

# Regional Action Framework on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific\*

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\* Endorsed by the Ministerial Conference on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and Pacific on 28 November 2014 in Bangkok, Thailand.

## I. Introduction

1. Through Commission resolution 69/15, countries in Asia and the Pacific requested that further regional action be taken to support the improvement of civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) systems. The regional action framework responds to that request as a catalyst for Governments and development partners to focus and accelerate their efforts to realize a shared vision and the three CRVS goals outlined in this document during the proposed civil registration and vital statistics decade for Asia and the Pacific (2015 to 2024).

2. The regional action framework facilitates collaborative action at local, provincial, national and international levels by enabling multiple stakeholders to align and prioritize their efforts, as well as to monitor progress towards achieving shared results.

3. Guided by the Regional Steering Group for Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific,<sup>1</sup> the development of the regional action framework benefited from comprehensive consultations with countries and development partners during 2014. It builds on and offers a practical means for implementing the Regional Strategic Plan for the Improvement of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific.<sup>2</sup>

4. CRVS is defined as the continuous, permanent, compulsory and universal recording and production of vital statistics on the occurrence and characteristics of vital events in accordance with national laws, rules, regulations and policies from time to time in force, including births, deaths, foetal deaths, marriages, divorces, adoptions, legitimations and recognitions.<sup>3</sup>

### A. Shared vision, goals and action areas

5. The shared vision is that, by 2024, all people in Asia and the Pacific will benefit from universal and responsive CRVS systems that facilitate the realization of their rights and support good governance, health and development.

6. The goals and targets of the regional action framework offer measurable outcomes that reflect progress towards achievement of the shared vision during the course of the decade 2015 to 2024. They recognize core human rights principles of progressive realization, non-regression, non-discrimination and equity, which apply to all countries and areas.

7. The three goals are:

(a). **Goal 1:** Universal civil registration of births, deaths and other vital events;

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<sup>1</sup> The Regional Steering Group was established in September 2013 pursuant to Commission resolution 69/15, comprising a balance of representatives of the Governments from the five subregions of the Commission and the civil registration, health and statistics sectors, as well as representatives of regional organizations with mandates to support the improvement of CRVS systems in the region.

<sup>2</sup> As endorsed by Commission resolution 69/15.

<sup>3</sup> *Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System: Revision 3* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.13.XVII.10). Available from <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/Demographic/standmeth/principles/M19Rev3en.pdf>.

- (b). **Goal 2:** All individuals are provided with legal documentation of civil registration of births, deaths and other vital events, as necessary, to claim identity, civil status and ensuing rights;
- (c). **Goal 3:** Accurate, complete and timely vital statistics (including on causes of death) are produced based on registration records and are disseminated.

8. The realization of the shared vision depends on coordinated and concerted efforts to develop and enhance the capacities of members and associate members in seven action areas, which are:

- (a). Political commitment;
- (b). Public engagement, participation and generation of demand;
- (c). Coordination;
- (d). Policies, legislation and implementation of regulations;
- (e). Infrastructure and resources;
- (f). Operational procedures, practices and innovations;
- (g). Production, dissemination and use of vital statistics.

## **B. Key principles**

9. The six key principles for implementing the regional action framework are:

- (a). **Countries take the lead.** Activities under the regional action framework should be driven by country demand and address the needs identified in the comprehensive multisectoral national CRVS strategy, if one exists;
- (b). **A stepwise approach.** The regional action framework harnesses existing strengths of members and associate members, and facilitates incremental, feasible and sustainable improvements that are supported by ongoing monitoring and evaluation;
- (c). **Flexibility and responsiveness.** Recognizing that there is no single blueprint for improving CRVS systems in every setting, the regional action framework offers action areas as a broad basis for the activities of Government and development partners with flexibility to accommodate the particular circumstances of each member and associate member;
- (d). **Building on local expertise.** In recognition of national and regional diversities, the regional action framework leverages local knowledge and expertise for CRVS improvement;
- (e). **Consistency with international human rights and legal principles, and national law.** The regional action framework is consistent with relevant international

frameworks, including article 6 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights<sup>4</sup> and article 7 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child,<sup>5,6</sup> as well as the principles of universality and non-discrimination. The regional action framework should be applied consistently with the existing national law, rules and regulations;

- (f). **Coordination and alignment.** The regional action framework is a platform to facilitate harmonization and avoid duplication of activities of local, provincial, national, regional and international stakeholders, including subregional initiatives,<sup>7</sup> for augmented impact in countries.

## II. Goals and targets

10. The three goals of the regional action framework address the three essential outputs of CRVS systems: the civil registration of vital events, which is a precursor to the other two goals; the provision to individuals and families of legal documentation as evidence of the occurrence and characteristics of vital events; and the production and dissemination of vital statistics based on civil registration records.

11. The targets are designed to enable monitoring and evaluation in ways that are objective, efficient, technically sound and time bound during the decade 2015 to 2024.

12. Members and associate members set their own national target value for each target (either the percentage or the year, depending on the target) based on their ambition and capacity, and in accordance with their comprehensive multisectoral national CRVS strategy, if one exists.

13. Geographic location, gender, religion or ethnicity should not be barriers to civil registration. Many countries experience substantially lower civil registration coverage rates among certain population groups, geographic areas and administrative subdivisions. Members and associate members are thus encouraged to set separate national targets, where appropriate, for civil registration coverage, provision of legal documentation and vital statistics for these subgroups, including hard-to-reach and marginalized populations. These targets should be supported by specific activities, ideally as part of a comprehensive multisectoral national CRVS strategy, to address the inequalities related to CRVS that these subgroups experience.

14. Disaggregated data enable Governments and development partners to continuously monitor civil registration coverage and the provision of legal documentation and vital statistics among all population groups, and facilitate targeted actions to specific groups. Therefore, when members and associate members report on progress in implementing the regional action framework, they are encouraged to provide data that can be disaggregated by age, sex and geographic area or administrative subdivision, as well as by other relevant subgroups.

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<sup>4</sup> General Assembly resolution 217 A (III).

<sup>5</sup> United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1577, No. 27531.

<sup>6</sup> Article 1 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child states "... a child means every human being below the age of eighteen years unless[,] under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier".

<sup>7</sup> For example, the Pacific Vital Statistics Action Plan and initiatives of the World Health Organization, including the Regional Strategic Plan for the Improvement of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Regional Strategy on Strengthening the Role of the Health Sector in Improving CRVS in South-East Asia.

15. The civil registration of marriages, divorces and adoptions has profound development implications, such as contributing to gender equality and addressing issues related to marriage before the legal age. Each marriage, divorce or adoption registration has the potential to have drastic impacts on the lives of the individuals concerned. Members and associate members are encouraged to make additional commitments with appropriate national targets for the civil registration coverage, provision of legal documentation and vital statistics on marriages, divorces and adoptions.

### **A. Goal 1: Universal civil registration of births, deaths and other vital events**

16. Goal 1 is an expression of the internationally accepted principle of the universal coverage of civil registration. The CRVS system should register all vital events occurring in the territory and jurisdiction of the country or area, including among hard-to-reach and marginalized populations.

17. The focus on universality and equity implies that, in countries where there are significant variations in civil registration coverage by geography or level of social and economic development, it may be necessary to establish special procedures for civil registration. These may include incentives and measures to alleviate barriers to civil registration, such as gender disparities, distance, costs and cultural factors, and may involve utilizing existing infrastructure or public services, including social workers and community health workers, for notifying civil registration authorities of vital events.

18. Civil registration records should contain, for each vital event, the minimum information for judicial and administrative purposes as recommended by the United Nations.<sup>8</sup>

19. Every death should have a medically certified cause associated with it. For statistical purposes, special measures, such as verbal autopsy, may be needed to ensure that all deaths are associated with a defined cause of death, especially in settings where many deaths occur outside of health facilities and without attention from a medical practitioner.

20. The targets for goal 1 are:

- 1.A By 2024, at least ... per cent of births in the territory and jurisdiction in the given year are registered.<sup>9</sup>
- 1.B By 2024, at least ... per cent of children under 5 years old in the territory and jurisdiction have had their birth registered.
- 1.C By 2024, at least ... per cent of all individuals in the territory and jurisdiction have had their birth registered.
- 1.D By 2024, at least ... per cent of all deaths that take place in the territory and jurisdiction in the given year are registered.
- 1.E By 2024, at least ... per cent of all deaths recorded by the health sector in the territory and jurisdiction in the given year have a medically certified cause of death recorded using the international form of the death certificate.

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<sup>8</sup> *Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System: Revision 3* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.13.XVII.10), annex I. Available from <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/Demographic/standmeth/principles/M19Rev3en.pdf>.

<sup>9</sup> Given that Member States endorsed, at the sixty-seventh World Health Assembly, “Every Newborn: An Action Plan to End Preventable Deaths” (World Health Organization (Geneva, 2014), annex 1), which contains the strategic objective that “every newborn needs to be registered, and newborn and maternal deaths and stillbirths need to be counted”, members and associate members should aim to register every birth within 28 days of occurrence, and reflect this in their national target for target 1.A.

21. Members and associate members are encouraged, where appropriate, to add national targets for the civil registration of other vital events, such as marriages, divorces and adoptions.

**B. Goal 2: All individuals are provided with legal documentation of civil registration of births, deaths and other vital events, as necessary, to claim identity, civil status and ensuing rights**

22. Goal 2 reflects that CRVS systems provide legal documentation of civil registration to individuals and families for legal and administrative purposes. Legal documentation is strongly linked with a broad range of rights and activities, in particular legal identity. This goal addresses the distinction between the civil registration of a vital event and the possession of formal proof that it took place, in the form of legal documentation.

23. Legal documentation of civil registration is obtained through paper or electronic certificates or certified copies of registration records that prove the occurrence and characteristics of a vital event. Governments should specify the method of issuing legal documentation for the first time, for replacements and for corrections, and take necessary measures to eliminate discrimination, deter corruption, fraud and forgery, and protect the privacy of individuals and families.

24. Achieving this goal requires that legal documentation should be readily accessible to the appropriate individuals. Aside from physical access, this includes no or low fees for providing the legal documentation and short waiting time between the civil registration of a vital event and the provision of the legal documentation.

25. In order to mitigate risks of discrimination, legal documentation should contain just the minimum set of information required for legal and administrative purposes as the national legal framework dictates. The targets of goal 2 describe the minimum information that should be included on birth and death certificates, according to international standards and recommendations.

26. The targets for goal 2 are:

- 2.A By 2024, at least ... per cent of all births registered in the territory and jurisdiction are accompanied with the issuance of an official birth certificate that includes, as a minimum, the individual's name, sex, date and place of birth, and name of parent(s) where known.
- 2.B By 2024, at least ... per cent of all deaths registered in the territory and jurisdiction in the given year are accompanied with the issuance of an official death certificate which includes, as a minimum, the deceased's name, date of death, sex, and age.

27. Members and associate members are encouraged, where appropriate, to add national targets for the provision of legal documentation of civil registration of other vital events, such as marriages, divorces and adoptions.

**C. Goal 3: Accurate, complete and timely vital statistics (including on causes of death) are produced based on registration records and are disseminated**

28. Goal 3 highlights the critical importance of civil registration being linked to the production and quality assurance of vital statistics on the occurrence and characteristics of vital events.

29. For many Governments, the routine generation of accurate complete and timely statistics on births, deaths and causes of death will require medium-term strategic and prioritized investment to improve civil registration and the national statistical system. There is thus a need to work progressively towards this goal. In the interim, the need for data to track progress towards improved health outcomes and broader development goals can be met using alternative sources, including censuses, household surveys and sample registration methods. While each method has some advantages, none is able to replicate the key strengths of civil registration as a source, namely universality in coverage, permanence and continuity, and archiving of records.

30. In countries and areas where it is legislated that all births and deaths should be recorded by the ministry of health, the data collected should be seen as a possible valid administrative data source of vital statistics. However, there should be systems in place to ensure that the data are shared with the civil registry and national statistical system.

31. The production of vital statistics should allow for key disaggregation, namely by age, sex, geographic area, administrative subdivisions, other subgroups and characteristics of the vital event, such as cause of death, using the International Classification of Diseases (ICD).

32. The production of vital statistics should be in accordance with the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics.<sup>10</sup>

33. The targets for goal 3 are:

- 3.A By ... (year), annual nationally representative statistics on births – disaggregated by age of mother, sex of child, geographic area and administrative subdivision – are produced from registration records or other valid administrative data sources.
- 3.B By ... (year), annual nationally representative statistics on deaths – disaggregated by age, sex, cause of death defined by ICD (latest version as appropriate), geographic area and administrative subdivision – are produced from registration records or other valid administrative data sources.
- 3.C By 2024, at least ... per cent of deaths occurring in health facilities or with the attention of a medical practitioner have an underlying cause of death code derived from the medical certificate according to the standards defined by ICD (latest version as appropriate).
- 3.D By 2024, the proportion of deaths coded to ill-defined codes will have been reduced by ... per cent compared with the baseline year.<sup>11</sup>
- 3.E By 2024, at least ... per cent of deaths taking place outside of a health facility and without the attention of a medical practitioner have their underlying cause of death code determined through verbal autopsy in line with international standards.
- 3.F By ... (year), key summary tabulations of vital statistics on births and deaths using registration records as the primary source, are made available in the public domain in electronic format annually, and within one calendar year.
- 3.G By ... (year), key summary tabulations of vital statistics on causes of death using

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<sup>10</sup> General Assembly resolution 68/261 of 29 January 2014.

<sup>11</sup> The classification of “ill-defined” will depend on the code set adopted by the country, including the version of ICD being used and the level of detail being applied.

registration records as the primary source, are made available in the public domain in electronic format annually, and within two calendar years.

3.H By ... (year), an accurate, complete and timely vital statistics report for the previous two years, using registration records as the primary source, is made available in the public domain.

34. Members and associate members are encouraged, where appropriate, to add national targets for the production and dissemination of vital statistics on other vital events, such as on marriages, divorces and adoptions.

### **III. Action areas**

35. The action areas serve as a basis for Governments and development partners to focus and organize efforts towards developing, implementing and supporting comprehensive multisectoral national CRVS strategies, including delineating the responsibilities of involved stakeholders.

36. The action areas also facilitate structured reporting on activities and progress by Governments and development partners, which will enable enhanced knowledge-sharing, regional cooperation and learning, and the identification of opportunities for collaboration. If members and associate members have adopted an alternative approach for a comprehensive multisectoral national CRVS strategy, it should be ensured that all seven action areas are covered in some manner.

37. The features of a comprehensive multisectoral national CRVS strategy will depend on the administrative, legal, social, cultural and political structures within national and subnational contexts, and on available or attainable infrastructure and resources. However, progress towards achieving the three goals of the regional action framework will for most countries require efforts in all of the action areas.

38. Examples of activities that can be undertaken in each of the action areas are annexed to this document. The examples are illustrative only and may be highly relevant to some countries but not to others.

#### **A. Political commitment**

39. Sustained political commitment is crucial for the development and continuous functioning of CRVS systems. Political commitment can galvanize all stakeholders and levels of society around efforts to improve CRVS systems, and enable CRVS improvement to be embedded into national development plans. Furthermore, political commitment is critical for ensuring that CRVS systems are adequately resourced and are designed to be inclusive and responsive.

40. Political commitment at the highest levels plays an essential role in ensuring that relevant government stakeholders effectively take on their roles and responsibilities, and unify around a single comprehensive multisectoral national CRVS strategy. It is imperative that all levels of government are engaged in the process of establishing political commitment and development of a comprehensive multisectoral national CRVS strategy.

## **B. Public engagement, participation and generating demand**

41. Improving the coverage of civil registration requires individuals and families to know the value of declaring vital events to relevant authorities and to be willing to do so. Universal and responsive CRVS systems are thus dependent on relationships of mutual trust and accountability between authorities and the public, and should be organized and managed in ways that are respectful of cultural and behavioral sensitivities.

42. Public engagement, participation and demand generation involves enhancing public awareness of the importance of declaring vital events and the value of vital statistics, and efforts to remove barriers to registration at all levels. Often, health, education and other public services, as well as the media, social workers and civil society, play a crucial role in providing information about the value of CRVS and encouraging the public to register vital events.

## **C. Coordination**

43. Since there are so many institutions involved in and benefiting from CRVS, effective coordination is a prerequisite for universal and responsive CRVS systems. Coordination must take place among all relevant responsible stakeholders in countries at all levels of government, among development partners and between Governments and development partners.

44. Within countries, effective coordination among different local, provincial and national stakeholders involved in reporting, recording and registering the occurrence of vital events is essential, particularly for preventing duplication of functions and information and for facilitating the effective use of registration records for statistical purposes. It is therefore imperative that a national CRVS coordination mechanism, such as a national committee or board, functions well and comprises all sectors, including the civil registration authorities, provincial and local governments, the health and education sectors, the statistics authorities and civil society.

## **D. Policies, legislation and implementation of regulations**

45. A sound legal framework provides the basis for a universal and responsive CRVS system. Reviewing and updating of relevant legislation, regulations and policies is often a first step and common priority in a comprehensive multisectoral national CRVS strategy. It is especially important that the legal framework for CRVS does not create discriminatory barriers to civil registration.

46. The legislation or regulations should provide definitions of vital events. The legal framework should make the civil registration of vital events compulsory and define the functions, duties and responsibilities of civil registration authorities and of those who are obliged to register, thus helping to ensure the completeness of registration and to improve the accuracy of information held in civil records. In accordance with international standards, birth registration should be free of charge or a low fee should be charged to the family for late registration. Incentives should be offered to families for timely civil registration.

47. The legal framework should protect the confidentiality of personal data and ensure that data can be securely shared between approved departments, as necessary, for quality assurance and to produce the required vital statistics. The legal framework should ensure the quality, timeliness and completeness of the vital statistics produced in compliance with the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics, and should contain provisions for the CRVS system.

## **E. Infrastructure and resources**

48. Registration points should be within a reasonable distance for the whole population, or measures, such as digital registration options, need to be undertaken to facilitate civil registration in remote areas on a routine basis, including for hard-to-reach and marginalized populations.

49. In terms of human resources, CRVS systems depend on a sufficient number of qualified staff. Governments need to consider mechanisms for career development and appreciation, as well as ongoing training to enhance the skills of and retain staff. Special efforts should be made to develop and retain key technical skills, such as training for physicians to accurately determine and record immediate and underlying causes of death, as well as capacity-building of officials to be able to establish, maintain and monitor CRVS systems.

50. Sufficient and sustainable investments are essential to enable incremental improvements in CRVS systems in areas of human resources, infrastructure, equipment and supplies.

## **F. Operational procedures, practices and innovations**

51. Whereas the existence of a sound legal and institutional framework is central to a universal and responsive CRVS system, by itself it is insufficient. Attention must also be paid to ensure that those frameworks are effectively and consistently applied through the design and implementation of operational procedures and practices.

52. Operational procedures must be designed and implemented so as to ensure the essential function of civil registration in providing legal documentation that can help to establish legal identity, civil status, family relationships, nationality and ensuing rights. Similarly, they should facilitate the transmission of data to approved departments for the production of vital statistics.

53. Digital collection, maintenance and dissemination of data as part of a CRVS system, including online civil registration and service delivery, is a likely long-term ambition of members and associate members since it can support efficient public service delivery and e-government. In addition, advances in technology simplify and reduce the cost of secure storage and protection of civil registration archives from natural disasters, war and cyberattacks. Innovations and the application of information and communications technology, including mobile technology, can also facilitate the civil registration of vital events in areas that are remote or otherwise isolated. However, innovations and technology are effective only when applied within a sound legal and institutional framework, with appropriate operational procedures and practices in place and consistently applied.

## **G. Production, dissemination and use of vital statistics**

54. The administrative data from civil registration, when universal, is the preferred source of vital statistics in terms of accuracy, completeness and timeliness. An advantage of vital statistics based on civil registration is that they can be disaggregated to smaller sections and areas of the population, for example administrative subdivisions. Furthermore, advances in technology and methodology have made it increasingly feasible to overcome technical and logistical challenges related to compiling, ensuring the quality of, analysing and disseminating complete and reliable information on vital events.

55. Governments may need to adopt a phased approach to using civil registration records as a source of vital statistics by ensuring that information on currently registered vital events is compiled in

a way to allow the production of vital statistics. Even if civil registration is known to be incomplete and confined to certain areas of the country, for example urban areas, the information should nonetheless be compiled and analysed alongside vital statistics from other sources. In the longer term, the aim is to produce complete, nationally representative statistics using civil registration as the main source.

56. Vital statistics should be made available to key users and in the public domain within a reasonable time frame. Metadata, including information on the content, context and limitation of the statistics, should be provided to users to increase their understanding of the data.

## **IV. Implementation of the regional action framework**

### **A. Governance**

57. The Regional Steering Group for Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific will be responsible for providing regional oversight and guidance for the implementation of the regional action framework, including acting as custodian for the decade 2015 to 2024.

58. The Regional Steering Group shall be responsible for facilitating synergies between the regional action framework and other ongoing initiatives to improve CRVS systems in Asia and the Pacific.

59. The Regional Steering Group shall be serviced by the ESCAP secretariat.

60. Where subregional initiatives exist to improve CRVS, coordination will occur in conjunction with and through appropriate and mandated governance bodies overseeing such initiatives. For example, in the Pacific islands, coordination will continue through the Brisbane Accord Group and the Pacific Vital Statistics Action Plan (2011-2014), which is under the Ten-Year Pacific Statistics Strategy 2011-2020.

61. Within countries, the implementation of the regional action framework shall be overseen by the national CRVS coordination mechanism. Development partners operating within national contexts are encouraged to establish working groups to coordinate activities among themselves and with the Government.

### **B. Implementation steps**

62. Implementation of the regional action framework requires members and associate members to undertake the following steps, if they have not done so already:

- (a). Establish an effective and sustainable national CRVS coordination mechanism comprising all relevant stakeholders;
- (b). Conduct a standards-based comprehensive assessment of CRVS in their territory,<sup>12</sup> which is inclusive of all relevant stakeholders, for the purpose of identifying gaps and

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<sup>12</sup> Using a tool such as *Improving the Quality and Use of Birth, Death and Cause-of-death Information: Guidance for a Standards-based Review of Country Practices* (World Health Organization and the University of Queensland Health Information Systems Knowledge Hub, 2010).

making recommendations that will be the foundation of a comprehensive multisectoral national CRVS strategy;

- (c). Set the national target value for each target, in consultation with all relevant stakeholders, and report these to the ESCAP secretariat,
- (d). Develop and implement a plan for monitoring and reporting on achievement of the targets, including on reporting to the ESCAP secretariat;
- (e). Assess inequalities related to CRVS experienced by subgroups of the population, including among hard-to-reach and marginalized populations and particular geographic areas and administrative subdivisions, and, where appropriate, set national targets to address those inequalities;
- (f). Develop and implement a comprehensive multisectoral national CRVS strategy, aligned, where appropriate, with the action areas of the regional action framework, with political commitment, adequate funding, and a clear delineation of responsibilities for stakeholders to establish accountability for the implementation;
- (g). Assign a national focal point within the Government that is responsible for coordinating with the ESCAP secretariat and development partners;
- (h). Through the national focal point, report relevant information to the ESCAP secretariat or subregional body, as appropriate, in accordance with the reporting structure for the regional action framework.

## C. Reporting and regional reviews

Table

### Key dates for reporting and reviewing progress on implementing the regional action framework

Year	Activity
2015	Members and associate members submit baseline report to the secretariat
2016	Regional baseline analysis
2019	Members and associate members submit midterm report to the secretariat
2020	Midterm regional review conducted
2024	Members and associate members submit final report to the secretariat
2025	Final regional review conducted

63. In order to facilitate reliable monitoring while respecting the need for flexibility to national circumstances, the reporting structure of the regional action framework is as follows:

- (a). **Baseline report.** By the end of 2015, members and associate members, through the designated national focal point, will submit to the ESCAP secretariat:
  - i. Most recent nationally representative baseline data for each target;
  - ii. The national target value for each target;
  - iii. A progress report on CRVS improvement activities;
  - iv. The report of any comprehensive assessment conducted in the country, where available;
  - v. Any national CRVS strategy, where available;
- (b). **Midterm report.** By the end of 2019, members and associate members, through the designated national focal point, will submit to the ESCAP secretariat:
  - i. Nationally representative data measuring progress towards each target, where available;
  - ii. A progress report on CRVS improvement activities;
  - iii. The report of any comprehensive assessment conducted in the country, where available;
  - iv. Any national CRVS strategy, where available;
- (c). **Final report.** By the end of 2024, members and associate members, through the designated national focal point, will submit to the ESCAP secretariat:
  - i. Nationally representative data measuring progress towards each target, where available;

- ii. A progress update report on CRVS improvement activities;
- iii. The report of any comprehensive assessment conducted in the country, where available;
- iv. Any national CRVS strategy, where available.

64. For the purposes of tracking progress and compiling information about CRVS improvement activities that could be constructive to share across the region and with other regions, members and associate members should submit progress reports to the secretariat in the years mentioned above, detailing activities undertaken under each.

65. On a voluntary basis, members and associate members may submit reports and information in other years either on an ad hoc basis or upon request of the secretariat or the Regional Steering Group.

66. The progress reports on CRVS improvement activities should preferably be arranged along the lines of the action areas or the form of any template decided by the Regional Steering Group. Definitions of vital events and key terms used should be provided as a part of the progress reports.

67. In order to prevent duplication, members and associate members with existing similar progress reporting structures may provide their reports arranged as those structures allow, for example as part of their national CRVS strategy or for other international initiatives, as is the case for the Pacific islands under the Pacific Vital Statistics Action Plan (2011-2014).

68. In the years immediately following the three reporting years, the secretariat and development partners, in collaboration with the Regional Steering Group, will synthesize the country reports into a report on regional progress towards achieving the targets set by members and associate members, and publish the result as an overview report of the status of CRVS in the Asia-Pacific region.

69. To support monitoring of the regional action framework, the secretariat and the regional partnership, in consultation with the Regional Steering Group, will develop and make available relevant definitions and guidelines for the collection and processing of monitoring information.

#### **D. Regional partnership and secretariat**

70. International, regional, subregional, national and local development partners, including international organizations, non-governmental and civil society organizations, academia and professional societies, have a key role to play in supporting members and associate members to realize the shared vision. The implementation of the regional action framework can include advocacy, technical assistance, capacity-building, dissemination of information, application of information and communications technology, research, innovation and facilitation of the exchange of knowledge and best practices in the region.

71. The regional partnership of organizations supporting the implementation of the regional action framework will provide their support in accordance with the key principles. In particular, assistance shall be conducive to a comprehensive and integrated approach to improving CRVS, and delivered in a coordinated and harmonized manner that is aligned with the priorities set by members and associate members through their comprehensive multisectoral national CRVS strategies. Where subregional or other related CRVS initiatives exist, all involved stakeholders have a mutual obligation to ensure coordination.

72. National civil registration authorities are central to successful implementation of the regional action framework, particularly realization of goals 1 and 2. Recognizing this important role, the regional partnership will, subject to the availability of resources, support the establishment and functioning of a regional network of civil registrars to facilitate information sharing and peer-to-peer technical support, as well as documenting and sharing knowledge and lessons learned.

73. The ESCAP secretariat shall contribute to the implementation of the regional action framework through its regional convening and norm-setting role, facilitating coordination, servicing the Regional Steering Group and overseeing the regional reviews.

## **Annex**

### **Examples of activities in each action area**

#### **A. Political commitment**

- (a) Issuing a high-level declaration on the importance of CRVS for all individuals;
- (b) Developing a comprehensive multisectoral national CRVS strategy detailing budget and commitments required for implementation;
- (c) Ensuring that a national CRVS coordination mechanism reports to the highest level of government and includes representation of all levels of government involved in the CRVS system.

#### **B. Public engagement, participation and generating demand**

- (a) Undertaking national campaigns or drives to encourage individuals and families to declare and register vital events;
- (b) Undertaking national and subnational advocacy and outreach specifically directed to hard-to-reach and marginalized population groups;
- (c) Identifying and removing barriers to registration, in particular those that impede access by persons from marginalized groups;
- (d) Undertaking advocacy on the benefits of vital statistics and sponsoring vital statistics as a theme for national statistics day;
- (e) Reviewing incentives and penalties in relation to the civil registration of vital events and considering ways to make these more effective and avoid unintended effects and adverse impact on the realization of rights, such as access to health and education;
- (d) Including representatives of civil society, such as communities and non-governmental organizations, on national CRVS coordination mechanisms.

#### **C. Coordination**

- (a) Establishing a representative and functioning multisectoral mechanism responsible for CRVS coordination, such as a national committee or board;
- (b) Assigning the national CRVS coordination mechanism with the task of overseeing the implementation of a comprehensive multisectoral national CRVS strategy and liaising with development partners;
- (c) Ensuring linkages between CRVS improvement efforts and relevant national development plans.

#### **D. Policies, legislation and implementation of regulations**

- (a) Reviewing and amending legislation, policies and regulations in adherence with international standards, as described by the United Nations, in order to ensure access to registration for all without discrimination;

- (b) Reviewing and amending policies, legislation and regulations in order to ensure that registration of births and deaths is free of charge or with a low fee for late registration;
- (c) Reviewing and amending policies, legislation and regulations to protect the confidentiality of personal data in civil registration records;
- (d) Putting measures in place to protect the integrity of civil registration records and prevent fraudulent registration of vital events;
- (e) Reviewing and amending policies, legislation and regulations pertaining to the certification of deaths, ensuring that they are aligned with international standards as defined by the World Health Organization;
- (e) Ensuring uniform implementation of regulations across the jurisdiction.

#### **E. Infrastructure and resources**

- (a) Analysing business processes within CRVS systems with a view to identifying options for enhanced cost-effectiveness as well as resource gaps;
- (b) Allocating adequate national financial resources for the implementation of national comprehensive CRVS strategies;
- (c) Introducing measures to ensure availability of registration infrastructure, staffing, and equipment and supplies;
- (d) Investigating the appropriateness of public-private partnerships to address infrastructure gaps;
- (e) Training registration staff in correct registration and certification procedures and practices, possibly through online qualification systems along with periodic retraining;
- (f) Providing staff in the national statistical system with training on using administrative data to produce statistics;
- (g) Introducing courses in medical schools and continuing training for physicians in certification of causes of death and for statistical clerks in ICD coding procedures.

#### **F. Operational procedures, practices and innovations**

- (a) Reviewing and adapting registration forms and procedures to align with international standards for legal and statistical purposes;
- (b) Implementing measures to ensure the quality and integrity of legal documentation emanating from the civil registration system;
- (c) Implementing actions to safeguard confidentiality and security of registration information and records;
- (d) Introducing operational procedures to ensure that unregistered children are not deprived of access to rights and services;
- (e) Introducing innovations to increase access to registration, such as mobile registration and use of information technology for registration and maintaining civil registration records;
- (f) Conducting thorough technical analysis and risk assessment to establish how digital technologies can best be used to support CRVS processes in a scalable and sustainable way, and ensuring that

mitigation strategies are in place when there are possible threats to the rights of individuals, such as privacy;

- (g) Introducing procedures to build and maintain skills of statistical clerks and related personnel for ICD-compliant coding of causes of death and use of automated coding techniques;
- (h) Enhancing the capacity of the civil registration system to produce and deliver certificates to the public in a timely and efficient manner;
- (i) Harnessing the capacity of hospitals, health centres, religious institutions and schools to contribute to civil registration since they can play significant roles in registering vital events;
- (j) Enhancing national capacities to ensure the safe and secure long-term management and archiving of legal records;
- (k) Implementing measures to register the vital events of residents who are temporarily abroad and in a position to access consular facilities;
- (l) Implementing special measures to register currently unregistered populations, for example through facilitating late birth registration.

#### **G. Production, dissemination and use of vital statistics**

- (a) Providing ongoing training for statisticians in the production, dissemination and analysis of vital statistics;
- (b) Introducing quality assurance frameworks for the production of vital statistics derived from civil registration;
- (c) Promoting the use of vital statistics to support decisions in areas of social, economic and health policy, and monitoring progress towards national and internationally agreed development goals;
- (d) Integrating CRVS improvement into the National Strategy for the Development of Statistics, if one exists;
- (e) Introducing operational procedures including a data release calendar;
- (f) Using information technology for the speedy compilation, analysis and publication of vital statistics derived from civil registration;
- (g) Taking measures to make vital statistics readily accessible to users, including through issuing summaries and policy briefs, and publishing vital statistics on the Web.

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