

Out of Sight, Out of Reach: Breaking the Cycle of Invisibility

CRVS and Education

Legal Identity, CRVS, and Basic Services Policy Brief Series



Civil registration and the provision of legal identity are fundamental services that all humans have the right to expect from their governments. Functional civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) systems also generate population data on fertility, mortality, and cause of death, which are indispensable to good governance and policy-making across sectors. In many cases, legal identity documents produced by the CRVS system facilitate access to basic services, including education. Previous studies, for example, have found that birth certificate ownership in parts of Indonesia is associated with a higher rate of school enrolment and school continuation.¹ Not only are legal identity

documents often used for school enrolment, but each interaction with Indonesia's schooling system also constitutes an opportunity for birth registration to be encouraged and supported. This brief draws on the findings of a study conducted by the Ministry of National Development Planning/BAPPENAS in collaboration with PUSKAPA and *Kolaborasi Masyarakat dan Pelayanan untuk Kesejahteraan* (KOMPAK) between late 2015 and early 2016 to explore the ways in which the education sector in Indonesia is implicated in the government's various commitments to improve the country's CRVS. It also recommends ways in which the education sector can contribute to an enduring solution.

¹ This brief refers to Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) systems to mean all government mechanisms of recording and/or reporting vital events—including birth, death, marriage, and divorce—and the manners by which those mechanisms relate to certifying vital events; though the research questions focused primarily on birth and death. In Indonesia, there is no single, universal CRVS system, but instead a tangle of mechanisms that intersect or overlap at times, but mostly run in parallel, rarely converging to create a whole.



CRVS in Indonesia

Indonesia currently has no single, consolidated mechanism for collating birth and death statistics across sectors, and mortality estimates are projected from the decennial census. The authority for registering births and deaths lies solely within the Ministry of Home Affairs, but several government bodies are positioned to contribute to registration activities, and many collect, analyze, and use data related to vital events.

Only 56 percent of Indonesian children (under 18 years old) have a birth certificate,² and Indonesia is among the countries with the largest number of unregistered children under five.³ Death registration is almost non-existent, and data on the causes of death are completely unavailable in many parts of the country.^{4,5} Without comprehensive, timely, and accurate vital statistics, ministries have reported being unable to accurately plan, target, or monitor their services.^{6,7}

Although one or two government bodies are typically responsible for managing a country's CRVS, a weak system can have a domino effect across sectors. Following the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), for example, the World Bank argued that legal identity coverage for all will “fundamentally support the achievement of at least 10 other SDGs,” including strengthening social protections, improving access of the poor to economic resources, ending preventable deaths of newborns,

empowering women, and protecting children.⁸ A recent global study found that, even after controlling for factors like income and health systems strength, countries with well-functioning CRVS systems tend to have better health outcomes, including greater healthy life expectancy and lower rates of maternal and child mortality.⁹ Studies in Indonesia have found ownership of legal identities to be associated with the school enrolment and continuation of schooling.¹

Recognizing these linkages, the Government has set out to strengthen mechanisms related to CRVS. This figures directly in President Widodo's Medium Term Development Plan, which sets out to improve access to quality basic services, including health, education, social protection, infrastructure, and civil registration as a means of reducing poverty across the country.¹⁰ As part of this plan, the President aims to cover 85 percent of children with birth certificates by 2019. Several regulations have been issued in recent years to simplify birth registration procedures, facilitate outreach to outlying communities, and promote collaborative efforts among ministries for improving death registration. The Ministry of Home Affairs has also made promising investments in modernizing the country's population registry through the Population Administration Information System (SIAM), which is now in its fifth version. Yet these initiatives are often uncoordinated, and in the context of decentralization, standardized implementation across the country's remote areas remains elusive. To date, no national plan has been made public detailing the government's strategy for integrating birth, death, and cause-of-death registration in one comprehensive system with the capability of producing certificates for all vital events while also generating valid, continuous, and timely statistics that can be shared across ministries.





The Ministry of National Development Planning/BAPPENAS is exploring ways in which the various sectors with a stake in CRVS strengthening can be mobilized to work together towards a unified, complete, and reliable system. Schools, and the education sector more generally, can potentially play a significant role in improving Indonesia's CRVS, especially with regard to birth registration for school-aged children between the ages of four and 17.

Indonesia's National Education System Law (No. 20/2003) does not indicate that legal identity documents, such as birth certificates, are required for school enrolment. Districts have the discretion to pass their own local regulations mandating birth certificates for school enrolment, while school principals may also create such policies at the school level.¹ For its part, the central Ministry of Education and Culture suggests that schools use birth certificates as the main reference for the child's identity when issuing diplomas for graduation, as stated in the latest technical instruction for diploma inscription (2014/2015 academic year).¹¹ In lieu of a birth certificate, schools are guided to admit other official documents, which presumably include family cards and birth notification letters.

In practice, some schools actively require birth certificates to enrol students, whether as a district or a school policy, while most simply accept family cards if the child does not have a birth certificate. Other schools enrol unregistered students, but do not allow them to participate in extracurricular competitions at the district or provincial level.¹² Rather than penalizing students without birth certificates,

on the other hand, some cities have started incentivizing birth certificate ownership through rewards. In Surakarta, for example, parents of children with birth certificates are entitled to a Child Incentive Card, which can be used to purchase goods and services related to education at a discounted rate.¹² Others have started using schools for service outreach—for instance, as a registration point during Integrated and Mobile Services.¹²

School administrators mainly use children's identity documents to create student records, which are logged in the Education Management Information System (Dapodik), the main reference for allocating school budgets and needs-based assistance to schools. This system currently records student Single Identity Numbers (NIK), but does not track birth certificate ownership. This may constitute an important opportunity for identifying unregistered children and referring them to legal identity services.

Regional Perspective and Key Lessons

From a review of over 500 published reports and studies about CRVS in low- and middle-income countries, we found that most such countries struggle with underdeveloped CRVS systems; but recent years have seen many governments exploring innovative strategies for strengthening these systems. Some have worked closely with the education sector in order to increase civil registration among the school-age population, especially around birth certificates. Between 2007 and 2008, for example, UNICEF partnered with Ministries of Education in 12 countries to embed birth registration campaigns in school, including Timor-Leste, Papua New Guinea, and the Philippines, for example.¹³





In some countries, requiring a birth certificate for school enrolment, or other school-related activities, is considered one approach to incentivize birth registration. In Kenya, for example, according to national policy, children must provide birth certificates to take their national exams. But with a low registration coverage of 60 percent, a large segment of the youth population is de facto barred from educational advancement. Even when registration coverage is much higher, as in Vietnam (95 percent), the policy of requiring birth certificates to enrol in preschool and primary school still risks excluding the most marginalized children from educational services, which can create a vicious cycle of vulnerability.¹⁴ To avoid this, the Philippines has taken a unique approach to its enrolment policy. Public schools still request birth certificates during enrolment, but with birth certificate coverage remaining low, schools do not turn away unregistered students. Instead, school personnel have started providing parents with information and advice on birth registration procedures and delaying the birth certificate requirement until graduation. This mechanism has been a critical component of the Philippines' CRVS-strengthening initiative.¹⁵

Collaboration among related sectors has also been an important measure to improve CRVS for several countries. In the case of Ghana, schools in many districts actively identify unregistered students during enrolment and then refer parents to the appropriate registration officials. However, this system depends on the will of local registration officials, many of whom have been found not to actively follow up on referrals given to them

by schools, waiting instead for parents to make contact. One of the factors that contribute to this passivity is that the Ministry of Education is not formally mandated to support birth registration, and has not established a coordination agreement with the Central Registry Office.¹⁶

Key Findings from the 2016 Formative Research

This study found that civil registration in the three selected sites was far from universal or compulsory. One in three children had no legal documentation of their birth, and two in five marriages were considered illegitimate by the state. Almost one in five adults could not readily produce an ID or family card with their name on it, and death certificates were almost non-existent. When individuals did own documents, these were often internally inconsistent with one another. More than a third of respondents either had a marriage certificate but were listed as single on their family card, or were listed as married on their family card, but did not own a marriage certificate.

Although school officials and community members in all three provinces said that birth certificates were required for school enrolment, this policy was not adhered to strictly in any of the sub-districts included in the study, and children without birth certificates were admitted using alternative documents, such as family cards. Some officials believed that requesting birth certificates for school enrolment was an important way of creating



value for birth certificates in their communities. Others thought that it was more important to enrol students regardless of their registration status. Nevertheless, there was a strong relationship between educational attainment and birth certificate ownership. Adults who had attended elementary or middle school were twice as likely to have a birth certificate as those who had not attended school, and those who attended high school or higher were almost four times as likely to have a birth certificate as those who had not attended school. School-age children who were enrolled at the time of the study were twice as likely to have a birth certificate as those who were not enrolled in school.

Although the education sector had no formal relationship with the Population and Civil Registration Authority (Disdukcapil) in any of the three districts, and had no official role in facilitating birth registration, some school personnel occasionally helped parents to register their children. One in five mothers of children who had graduated from preschool reported that they had received information or support for registering their child's birth from preschool personnel. This usually consisted of a staff member explaining the importance of birth registration or sharing other types of information with parents. In a little over a quarter of instances, the staff member also went further, either providing the necessary application forms, offering to help complete or deliver the application on the parents' behalf, or a combination of these measures of support. Elementary school staff also reported facilitating birth registration.

Most educators and school administrators, however, believed that civil registration was outside their scope of responsibilities, and many expressed either not having the resources to contribute to civil registration strengthening, or not wanting to impose on the Ministry of Home Affairs' mandate. Altogether, service providers across all study sites, including educators, only provided less than five percent of birth registration in the sample.

Despite most schools requesting birth certificates during enrolment (though not requiring them), schools did not systematically record their students' registration status, nor did the Ministry of Education and Culture expect them to.

Most schools visited in the three districts were equipped with Dapodik, which does prompt school administrators to record students' NIK. This would theoretically allow student records to be cross-referenced with SIAK, which includes birth registration status. A few education officials thought Dapodik should be used to identify children in need of legal identity services. One primary school teacher already maintained his own manual logbook of students enrolling without birth certificates.

Other informants from the education sector expressed a need for better birth data generally. One explained that reliable data on the school-age population could help schools and education offices to plan and allocate resources more effectively to meet the minimum standard of services, while also ensuring that education services reach all school-aged children, as mandated by the law.



Recommendations

Considering the current inaccessibility of legal identity services to large segments of the population, schools should not make birth certificates mandatory for school enrolment unless this policy is implemented together with schools identifying legal-identity demand and facilitating them to access legal-identity services. Strictly enforcing birth certificate as a school requirement denies children their fundamental right to education and, with unregistered children tending to come from lower-income households, it also risks exacerbating social inequities.

- Districts or schools that require birth certificates for certain school-related activities, such as exams, extracurricular competitions, or graduation, should offer counselling to the parents of unregistered children in a manner that is accessible and culturally sensitive.
- Schools should at the very least be equipped with standardized materials explaining birth registration procedures, and these materials should be shared with the parents of unregistered students.
- Schools should work with Disdukcapil to establish referral pathways that link parents directly with registration authorities. These referral pathways should be mindful of sharing information in a manner that does not expose students or their parents to shame, abuse, or any other type of harm.

Schools should systematically record birth certificate ownership in addition to NIK for all of their students in Dapodik, and should use this as a basis for identifying need for legal-identity services and monitoring progress.

- Dapodik should be synchronized with SIAK so that Disdukcapil can plan outreach campaigns using the schooling system. Using existing data, Dapodik can already produce statistics on NIK coverage among the students by school or sub-district, which signals those without access to legal identity. This would allow Disdukcapil to target areas with particularly low coverage with integrated and mobile services for civil registration, potentially using schools as the central registration point.
- Schools without active Dapodik should be supplied with manual recording forms that include a field for NIK and birth registration, and this should be reported together with other routine education data to the Office of Education.

To enhance the effectiveness of the first two points, the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Ministry of Home Affairs (MoHA) should consider establishing a formal partnership to address Indonesia's lingering birth certificate coverage gap. To enable coordination, this could include the following recommendations:

- Routine data-sharing procedures should be implemented across all districts. Sub-district education officers (*UPT Pendidikan*) could be mandated to report monthly data on children without NIK and birth certificates for every school in their area, which sometimes consists of multiple sub-districts, and then collaborate with Disdukcapil to prepare integrated and mobile services in schools. They can also contribute to awareness-raising campaigns and information dissemination.
- MoHA should collaborate with the Ministry of Education and Culture to develop standard operating procedures for conducting integrated and mobile registration services within schools.
- MoHA and the Ministry of Education and Culture should develop an accessible information package about birth registration, and possibly other vital-events registration, to be distributed and communicated to parents by teachers and school administrators periodically in every parents-teacher meeting occasions (e.g., school registration, report card distribution, counselling days, etc.).

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Research Sites:

The provinces of Aceh, Central Java, and South Sulawesi were selected purposively by a steering committee comprised of the Ministry of National Development Planning/BAPPENAS and KOMPAK to allow for variation in governance, local laws and regulations, legal identity coverage, cultural practices, and other contextual factors. One sub-district was selected in each province based on buy-in from local leaders, low scores on the Ministry of National Development Planning/BAPPENAS's composite poverty index, and geographic variation (Kecamatan Arongan Lambalek in Kabupaten Aceh Barat, Kecamatan Petungkriyono in Kabupaten Pekalongan, and Kecamatan Liukang Tupabbiring Utara in Kabupaten Pangkajene dan Kepulauan). At sub-districts level, villages and households were systematically randomized.

Methodology:

Three-part systematic desk review, key informant interviews, focus group discussions, a cross-sectional, multi-stage cluster survey at the sub-district level, and national consultations to validate findings.

Sample Size:

Data of 5,552 household members, in which 2,361 were children, were collected from a sample of 1,222 respondents.

This series of policy briefs “Out of Sight, Out of Reach - Breaking the Cycle of Invisibility” is part of a study to institutionalize civil registration and vital statistics in basic services. The main report from this study can be accessed from the KOMPAK and PUSKAPA websites.

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