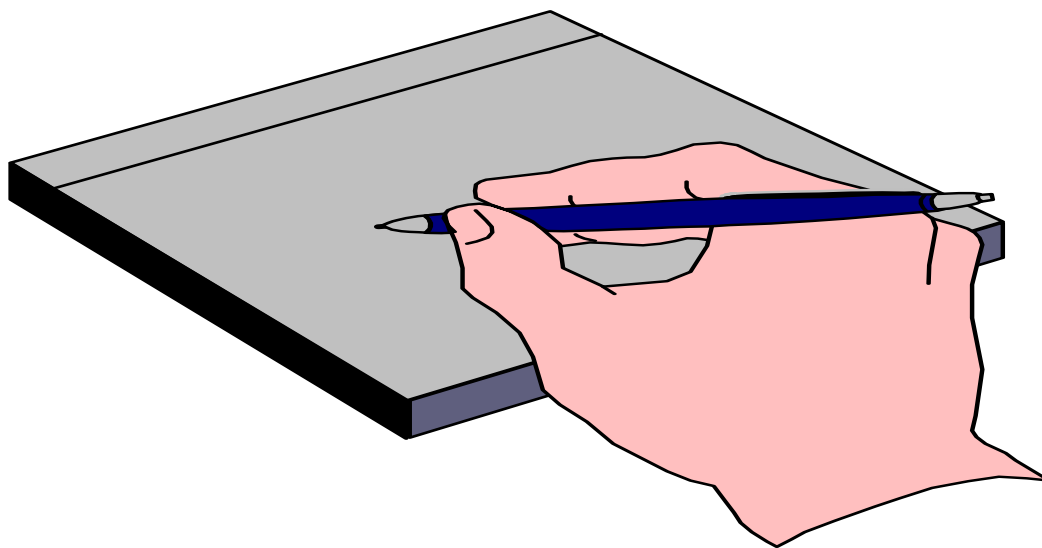


**PERFORMANCE AUDIT REPORT OF THE
AUDITOR GENERAL
ON THE
MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS**



IDENTITY DOCUMENTS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

I am authorised to carry out performance audits in terms of Section 26 (1) (b) (iv) of the State Finance Act, (Act 31 of 1991) which reads as follows: (The Auditor General) “may investigate whether any moneys in question have been expended in an efficient, effective, and economic manner.” Performance auditing may be defined as examining whether Government ministries are “doing the right thing” and doing this “in the right and least expensive way”.

This report which I present to the National Assembly is based on issuance of identity documents administered by the Division of Population Services in the Department of Civic Affairs within the Ministry of Home Affairs. This report was sent to the Ministry for comments on the factuality of the report but after several reminders no reply was received from them.

The objective of the Department of Civic Affairs is to oversee all Government policies and operations in regard to civic affairs and to issue identity documents. Our findings indicate a lack of policies and standards in distributing identity documents.

The problems below are the major findings and conclusions identified during the audit:

- ❖ The identification act of 1996 is not made clear to the public as to the purpose and importance of possessing an identity document. Because of this many Namibians have not even applied for an identity document.
- ❖ The regional offices have not managed to establish an efficient distribution system. Inefficiency of distribution is the main reason why so many identity documents remain uncollected.
- ❖ A lack of procedures/standards for how the Population Services Division should operate has led to unclear responsibilities, no strict separation of duties, poor internal monitoring and reporting, etc. Thus when something goes wrong there is often no one who can take corrective action.
- ❖ The number of verified applications do not keep pace with the number of incoming applications. This causes a backlog of applications waiting to be processed and prolongs the production period.
- ❖ No monitoring of work is done at regions.

The following are my recommendations for improvements on the identified problems in the division:

- ✓ The Ministry of Home Affairs should make the purpose and importance of possessing an identity document clear to the public.

- ✓ The Population Services Division should issue clear guidelines, to the regional offices, how identity documents should be distributed. These guidelines should include advice on how the regional offices make use of counselors, church leaders and traditional leaders to distribute identity documents in constituencies and villages.
- ✓ The Division Population Services should develop and enforce rules on how work in the regions should be organised and monitored, and how reports should be made to the head office.
- ✓ The division should set up standards as to how many identity documents can be distributed per day and they should publish it for the applicants to know what is expected from the division.
- ✓ The division should set strict rules on how many times the control officers should visit the regions.

CHAPTER 1

1.1 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The identity documents¹ in South West Africa Act, (Act 37 of 1970) came into operation on 1 February 1972. This Act made provision for the issue of identity documents to the inhabitants of the territory of South West Africa who were 16 years or older. According to the Act, identity documents are issued to every person who was permanently resident in the territory (Namibia). An identity document should contain the following relevant particulars:

- ✓ The identity number and the date of issue of the identity document.
- ✓ The full name, the date of birth and sex as well as the country in which the person was born.
- ✓ An indication whether or not the person is a South African citizen.
- ✓ A recent photograph of the person.
- ✓ The particulars as to the person's marriage contained in the marriage register concerned or any other documents relating to the contracting of the marriage, and such other particulars as to the married state as deemed necessary.

The Identification of Persons Act, Act 2 of 1979, stipulates that “After the date to be fixed by the Administrator General by proclamation in the Official Gazette, any person in the territory who is of or over the age of sixteen years, shall be in possession of an identity document and shall at request of any member of the security force produce such identity document within such reasonable time and to such person and at such place as such member may specify. Any person who fails to comply with any request under the subsection shall until the contrary is proved, be deemed not to be in possession of an identity document and may be arrested without warrant by the member of the security forces making such request.”

Application for identity documents consisted of three steps:

- Personal information of the applicants
- Taking a full set of fingerprints
- Taking of a photo of the applicant

The information mentioned above was transferred to the head quarters in Windhoek and processed as follows:

- ❖ Personal information of the applicant was verified, approved and stored electronically in the computer system's main frame.

¹ Audit was based on the issuance of identity documents.

- ❖ Fingerprints were classified, verified and stored manually by fingerprint experts at the fingerprint section.
- ❖ Photographic films with photos were developed and photos printed whilst the negatives were stored.
- ❖ An identity document was then produced by means of a photographic process.

During June 1994 a new system was implemented and the following basic changes were made:

- The identity number changed from 13 digits to 11 digits.
- The photographic taking of photos was replaced by means of electronic image capturing and image storing.

The electronically produced documents with a laser engraver replaced the physical production of identity documents.

According to the Identification Act, 1996 (Act 21 of 1996) “The minister shall upon receipt of an application, in the prescribed form and manner, for an identity document by a person who has attained the age of 16 years and whose name is included in the population register, issue an identity document in the prescribed form to such person.” An application shall be made within such period as may be prescribed in respect of any category of persons.

1.2 THE MAIN OBJECTIVES OF THE DEPARTMENT CIVIC AFFAIRS

The main objective is to oversee all Government policies and operations in regard to civic affairs as well as to ensure that the objectives are achieved and policies are properly implemented. To review policy options and make public the Government’s policies and guidelines in above-mentioned areas.

The main operations of civic affairs are to issue identity documents with the co-operation of magistrates and to co-ordinate registration of births, marriages and death services provided by the magistrates and churches.

1.3 FINANCING AND BUDGET ALLOCATIONS

Expenditure

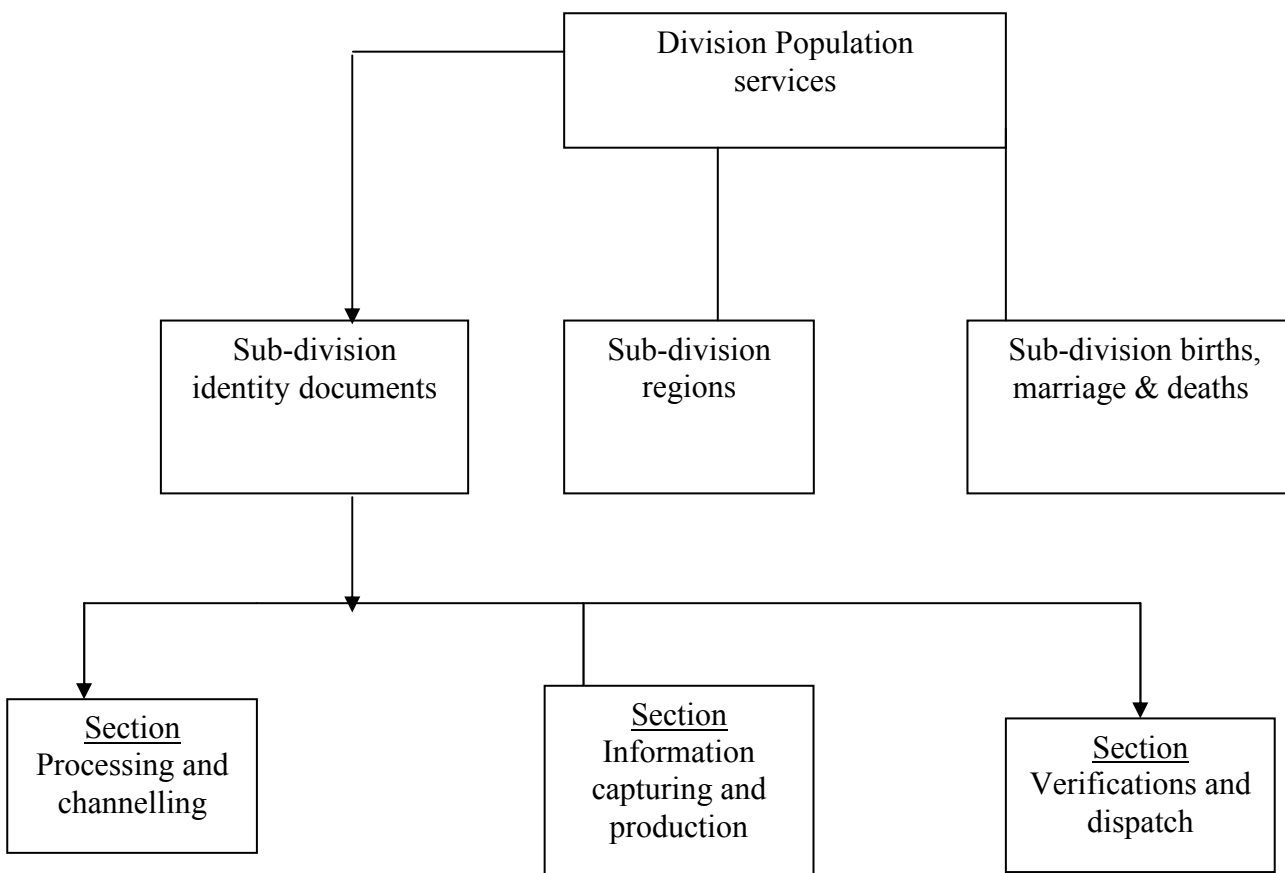
The budget for the population services division is integrated with all other divisions and the estimated total budget for the main division “Civil Registration” for 1999/2000 amounts to N\$12 448 000.

1.4 STAFFING

A Deputy Director heads the division for population services and each sub-division is run by a Chief Control Officer. The sub-division identity documents consists of three sections.

The approved organogram is as follows:

The Division of Population Services



CHAPTER 2

INTRODUCTION

2.1 THE PRE-STUDY

Alleged general problems in the division that have been brought up in the media or public debate are as follows:

- Lost files, documents not processed up to two years after being handed in.
- People had to wait for as long as a year for an identity document because of the poor service quality which further extended waiting periods.
- Many elderly people are unable to receive their pension because they are unable to wait in the long queues for their identity documents.
- The Ministry was complaining that they do not have enough space in the office because of uncollected documents.
- Long queues at offices.

All these problems may indicate that there is a lack of performance within the division. The activities in the population services division are affecting all Namibians from 16 years and above. After considering all these problems it was decided to carry out a pre-study on the division of population services within the Ministry of Home Affairs.

The following problems were identified at the Head Office and Khomas Regional Offices during the pre-study:

- Distribution of identity documents is very slow and is causing queues and uncollected documents at the regional offices.
- Poor utilisation of human resources in the distribution of identity documents.
- Unclear procedures in applying for identity documents.
- Lack of communication between head office and regional offices regarding missing identity documents.
- The applicants do not collect their identity documents at the regional offices where they have applied.

2.2 LIMITATION OF AUDIT AREA

The pre-study carried out by my Office indicated a number of different problem areas. One of the problems identified was the uncollected identity documents at regional offices. The pre-study recommended a full performance study to be carried out on uncollected identity documents at the population services division. The purpose was to find the important performance areas within which possible recommendations could improve efficiency and effectiveness in distributing and issuing identity documents. The study was limited to subdivisions and sections within the population services division.

The audit intended to address the following questions:

1. Are applicants informed where to collect their identity documents?
2. Is there monitoring of produced identity documents?
3. Is the purpose of identity documents explained to the applicants?
4. Do the regional offices follow up missing documents at head office?
5. Does the Department make sure that applicants give the correct address?

2.3 METHODOLOGY AND SOURCES OF INFORMATION

2.3.1 Documents and statistics

The Identification Act, 1996 (Act 21 of 1996) was studied as well as the statistics regarding uncollected documents from the Okavango and Oshikoto regions.

2.3.2 Interviews

A total of 45 interviews were carried out at different levels. The interviews were carried out with officials at regional offices, at the production sections at the head office and with the deputy director of population services. Interviews were also carried out with applicants found at the collecting points.

2.3.3 Observations

Observations were made at three regional offices. The reception area where applicants collect their identity documents was observed as well as the manner in which those applying were treated. At the head office the team visited the following sections: Processing and channelling, Information capturing and Production and verification and dispatch.

The performance audit pre-study was completed in January 1999 and the fieldwork for the main study was completed in May 1999. Both studies were carried out by Mrs Read.

CHAPTER 3

THE IDENTIFICATION ACT

According to the Identification Act, 1996 (Act 21 of 1996) “An identity document shall contain the following particulars in relation to the person to whom it was issued, namely:

- his or her identity number
- his or her full name
- gender, date of birth, height, colour of eyes
- the place where, or in the case of a person not born in Namibia, the country in which he or she was born
- whether or not he or she is a Namibian citizen
- a photograph of the person concerned
- fingerprints or other marks as may be prescribed.”

Subsection 10 of the same Act stipulates: “An authorised officer as defined in subsection (3) may request any person reasonably presumed to have attained the age of 16 years to prove his or her identity within a reasonable time to that officer by presenting his or her identity document, his or her passport, proof of identity or other travel document as the Minister may prescribe; or any other proof of identity issued by the State on which the name and a photograph of the holder appear.”

Findings

Most applicants interviewed apply for identity documents because institutions like banks or universities, etc require this document for employment purposes, opening of accounts or when students register for classes. During the observations none of the officials explained the purpose of the identity documents to the applicants. The priority of the division is the birth certificate and the identity documents come second. All Namibians should identify themselves by means of a birth certificate and identity documents, the passport can also be used, but it is meant for travelling purposes. According to the division the drivers license cannot be used as identity document due the fact that it does not give any information whether the person is Namibian or not. The division found it difficult to give a deadline for the expiry of the old identity documents because of technical problems in the Ministry.

CHAPTER 4

INCONVENIENCES TO APPLICANTS

According to the Ministry the applicants should collect their identity documents from the regional office after six months. The applicants spend money and time in order to travel to collecting points.

Findings

- When applications were rejected at the head office, the officials often did not tell the applicants exactly what had happened to the application. Instead they are told that the identity documents “had burnt” (poor picture quality, etc). The reasons given to applicants were not always clear and this discouraged them to collect the identity documents after they re-apply.
- Some applicants feel unfairly treated and discouraged by the fact that they have to stand in the queue for hours just to be told that their identity documents are not yet produced or that they have to re-apply again. These applicants feel that officials who helped them during the application process should make sure that things are done properly in order to avoid rejected applications.
- Elderly people from rural areas make use of the old identity documents because they do not have transport or money to go to the collecting points. Due to problems related to old age, they can also not stand in the queue for hours.
- Applicants from the Khomas region feel that the queue is too long and the service at the regional office is too slow. Therefore applicants went to the regional office as early as 05h00 in the morning in order to get a chance to apply for their identity documents or to collect their identity documents. Applicants said that the earlier they go to the office the better their chances are to apply or to collect their identity documents.
- Applicants are not told where to collect their identity documents and this causes that they go to other regions with the hope that they can collect their identity documents in those regions, only to be told that their produced identity documents are not there. The unwritten rules of the Department, which say that identity documents should be collected at the points where people have applied, are causing inconveniences to the people who live far from the regional offices.
- Officials at the head office said that they noticed that people rather apply for passports instead of identity documents. The reason for this is that to produce a passport only takes between one to two months while the production of an identity document can take one to four years or even longer.

CHAPTER 5

APPLICATION PROCEDURES AND PRODUCTION PROCESS

5.1 APPLICATION PROCESS

The qualifications needed to obtain the identity documents are Namibian citizenship by birth or registration or the applicant must be a permanent resident by marriage or by descent. The identity documents can be applied for at the regional offices. The officials at these offices complete the application forms in the presence of the applicants. The form makes provision for the applicants to indicate where they want to collect their identity documents. After the applications are completed the officials take the applicants' fingerprints and a photograph. The image of the photograph is kept on a transport disc and each disk can take up to 2 700 images. The application forms are then filed and sent together with the transport disks to the head office, on a weekly basis. At the head office the applications go through the under mentioned stages:

5.1.1 Verification and dispatch

Verification is a process to ensure that facts or statements made in the application forms are correct and true. At this stage officials check whether the information provided by applicants on the application form meets the specified requirements in order to produce an identity document. According to the division applications are treated by first come first served. According to the Department, it takes approximately 12 minutes to verify one application form. Approximately 6000 application forms can be verified per month. After verification, applications are sent to the processing and channelling section.

5.1.2 Processing and channelling

The processing and classification section is responsible for adjusting the quality of the pictures, the fingerprints and the signatures. The section is also responsible for combining the information on the transport disc with the information on the application forms, i.e. the transport disc is carrying the image of the picture but the signature and fingerprints are still on the application forms. This information is then put together. Work regarding application forms of the various regions is divided between the officials of the section.

From the processing and channelling section the forms are sent to the information capturing and production section.

5.1.3 Information capturing and production

At this section information like surnames, date of birth and addresses, etc is typed from the application forms on to the computer network. The information is kept on the main server for temporary safekeeping. The data capturing section will then transfer the information to the computer system of the main frame at the Office of the Prime Minister. When the transfer of information to the computer main frame is delayed, due to overloading, the identity documents are produced later than expected. Approximately 400 identity documents can be produced every day. Each region has a stamp with a unique number. When identity documents are produced they are automatically sorted according to the number that appears on the stamp which was used during the application process. These numbers are then summarised on a “reference list”.

It can happen that application forms are not properly completed or the images of photos are not clear. If such errors are discovered at one of the sections mentioned above the application forms are returned to the respective regional offices. The problems are then indicated on the application form and the regional office concerned must rectify it before it is sent back for processing. After the identity documents are produced they are sent together with the reference list to the regional offices. The reference list includes all rejected applications from the head office. The officials at the regional offices verify the list of reference numbers with the produced identity documents.

5.1.4 Long waiting period

The unwritten standard time limit set in the Ministry to produce an identity document is approximately six months from the date of application.

The long waiting periods create a situation where applicants decide to go to other regions to unnecessary reapply for an identity document.

Findings

It was observed that when the officials fill in the application forms they do not ask the applicants where they want to collect their identity documents. They took it for granted that applicants will collect their documents from the regional office where they have applied. This is causing problems for applicants who wish to collect their identity documents in regions other than the region where they had submitted their application forms.

Sometimes the image on the photograph is not well taken or the person's image does not appear at all or the disc is lost/damaged during transport. The automatic producing machine rejects those applications if one of these problems occur and the application form is sent back to the respective regional office for rectification, which means that the applicants have to re-apply again.

Since the new identity document was launched, approximately 270 000 identity documents have been produced in the Department compared to an estimated 400 000 applications. This results in approximately 130 000 applications not yet completed or many of these applications have been rejected. It is time consuming for the head office to inform regions of every rejected application form. A large, but unknown, number of documents that have been produced still remain uncollected at the regional offices.

According to interviews, applicants prefer to apply for a passport and drivers licence even if they are charged for these documents. It costs N\$ 80,00 to apply for a new passport. Apparently citizens prefer to make use of such documents to identify themselves as these are issued in a much shorter time span.

CHAPTER 6

DISTRIBUTION OF IDENTITY DOCUMENTS

6.1 THE DISTRIBUTION PROCESS

The identity documents should be produced within six months from the date of the application and should be sent immediately to the respective region depending on what the applicants have requested. The regional offices should then distribute the identity documents to their rightful owners. In cases where elderly people send a representative to collect identity documents on their behalf, it is expected that these representatives should come with the receipt of the application as well as a declaration from the police. This declaration should indicate reasons why the elderly people find it necessary to send a representative as well as the relationship between the representative and the elderly person. These representatives must show their identity documents to the officials at the regional office and they should also sign when they receive the identity documents of the elderly person.

When applicants come to collect their identity documents it is expected that they should submit the receipt, which has a number that corresponds with the number that will appear on the identity document. It is also required that the fingerprints of applicants are taken before he or she is given the identity document.

Findings

The regional offices do not have online access to the main frame in order to identify which identity documents have been produced and which are not yet produced. The regional offices do have the rejected form. They still find it difficult to communicate with the head office to find out which identity documents have not yet been produced.

It is a rule in the Department that officials do not work with the public on Thursdays and Fridays. On these two days officials should do administrative work, however during my staffs' visit to one region it was found that officials were chatting with each other while applicants went back home because they thought the offices were closed. It was also found that officials work at the same desk. The same official who helped people to apply for their identity documents also helps with issuing of birth, marriage and death certificates. When asked about the segregation of duties they could not tell who is responsible for what, i.e no segregation of duties existed.

At some regions applicants are served through a window, i.e. applicants give their receipts for the identity document through the window before they are called inside. If the identity documents have not been produced the official returns the receipt to the applicant and informs him/her to come back or to re-apply for a new identity document. Applicants complained about this type of service because they have to wait outside in uncomfortable weather before they are called inside to be helped. The Department is busy to create committees in each constituency to assist them with distributing the identity documents.

At the Khomas regional office police officers are used to distribute identity documents. These officers could not tell the exact number of identity documents distributed per day.

During the launching of the new identity documents during 1996-1997, the Department sent mobile teams to remote areas and schools, which were close to the community in order to collect applications for identity documents. However the Department has done nothing to make use of the same means to distribute the produced identity documents in these remote areas and this group of people finds it difficult to go to their respective regional offices to collect the identity documents. The result is that these documents are not collected and are still at regional offices. Officials from the public sector and private sector in Windhoek were regarded as VIPs when the new identity document was launched since officials from the Ministry went to their workplaces to collect their applications. However many of these VIP-applicants are unable to collect their identity documents due to the fact that they don't have time to queue up at the Khomas regional offices to collect their identity documents. The only exception was made for workers from Rosh-Pinah and Namdeb where the division has sent the identity documents to the head of the company for distribution.

6.2 MONITORING OF WORK AT REGIONS

The division has five control officers responsible for the regions. They are the link between the regions and the head office. These control officers are responsible for controlling, supervising and monitoring activities in the regions. The control officers serve as co-ordinators at the regional level. They are responsible for budgeting, giving feedback to management as well as for personnel matters. They are divided as follows:

- Control officer responsible for Omaheke and Otjozondjupa region based at the Khomas regional office.
- Control officer responsible for Khomas, Hardap and Karas region, based at the Khomas regional office.
- Control officer for Oshana, Omusati and Ohangwena region based at the Oshana regional office.

- Control officer for Erongo and Kunene region based at the Erongo regional office.
- Control officer for Okavango, Oshikoto and Caprivi regions is based at the Okavango regional office.

Findings

The control officers for Kunene, Karas and Oshikoto regions visit their respective regions once in a year when transport is available while the control officer responsible for the Omaheke and Otjozondjupa regions visits the regions quarterly or even more often when deemed necessary. The control officer for Khomas, only visits Hardap and Karas region once a year when there is a team going to those regions. In one of the regions visited, the control officer does not have an approved duty sheet and as such developed an own duty sheet. This control officer only approaches head office when he comes across a problem which he is unable to solve. In the Omaheke region the work is monitored by a chief clerk when the control officer is not on duty and he reports direct to the control officer.

None of the control officers interviewed produced a report on the activities carried out in their regions.

6.3 THE FILING SYSTEM FOR PRODUCED DOCUMENTS

After the identity documents are received at the regional office from the head office, the officials at the regional offices should compare the list of reference numbers and the identity documents, in order to reconcile the numbers on the reference form with the number on the identity documents. This step is necessary in order for regional offices to know which identity documents have been processed and which are still outstanding. Before regional offices start to compare, they should already know which identity documents have been rejected because head office sent them the rejected forms. The produced identity documents should be filed according to the filing system used at the respective regional offices and should be kept in a safe place.

Findings

At Khomas and Okavango regional offices the identity documents are kept in the office but not in a safe. To prevent identity documents from getting lost, windows and doors of these offices are kept closed. The reason given why the Okavango regional office does not have a safe is because they make use of a building that is allocated to the Ministry of Justice.

At the Khomas regional offices the police protects the identity documents. At some offices every official has access to the safe which might hamper the controls over these documents.

The Erongo regional office keeps the identity documents in the safe but they do not conduct stocktakings from time to time to ensure that all identity documents are still there and every official has access to the safe which might hamper the controls over these documents. It was found that there is no uniform system when it comes to the filing of the identity documents. The Okavango and Khomas regional offices, for example, file the identity documents according to the application numbers while Erongo, Omaheke and Otjozondjupa regional offices file the identity documents according to application numbers and surnames, e.g. A4367 Beukes, A5698 Iita, etc. None of the regions visited knew the exact number of identity documents on hand in their offices.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSIONS

On the basis of the findings above the main reasons as to why so many Namibians do not possess identity documents can be summarised as follows:

- The identification act of 1996 is not made clear to the public as to the purpose and importance of an identity document. Because of this, a large number of the Namibian population that is entitled to have an identity document did not even apply for one.
- Since there are no guidelines on how identity documents should be distributed, the regional offices have not managed to establish an efficient distribution system. Inefficiency of distribution is the main reasons why so many identity documents remain uncollected.
- A lack of procedures/standards for how the Population Services Division should operate has lead to unclear responsibilities, no segregation of duties, poor internal monitoring and reporting etc. Thus when something goes wrong there is often no one responsible to take corrective action.
- The number of verified applications does not keep pace with the number of incoming applications. This causes a backlog of applications waiting to be processed and prolongs the production period.

CHAPTER 8

RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to improve the efficiency and the effectiveness in issuing and distributing identity documents the following recommendations should be considered:

- The Ministry of Home Affairs should make the purpose and importance of identity documents clear to the public.
- The division Population Services should develop and enforce rules on how work in the regions should be organised and monitored, and how reports should be made to the head office.
- The Population Services Division should issue clear guidelines, to the regional offices, on how identity documents should be distributed. These guidelines should include advice on how the regional offices make use of counselors, church leaders and traditional leaders to distribute identity documents in constituencies and villages. The same should be done to inform applicants that their identity documents are ready for collection.
- Local media should be used to publish names of persons of whom the ID documents are awaiting collection, indicating the relevant office. Special pick up counters should be arranged to avoid people standing in long queues together with new applications.
- Steps should be taken to increase the capacity of the verification function.
- The regional office should keep statistics of identity documents available in the office as well as the number of identity documents distributed and this information should be availed to head office on a monthly basis. This would enable head office to properly monitor progress and productivity.
- Specific tasks should be clearly allocated to each official, e.g. his or her main task is to issue birth certificates. However, if there are no more persons to serve at any given time, he or she should assist with other tasks, e.g. issuance of identification documents, etc.

WINDHOEK, July 2000

**DR F. TJINGAETE
AUDITOR GENERAL**

LIST OF INTERVIEWEES

Ministry of Home Affairs

1. Head Office

- The chief clerk- Production
- Control officer –Khommas region
- Finger prints officers

2. Erongo region

- Control officer
- Chief clerk
- 6 record clerks and a cleaner
- Applicants collecting and applying

3. Okavango region

- Control officer
- 5 record clerks
- Applicants collecting and applying

4. Khomas region

- Control officer (Omaheke and Otjiozondjupa)
- 1 chief clerk
- 5 record clerks
- Applicants collecting and applying