death recording. I am glad that the decentralization process is going on. Please, CDC, help getting district registrars to be coordinated.

### **Card 7**

CDC, your step in salvaging the situation is vital, especially in helping the orphaned children whose parents died.

### **Card 8**

- a. Radio talk show is necessary to showcase the importance of reporting all deaths, especially in the chiefdom and Western Rural
- b. All Peripheral Health Units (PHUs) must have a sitting registrar with stipend per months to the health workers at the PHU to record all deaths at the remote areas to help combating infant mortality rate.

### **Card 9**

The fact is that all Cemeteries at the District Western Rural, Waterloo, and the surroundings were being owned by the communities, and no death is reported. That is why (Western) Rural is full of homicides and the District Council of Waterloo do not have the statistics to present. Help the District, CDC.

### **Card 10**

- a. This should be interagency approach;
- b. Tribal Chiefs should be given the responsibility of conducting registration of all deaths;
- c. Special enforcement unit should be formed to enforce the registration of death;
- d. Training is needed for the cemetery keepers on the usefulness of civil registration.

#### **Card 11**

- a. Create a Communication Unit at Birth and Death Office;
- b. Involve Village Chiefs in ensuring that the residents are registered at birth and death;
- c. Improve infrastructure, (Office of Birth and Death) building, (provide) materials and technology.

#### **Card 12**

- a. Moving of the Central Birth and Death Office headquarters to a better government building – with modern facilities, including digitalization – to build up a database system, propose office structure;
- b. Staff capacity building – training, employing more staff, also needs to satisfy them on a reasonable salary structure.

#### **Card 13**

- a. Sensitization – countrywide, onto villages where Peripheral Health Units cannot reach;
- b. Adequate supply of printing of registration materials or the availability of materials for the registration;
- c. Provision of office the vehicles, to reach countrywide.

#### **Card 14**

During this outbreak, I want to know if all deaths that occurred were recorded at your office. Some deaths happened at the interior.

#### **Card 15**

1. Office of Birth and Death needs
  - a. office accommodation,
  - b. office materials,
  - c. training on data (management) for the staff,
  - d. Training for the staff should be (conducted) regularly;
2. To sensitize people on reporting deaths, births;
3. To sensitize the community to report death before burial.

#### **Cards 16 - 17**

- a. Human resources:

To increase manpower and open more registration centers for accessibility to the public to register (birth or death);

b. Community leaders:

To restrict them from using their power to bury the loved ones without (recording) medical cause of death, but (empower) using their power to oversee over the cemetery data. To engage them to stop issuing the permissions for funeral without necessary documentation;

c. Religious leaders

To advice and sensitize them to demand certified death certificates before performing burial rites.

**Card 18**

Improving Birth and Death registration

- Birth and death registration should be digitized, provide Office Building;
- Birth and Death operation country-wide, provide staff for better service delivery;
- Provision of mobility for all fourteen districts registrars;
- Relocate the National Headquarters to conducive location;
- Review Birth and Death Registration Acts and Rules;
- Strengthen Legislation on Birth and Death Registration.

**Card 19**

Have a clear and simple approach for using community health workers to detect and report on community death up to District Health Management Teams.

**Card 20**

The Ministry of Health and Sanitations should take the lead to make sure that all that we are discussing here meet the political power that be.

**Card 21**

- 1) Looking at the benefit of the death certificate, costs of the processes in securing a death certificate should be flexible;
- 2) Mechanism should be put in place so that unlawful issuing of birth and death certificates will be avoided.

**Card 22**

Engage and empower the available resources for birth and death reporting, and sensitization on the importance of birth and death registration.

**Card 23**

I recommend you to take this issue to the President of the Republic to assure a political will.

**Card 24**

Coordination of funeral Homes and mortuary and all other agencies is needed.

**Card 25**

- (1) Birth/death should educate the community members in their plans and support;
- (2) Provide by-laws, more staff, and train and equip the office (of Birth and Death).

**Card 26**

- \* Mutual understanding and communication are needed between the hospitals, mortuary, and FCC in registration of all birth and death counts;
- \* Digitalization (computerization) of birth and death (records).

**Card 27**

- \* Government to resource the birth/death national Office to enable them to maintain data management;
- \* The provision of training faculty for staff of birth/ death (Office);
- \* Coherent national review policy covering data management;
- \* National sensitization on the civil registration of birth/death;
- \* Proper management and cleaning of the cemeteries run by FCC.

**Card 28**

Resources from Safe and Dignified Burials (SDB) can be handed over to burial system once Ebola SDB processes are finalized and the SDB standard operational procedure is revoked:

- Data,
- Equipment,
- Training.

**Card 29**

1. The civil registration authority should have a harmonize data reporting forms for birth and death capturing the following:

Total number of birth/death, cause(s) of death, time of birth/death, date of birth/death, place of birth/death, sex, age at death, etc.

for future planning to improve the (health of the) country.

2. Sensitization/Consultations should be in place with all relevant stakeholders to prepare and agree on the format of the form.

### **Card 30**

Recommend:

- Civic education/public awareness,
- Record management,
- Coordination with the required stakeholders
- Improved technology and data management skills.

### **Card 31**

- (1) There should be a proper cooperation and coordination between the various ministries dealing with registration of birth and death;
- (2) The registration department should engage in regular sensitization and community engagement drive to educate communities on the relevance of birth and death registry;
- (3) Digitalization of the death registration offices and personnel training across the country;
- (4) Government should enact the laws to ensure that deaths are reported to appropriate authority.

### **Card 32**

- (1) To enforce birth and death laws by making impossible for people without birth certificate to access certain facilities, like hospitals, passport offices etc.
- (2) To have birth and death registration offices in 143 chiefdoms.

### **Card 33**

- 1) A decision needs to be made regarding which department of the SL government will manage civil registration;
- 2) The country of Sierra Leone need to move away from the blame culture;
- 3) There needs to be more than one forensic pathologist addressing post-mortem.