

#COUNTINGEVERYONE CRVS Leadership in Kenya



Madam Janet Mucheru

Secretary, Civil Registration Services

In recent years, Kenya has significantly improved its civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) systems using innovative approaches and adapting digital technology to increase the accuracy and timeliness of birth and death registration. Janet Mucheru, the Secretary of Civil Registration Services, has provided critical leadership as the department undertook the collaborative effort needed to streamline intra-government coordination and strengthen the country's CRVS system.

Mucheru's government experience started in 1989 after she completed a degree in Public Administration and Economics at Punjab University in India; she earned a master's degree in Strategic Management from the University of Nairobi in 2005. She worked in various government ministries in Kenya before joining Civil Registration Services in 2017.

As the secretary, Mucheru and her team oversee the entire civil registration program, at the national, regional and sub-county levels. Registration agents, such as assistant chiefs and health facility personnel, facilitate birth and death registration in Kenya by notifying Civil Registration Services about births and deaths in the community and in health facilities.

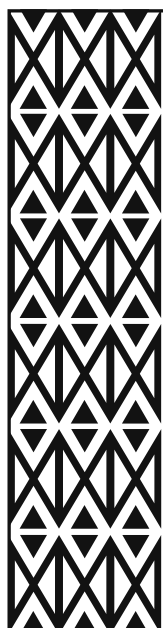
After conducting thorough research to better understand Civil Registration Services and other government agencies involved with registration, including the Ministry of Health, National Bureau of Statistics and National Registration Bureau, Mucheru and her team developed a strategic plan to improve communication and collaboration among the agencies. “If you come up with a vision and you don't disseminate it to other people working under you, they will not understand and there will be no buy-in,” she said. “So, everybody now understands the vision of the department and we are moving together.”

Traditionally, assistant chiefs collect birth and death registration information from applicants and then submit them manually to the Civil Registration Services offices for registration. Part of the system is paper based while the other part is electronic.

In 2019 Mucheru's team undertook the huge task of digitizing of 32 million birth and death records within one month. “We automated after realizing manual records can be manipulated. I explained to my officers the only way to move forward and have reliable data that can be used by the government in decision-making and planning is through digitization,” she said.

Digitization has protected the records from manipulation and allowed for timely, streamlined records retrieval, cutting down on time and cost of traveling to where an event occurred as it can be accessed anywhere in the country.

Since Mucheru joined the department, the number of Civil Registration Services offices across the country has increased from 109 in 2017 to 131 in 2022. In 2021, Kenya achieved 86.2% of registration. “What other countries can learn from us is that you don't need a lot of resources; you need sound leadership,” said Mucheru. “You need leadership with a vision and committed to delivering services to the communities.”



Key Success Factors

- In the span of a month, 32 million records in Kenya were digitized in 2019. Digitization has helped ensure the accuracy and completeness of registered births and deaths.
- The number of Civil Registration Services offices throughout Kenya has significantly increased, from 109 in 2017 to 131 offices in 2022. More offices have meant easier access, particularly for people living in more remote areas.
- As of 2021, Kenya achieved 86.2% of birth registration and 55.4% of death registration. Increases in birth and death registration help governments identify trends in population health and make informed decisions about their government.