

**Migration Review Tribunal
AUSTRALIA**

MRT RESEARCH RESPONSE

Research Response Number: BGD35458
Country: Bangladesh
Date: 25 September 2009

Keywords: Bangladesh –Death certificates – Death registration

Questions

- 1. Please advice how and by whom deaths are recorded in Bangladesh?**
- 2. Please advise whether the Grameen Bank is involved in issuing death certificates?**

RESPONSE

1. Please advice how and by whom deaths are recorded in Bangladesh?

The US Department of State's 'Bangladesh Reciprocity Schedule' advises as follows of death registration and certification in Bangladesh noting the relevant authorities and the standard of the relevant documentation:

A registered death certificate is issued in compliance with the Construct 21 rules of the Government of Bangladesh. The Government of Bangladesh has designated local registrar offices throughout Bangladesh for issuance of death certificates. Applicants should contact the designated office in the locality where the deceased was buried. The authorized registrar office is usually the City Corporation, the Pourashava Office, the Union Porishad Office or the Cantonment Board. In some rural areas, the municipal Chairman's office provides registered death certificates. The format of the death certificate should have biographic information about the deceased, the serial number of the register, the page number of the register where the data, and the identity of person who registered the death. Embassy Dhaka will not accept death certificates from hospitals, clinics or doctors. If your spouse, previous spouse, or any family member related to your case is deceased, you must obtain the death certificate from the designated death registry office (US Department of State (undated), 'Bangladesh Reciprocity Schedule')

http://travel.state.gov/visa/frvi/reciprocity/reciprocity_3509.html# – Accessed 24 September 2009 – Attachment 1).

A June 2007 study by the Asian Development Bank provides, in Appendix 1 on page 83, a table styled overview of the requirements for the issuance of a variety of documents in Bangladesh including death certificates. The information on death certificate issuance is provided below. The table is presented in an altered form for ease of reading.

<i>Document</i>	Death Certificate
<i>Agency</i>	Local registrar*
<i>Informant</i>	Family members
<i>Time frame</i>	
<i>Fees</i>	Free registration up to 2 years after the death, Tk. 5.00 or 10.00 thereafter, Tk 20.00 or 40.00 for a Bangla copy of the certificate and Tk. 50.00 or 100.00 for an English copy
<i>Required Documents / Information</i>	-Name -Date of death -Place of death -Gender -Name of father or mother or husband/wife

*The local registrar's authority will be delegated by: the mayor in the case of a city corporation, the chairman in the case of a paurashava/municipality, the chairman in the case of a union parishad, the president in the case of a cantonment board, and the high commissioner/ambassador in the case of Bangladeshis born abroad.

(Asian Development Bank 2007, 'Conclusions' in: *Legal Identity for Inclusive Development*, June <http://www.adb.org/documents/books/legal-identity/conclusions.pdf> – Accessed 24 September 2009 – Attachment 4).

On 5 February 2007 *New Age Bangladesh* reported that "Dhaka City Corporation will launch computerised birth and death registration to smoothen and facilitate immediate issuance of certificates from February 11". The report notes: the planned instillation of the system in Dhaka's "10 zonal offices"; the expected time for issuance of a certificate; the fees required to access the service; and "allegations against the corporation's birth-death section officials that they take bribes of at least Tk 400 to Tk 2,000 to issue a certificate". Extracts follow:

To start the work, the corporation has already installed the software at all its 10 zonal offices. 'The installation of the software will be completed by February 10 and we would be able to provide the service from February 11,' said an official of the birth and death section of the corporation.

Abu Jafar Md Illius, record keeper of the section said, 'Earlier it took at least three months to issue a certificate. It will come down to 20 days.'

There is no fee required for birth registration if it is done within two years of birth and a fine of Tk 10 will be charged for each year after two years of birth.

Currently the charges for a birth or death certificate are Tk 50 English or Bangla, however, in the computerised version Bangla certificates would cost Tk 40 and Tk 100 for English. The corporation will charge Tk 20 for any corrections.

However, there are allegations against the corporation's birth-death section officials that they take bribes of at least Tk 400 to Tk 2,000 to issue a certificate.

The Births and Deaths Registration Act, 2004 has come into force since July 4 2006. The city corporations, municipalities, union councils and cantonment boards are responsible for births and deaths registration in the country while births and deaths of Bangladeshis abroad will be registered by the Bangladesh missions in the respective countries.

At present, births of more than 90 per cent of the country's total population remain unregistered, according to a survey.

The government has set a target to register all births by 2008. Although birth registration had been made mandatory in the Births and Deaths Registration Act, 1873, it has not been implemented (Arzu, A. 'DCC to begin computerised registration', *New Age Bangladesh*, 5 February <http://www.newagebd.com/2007/feb/05/nat.html> – Accessed 25 September 2009 – Attachment 9).

A 2007 report published on the website of the World Health Organisation (WHO) provides information on death registration in Bangladesh in providing an overview of “the recording and reporting mechanisms of mortality data as regards in-hospital deaths as well as deaths occurring in the community, completeness of the death registration, use of ICD guidelines, utilization of the mortality data, death registration Acts and Enforcement”. The report details the various procedures and practices associated with death registration in a variety of different circumstances, including government and private hospitals, municipalities, and union parishads. The report notes that: “The percentage of death registration is low”. Extracts follow:

Statutory death registration:

There exists Acts for death registration which came into being through S.R.O. No.206-Act/2006, S.R.O. No. 321-Act/2006 and S.R.O. No.326- Act/2006 published in the Bangladesh Gazette Notifications dated 24 August 2006 and 24 December 2006.

Key points:

The Acts will be called (a) Birth and Death Registration (city corporation) Rules, 2006 and will be effective for all the city corporations of Bangladesh, (b) Birth and Death Registration (Embassy) Rules, 2006 and will be effective for all the embassies of Bangladesh operating abroad and (c) Birth and Death Registration (Cantonment Board) Rules, 2006 and will be effective for all the cantonment boards of Bangladesh.

The ‘registrar’ will record the death of a Bangladeshi person who had lived in his jurisdiction.

The ‘inspector’ will visit the place of occurrence to authenticate the related information and fill up the prescribed ‘form’. Subsequently, the registrar, will finally approve and document the death registration.

MIS-Health: In the government run hospitals at the upazilla, district and central levels...mainly the Doctors and the Nurses register the deaths. The Statistical persons collect the data from the registers and, after authentication by the local authority, report them upwards.

Municipalities: Mortality Statistics are maintained at the offices of the city corporations of the six divisional head-quarters and in the municipal areas of the districts and the upazillas. In these areas, when a death occurs and a relative or a known person of the deceased brings the corpse for burial in a graveyard, he has to register the death. A death registration is also done when a relative comes to the city corporation for obtaining a death certificate. Mortality

Statistics are recorded in the printed Death Registration Form present in the offices of the municipalities. The cause of death is mentioned but is not authenticated by a doctor. The percentage of death registration is low. One of the reasons is that proper mechanism for the collection and verification of the data pertaining to deaths is not developed in the municipalities and no worker is assigned to collect the data from the site of occurrence. It is voluntarily done by the acquaintances of the deceased.

Union Parishad: When a death occurs in a village, the village police or chowkidar visits the place of occurrence, takes the death related data and keeps the information in a diary. Later on, the information is transferred to a printed Registration Form and recorded in registers kept in the office of the respected Union Parishad. The cause of death is mentioned but it is not authenticated by a doctor. No survey is done to identify the total number of deaths recorded through the above mechanisms and as such percentage of population coverage cannot be ascertained. **Cantonment Board:** When a death occurs in the jurisdiction of a cantonment board, the prescribed form for recording the death has to be filled up by the person reporting the death and submit it to the registrar of the concerned board. The certified copy of the burial by the caretaker of the designated graveyard has to be produced before the registrar. Any death out side the country will be registered by embassies of Bangladesh operating abroad.

...3. Recording and reporting of “unnatural” deaths :

Deaths due to accidents, criminal injuries or other external causes are reported and recorded in the police departments of the concerned areas. The dead bodies are sent to the Forensic Medicine departments of the district hospitals or the medical college hospitals. Post-mortems are performed and the findings are recorded and reported to the MIS-Health, DGHS. 4. Completeness of death registration:

An attempt is made to calculate the completeness of death registration based on the mortality data generated at the upazilla, district and central level hospitals of the public sector and compiled in the MIS- Health department of DGHS. The Mortality Profile of the year 2005, attached to this report, shows that around 26000 deaths were recorded at the facilities of different tiers of the health care delivery system. The whole population of the country is supposed to be covered. During 2005, the population size was about 140 millions and the crude death rate was approximately 7 per 1000. Multiplying the two, we get the estimated deaths of the period. It comes to 980000. The completeness, calculated by the number of registered deaths/number of expected deaths(estimated deaths)*100 displays a figure of 2.65 %. Comment on completeness of death registration: A death is a vital event. It is expected that every death occurring anywhere in the country should be recorded and the related cause explored. The percentage of the death registration as shown by the above calculations is quite low. It can be explained by the fact that;

- All the government run hospitals were not covered
- Deaths occurring in the private hospitals could not be shown
- Mortality data recorded through various surveys are not presented
- Deaths occurring in the communities are under-reported

(World Health Organisation 2007, ‘Status of Mortality Statistics of Bangladesh’ http://www.searo.who.int/LinkFiles/2007_MortalityStatus-BANGLA.pdf – Accessed 24 September 2009 – Attachment 3).

A July 2009 *Financial Review* report provides background on the various laws which have governed birth and death registration in Bangladesh and the extent to which practices have been at variance with prescribed procedures:

...The birth registration with relevant departments is the first official acknowledgment of the child's existence by state. Until recent past, Bangladesh was governed by a registration law called The Birth and Death Registration Act 1873 which was framed in colonial British times, though its actual implementation was almost non-existent; or we may say registration of birth and death under the law was rather optional.

In December 2004, the Parliament of Bangladesh promulgated the Birth and Death Registration Act 2004 and forwarded the same to the Ministry of Local Government to prepare detailed modalities and implementation procedures and asked them to issue a Gazette notification in this regard (Siddiqui, M.S. 2009, 'Birth and Death Registration Act and name of citizen', *Financial Review*, 4 July <http://www.thefinancialexpress-bd.com/2009/07/04/71890.html> – Accessed 24 September 2009 – Attachment 2).

A number of news article were located which reported allegations of impropriety, negligence and/or incompetence in the issuance of death certificates at hospitals, including by the falsification, misrepresentation and misspelling of documented details ('Uttara hospital retracts swine flu claim' 2009, *Daily Star*, 25 September http://www.thedailystar.net/pf_story.php?nid=100864 – Accessed 25 September 2009 – Attachment 7; Arzu, A. 2009, 'Abortion at wrong hands ends her life', *Daily Star*, 1 September <http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=103887> – Accessed 25 September 2009 – Attachment 6; 'Patients allege negligence in treatment' 2008, *Daily Star*, 25 September http://www.thedailystar.net/pf_story.php?nid=20392 – Accessed 25 September 2009 – Attachment 8; 'Doc fired for negligence in duty' 2003, *The Daily Star*, 2 November <http://www.epaper.thedailystar.net/2003/11/02/d31102070670.htm> – Accessed 25 September 2009 – Attachment 5).

2. Please advise whether the Grameen Bank is involved in issuing death certificates?

On 18 August 2006 the *New Age Bangladesh* reported that "GrameenPhone has set up a number of community information centres (CICs) in different parts of the country with a view to providing rural people access to the internet and other communication and information-based services". Death certificates are reportedly among the "e-governance services" provided by GrameenPhone. Extracts follow:

GrameenPhone has set up a number of community information centres (CICs) in different parts of the country with a view to providing rural people access to the internet and other communication and information-based services through its nationwide EDGE connectivity.

The leading mobile phone operator of the country had so far established 26 CICs since February.

In the CICs, rural people get access to services such as the internet browsing and e-mail, chatting with voice and picture, e-governance services (access to passport forms, birth and death certificate forms and other related information through government websites and market prices of agricultural produce through the Agricultural Extension Department website).

... 'Grameen Bank has provided me with loan for setting up the centre which earns, on average, Tk 10,500 per month,' said Khairuzzaman.

The CIC had made available the internet facilities to the people in the rural areas who were out of the access of modern means of the communications and information, he said ('GP centres give rural people access to internet' 2006, *New Age Bangladesh*, 18 August <http://www.newagebd.com/2006/aug/18/nat.html> – Accessed 25 September 2009 – Attachment 10).

According to a February 2008 report: “Grameen Phone is now a part of the Grameen Bank, which holds 38% stake in the company – the balance is held by Telenor, Norwegian telecom company” (Basu, I. 2008, ‘Unwired Bangladesh: Taking a Lesson From Microcredit’, Intelligent Community Forum, 20 February <http://www.intelligentcommunity.org/index.php?src=news&srctype=detail&category=Facts%20%26%20Figures%20Library%20-%20Digital%20Inclusion&refno=44> – Accessed 25 September 2009 – Attachment 11).

List of Sources Consulted

Internet Sources:

Google search engine <http://www.google.com.au>

Databases:

FACTIVA (news database)

BACIS (DIAC Country Information database)

REFINFO (IRBDC (Canada) Country Information database)

ISYS (RRT Research & Information database, including Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, US Department of State Reports)

RRT Library Catalogue

List of Attachments

1. US Department of State (undated), ‘Bangladesh Reciprocity Schedule’ http://travel.state.gov/visa/frvi/reciprocity/reciprocity_3509.html# – Accessed 24 September 2009.
2. Siddiqui, M.S. 2009, ‘Birth and Death Registration Act and name of citizen’, *Financial Review*, 4 July <http://www.thefinancialexpress-bd.com/2009/07/04/71890.html> – Accessed 24 September 2009.
3. World Health Organisation 2007, ‘Status of Mortality Statistics of Bangladesh’ http://www.searo.who.int/LinkFiles/2007_MortalityStatus-BANGLA.pdf – Accessed 24 September 2009.
4. Asian Development Bank 2007, ‘Conclusions’ in: *Legal Identity for Inclusive Development*, June <http://www.adb.org/documents/books/legal-identity/conclusions.pdf> – Accessed 24 September 2009.
5. ‘Doc fired for negligence in duty’ 2003, *The Daily Star*, 2 November <http://www.epaper.thedailystar.net/2003/11/02/d31102070670.htm> – Accessed 25 September 2009.
6. Arzu, A. 2009, ‘Abortion at wrong hands ends her life’, *Daily Star*, 1 September <http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=103887> – Accessed 25 September 2009.
7. ‘Uttara hospital retracts swine flu claim’ 2009, *Daily Star*, 25 September http://www.thedailystar.net/pf_story.php?nid=100864 – Accessed 25 September 2009.

8. 'Patients allege negligence in treatment' 2008, *Daily Star*, 25 September
http://www.thedailystar.net/pf_story.php?nid=20392 – Accessed 25 September 2009.
9. Arzu, A. 'DCC to begin computerised registration', *New Age Bangladesh*, 5 February
<http://www.newagebd.com/2007/feb/05/nat.html> – Accessed 25 September 2009.
10. 'GP centres give rural people access to internet' 2006, *New Age Bangladesh*, 18 August
<http://www.newagebd.com/2006/aug/18/nat.html> – Accessed 25 September 2009.
11. Basu, I. 2008, 'Unwired Bangladesh: Taking a Lesson From Microcredit', Intelligent Community Forum, 20 February
<http://www.intelligentcommunity.org/index.php?src=news&srctype=detail&category=Facts%20%26%20Figures%20Library%20-%20Digital%20Inclusion&refno=44> – Accessed 25 September 2009.