Civil Registration in the Republic of Argentina
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FOREWORD

In a federated system of government, there is usually no national focus of the civil registration system. This gives rise to problems of coordination, and of obtaining uniformity of procedures and practices. The production of uniform national vital statistics, both in terms of content and quality, is also a special problem. The Republic of Argentina is coping with these problems through their Permanent Coordinating Organization for Civil Registration which has an active program involving the 22 state registration offices, the Federal Capital District and the National Territory.

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THE COUNTRY

The Republic of Argentina is in the Southern Hemisphere, occupying its extreme south. Its land area is about 400 million km², with a population presently estimated at 26 million. The inhabitants are almost exclusively Caucasian of Spanish and Portuguese European descent.

One of the country's most serious problems is underpopulation. Another problem is the maldistribution of the population in such a vast land area, given that 80 percent live in urban, and 20 percent in rural areas.

This immediately confronts us with the serious difficulties encountered in attempting to provide the entire country with an efficient civil registration system and the enormous economic and organizational effort required to provide adequately for this fundamental public service.

The country is organized on a federal basis and consists of 22 provinces, one Federal District and one National Territory. The Provinces are: Buenos Aires, Catamarca, Córdoba, Corrientes, Chaco, Chubut, Entre Ríos, Formosa, Jujuy, La Pampa, La Ríoja, Mendoza, Misiones, Neuquén, Río Negro, San Juan, San Luis, Salta, Santa Fe, Santa Cruz, Santiago del Estero, and Tucumán. Each Province elects its local authorities by popular vote.

The Federal District comprises the capital of the country, Buenos Aires, encompassing an area of almost 200 km² within the Province of Buenos Aires. Here the national authorities are headquartered. The inhabitants of Buenos Aires elect their representatives to the House of Representatives or the “Council,” but the chief administrator of the city is appointed by the President of the Republic.

The National Territory consists of Tierra del Fuego, Antarctic Argentina and the South Atlantic Island. The President of the Republic appoints the Governor who resides in the southernmost city of the world, Ushuaia.

THE CIVIL REGISTRATION SYSTEM

The Argentinian federation was patterned after the U.S. Federal System whose Constitution, in 1853, served as a basis for the Argentina Constitution. This means that all powers not delegated to the central government are reserved to the (States) provinces. One such, is the responsibility to organize civil registration. This has resulted in 24 different systems, one for each province, plus the Federal Capital and the National Territory.

Concurrently and independently, there operates in the Capital a “National Registry of Persons,” intended to identify both citizens and foreigners, which provides them with a “National Identity Document.” To achieve this, all civil registration offices in the country are vested with the corresponding responsibility in their respective jurisdictions.

The local civil registration offices handle not only civil registration and the above identification procedure, but they also serve as recording offices for various incapacities. They record, *inter alia*, judicial declarations of insanity, limitations due to deaf-muteness and civil restrictions of the incarcerated. Furthermore, many civil registration offices produce demographic statistics; this in addition to the recording of vital events, of judicial functions and the identification of persons.

Each of the 24 registration offices is headed by a Director, a number of Deputy Directors, qualified advisors and lower level staff. It is usual for local regulations to require the Directors to be lawyers or actuaries.

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* Asesor del Organismo de Coordinación Permanente delos Registro Civiles de la República Argentina.

** Presidente del Organismo de Coordinación Permanente de los Registros Civiles de la República Argentina.
Each provincial registration authority then has a number of administrative branch offices. These are the contact point with the public and carry out the actual registration function: birth, death and marriage registration, etc. Those same offices issue the National Identity Documents, a function they discharge under delegated powers from the National Registry of Persons. The country has about 4000 such offices, many of them headed by lawyers or actuaries.

CIVIL REGISTRATION LEGISLATION

Until 31 December 1963, each of the local jurisdictions (provinces, Federal Capital and the National Territory) followed their own civil registration legislation as enacted by local authorities. This means that identical subject matter was dealt with in a diverse manner, a state of affairs which pointed to the need of achieving some uniformity. To this end, it proposed that the several Directors of Civil Registration meet (together) and the “First Argentina National Congress of Civil Registration Directors” was held in Buenos Aires in 1960.

During the Second Congress which was held in 1961 in Paraná, the capital of Entre Ríos, a draft bill was prepared and subsequently approved by the National Congress in October 1963 as Statute No. 8204/63. The decree was to apply in the entire country as of 1 January 1964. In the same year, the Congress promulgated Law No. 16478. With some subsequent modifications, this law now governs civil registration and personal identity.

Also applicable are some substantive issues covered by the Civil Code and some national legislation enacted to deal with specific questions related to the registration of persons, e.g., decree No. 18248, dealing with names, and decree No. 18327 which covers creation of a microfilm system for registration.

It should be noted that the “National Registration of Persons” system has provisions for issuing the National Identification Document (D.N.I.) for both citizens and foreigners.

Furthermore, the provinces have local regulations to complement the “National Civil Registration Law,” intended to facilitate the application of standards in each jurisdiction.

CONGRESSES OF CIVIL REGISTRATION DIRECTORS

The first two congresses of provincial registrars have already been mentioned. A total of 5 congresses has been held. The third took place in Mendoza, Province of Mendoza in 1965; the fourth was held in Santa Fé in Santa Fé Province in 1972, and the fifth came to San Salvador de Jujuy in 1974. The sixth congress may be held in the city of La Plata, capital of Buenos Aires Province, in 1979.

To reinforce the federative spirit, and to reflect the political organization of the Republic, these congresses have been held in different parts of the country. The subject matter of the meetings deals with proposals for improving legislation relating to the registration of persons. Conclusions are transmitted to the national authorities in order to seek improvements in the appropriate legislation.

At times, these Directors’ meetings are less formal than a congress and sometimes they have a regional character. These may deal with regional issues, or they may lay the groundwork for another congress, or again they may deal with the application of a new legal provision.

The congresses and meetings have been a constructive force for improvements in the registration task of the country. It should be noted that registration officials from other South American countries have attended some of these congresses as observers.

PERMANENT COORDINATING ORGANIZATION FOR CIVIL REGISTRATION IN THE REPUBLIC OF ARGENTINA

It has already been pointed out that Argentina is a Federal Republic. This means that there is no centrally controlled registration system. The repeated contacts among the local directors pointed to the desirability of institutionalizing these contacts into a permanent organization. In the course of the Fourth Congress, there came into being the “Permanent Coordinating Organization for Civil Registration in the Republic of Argentina,” and it was decided that one of the offices should assume the leadership until the next congress. The Head of the Buenos Aires Province Registration Office was so elected and subsequently reelected during the Fifth Congress. This means that the above mentioned organization is headquartered in the Registration Office of Buenos Aires Province at First Street, corner of 60th in the City of La Plata. The latter 57 km from Buenos Aires.

Since its creation, the Organization has maintained contact with all the Heads of Registration Offices, as well as with many registration offices in other countries and with international organizations. Additional functions included responding to inquiries, and representation before the authorities to achieve improvements. Its Director and an adviser at-
tended the "Meeting on Strategies to Improve Civil Registration Data" which was held in Montevideo, Uruguay in November 1977 under the auspices of the Inter-American Children's Institute, the Panamerican Health Organization, the Statistical Office of the United Nations, the National Center for Health Statistics (of the U.S.) and the Agency for International Development.

Every four months the Organization publishes an Information Bulletin issued by the Registration Office in the Province of Buenos Aires. It usually contains subject matter deemed of interest to all the civil registration offices in the country.

The Organization also maintains a central file that contains registration legislation from many countries, with emphasis on the Spanish-speaking countries. These materials are made available for study purposes.

SOME DETAILS OF CIVIL REGISTRATION LEGISLATION

National statute 8204/63, ratified by Public Law 16478, regulates, as already mentioned, matters pertaining to civil registration and civil rights. A few of the essential features are explained below:

Organization. The national legislation states that the organization of registration rests with local government, i.e., respective authorities of the provinces, the Federal Capital and the National Territories. Public officials in charge of registration offices and their branches are appointed by the Governor of the provinces, the Municipal Mayor of the City of Buenos Aires, and the Governor of the National Territory of Tierra del Fuego.

Offices and branches. These have been established on the basis of population density, communications, availability of transportation, etc.

Registration books. An amendment introduced in 1969 as Public Law 18327 provides for separate registration books for births, deaths, marriages, and incompetence. The pages of this book are copied into another book, either by manual transcription, or by microfiche, or by some other system. In practice, only very few provinces use the microfiche system and the vast majority function with the traditional duplicate book.

Each Director is empowered to use judgment in the establishment of additional books for the recording of events over and above those mentioned previously. This has occurred in some cases, for instance, for adoptions, reaching of majority, etc.

The birth, death and marriage books are preprinted, with appropriate spaces for each entry. The books are bound and the pages sequentially numbered. At the end of each calendar year, a set of books is closed and a new set is started on 1 January. The books and other documentation related to registration may be turned over only to the public official charged with their custody, but they may be shown to anyone having a legitimate interest.

Archives. Upon completion, the books and their duplicates are filed; one set locally, and the duplicates in the central office of each Registry (of the Federal Capital, the province and the National Territory).

Registration procedures. Birth, marriage, death, etc., registration is carried out in numerical and chronological order. Both the original and the copies are signed by the Registrar and the declarer, except in the case where the copies are microfilmed. The supporting documentation remains on file for a period of time subject to local determination. The period may be no less than 5 years, after which time it may be destroyed.

Indexes and card files. In order to facilitate searches, there is an index at the end of each book. Each registration is also transferred onto a card and these cards remain on file in the central offices to further facilitate local searches. In the event where the locality of a birth, marriage or death is not known, it may be possible to obtain this information through the card files of the National Registration Office in the city of Buenos Aires.

Copies. Interested parties may obtain registration copies in the form of photocopies, certificates, etc. The registration offices also issue a Family Document. This public document contains a certification of the marriage registration, and of the birth and death registration of the couple's children.

Modifications. Should it become necessary to modify a registration, a note to that effect is placed in the margin.

Birth registration. Registration takes place within 40 days before the public official in whose jurisdiction the event occurred. In case of failure to comply within this time period, Directors are authorized to hear the reasons for noncompliance and they may order the event to be registered for a period of one year after its occurrence. If this legal limit is exceeded, a judicial order is required to effect the registration.

The law specifies that birth registration must be based on medical obstetric certificates; who may register the event, the supporting documentation to remain in the registration office, the procedures for registering fetal deaths, etc.
Upon registration of a birth, the newborn is issued the National Identity Document. The latter must subsequently be renewed, for the first time upon reaching the age of 8. The law also makes provision for illegitimate children.

Given names and surnames. Public Law 18248 of 1969 modified existing legislation on this subject. The prevailing law now consists of 25 articles. These regulate names which may be given to the person being registered; naming in cases of adoptions; names of married, divorced or separated women; protection of names, etc.

Marriages. These are subject not only to the Civil Registration Act, but also to the Civil Marriage Act and to a number of their laws. Among them is Public Law 18444 through which Argentina ratified the United Nations’ General Assembly’s “Convention on Marriage Consent, Minimum Age and Marriage Registration” as signed in New York on 7 November 1962. Thus, there is a full body of law to deal with all questions and situations that may arise in connection with marriage, divorce and annulment.

Death registration. Registration must take place within 48 hours of occurrence before the public official in whose jurisdiction the death occurred. After that time, the event is still subject to registration. It may, however, result in a fine levied against the person responsible for the delay. The law specifies the form in which death has to be proven, the manner in which the attending physician certifies a death, the persons responsible for the registration and the particulars of the event. There are also a number of safeguards that must be observed by the public officials. These relate to the cause of death, especially in cases where there is some reason to believe that the death may have been caused by a crime. There are other situations where health authorities must be alerted to the possibility of communicable diseases as a cause.

Registration beyond jurisdiction. The ethnic composition of Argentina is strongly influenced by a sizeable immigration from Europe and a large number of the residents were born abroad. From a demographic standpoint, there is also much internal migration in the country. What this means is that a birth or marriage may be registered in one place and by the time people have used copies of the registration of these events, they are residents in another jurisdiction. To remedy this situation, all the registration offices are authorized to accept what is called “Registration Beyond Jurisdiction” where interested parties may register events that occurred in other countries or other provinces. This permits them to obtain copies with greater ease.

Changes in registration. In general, it may be said that changes in registrations to correct errors is vested in judges. For certain cases, however, such as when a mistake was made in an entry that might result in a discrepancy with other documents of the same person, Registration Directors are legally empowered to make corrections.

Registration of incompetence. All local registration offices have a special book for purposes of registering judicial declarations of insanity, restrictions for reasons of deaf-muteness, civil rights restriction for felons, self-declarations of limitations for physical reasons and other judicially determined restrictions.

Vital statistics. Most of the local registration offices also serve as collection points for vital statistics information. Four types of forms must be filled out before an actual entry may be made into a registration book. These are: the Statistical Report of Live Birth, the Statistical Report of Marriage, the Death Certificate, and the Fetal Death Certificate (the latter part of this report contains samples of these).

After completion of these forms by the local public officials, they are transmitted to the central offices in the provincial capitals, the Federal Capital and the capital of the National Territory for processing purposes. This is to say, that the civil registration offices act as data collection points, but they have no responsibility for the subsequent statistical operations. However, many local registration offices do have some functions in the area of demographic statistics, primarily the preparation of monthly reports that provide registration totals from individual offices. These are used for internal planning purposes for the distribution of offices and personnel.

REGISTRATION PERSONNEL

Argentina has about 20,000 officials who work in the 24 (existing) Civil Registration Units. The educational level is generally high. The country’s education system comprises 3 levels: 7 years of elementary school; and 5 or 6 years of secondary school and 3 to 7 years of university training, depending on specialization. The leadership of the Civil Registration Units is generally in the hands of university graduates. Most of the other higher officials have advanced education degrees, whereas the other employees have usually completed secondary school.

As far as training of the civil registration personnel is concerned, they do undergo special instruction to acquire the necessary technical skills for the discharge of their duties.
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Delegado, don ...

Domiciliado ...

DECLARA: Que el día ...

mes ...

año mil ...

novecientos ...

hora ...

lugar ...

NACIO una criatura del sexo ...

constatada por ...

recibió el nombre de ...

APELLIDO ...

su padre ...

su madre ...

L. Sanitaria N° ...

Ficha identificadora N° ...

Leida esta acta, la firman conmigo ...

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Deleg. Regional, comparece don ...

N° domicilio ...

DECLARA: Que el día ...

mes ...

año mil ...

novecientos ...

hora ...

lugar ...

FALLECIO ...

Cert. médico Dr. ...

de ...

sexoo ...

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años, estado ...

profesión ...

domicilio ...

nacionalidad ...

N° nacido el / / ...

en ...

y de ...

Intervenido ...

Testó ...

Leida el acta, la firman conmigo ...
ACTA N° En Partido
provincia de Buenos Aires, a días, mes de mil novecientos Ante mí:

Delegado, comparecen:
Don de años, nacido en el 19
profesión domiciliado en
estado hitcho de don Nacionalidad
y de doña Nacionalidad
y Doña de años, nacida en el 19
profesión domiciliada en
estado hija de don
Nacionalidad
y de doña
Nacionalidad
profesión
Cumplidas las formalidades legales y recibido el consentimiento de los contra-
yentes, en nombre de la Ley los declaro unidos en legítimo matrimonio, ante los
testigos: don de años, domiciliado en
y don de años; domiciliado en
Leida el acta, la firman todos los comparecientes conmigo
SAMPLES OF STATISTICAL FORMS FOR RECORDING DATA ON: BIRTHS, MARRIAGES, DEATHS, FETAL DEATHS.

### INFORME ESTADISTICO DE NACIDO VIVO

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#### DATOS DEL NACIMIENTO

- **Nombre y Apellidos:**
- **Fecha de nacimiento:**
- **Localidad:**
- **Días de la mañana:**
- **Hora del nacimiento:**
- **Nacimiento:**
- **Sexo:**
- **Peso:**

### INFORME ESTADISTICO DE MATRIMONIO

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#### DATOS DEL ENLACE

- **Fecha del enlace:**
- **Localidad:**
- **Días del casamiento:**
- **Fecha del nacimiento:**
- **Sexo:**
- **Peso:**

### DATOS DEL CONTRAYENTE

- **Edad:**
- **Profesión o ocupación:**
- **Estado civil:**
- **Nacionalidad:**
- **Localidad:**

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- **Actividad Económica:**

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- **Firma y Disección:**
- **Actividad Económica:**

**Actividad Económica**
- **Pareja:**
- **Trabajador familiar no remunerado:**
- **Indicador de que produce o no se le obliga a saldar una deuda:**

**Actividad Económica**
- **Pareja:**
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**Certificación de Causa de Muerte**
- **Causa de muerte:**
- **Certificación del médico forense:**
- **Firma:**

**Certificado de Defunción**
- **Nombre y apellidos:**
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4. Vital Registration and Marriage in England and Wales, Office of Population Censuses and Surveys, October 1979