



CIVIL REGISTRATION IN SOUTH ASIA: COORDINATION, CONNECTIONS AND COLLABORATION

**THE IMPERATIVE OF
COORDINATION FOR
A COMPLETE AND
EFFICIENT CRVS SYSTEM**

**RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN
CIVIL REGISTRATION AND
CIVIL IDENTIFICATION**

**THE IMPORTANCE OF
CROSS-BORDER
COLLABORATIONS**

*Eds. Kendra Gregson
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The background papers in this publication were initially prepared by Raj Mitra (The Imperative of Coordination for a Complete and Efficient CRVS System: Experiences in South Asia), Mia Harbitz (Relationship between Civil Registration and Civil Identification) and Renee Sorchik (Potential for Cross-Border Collaboration Between Civil Registrars in South Asia). Each paper benefited from inputs shared during and after a meeting of civil registration professionals in South Asia. The meeting was an important collaboration between the United Nations Children's Fund and United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, steered by Kendra Gregson (UNICEF) and Hong Pum Chung and Rikke Munk Hansen (ESCAP).

Cover photo:

Fatimath Naifa holds her baby girl's hand (not named yet) in a hospital in Male, Maldives.
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FOREWORD

All people have a right to identity, to be legally and socially recognized as the subject of rights and responsibilities. The right to legal identity is recognized in international law and stressed by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as the foundation for “leaving no one behind.”

Civil registration is the critical foundation for any country’s identity management system, providing documents for people to exercise their rights, and to be protected from abuse. Vital statistics – statistics generated from vital registration systems – are of great value for state policy and planning as they inform the allocation of public sector resources and benefit private and non-profit actors alike for similar purposes.

Legal identity is first recognized by a state at birth, through birth registration. All subsequent important life events – marriage, death, adoption, divorce, recognition and legitimation – are recorded in reference to this first recognition.

Nevertheless, only 60 percent of children under the age of 5 in South Asia have had their birth registered.

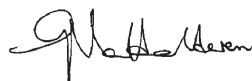
The seriousness and magnitude of the problem was acknowledged when in 2014, all countries in South Asia committed to improving their civil registration systems by the end of the Asia-Pacific Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Decade, 2015-2024.

The meeting of civil registration officials in South Asia held in July 2018 acted on the 2014 commitments when agreeing to establish a network of civil registrars from the eight countries, the CR8, to collectively address common challenges to realizing the vision of the CRVS Decade. The meeting provided an opportunity to discuss common concerns and to learn from the experience of other countries.

The present publication contains the issue papers discussed at the July meeting. We are delighted with the outcomes of the meeting and look forward to collaborating with CR8, the network of civil registration professionals of South Asia.



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INTRODUCTION

Civil registration is a priority on the policy agenda of countries across South Asia. The governments in the region are committed to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including complete birth registration and 80 per cent death registration (SDG targets 16.9 and 17.19). They also declared 2015—2024 the decade for civil registration and vital statistics. To improve civil registration over this time period,¹ all countries are developing plans and targets to enhance the registration of vital events, in line with a Regional Action Plan to “Get Every One in the Picture”. These commitments to obtain and maintain complete registration of all types of events present new responsibilities, opportunities and challenges.

The United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) in South Asia and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia-Pacific (ESCAP) jointly organized a meeting of professionals engaged in civil registration in South Asia from 24 to 25 July 2018 in Kathmandu, Nepal. The group comprised 22 government experts from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, as well as representatives from UNICEF, ESCAP, UNHCR, UNSD and the World Bank. In addition, government representatives from Namibia, New Zealand and Thailand, and four independent consultants attended.

The Meeting of the Civil Registrars of South Asia, as it was titled, discussed three common areas of concern in all countries in South Asia — national coordination, cross-border collaboration, and the relationship between civil registration and civil identification. The participants recognized that the interdependent nature of civil registration demands systematic and active coordination between the civil registration office and ministries and departments that directly or indirectly support or benefit from the system. Cross-border collaboration is also required to ensure universal registration. Collaboration presents challenges, including to data security, and often requires adjustments to legal frameworks. However, the benefits of cross-border collaboration in terms of protecting human rights and delivering better services to resident and migrant populations fully justify efforts to overcome such challenges.

With the need for a secure and efficient identification management system, the meeting discussed the relationship between, and uniqueness of, civil registration and civil identification systems. Both are primary registers as they provide the institutional anchoring for the verification and authentication of identities through the identity credentials they issue. Contrary to civil identification systems, civil registration systems are considered foundational as well as primary as they are needed to establish and maintain any other type of identification management system.

This publication includes the three background papers that formed the basis for the discussion during the meeting, as well as the meeting conclusions and recommendations. Meeting presentations and other materials are available at <http://www.getinthepicture.org/event/meeting-civil-registrars-south-asia>.

¹ http://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/Regional.Action.Framework.English.final_.pdf (accessed 5 March 2019).

THE IMPERATIVE OF COORDINATION FOR A COMPLETE AND EFFICIENT CRVS SYSTEM: EXPERIENCES IN SOUTH ASIA²

1. Introduction

The successful implementation and maintenance of civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) systems in countries hinges on systematic and active coordination between the civil registration ministry/office and other ministries and departments that directly or indirectly support or benefit from the system. The interdependent nature of civil registration functions of different organizations in the collection, registration and transmission of vital event records demands a close and continuous coordination and collaboration among these organizations at all levels of administration. Whether civil registration organization in a country is centralized or decentralized, coordination must be an integral part of the system. Even within the civil registration office, close coordination between national and provincial/district and local registration offices is crucial to ensure that the civil registration activities are delivered in a consistent, timely and efficient manner. An efficient coordination mechanism leads to a high quality of delivery of services and production of vital statistics.

The Regional Action Framework for on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific identifies 'coordination' as one of six action areas that *"would serve as a basis for Governments and development partners to focus and organize efforts towards developing, implementing and supporting comprehensive multisectoral national CRVS strategies."* The framework, which was endorsed by the Ministerial

² This paper was authored by Raj Mitra. It benefited from significant contributions by Ziad Elgendy of ESCAP, as well as from contributions provided during the meeting of civil registration professionals in Kathmandu July 2018.

Conference on *Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) in Asia and the Pacific* (Bangkok, Thailand, 24-28 November, 2014), elaborates further on coordination: “*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. 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.*”

The United Nations *Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System*, Revision 3, also highlights that coordination should be an integral part of the CRVS system regardless of its organizational arrangement. It emphasizes the need for centralized and peripheral coordination among all relevant agencies to ensure consistent concepts and definitions across the agencies and to eliminate duplication of responsibility. The UN *Principles and Recommendations* underscores the need for communication among various agencies as an important ingredient of coordination and suggests a few communication techniques that could be employed to ensure its effectiveness.

2. Types of coordination mechanisms and their scope

The type of coordination mechanisms that a country would need to deploy for implementing

and maintaining a complete and efficient CRVS system will largely depend on the way the system is organized within the existing administrative structure of the country. The agencies that are responsible for day-to-day management and operations of various components of the CRVS system at different administrative levels will necessarily constitute the core of the coordination mechanisms. The three main agencies that would generally constitute the core are the Civil Registration Office (CRO), Health Ministry/Department and National Statistics Office (NSO). In some countries the responsibility of compilation of vital statistics lies with the CRO itself and, therefore, the NSO has no role to play and may not be required to be a part of the core.³ In some countries, civil registration has an organic interface with national ID/population registration systems, in which case the national ID agency has to be one of the key agencies in the coordination group.⁴ It would be important to note that most registration laws provide for medical institutions to report or declare birth and death events (including certifying causes of death) occurring in these institutions for legal registration. In some countries the community health workers have also been roped in for reporting/notifying the events occurring within their jurisdictions. Therefore, the health agency should be an inalienable and permanent part of all coordination mechanisms regardless of the organization and administrative arrangement of the CRVS system in a country.

The other agencies that should be included in the coordination mechanisms are the police department, which is responsible for reporting on cases of medicolegal death and the justice department, which is involved in registration of divorce. The main user agencies such as national ID/population registration, education,

³ In India, the vital statistics division in the Office of the Registrar General compiles the national vital statistics and the Ministry of Statistics is not involved at all. In fact, India does not have a national CRVS coordination mechanism in place.

⁴ None of the South Asia countries has an integrated CR and national ID/population registration system.

social welfare and other agencies of the government, should be participating in the coordination work at various levels depending on the nature and extent of their involvement at these levels. Development partners and civil society organizations can also be included in the coordination group/committee or co-opted or invited to take part in specific meetings.

In some countries registration hierarchies may not be unilineal, meaning that the agencies responsible for actual registration at the local level (including municipal level) may be different from the agency that manages and coordinates the civil registration system at the national or provincial levels. This poses management and coordination challenges: In such situations the local registrars are not under the administrative control of the provincial or national level registration functionaries, which makes it difficult to supervise and monitor performance. Whether the law provides for clear reporting lines between the local registrars to the national level, it would be necessary to introduce an innovative approach in coordination across and within the responsible agencies that are involved so as to ensure smooth functioning of civil registration at local level.

National level coordination is often carried out through an inter-agency coordination committee with a mandate to provide technical and management oversight and guidance to the CRVS system. In addition to taking stock of the progress and achievements in CRVS, the committee also identifies

challenges/bottlenecks in implementation and maintenance of the system and takes decisions towards their resolution. The committee is responsible for implementation of international standards on CRVS. Such a committee⁵ has to go beyond the above-mentioned core and include several other agencies that contribute to or benefit from the CRVS system – such as law and justice, education, social welfare, ICT (Information and Communication Technology), and others. It is usually a strategic decision to include the Ministry of Finance as part of the committee as it helps the Ministry to better understand and appreciate the importance of CRVS and the need for adequate budgeting. Committees of this type are usually constituted through a government notification/order with specific terms of reference (TORs),⁶ which inter-alia would include a list of members/institutions including the designated chair, objective and scope covering management and technical aspects, the proposed frequency of meetings and preparation and submission of meeting minutes/reports. Similar inter-agency committees can be constituted at provincial levels and even local level with relevant agencies as members. However, the scope of these committees, at the provincial or local levels, is mainly limited to operational matters.

A country may choose to establish two committees at the national level – a High-level Coordination Committee chaired by the Minister with a mandate to provide oversight and guidance for strengthening the CRVS system in the country, and a Technical

⁵ The Handbook on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems: Management, Operations and Maintenance, Revision 1, has identified a number of areas that should be included in the scope of an inter-agency committee on CRVS. These are: developing and maintaining instructions regarding definitions of vital events; coding schemes; generation of the unique identifier; content of the form; statistical definitions of characteristics of the event and the persons involved; training curricula for informants, registrars and statisticians; quality control mechanisms; field visits; procedures for reporting and recording events; content and format of certificates; transmission protocols; content and periodicity of statistical reporting and all other standardized activities as necessary. This committee is the coordinating body for data items and definitions, collection and monitoring, access and utilization, and the legal and administrative functions needed to manage the programmes effectively.

⁶ Some countries may have specific provisions in the law for establishment of such an inter-agency committee at national level.

Coordination Committee that is responsible for implementing and coordinating the operational and technical aspects of the system.

In addition to external coordination, internal coordination within each of the agencies (intra-agency coordination) requires particular attention as each office engaged in collection, registration and activities related to production of vital statistics needs to reach a level of understanding of the needs and responsibilities of the other components. This kind of internal coordination helps to keep the process uniform

and consistent across different administrative levels. Coordination between various agencies can also be informal in nature particularly at the local level for immediate resolution of bottlenecks. This kind of coordination does not need formal meetings but hinges on effective communication through various means such as e-mail and phone calls.

Following are examples of the types of coordination committees in a country, their composition and main scope.

Administrative Level	Coordination committee and proposed frequency of the meeting	Composition of the committee	Main scope
National	<i>High-level Coordination Committee on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics⁷</i> <i>To meet once a year</i>	<i>Chair: Minister of Interior</i> <i>Members: Permanent secretaries of ministries of planning and finance, health, education, justice, ICT and social welfare</i> <i>Secretariat: Registrar General's Office</i>	<i>Provide oversight and policy guidance to the work of civil registration and vital statistics</i> <i>Review progress of work</i> <i>Review fund requirement and approve funding if necessary</i>
National	<i>Technical Coordination Committee on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics</i> <i>To meet once every six months</i>	<i>Chair: Registrar General</i> <i>Members: Director General of National Statistics Office; director generals of ministries of health, justice, education, ICT and social welfare;</i> <i>Chief Executive officer of the capital city</i> <i>Special invitees depending on the nature of the meeting: Relevant UN agencies, NGOs, civil society organizations, academic institutions, and other stakeholders</i> <i>Secretariat: Registrar General's Office</i>	<i>Review progress of annual action plan</i> <i>Review completeness of registration at the national and province level</i> <i>Review transmission of statistical data, and production and dissemination of vital statistics</i> <i>Ensure adherence to international standards and concepts</i> <i>Discuss any administrative and technical challenges and propose steps to resolve them</i> <i>Identify coordination bottlenecks at various levels and propose definite action for their resolution; donor coordination</i>

⁷ Bangladesh has constituted a high-level committee, the 'CRVS related Steering Committee'. The Committee is convened by the Cabinet Secretary and comprises 22 members from various agencies and two special invitees. The roles and responsibilities of this inter-agency Steering Committee include the coordination of activities related to CRVS development, providing direction for ministries responsible for CRVS-activity implementation, and revising/reviewing/ disseminating CRVS-related national plans and documents. To realize the proper implementation of CRVS, the Steering Committee established the CRVS Secretariat at the Cabinet Division.

Pakistan also has also established a high-level coordination mechanism, namely the National CRVS Steering and Coordination Committee, which is headed by the Federal Minister, Ministry of Planning, Development and Reforms (MOPDR) while membership is drawn from multiple provincial departments and multiple stakeholders.

Administrative Level	Coordination committee and proposed frequency of the meeting	Composition of the committee	Main scope
			<i>Prepare half-yearly report for the high-level coordination committee; identify issues and prepare action points for its consideration</i>
<i>Provincial⁸</i>	<i>Provincial Coordination Committee on Civil Registration</i> <i>To meet once every quarter</i>	<i>Chair: Provincial Registrar</i> <i>Members: Provincial heads of departments of health, justice, education, social welfare⁹</i> <i>Secretariat: Provincial Registrar's office</i>	<i>Review status and progress of registration, transmission of registration records at the province and district level (local level) in terms of completeness of registration</i> <i>Discuss administrative and technical challenges in registration faced by the district (local) registrars, and propose steps to resolve them</i> <i>Identify coordination bottlenecks at province level and propose definite action for their resolution</i> <i>Prepare quarterly reports for the Technical Coordination Committee; identify issues and prepare action points for its consideration</i>
<i>District (local)</i>	<i>District Coordination Committee</i>	<i>Chair: District Registrar</i> <i>Members: District officers from departments of health, education, social welfare;</i> <i>Chief Medical Officer of the major health facility in the district</i> <i>Secretariat: District Registrar's Office</i>	<i>Review status and progress of registration work in the district in terms of completeness, transmission of registration records, stock of registration forms and other aspects of the day to day work of civil registration</i> <i>Identify coordination bottlenecks and propose definite action for their resolution and follow up</i> <i>Prepare monthly report for the provincial registration office and highlight issues for its consideration/decision</i>

3. Communication in coordination

Coordination without communication is half the work done. Clear and systematic communication links, both forward and backward, have to be established as an integral part of CRVS coordination mechanisms.

For example, decisions made in committee meetings at different levels and recorded in the form of minutes or reports, must be communicated to appropriate agencies for follow up and subsequently monitored for action taken based on feedback reports. Periodic workshops and conferences at national and

⁸ In Nepal, the District Development Committee coordinates CRVS functions at the local level registration centres located in village development centres and municipal wards. However, no inter-agency coordination committee has been established at the district level.

⁹ It is presumed here that the country does not have any statistics office at the province level.

province levels that are normally organized through the inter-agency committees, are a good way of communicating the important decisions of these committees and provide an opportunity to the member institutions to learn and discuss about the administrative and technical challenges faced at the field level.¹⁰ National level workshops/conferences are not limited to participation of member institutions of the coordination committees and field functionaries but can include other stakeholders, who would provide important feedback as users of civil registration records and data. The outcomes of these workshops/conferences feed into the agenda of the committee meetings for further discussions on follow-up action including resolution of the field challenges. The civil registration office may want to create a separate coordination section on its website, where the coordination committees at all levels can upload documents related to their meetings. This real time communication fosters speedy resolutions of challenges and also provides an opportunity to the field offices to learn from each other.

Coordination through informal daily communication between different responsible agencies in the field would help in overcoming various operational challenges faced in the field that need immediate action. For example, when the provincial monthly report on registration is delayed because the local registrar has not submitted the report for his/her centre in time, a phone call (in addition to e-mail communication) from the provincial registrar to the local registrar may be necessary.

4. Monitoring coordination

The *Handbook on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems: Management, Operation and Maintenance, Revision 1*, states: “The quality assurance evaluation should verify the presence of an interdepartmental coordination committee that involves all major stakeholders. The evaluation should also verify the nomination of a chairperson of the committee (which could be on a rotating basis between agencies). There should be a specific charter of duties for the committee, with certain roles and responsibilities for different institutions (e.g., Ministry of Health to be responsible for coding and analysis of causes of death). Also, there should be a specified timeline and schedule for committee meetings (e.g., semi-annual, annual meetings). Finally, the committee should require the preparation of annual overall reports on the performance of civil registration and vital statistics at local and national level.”

However, the mere presence of coordination committee(s) may not be a good enough measure for process quality assurance. The counties have to set up a mechanism for monitoring the efficient functioning of coordination committees. The effective functioning of coordination mechanisms should be considered as an important domain for inclusion in the list of Key Performance Indicators (KPI) of the functioning of the CRVS system.¹¹ For example, ‘Coordination efficiency’ calculated as a percentage of meetings held to total expected number of

¹⁰ In Pakistan, the National CRVS Steering Committee in its fourth meeting, held in January 2018, decided to establish a provincial level steering, coordination and implementation committee and also proposed a list of agencies to be included in such a committee. This was included in the report summary with a clear instruction as to how this information will be communicated to the province.

¹¹ In India, although there is no national coordination committee, each state has constituted an inter-departmental coordination committee and almost all have established district level inter-departmental committees. The chief registrars of the states, in their annual report, provide information on the number of meetings held by these committees. This information is compiled by the Office of the Registrar General, Government of India, and presented in its Annual Report on the performance of the Registration of Births and Deaths Act.

meetings, can be a good KPI. This can be calculated for the national level and also for each province on a half-yearly or yearly basis. Ideally, there could be a separate KPI on the quality of decisions and follow up. However, these can be introduced in a phased manner when a high level of coordination efficiency is achieved in the country. In the interim a process can be established to review a random sample of the reports/minutes/summary proceedings of some of the meetings can provide a general assessment of the quality and communicate

them to the provincial or local committees for future improvement. Such reviews can also form part of the internal or external audit functions.

5. Country experiences

Following are brief accounts of the CRVS coordination mechanisms in each of the eight countries of South Asia. These accounts are based on presentations made by these countries¹² in the Meeting of Civil Registrars of South Asia held on 24-25 July 2018, in Kathmandu, Nepal.



AFGHANISTAN

The civil registration system in Afghanistan is centralized, with the Afghanistan Civil Registration Authority (ACCRA) having the overall responsibility for operations and management in the country. At the local level, health centres conduct the registration of births and deaths so therefore, the Ministry of Health has a crucial role to play in the success of the programme.

A High-level Inter-agency Coordination Committee has been established at the national level for policy development, strategic decision-making and legal approvals. This High-level Committee is composed of the following institutions: Vice President's Office; chief executives of the ministries of interior, public health, religious affairs and finance and

of ACCRA. Participation in this committee is at the level of ministers and deputy ministers. A steering committee consisting of directors and chief executive officers, directly implementing the civil registration programme, is responsible for coordinating (both horizontally and vertically) the day-to-day operations of the system. At the local level, ACCRA is also the lead agency that works in collaboration with the local governments. ACCRA has 420 offices at the district level across the country (there are 372 districts in Afghanistan). These work under the supervision of the central office and coordinate with the local government at provincial and district level. The committee members at various levels communicate among themselves through face-to-face meetings, emails and video conferences.

¹² No report was received from India. Information for India was compiled from the report, Vital Statistics of India based on Civil Registration System, 2016, (pp. 7 and 8) on the Inter-Departmental Coordination Committee.



BANGLADESH

At the national level, the Office of the Registrar General, Local Government Division, has the overall responsibility for the registration of births and deaths in the country and the Office of the Inspector General of Registration, Law and Justice Division Bangladesh is accountable for marriage and divorce registration. The Directorate General of Health Services and Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics are the other two agencies with shared responsibility in maintenance of the CRVS system at the national level.

Bangladesh is currently streamlining and synchronizing the civil registration functions of different government agencies to develop an integrated service development platform through the provision of unique ID (UID) for people of the country. The CRVS Secretariat, placed as it is in the Cabinet Division, is playing a pivotal role in this 'whole of government' approach and providing supervisory and coordinating support to the four principal organizations mentioned above. In late 2014, Bangladesh established a national coordination mechanism named the CRVS related Steering Committee. The Committee comprises 18 secretaries and heads of agencies and is headed by the Cabinet Secretary. The objectives of the Steering Committee include: coordinating activities of different ministries/divisions in order to ensure overall development of the CRVS system; providing necessary suggestions and guidance to relevant agencies in order to implement CRVS activities; evaluation and analysis of CRVS related strategies and workplans; and other CRVS related issues. The coordination mechanisms are active across agencies, working through regular meetings. A CRVS implementation committee has also been

established for coordinating the implementation of activities on a regular basis. Several thematic task teams have been put in place, such as a legal review committee and a technical committee.



BHUTAN

Bhutan has a centralized registration system with Ministry of Home and Cultural Affairs (MoHCA) having the primary responsibility for registration in the country. MoHCA is involved in registration activities right up to the subdistrict level and supported by local administration at lower administration levels. The Basic Health Units (BHU) and referral hospitals at district, regional and national levels under the Ministry of Health provide birth and death notifications and certificates. The other agencies involved are the National Statistics Bureau, Royal Bhutan Police (RBP) and Road Safety and Transport Authority (RSTA).

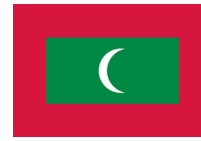
A national level coordination committee exists in the country, which includes MoHCA, National Statistics Bureau, Ministry of Health and Local Administration. The committee functions on the basis of a formal terms of reference issued through administrative orders of the government. RBP and RTSA are involved in national coordination but not in formal way. The objective of this committee is to maintain an optimum level of coordination to ensure that registration is undertaken at the local level in timely manner and with quality, and that the reports are submitted on time.



INDIA

The registration system in India is fully decentralized. At the national level, the Registrar General, India, is responsible for unifying and coordinating the activities of chief registrars of births and deaths of all states/union territories, issues general directions regarding registration of births and deaths and compiles annual vital statistics report. The state governments appoint the chief registrar of births and deaths for actual implementation of CRVS (and vary from state to state) and are mainly directors of local administration, health, economics and statistics. The state governments also appoint a district registrar of births and deaths for each revenue district. The responsibility for the registration of births and deaths rests with the secretaries of the local government (panchayat).

In India, since the state governments are fully responsible for registration of births and deaths and compilation of vital statistics, no coordination committee exists at the national level. Inter-departmental coordination committees (IDCCs) have been constituted in all states and union territories, through formal government notification, which include clear terms of reference. In most of the states/UTs, IDCCs are chaired by the principal secretary/secretary of the chief registrar's department and are supposed to meet once every year. The other members of the IDCC include representatives of the departments that are involved in registration work at district, block and local level. Formal IDCCs have also been constituted at the district and lower level for improving coordination at these levels. The Office of the Registrar General, India, monitors that functioning of the IDCCs and provides an assessment in its annual report reviewing the Registration and Births and Deaths Act.



MALDIVES

The civil registration system in Maldives is centralized. At the national level, the Department of National Registration (DNR) is responsible for overall logistics and administration of the civil registration system and the Ministry of Health (MoH) produces and disseminates vital statistics data. Local government authorities (Island councils, Atoll councils, and Male City council) and the Government as well as private hospitals are involved in the actual process of registration of births and deaths. In cases of death registration, the Maldives police service and the cemeteries facilitate registration of death before burial.

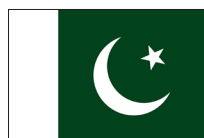
A high-level coordination committee exists at national level with policy and technical representation. The member institutions represented in the committee include the DNR, MoH, National Bureau of Statistics, National Centre for Information Technology, Male City Council and the Local Government Authority (LGA). The objectives of the committee are strengthening the CRVS system in the country; improving inter-agency coordination; addressing the challenges and new requirements in the system; acting as advisory board for changes to legal framework concerning CRVS; and overseeing capacity building. Although the national coordination mechanism is working well, it is yet to be formalized. A memorandum of understanding exists between DNR and MoH and the coordination between the LGA and medical facilities at the local level is functioning at an optimum level.



NEPAL

In Nepal, the Department of Civil Registration under the Ministry of Federal Affairs and General Administration (MoFALD) is the nodal authority at the national level for civil registration system. It is also responsible for production and dissemination of vital statistics based on civil registration. At the local level, registration is carried out in the ward offices of urban and rural municipalities. A birth registration system is being implemented in a few hospitals on a pilot basis. The District Administration Offices deal with legal aspects of registration, particularly court marriages and adoption.

There are no formally established high-level CRVS coordination committees at national, provincial or district levels. In some cases, ad-hoc committees have been established to implement specific tasks, for example to conduct CRVS baseline surveys. There are as well, opportunities to include civil registration as an item in existing coordination mechanisms such as the district statistical coordination committee.



PAKISTAN

Pakistan has a decentralized civil registration system in which the local bodies/urban councils undertake the actual registration work at the local level. The National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) automated all the local governments in the country, and centralized computerized registration and certificate issuance of vital events at the local level. The health sector is also involved in the process of registration of births and deaths at the local level.

The task of overall coordination for CRVS development at federal level, has been assigned to the Ministry of Planning, Development and Reforms (MOPDR). A Technical Resource Unit has been established within the MOPDR to oversee and facilitate the CRVS development process. A National CRVS Steering and Coordination Committee has been formally established under the chairpersonship of the Federal Minister, MOPDR. Members include representatives of several ministries – namely health, law and justice, and information technology – departments such as NADRA and the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics. It also includes provincial level departments from planning and development, health and local government, as well as development partners. One of the Steering Committee's key objectives is to discuss, develop and implement a comprehensive multi-stakeholder National CRVS Strategic Plan/National Action Framework. To further strengthen the coordination mechanism, provincial steering committees have been formed, with provincial officers of the various ministries and departments as members.



SRI LANKA

In Sri Lanka at the national level, the Registrar General's Department has the responsibility of overall supervision and control of the civil registration system. The Department of Census and Statistics provides technical support for the production of vital statistics. At the subnational level, the RG's department is in charge of implementing the civil registration system. At the local level civil registrars appointed by the RG's department carry out the function of registration. Health facilities are involved in reporting birth and death events occurring within the institutions.

A high-level national coordination mechanism exists in the country with Registrar General, Director General of Census and Statistics and Director General of Health as primary members. The main objective of the coordination mechanism is to ensure that civil registration is functioning at its optimum levels of efficiency at all times. The coordination is mainly carried out through meetings and workshops.

6. A short overview of the coordination mechanisms

A quick summary of the mechanisms of coordination across the eight South Asia countries shows that four of them – India, Maldives, Nepal and Sri Lanka – do not have any formal national level coordination mechanisms in spite of the fact that multiple agencies share responsibilities on different aspects of civil registration at national, subnational and local levels. Three out of the four countries – Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan – with formally established national coordination committees are led or represented at a very high level. Sri Lanka is the only country that has a unilineal registration hierarchy from the national to local level and therefore, needs minimal horizontal coordination and vertical coordination is smoother. India has a highly decentralized registration organization with multiple organizations directly engaged with registration at various levels of administration. India has formal coordination mechanisms established at state and district levels (and even at sub-district levels).

The objectives of the high-level coordination are aimed at improving the completeness and efficiency of the civil registration system. Bangladesh through its high-level coordination mechanism led by the Cabinet Secretariat is trying to take CRVS to a higher level of maturity – CRVS+. Afghanistan is working towards establishing a new system of CRVS and linking to identity management. For countries that already have a fully functional system, the focus is on maintaining the system at its optimum level of efficiency.

Almost all countries have reported a few gains that were achieved through coordination mechanisms. These include improvement in birth and death registration levels, increased awareness of general public about the importance of civil registration, establishment of technical support mechanisms, streamlining the flow of information and production of vital statistics.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CIVIL REGISTRATION AND CIVIL IDENTIFICATION¹³

Recognizing the need for secure and efficient systems, and how CR and CI systems can make life easier for citizens and residents while strengthening national governance structures.

1. Purpose

This note discusses the different models for linking civil registration (CR) and civil identification (CI), and possible adjustments that may be considered in the relationship between CR and CI for the benefit of users, both individuals and the public sector. Specifically it analyses the extent to which the developments in CI systems are building on and taking advantage of existing CR systems, and identifies opportunities for leveraging CR and CI strengths to the mutual benefit of both, organizationally and operationally. Since several countries are investing in building up CI systems before upgrading the CR system, this note also examines how mature, or maturing, CI systems can contribute to the rebuilding of CR systems.

2. Background

International conventions have firmly established the right to identity as a human right. The role and responsibilities of the civil register, as the originator and custodian of the records that establish and certify people's legal identity, is equally recognized.

Civil registration establishes the legal identity of a person through "the continuous, permanent, compulsory and universal recording of the occurrence and characteristics of vital events pertaining to the population as provided through decree or regulation in accordance with the legal requirements of a country," (IDB 2015).

¹³ This paper was authored by Mia Harbitz and benefited from contributions made during the meeting of civil registration professionals in Kathmandu July 2018.

The civil register's primary purpose is to be the custodian of identity records and to issue certificates to corroborate people's civil status. The certificates are birth certificates, marriage certificates, divorce certificates and death certificates. In the case of adoptions or recognitions, an amended birth certificate will be issued. Legislation in most countries requires the presentation of certificates issued by the CR for numerous administrative legal processes. The certificates are legal tenders and are often called 'breeder documents' in that they form the foundation for other identity documents.

Furthermore, statistics compiled by the CR are an important source of vital statistics. The monitoring of at least 70 of the indicators for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) relies directly on the vital statistics that the CR produces. This underscores the importance of universal birth registration, not only to establish a person's legal identity but also as a key institution that contributes to measuring sustainable development results.

The SDGs (Goal 16.9) that calls for "...legal identity for all, including birth registration" by 2030, is of particular relevance to the functionality of the CR and the CI.

Civil identification is the establishment of a unique civil identity in the public sector space through the verification, registration, management and conservation of other personal data such as a unique identity number, signature, photograph and/or biometric data in addition to the existing biographic data.

There is no international agreement that explicitly defines civil identification, nor any conventions that classify it as a human right. Yet, for some time now there has been an increasing global demand in uniquely establishing a person's identity for verification and authentication purposes.

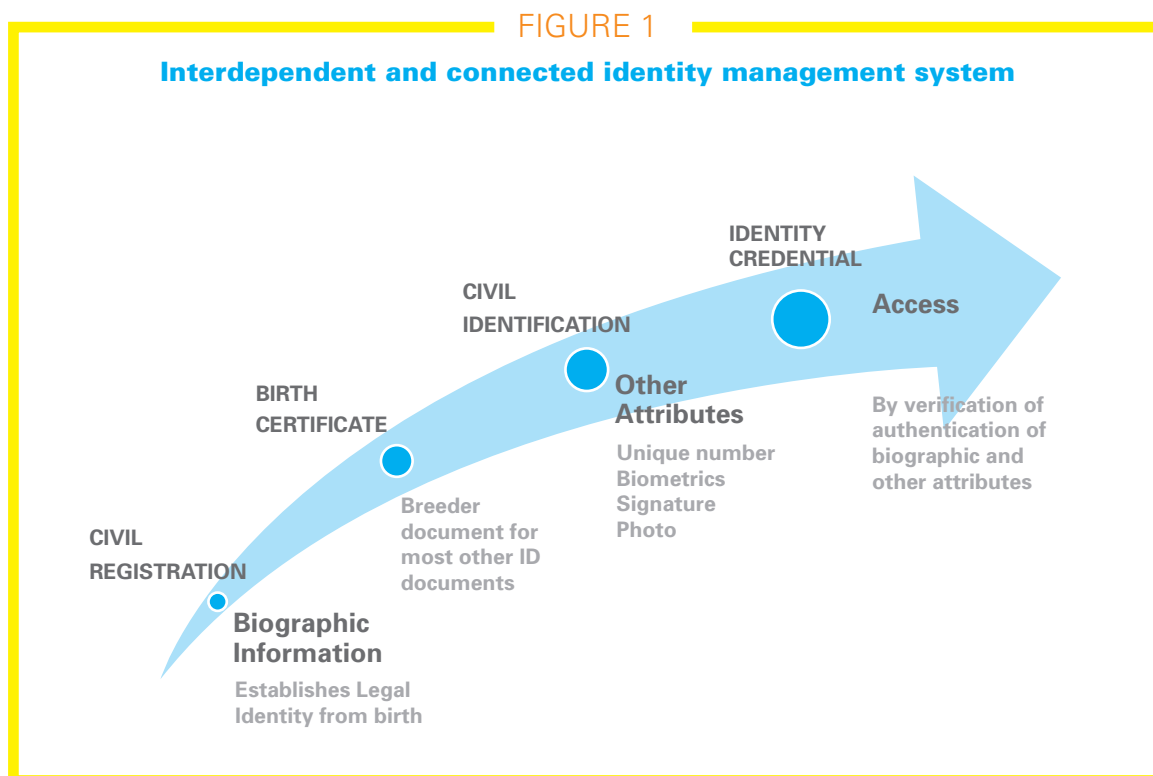
The purpose of verification and authentication of identities is to (a) grant permission of access for the claimant (access to a benefit, a service, a right, or an obligation), and (b) the determination that the right individual is granted access. These processes must be carried out in a trusted and trustworthy framework that incorporates the combination of systems, rules and procedures that define the entitlement, use and protection of personal information.

Having this framework in place will also allow for the timely and efficient delivery of public services that will ultimately result in better and more efficient governance structures, and possibly considerable savings for the public sector.

A comprehensive identity management framework is also a prerequisite for the fulfillment of basic human rights, such as the right to a name and a nationality (CRC, Art. 7) and the right to be recognized before the law (Art 6, Universal Declaration of Human Rights).

3. Links between civil registers and civil identification registers – the models

Civil registers (CR) and civil identification registers (CIR) are both highly specialized public sector agencies. They are considered essential institutions in the public sector since they are the exclusive custodians of the public records of peoples' legal identities. Both registers are considered primary or foundational because they provide the institutional anchoring for verification and authentication of identities. The two registers play different roles in that they issue different identity credentials (see Figure 1) but this circumstance also makes them interdependent.



3.1 Institutional arrangements

Where the CR and CIR are located administratively in the government organizational chart varies from country to country and depends on the governmental organizational structures as well as the laws governing the two registries.

A revision of the CR and CI systems in 198 countries showed that only two countries do not have a CR.¹⁴ There are 27 countries that do not have a CIR, but at least four of these

(Brazil, Jamaica, Norway and the Philippines) are in the planning stages of setting up agencies that will be issuing national identity cards.

The prevailing institutional anchoring for CIRs is within the ministry of the interior, followed by the ministry of justice and electoral tribunal. The majority of CRs is within the ministry of justice, followed by the ministries of the interior and health. Among all countries, 92 had the CR and the CIR under the same ministry.

Table 1: Key institutional models

	Autonomous	Ministry of Interior*	Ministry of Justice	Ministry of Health	Electoral Tribunal	Other	No CR	No CIR
CR	5	51	82	20	7	29	2	-
CI	6	114	18	-	15	18	-	27
In same inst.	4	8	68	-	6	6		

* Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Home Affairs used synonymously

¹⁴ ID4D Global Dataset, version 2.0, 2016.

The institutional panorama in the South Asia region is similarly distributed (as Table 2 shows). Seven of the eight countries in the South Asia Region provide official government-issued identity cards to their citizens, whereas in India the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI)¹⁵ issues a 12 digit number and card (aadhar) to all citizens and residents.

Five of the eight countries in the South Asia region – Afghanistan, Bhutan, Maldives, Pakistan and Sri Lanka – have their respective CR and CI agencies within the same ministry, thus having an institutional structure than can enable interoperability between the two. In the cases of Bangladesh and Nepal, their CR and CI agencies are located within different ministries.

The situation for recording and certification of marriages and divorces varies between the countries, and all eight countries have special legislation and registration for religious marriages. Not having a unified register for all marriages and divorces can cause problems for divorces, re-marriages and inheritances. It also can be an obstacle to obtaining the relevant certificates to access assistance such as pensions, welfare payments or widow/widower benefits.

At the time of publication of this paper, the relevant authorities from each country had validated the information in Table 2.

Table 2: Institutional arrangements for South Asia Region¹⁶

	AFGHANISTAN	BANGLADESH	BHUTAN	INDIA	NEPAL	MALDIVES	PAKISTAN	SRI LANKA
CR – births and deaths	Afghanistan Central Civil Registration Authority (ACCRA)	Office of the Registrar General for Birth and Death Registration ¹⁷	Ministry of Home and Cultural Affairs ¹⁸	State Governments as instructed by Ministry of Home Affairs. Office of the Registrar General ¹⁹	Ministry of Federal Affairs and General Administration. Department of Civil Registration ²⁰	Department of National Registration. City councils (Island and atoll)	Union Councils under Provincial Local Government Departments	Ministry of Home Affairs. Department of Registrar General ²¹
Registration of marriages and divorces	Ministry of Justice ²²	Ministry of Law, Justice and Legislative and Parliamentary Affairs Division. Also Office of the Muslim marriage registrar	Courts.	District Magistrate ²³	Ministry of Federal Affairs and General Administration. Department of Civil Registration ²⁴	Family courts. Also responsible for adoptions	Union Councils under Provincial Local Government Departments	Ministry of Internal Affairs. Department of Registrar General ²⁵

¹⁵ <https://uidai.gov.in/your-aadhaar/about-aadhaar.html>

¹⁶ All website were accessed between June and July, 2018.

¹⁷ <http://br.lgd.gov.bd/english.html>

¹⁸ http://www.mohca.gov.bt/?page_id=171

¹⁹ <http://censusindia.gov.in/>

²⁰ <http://docr.gov.np/>

²¹ <http://gic.gov.lk/gic/index.php/en/component/info/?id=50&task=subcat>

²² Afghanistan Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Country Strategic Plan 2016–2020, December 2015.

²³ <http://www.madaan.com/marriage.html>

²⁴ <http://docr.gov.np/>

²⁵ <http://www.rgd.gov.lk/web/index.php/en/services/civil-registration/marriage-registration.html#registration-of-marriages-general>

	AFGHANISTAN	BANGLADESH	BHUTAN	INDIA	NEPAL	MALDIVES	PAKISTAN	SRI LANKA
CI	Afghanistan Central Civil Registration Authority (ACCRA)	Bangladesh Election Commission ²⁶	Ministry of Home and Cultural Affairs	UIDAI ²⁷	Ministry of Home Affairs	Department of National Registration ²⁸	NADRA	Ministry of Internal Affairs. Commissioner General Registrar of Persons ²⁹
ID card name	e-tezkera	National identity card (NID)	Citizenship identity card (CID)	Aadhar	NIDMC	NID	Computerized National Identity Card (CNIC)	National identity card
Age for issuing ID card	18	18	15	n/d	16	At birth	18	16

When the CR and CIR are located within the same government institution, there could be a greater chance to achieve complete CI registration, especially when a country has reached universal birth registration.

A lot of attention is given to CI and setting up civil identification systems that also issue identity cards. This may be due to a combination of need for authentication and the large investments necessary to set up a system that uniquely and securely identifies large populations, and is capable of immediate authentication. However, the importance of the CR as the institution that establishes identity through birth registration is often overlooked. Regulations may still require people to bring a copy of birth certificates in order to enroll in CIRs and may cause individuals without birth certificates to be denied enrollment. Efforts to modernize the CIR and treat it as a “foundational register”, without parallel modernization of the CR may lead to the need for potentially costly re-designs of national identity management systems.

Locating the two agencies within different government institutions poses a higher risk for exclusion when people fall between the cracks

due to difficulties with verifying the biographic data in the CR, as well as for duplication and mismanagement of records. Studies have shown that women, children, minority groups and the poor are at greatest risk of non-registration (ADB 2017; Harbitz and Tamargo, 2009). If individuals are not registered in the CR, the procedures for enrollment in the CI can be complicated, if not impossible, given the need for pre-existing supporting proof of identity.

Countries where the CR and the CI are within the same government structure – such as in Chile (Ministry of Justice), Peru (Autonomous), Rwanda (Ministry of Local Development) or Namibia (Ministry of Home Affairs and Immigration) – have greater possibilities of achieving universal registration of their populations over time, both for civil registration and civil identification. These countries have recognized the CR as the foundation on which to establish a person’s identity; they have provided the services and introduced attributes from birth (such as the use of a unique identity number) to facilitate the verification and authentication process for access to government services. Another aspect that these four countries have in common is a long-term perspective.

²⁶ <http://www.nidw.gov.bd/>

²⁷ <https://www.uidai.gov.in/>

²⁸ <http://dnr.gov.mv/>

²⁹ <http://www.drp.gov.lk/>

COUNTRY CASE 1

The potential for coherent and streamlined data management and reporting procedures, for instance correction of errors or changes in civil status, are higher when CR and CI are located within the same institution.

Peru: Autonomous and interoperable

RENIEC – PERU

The National Register for Identification and Civil Status (RENIEC) of Peru was created in 1995 as an autonomous institution, independent of any ministry. RENIEC was further strengthened by one of the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Committee, which was set up in the wake of internal conflict, to reestablish a national system for civil registration and identification.

Initially RENIEC took over the voter registration database to use it as the basis for national identity cards. Instead, RENIEC created its own enrollment protocols and database for CI. Voting is obligatory in Peru, so when people renewed their voter cards, RENIEC collected their biometrics and issued identity cards to individuals who were already in the voter rolls. The Peruvian ID card has identifying information on the front, and slots to confirm voting on the back.

Historically, civil registration was local, carried out at the municipal level. There was no national database for civil registration records until almost 20 years ago when a decree was passed to create a national database for civil events and link it to the civil identification database. Today the two databases are interoperable.

Local registrars were at first reluctant to collaborate with RENIEC, but once the database was created and transparent procedures put in place, Peru has managed to achieve a 99 per cent birth registration rate.

The major municipalities are on-line with the central database, and children are issued a unique personal number when the registration takes place. The parent that registers the birth has to have a national ID card that is read by a card reader, and links the child to his or her parents in both the CR and the CI system. Birth certificates are issued immediately. In Peru children are now issued ID cards from birth.

RENIEC will send brigades to remote areas from time to time, and has the equipment to connect to the central database by satellite.

Since Peru is earthquake prone; RENIEC has two centrally located processing plants for ID cards in addition to backup facilities in a third geographic location.

For security reasons ID cards are produced centrally, and RENIEC has put in place a logistical system for efficient delivery. In the most remote areas it typically takes 4–6 weeks to deliver an ID card, in the capital, Lima, delivery is instant.

What makes the RENIEC unique is that they have built their registration and document management processes while keeping the general public informed, and delivering documents on time as promised, and the result is that it has become the most trusted public institution in Peru.

3.1.1 Population Registers

A population register is an augmented and amplified civil register, and the quality of the content and its usability depends on meticulous updating and management. It may be an interesting option for developing countries, especially if the CR will transition from paper to electronic databases for civil status records, and the country seeks to improve its vital statistics system at the same time.

Some countries, mainly in Northern Europe,³⁰ have population registers rather than civil registers. In 1969, UNSD³¹ defined the term ‘population register’ as “an individualized data system, that is, a mechanism of continuous recording, and/or of coordinated linkage, of selected information pertaining to each member of the resident population of a country in such a way to provide the possibility of determining up-to-date information concerning the size and characteristics of that population at selected time intervals. The method and sources of updating should cover all changes so that the characteristics of individuals in the register remain current. Because of the nature of a population register, its organization as well as its operation should have a legal basis.”

The following information is recorded in a population register: “date and place of birth, sex, date and place of death, date of arrival/departure, citizenship(s) and marital status. Depending on the possibility of proper linking with other registers, much additional information may be added to the single record, such as language(s), ethnicity, educational attainment, parity, activity status and occupation. In order to be useful, any additional information must be kept up to date. If complete,

³⁰ Austria, Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Israel and Japan.

³¹ <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/sources/popreg/popregmethods.htm>

population registers can produce data on both internal and international migration through the recording of changes of residence as well as the recording of international arrivals and departures.” Some Nordic countries also include information on health, educational attainment, employment and income within the population register.

One of the advantages of a current population register is that it eliminates the need for a census every 10 years, since the database will yield up-to-date demographic statistics at any time.

3.2 Registration, enrollment and management of personal data

The CR and CIS collect different data and issue different identity credentials. The CR issues certificates and the CI issues identity cards. The civil register records the biographic information of an individual and establishes his/her legal identity, whereas the civil identification registry adds attributes toward establishing a unique and secure identity for each individual. Such attributes can be any or all of the following: a unique identity number (UIN), a signature, biometrics (finger prints, iris scan), and a photo (digital or hardcopy).

To register a birth, most agencies require a notification of live birth from a certified health authority or, in its absence, a testimony from witnesses, and identity documents of the parents or the person responsible for reporting the birth to the CR.

For recognitions (a judicial act through which a father or a mother declares their paternity or maternity of a child born out of wedlock) the CR record is amended and a new birth certificate with the updated parental information is issued. In the case of adoptions the original record is sealed and concealed and a new record is created with the names and personal data of the adoptive parents.

The content of the certificate is guaranteed by the CR and can be verified against the CR record. A certificate issued by the CR cannot uniquely authenticate the identity of the person that presents the certificate. The legal documents for identity verification and authentication based on the respective registers are illustrated in Figure 2.

COUNTRY CASE 2

Namibia: Building institutional capacity over the long term

The National Population Registration System (NPRS)

In Namibia the civil registry and civil identification are located in the Ministry of Home Affairs and Immigration.

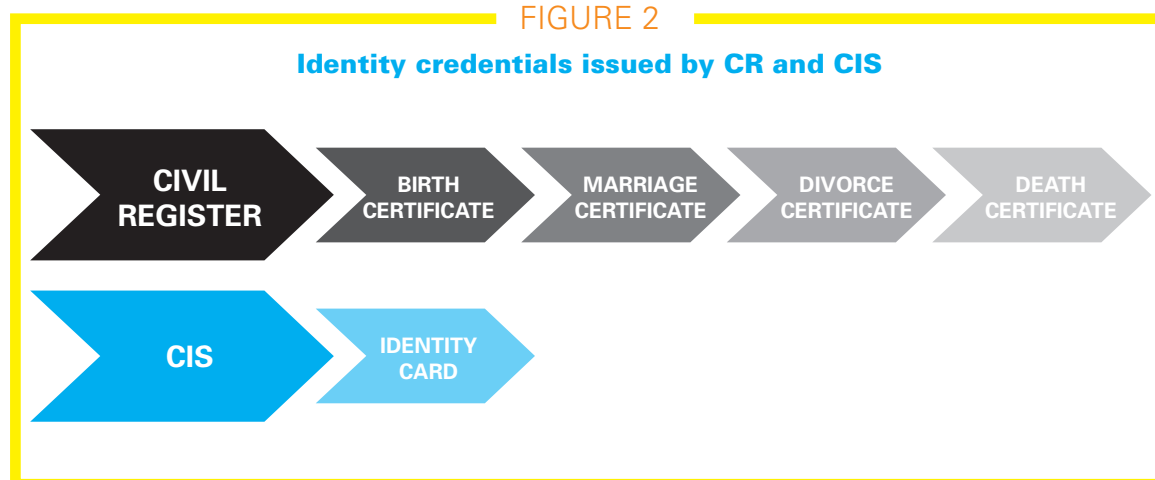
Namibia has built up its identity management system one module at a time, over time. Since the inception of the modernization process the civil register and the civil identification systems have worked in close collaboration with the national e-Governance agency to put in place a platform (X-road) for online authentication for accessing services.

In parallel to upgrading their civil registration and civil identification system, the Ministry undertook an institutional change management process that proactively involved all staff at all levels. This approach improved registration performance and the quality and trustworthiness of the records.

Namibia has had a long-term view of the modernization and integration processes for CR and CI; the government has financed all activities with only technical assistance from UNICEF and the World Bank.

- Key principles in the NPRS modernization processes:
- IT solutions must be appropriate for the country's context and directly support the core functions of the registry while transitioning from manual records to an electronic database.
 - Improvement to the CR must be implemented and deployed in a manner that takes into account the realities and capacities of the agency.
 - Clearly defined governance roles and responsibilities and accountability of key institutions involved.

FIGURE 2



In most countries, CI requires the presentation of one or more documents that will confirm the person's identity to a degree that is defined by law, decree or tradition. These must be acceptable to the CI agency, as it is the agency that will have to guarantee the veracity of the identity claim once an identity card has been issued.

The documents most commonly required are:

- Original birth certificate
- Notarized copy of the birth certificate
- A nationality certificate
- Proof of address
- Proof of profession or diploma
- A marriage certificate (in some cases only for the woman)
- A divorce certificate for divorced persons
- A death certificate of the spouse for widows
- Affidavits in lieu of missing documents

Additionally some countries will allow the testimonies of two witnesses whose identities can be authenticated with their national identity credentials. The witnesses should be at least the same age, or preferably older, to verify a person's identity for enrollment in the CIS.

If a person does not have the required documents, his/her enrollment in the CIR

can be denied. The safest way to ensure the right person gets the correct identity card is to have universal birth registration and introduce a unique identity number (UIN) from birth, both on the birth certificate and in the person's record in the CR. At different stages in a person's life, it is crucial to have birth certificate, a marriage certificate, a divorce certificate, or a death certificate for a relative. These are necessary for obtaining a passport, taking out a loan, or obtain a deed for a property.

The use of biometrics can be a powerful tool for identification, verification and authentication. However, it is important that "end users and various stakeholders recognize and give more thought on the impacts brought by biometric technologies on data privacy protection" (Woo, 2010). It is always important to ensure informed consent when collecting biometrics, especially from the most vulnerable groups such as refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs).

There is more to a person's identity than biometrics. A differentiated approach to collecting and managing personal data for verification is not only likely to be safer, but also makes sense economically if a country is

not ready to invest in readers for cards and/or biometrics, or if the necessary infrastructure is not fully developed.

While collecting and using biometrics for children is a possibility, it requires technological upgrades that make it expensive and cumbersome to use in day-to-day operations. For instance, using an automated fingerprint identification system (AFIS) to authenticate an infant's or a small child's finger print would require the system to be recalibrated.

Another question that arises relates to the ethics of collecting biometrics from individuals who cannot give their informed consent, such as children.

3.3 Civil identification built on civil registration

This interdependency between CR and CIR is defined as an identity management system (IDMS), as illustrated in Figure 2. Identity management is the combination of systems, rules and procedures that are defined between an individual and organizations regarding the entitlement, use and protection of personal information in order to authenticate individual identities and provide authorization and privileges within or across systems and enterprise boundaries (IDB, 2015). For an IDMS to be efficient and effective, the institutional and administrative link between CR and CI is critical. The systems and the rules are provided by the institutional arrangements, whereas the procedures are given by the administration and practices of the registers.

Technically, the systems can be set up as interconnected or interoperable systems, depending on the ICT framework. If CR and CI are interconnected there is one point of contact between the two, i.e. the two registration systems may not have full insight into each other's records. If the CR and CI

are interoperable, it means that the two registration systems may have full insight in each other's records, and depending on hierarchy of access, may also have the right to amend or correct content in records.

The preferred IDMS model is establishment of identity by timely birth registration and collection and recording of additional attributes that will lead to a unique, secure and legal identity. This flow from a lower level to a higher level of identity assurance strengthens the veracity of the system as well as the trustworthiness of credentials issued.

The CR issues certificates corroborating an individual's civil status and familial links, and confirms legal identity, but does not necessarily bestow citizenship, except in countries where citizenship is bestowed on anyone born in the country ("jus soli").

The CIR issues identity cards (or 'credentials') that uniquely confirm a person's identity, usually founded on his/her CR record. The credential, when presented by the holder, can be checked either by visual inspection, machine readability, or digitally, depending on the credential's sophistication and/or configuration, for access to benefits or services.

3.4 Leveraging civil identification systems to strengthen civil registration systems

In a perfect world with universal and timely birth registration, the processes outlined in Figure 1 would be automated and function seamlessly. In the case of interconnectivity and interoperability between CR and CIR, the functionality could be hindered by weak legal frameworks, paper-based legacy systems, outdated procedures, siloed institutions, lack of a civil service tradition (i.e., registrars are politically appointed), insufficiently trained human resources, lack of administrative resources, or weak or outdated ICT resources, to mention a few. Furthermore,

as with any composite system, success hinges on the weakest link(s), which is often related to the CR.

Civil registers have often been the weakest link in the IDMS because they are paper based and therefore have not been able to keep a central repository of records up to date. Another challenge is that CR does not necessarily issue a birth certificate at the time of registration because the recording needs to be verified by an official that may have a backlog of records to sign or may not be present every day of the week. Or they might have run out of paper. Parents may be slow to pick up the birth certificate because they do not understand the value of the document, or they live so far away from the CR they may be unable to return to pick up a copy of the birth certificate.

Confronted with dysfunctional registration systems, there are countries that have preferred to put in a CIS that issues identity cards based on biometrics, instead of solving the problem upstream by upgrading and modernizing the CR system.

Had the CR been upgraded, and efforts to achieve timely birth registration been commenced prior to (or at a minimum, parallel to) putting a CIS system in place, the roll out of a CIR would have been firmly grounded on already existing identities that could easily have been verified for a smooth implementation.

In some cases the CIS is created to ensure voter registration as part of a democratization process. However, this does require proof of age, such as a copy of the individual's birth certificate and proof of nationality, and can exclude people who in principle are eligible to vote but who cannot present the required documentation. Furthermore, depending on enrollment age a CIS may exclude the 0-18

COUNTRY CASE 3

Thailand: UIN tradition and solid links to vital statistics

The Bureau of Registration Administration (BORA) is responsible for operating and maintaining the database for the entire population of Thailand, and for issuing identity cards and household booklets. BORA is located in the Department of Local Administration in the Ministry of the Interior.

Thailand started issuing unique identity numbers to citizens in 1982, and this is the attribute that connects their biographical and biometric data in the BORA system.

Because of a long-term approach, and political support and commitment, Thailand has achieved over 99 per cent birth registration. Interestingly, since 2008 Thailand registers and provides birth certificates

to all children born in the country, although children of foreign-born parents are not granted citizenship rights. BORA has also set up a system for unique identity numbers for non-citizens.

The country has set up a system for reporting vital events from the civil registry and health authorities to the statistics agency, which has created a framework for evidence-based public health policies.

Thailand has a high rate of death registration. Efforts continue to improve the quality of the cause-of-death information given the still existing gap due to the proportion of ill-defined and misclassified cause of death.

age group from having an identity credential. These individuals should at least have a birth certificate to prove their identity. Confronted with the challenges of requiring proof of age and nationality, countries have then worked backwards to transform the civil register from an analogue or paper-based system to a system of electronic records, digitally accessible that has been linked with the CIS.

Countries that did start out strengthening their CIS without regard to the CR have found that they did not get sufficiently trustworthy foundational information, such as birth date, place and familial connection without linking the application for an identity card to the CR, and began aligning the two registers by digitalizing the CR and linking it to the CIR. It is a slow and painstaking task that requires meticulous attention to detail.

FIGURE 3

Illustration of personal information recorded in the CR and CIS registers

CIVIL REGISTER	CIVIL IDENTIFICATION SYSTEM
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • last_name_CHAR • first_name_CHAR • uin_INT • birth_date_DATE • gender_('M','F') • place_of_birth_CHAR • mother's name_CHAR • father's name_CHAR • registr_date_DATE • date of marriage_DATE • name of spouse_CHAR 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • last_name_CHAR • first_name_CHAR • uin_INT • birth_date_DATE • gender_('M','F') • place_of_birth_CHAR • mother's name_CHAR • father's name_CHAR • nationality_CHAR • breeder doc verified_('Y','N') • address_CHAR • online authenticationCR_('Y','N') • biometrics_('Y','N') • enroll_date_DATE

If the CI records are in an electronic database and the quality of the data complies with relevant standards and requires utility, objectivity and integrity, a mirror database for the CR can easily be achieved by transferring the minimum biographic information fields (highlighted in bold in Figure 3) to the CR database.

Going forward, all births from a given date should be registered in the CR database, and a UIN issued for future linkage with the CIR. At the same time, processes should be in place to digitalize paper records moving backwards from that same date.

4. Opportunities and challenges

Countries have long recognized these challenges and have sought to increase registration and improve the quality of the service to users. Rwanda and Peru are two interesting cases. Both countries reshaped their CR and CI systems after coming out of internal conflict, and both countries have

achieved an admirable level of registration and trust among the population. Both countries have taken a long-term view, and built up their systems module-by-module. Laws have been changed or updated, administrative routines changed, customer service improved, audit trails incorporated, quality of paper and plastic credentials improved, to mention some.

An overview of IDMS success shows that it does not matter where the CR and CI agencies are located in the government structure: What matters is having in place an overall strategy for their integration and interoperability (OSCE, 2017).

4.1 The politics of identity management

Identity management is so much more than technological solutions and mechanical registration. It goes to the heart of public sector and democratic governance, and is a prerequisite for the provision of – and access to – public services (Grindle, 2007; Harbitz and Boekle, 2009). How this matter is handled depends on political will and support.

Confronted with dysfunctional registration systems, there are countries that have preferred to put in a CIS that issues identity cards, at the cost of a needed upgrade and modernization of the CR system. In some countries the CIS is created to ensure voter registration as part of a democratization process. However, this does require proof of age, such as a copy of the individual's birth certificate, and proof of nationality, and can exclude people who cannot show either. Furthermore, depending on the enrolment age a CIS may exclude the 0–18 age group. These individuals should at least have a birth certificate to prove their identity. Confronted with the challenges of requiring proof of age and nationality, countries have then worked backward to transform the civil register from an analogue or paper-based system to a system of digitally accessible electronic records.

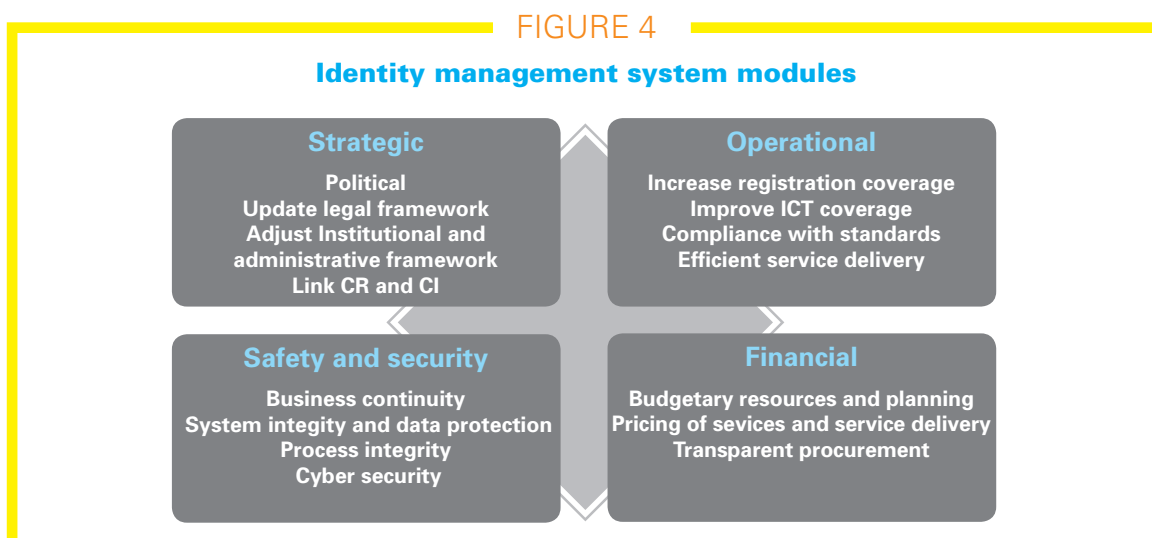
A number of countries issue national identity cards (NID) to citizens only. However, some countries issue NIDs to citizens and residents alike (e.g., Namibia, Ghana, UAE, Kuwait), noting citizenship or residency on the card.

For people as well as the public and private sectors to trust the veracity of the documents issued by both the CR and CI, the agencies

need to be in a position where their management of personal data will not be compromised in any way. An efficient and impartial complaint and rectification mechanism, easily accessible to customers, will also contribute to building trust in the CR system. The agencies should also be able to ensure that the information stored will not be used for purposes other than intended.

With register and services going digital, there is a growing need for protection of personal data and cyber security. Countries, and in particular their CRS and CIS, need to be conscious of how personal information data are created, collected, processed, stored, disseminated, or in some rare cases, disposed of. The CR and the CIS must be able to guarantee the integrity of personal data and protect the information from unauthorized access or revision, to ensure that the information is not compromised through corruption or falsification.

To ensure the secure development, implementation and running of an IDMS, four aspects should be considered. These are the strategic, operational, and financial as well as safety and security features of the system as illustrated in Figure 4 below.



Integrated identity management systems could have a significant impact on national development goals by creating synergies and allowing for timely and well-organized interaction with entities that require verification or authentication of identities. One example is a ‘one-stop-shop’ for people to access public services.

Verification is defined as the procedure to check that a product, service, or system (or portion thereof, or set thereof) meets a set of design specifications (ISO 9000). An example would be the registrar checking the certificate of live birth to make sure that all biographic information is correct and the person who is seeking to register the birth has the authority to do so, prior to creating the CR record for the child.

Authentication is the same as verification but with the added processes of checking the information on the credential of the bearer against information in a record or database. An example of this is the presentation of a birth certificate to enrol in school, i.e., the granting of access to a service.

For effective IDMS there are multiple stakeholders that hold diverse powers, interests and roles. There are the formal (presidents, legislators, bureaucrats) and informal (private sector, media, civil society) institutions and they operate on different levels and with different objectives and at

different speeds. The one thing they tend to have in common is to make the public sector more efficient, and recognize that the CIR is an important part of this schema. There is also a growing recognition that the lack of identity credentials causes exclusion and inequitable growth.

Unfortunately, the problem solving capacity expectations of IT solutions are often not realistic. It is glaringly obvious that many countries, especially developing nations, lack the resources to take full advantage of IT, partially because of the lack of relevant skill sets in the public sector. This can lead to potentially disastrous vendor lock ins. Some vendor dependency will always be the case, but it is preferable that local resources and institutional capacity are created and maintained.

The key enabler for a twenty-first century IDMS is the political decision to strengthen the role and capacity of both CR and CI systems through a national identity strategy that is inclusive and human-centered with the goal of reaching universal registration. The implementation of this strategy requires improvement of legal frameworks and budgetary considerations at the macro level, and institutional and administrative upgrades at the operational levels, as outlined in Table 3.

Considering the multifaceted and multi-layered operational procedures and processes

Table 3: Political considerations for improved registration coverage

National policy considerations	Institutional policy considerations
Legislative will	Training of staff
Legislative focus on inclusion	Awareness raising
Removal of outdated legal barriers to timely registration	More efficient registration processes and procedures
Budgetary prioritization	Investment in ICT and technology
Information campaigns	Special attention to vulnerable groups
	Auditing, quality control, applying standards

involved in developing a smooth and efficient interface between CR and CI, it is important to have a long-term perspective on implementation of activities. Managing expectations and building a sound foundation for an IDM system is best done by developing a road map ex-ante along with a sound system of monitoring and evaluation of milestones and processes.

4.2 Operational considerations

The use of information and communication technologies (ICT) holds much promise both for CR and CIS. Many nations still have paper-based CR records, and the transition from paper to digital systems is a challenge to many of these countries.

Before investing in ICT and digital systems it is recommended to analyse the legal and institutional framework that could impact the implementation and operation of upgrade plans.

The electronic and digital environment options for identity management are evolving fast for both CR and CI. This produces challenges with respect to maintaining available and searchable data records. The advantage of an electronic system is that an identity can be verified through the presentation of an identity credential, such as an identity card, in

a very short time with a very high degree of confidence. This will allow the bearer of the identity credential to gain immediate access to benefits and services, rather than the old fashioned way of presenting a number of paper-based supporting documents.

The operational transition from a paper based CR to an electronic CR “should be based on a robust framework that includes definitions, governance, organizational structure, as the roles and the responsibilities of those involved” (Gregson and Harbitz, eds., 2015). The framework consists of the procedures, processes and activities pertaining to the legal, institutional, administrative and ICT aspects for an electronically based RC.

There are a number of standards that can be applied to improve the functioning of the CR as well as creating a communication structure for CR and CI. However, there is no set standard or pattern that will fit every country, and any reform or upgrading will have to be tailored to each country’s special conditions and needs. Table 4 is not meant to be exhaustive but to provide an indication of some organizations that set standards for management of processes (registration, administration, quality management, etc.) and technological (IT) standards.

Table 4: Overview of select standard issuing organizations

Organization	Standard
International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)	Sets standards for machine readable travel documents that are also applicable to ID cards (e.g. size and layout of content on cards)
International Organization for Standardization (ISO)	ISO9001: Quality management of processes ISO15000: Specifies the requirements for a collaboration-protocol profile (CPP), and a collaboration-protocol agreement (CPA) ISO20000-1: Service Management System Requirements ISO27010: Information Technology: Security Techniques
National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST)	SP 800-63-3 Digital Identity Guidelines SP 800-63A Enrollment and Identity Proofing SP 800-63B Authentication and Lifecycle Management SP 800-63C Federation and Assertions

Organization	Standard
UNSD	Defines what biographic information is collected for the creation of a civil registration record in the UN <i>Principles and Recommendations for Vital Statistics Systems, Revision 3</i>
International Telecommunications Union (ITU)	Issues recommendations (standards) for how telecommunication networks operate and interwork

With respect to countries that have been issuing paper-based national identity cards, in many cases they continue to have paper-based records in the CIR as supporting documentation. This record will normally contain a picture, signature and inked fingerprints. It is a costly and time-consuming process to digitalize and digitize these records so they become searchable in a database. The biographical information can be typed in (digitalized), and the record itself scanned (digitized). However, the challenge is the “readability” of inked fingerprints; the quality has to be very good in order for these to become suitable as attributes that can be used for verification or authentication of the identity of the person.

The main goal of a CIR is to issue an identity credential, or card, that will be trusted both by users and entities that need to verify the bearer’s identity to access service and benefits. The process of verification or authentication of identities is to gain access to rights, benefits or civil duties for the holder, and should adhere to the 4-Vs: velocity, veracity, validity and value. Without the legal and institutional frameworks in place, ICT investments have in many cases been unable to deliver the expected results.

IDMS is a State/Government responsibility, as is the secure management of collected

information and protection of personal data. As countries move forward with upgrading systems and advancing e-government agendas, it is important to build trust in the delivery of and access to electronic service delivery. A central element in electronically based CR and CIR systems is to have clear protocols for the collection, use, disclosure and retention of personal information.

5. Users: Inclusion and participation

Many countries still refer only to citizens for issuance of birth certificates and national identity credentials. A birth certificate does not automatically bestow citizenship, but it does give the child a legal identity that will enable him or her to pursue citizenship.

In the world today, there are more than 68 million refugees and internally displaced persons, as well as more than 3 million considered stateless. It is therefore necessary to take a fresh look at the clients or users of public and private services and assess the minimum attributes necessary to give everyone access to basic services and benefits such as healthcare, education, and opportunities to earn a living and thus break the cycle of poverty in which many of the undocumented are trapped.

Table 5: Population and birth registration data

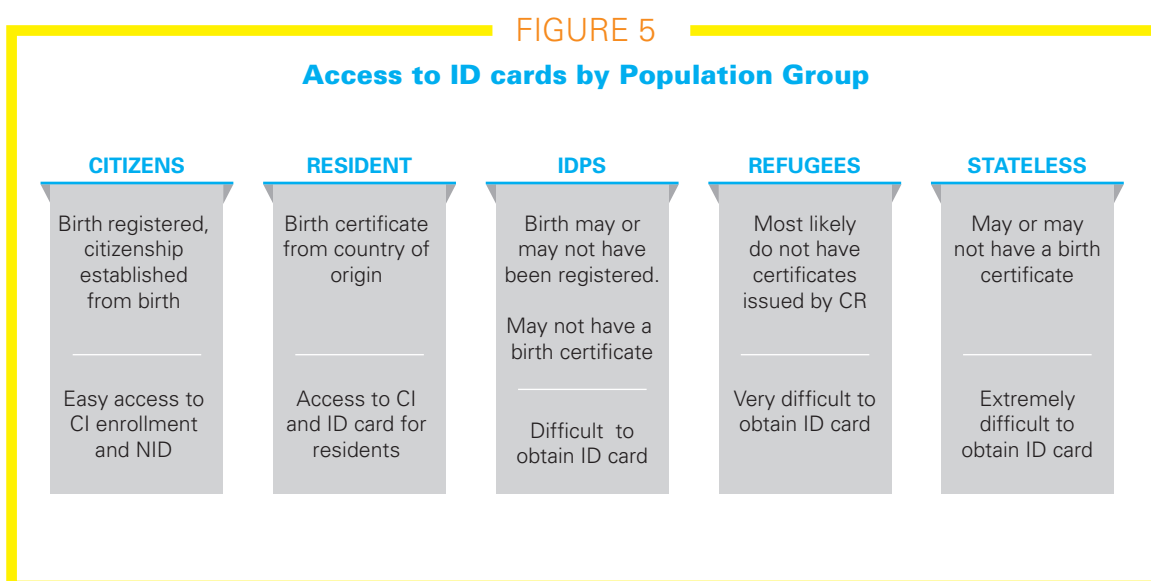
	AFG	BGD	BTN	IND	MDV	NPL	PAK	LKA
Population (thousand) ³²	34,656	162,951	797	1,324,171	427	28,982	207,774	21,203
BR % 0-5 (2010-2016) ³³	42	20	98	72	93	54	34	97
% with birth certificates	n/d	n/d	98	n/d	n/d	54	n/d	n/d
Obligatory voting	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No

Bhutan, Sri Lanka and the Maldives have birth registration data on par with developed nations. What is not known is if all children whose births have been registered in the CR have a birth certificate. A child without a birth certificate may not be given access to basic public services such as health and education. The older the child gets, the more difficult it may be to obtain a copy of a registered birth in that the burden of proof on the parents to have the child registered may become insurmountable, such as the cost of legal procedures.

The other countries in the region continue to improve their birth registration data but some

have a way to go to achieve universal birth registration.

Within any given country there may be different population groups including, first and foremost citizens and residents but also refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs), and stateless persons and other non-citizens. As human beings, all are entitled to be recognized according to international conventions and national legal frameworks. What types of identity credentials they are entitled to depends on national legislation. Namibia, for instance, has a blue national identity card for citizens and a pink and blue identity card for permanent residents, in both cases from the age of 16 years.³⁴



³² WBG. 2016

³³ UNICEF 2017 using DHS data and MICS

³⁴ <www.gov.na/identity-documents>

Countries that only issue ID cards to nationals will in most cases depend on certificates from either the CR or from the police for the applicant to prove his/her nationality. Figure 5 illustrates the requirement to access national ID cards by population groups. Legal, or regular, residents have to provide supporting documentation from their country of nationality, such as a passport, to obtain a residency permit. The three groups that will have problems in obtaining an ID card are the IDPs, refugees and stateless persons.

Countries will benefit from providing individuals with identity credentials. What kind of credentials will depend on national legislation, bearing in mind that a person's legal identity does not necessarily equate with citizenship. Not only does this give the state a better idea of who is in the territory, but also as a tool to develop public policies and how public services should be provided. Just as important are the opportunities for participation in civic life, or economic alternatives for the individuals.

In his book, *Development as Freedom*, the Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen posits that instead of income poverty for development to be sustainable there should be a focus on "capability deprivation". Lack of identity credentials deprives a person of the capacity to access benefits, services and economic opportunities.

While it is the government's responsibility to set up and manage CR and CI systems, the success measured in terms of universal registration and enrolment is dependent on the user's trust in the system. It is in many respects an intangible value, but countries that have linked timely provision of public services with presentation of identity credentials (either a certificate issued by the CR or ID-card issued by the CI) have been able to make considerable progress toward universal registration.

6. Final reflections

More and more countries are recognizing that completeness of civil registration and civil identification is a condition for efficient and human-centred governance models as well as for sustainable development. Universal registration is as important for service delivery and security as for public sector policies, planning and investment.

The Asia and Pacific Ministerial Declaration, 'Get Every One in the Picture', adopted in Bangkok, Thailand, in 2015, affirms the importance of the CR and the documents they issue as a key for proving legal identity, good governance, and access to services and benefits. The Declaration recognizes that "the majority of the countries in the region do not possess universal and responsive civil registration," and sets three goals to achieve by 2024:

1. Universal civil registration of births, deaths, and other vital events.
2. All individuals provided with legal documentation of civil registration of births, deaths, and other vital events, as necessary to claim identity, civil status, and ensuing rights.
3. Accurate, complete, and timely vital statistics, based on registration records, produced and disseminated.

The Declaration further lays out six principles for its implementation. The first of these principles is that each country takes the lead in improving CR and their vital statistics.

As countries initiate projects and programs to improve the functionality of the registries and facilitate registration, the practical solutions have to be tailored to each country's particular context and situation.

The premise for any institutional reform is political leadership and initiative.

Civil registers are supposed to include the entire population, regardless of immigration or residence status, and must be permanent, continuous, and universal. Civil registers have a strong legal basis, are often established through the constitution, and have clearly defined functions, institutional arrangements, and responsibilities. A civil identification register would be a stronger system when it is built on the CR, and both registers are integral parts of an identity management system.

The best country practices show that an identity management system (IDMS) is required to ensure universal registration. An IDMS is “the technical and organizational infrastructure used to define design and administer the attributes of an identity” (IDB, 2015). The attributes are the fields in the person’s record.

The two models for setting up a harmonized IDMS are (i) the “traditional” flow from civil registration to civil identification and the issuance of a secure and trusted identity credential; or (ii) the “back tracker” when the civil identification register is used to reconstruct a civil register through the creation of a mirror database with biographical information.

Whichever path a country follows to put an IDMS in place there are a few basic premises that should be considered:

At the policy level

- In the absence of a national IDM strategy with clearly defined targets, it will be difficult to achieve any of the three goals outlined in the Ministerial Declaration of 2015. At the operational level, an implementable roadmap is needed that

takes into consideration process and common technical standards between institutions and agencies.

- Any adjustment to existing CR and CI models must be tailored to respond to national circumstances. Countries that have succeeded in upgrading, modernizing and harmonizing their CRs and CIRs have included institution building as a part of their policies.
- There are multiple stakeholders that hold diverse powers, interests, and roles, and have different time horizons for upgrades. There are the formal (presidents, legislators, bureaucrats) and informal (private sector, media, civil society) institutions, and all need to be considered as part of the modernization processes.
- The pace, depth and scale of change in the area of technologies have had profound impact across the public sector. IT is not necessarily the panacea but is a tool that can make processes more efficient and user friendly, and the impact can be even more positive if the legal and institutional foundations are in place, or at minimum there are concrete plans to strengthen them.
- When defining a roadmap for improvements to CR and CI and their linkage, the first activity must be to define the desired end result and then describe each activity that is required to achieve it, with quantifiable indicators to measure progress. Just as important are managing risks associated with institutional changes. A roadmap is not a linear series of activities, but must be conceptualized and carried out as a series of modular, as well as parallel, endeavours.

At the operational level

- In the region, all countries have civil registration and civil identification systems at different stages of development. In strengthening the relationship between

the two it is important to consider the institutional, administrative, legislative, and ICT frameworks. The systems and related responsibilities may or may not be in the same institution; in any case, a trust-based relationship between the two is necessary to protect the individual and facilitate the provision of services to citizens.

- The desired modality is one record, or one identity, per person that follows an individual from cradle to grave, confirming that person's identity and civil and vital status, and the best option when this starts with birth registration.
- The main goal of a CIR is to issue an identity credential, or card, that will be trusted both by users and entities that need to verify the bearer's identity to access services and benefits.
- The operational efficiency of IDMS needs to be enhanced to respond to increasing need for verifications and authentication of identities with clear and measurable plans of action, with the necessary operating procedures and lines of responsibility in place.
- Standardization of processes and procedures as well as the use of applicable internally recognized technological standards are key for interconnecting or interoperating systems (data bases).
- An integrated and secure IDMS must be designed to protect personal data from misuse and theft. This will increase both trust in the system and the credential and lead to increased enrollment.

- Countries that have paper-based CRs could take advantage of CIR to transform analogue registers to electronic registers. However, this kind of "back tracking" requires changes to legal and regulatory frameworks, institutional arrangements and investments in technology.
- There is a recognized need for capacity building at all levels in the CR and CI agencies, a need that will only increase as more online (digital) services become available that require verification and authentication of identities.

The debate around much needed improvements to the civil registration agencies in the South Asia region, and their importance to civil identification and how CR and CI can and should collaborate, speaks to a comprehensive understanding among civil registrars of the significance of complete and all-inclusive identity management systems. There is also recognition of the importance of a holistic identity management system as a tool for consolidating good governance practices, efficient delivery of public sector services and more inclusive societies through the collaboration – both horizontally and vertically in and between the CR and CI frameworks –as well as transparency. This is important in the national context, but also between countries as the region moves toward more integration and increased cross-border movement.

GLOSSARY

Authentication	(a) The process of establishing confidence in the truth of a claim, which could be any declarative statement. (b) The process by which a user conveys data into a system in order to be recognized and to be able to interact with the system. (c) In biometrics, sometimes used as a generic synonym for ‘certification’.
Birth certificate	An original document or certified extract, usually issued by a government authority, stating when and where a person was born and usually identifying one or both of his/her parents as per the legal requirements of each country.
Breeder document	An identification document issued to support a person’s identity and used to obtain another document or privilege of greater perceived value, such as a passport or driver’s license. The most important breeder document is the birth certificate.
Certificate	(a) Public or private document that attests to the occurrence of an event. (b) In cryptography, an electronic document used to prove ownership of a public key.
Civil identification	The verification, registration, management, and conservation of personal data of citizens, with the goal of establishing a unique civil identity. Civil identification includes all of the data from the civil registration on that particular citizen as well as other attributes such as a unique number and/or biometric data. The civil identification serves as a basis for the verification of identity (i.e., passport or national identification documents).
Civil identification register	The repository of records set up for the recording and enrolment of a person’s biographic information and unique attributes.
Civil identification system	The institutional, legal, and technical norms established by government to conduct enrolment of identifying attributes. Such attributes can be any or all of the following: a unique identity number (UIN), a signature, biometrics (finger prints, iris scan), and a photo (digital or hardcopy) in addition to the person’s biographic information to uniquely and securely identify a person in a technical, sound, coordinated, and standardized manner throughout the country.
Civil register	The repository of loose-leaf file, ledger book, electronic file, or any other official file set up for the universal, continuous, and permanent recording, in accordance with established procedures, of each type of vital event and its associated data of the population of a defined area (e.g., county, district, municipality, or parish).
Civil registration	Continuous, permanent, compulsory and universal recording of the occurrence and characteristics of vital events (live births, deaths, foetal deaths, marriages, and divorces) and other civil status events pertaining to the population as provided by decree, law, or regulation, in accordance with the legal requirements in each country. An essential source of vital statistics.

Civil registration system	The institutional, legal, and technical norms established by government to conduct civil registration in a technical, sound, coordinated, and standardized manner throughout the country, taking into account cultural and social circumstances particular to the country.
Identity credential	Information (electronic, token, or paper) that seeks to uniquely identify or provide qualifications or attributes that define the individual identity.
Identity management	A combination of systems, rules, and procedures that are defined between an individual and organizations regarding the entitlement, use, and protection of personal information in order to authenticate individual identities and provide authorization and privileges within or across systems and enterprise boundaries.
Identity management system	The technical and organizational infrastructure used to define, design, and administer the attributes of an identity.
Interconnectivity	In computing, communication between two or more points to create a bond between them, even temporarily, to make a punctual or fixed transmission, with the permanent connection of two machines.
Interoperability	The ability of information systems and procedures to share or authenticate data and enable the exchange of information and knowledge among them. This exchange is necessary to ensure cooperation, development, integration, and delivery of joint services by public institutions. It is also necessary to implement various public policies, principles, and rights; transfer technology; and use applications that enable new services and result in better efficiency and cooperation among different applications. All of this facilitates the development of an e-government and information society.
Population register	A government data collection system in which the demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of all or part of the population are continuously recorded. Norway, Denmark, Sweden, and Israel are among the countries that maintain universal registers for demographic purposes, recording vital events (birth, marriage, moves, and death) so that up-to-date information on the whole population is readily available.
Validation	Verification that something is correct or conforms to a certain standard. In data collection or data entry, it is the process of ensuring that the data entered fall within the accepted boundaries of the application.

The definitions are extracted from the **Dictionary for Civil Registration and Identification**. Inter-American Development Bank. 2015 <https://publications.iadb.org/handle/11319/3679>.

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THE POTENTIAL FOR CROSS- BORDER COLLABORATION BETWEEN CIVIL REGISTRARS IN SOUTH ASIA³⁵

1. Introduction

Migration across borders is a common feature in South Asia. Cross-border movement can result in a person being born in one country, getting married in a second and dying in a third. The need for documents that certify the identity of the individual as well as each vital event occurring in the individual's lifetime has become increasingly important. It will remain at the forefront of the development agenda as part of the Sustainable Development Goals – SDGs Target 16.9: “By 2030, provide legal identity for all, including birth registration” and SDGs Indicator 17.19: “Proportion of countries that...(b) have achieved 100 per cent birth registration and 80 per cent death registration” (United Nations General Assembly, 2015). These documents are important not only for the individual during his/her lifetime but also for future generations.

Migrants are not a homogeneous group. Some have in their possession all their identity documents and work and residence permits in order, others cross borders irregularly and may or may not have identity documents. Refugees flee from natural or manmade disasters and often arrive without any documents that prove their identity origin. Further, some people may be descendants of people who migrated decades ago (with or without documentation).

In the global arena, Target 10.7 of the SDGs calls for the facilitation of “orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration

³⁵ This paper was authored by Renee Sorchik. It benefited from significant contribution from Kendra Gregson of UNICEF, Rikke Munk Hansen of ESCAP, Mia Harbitz, Bongkot Napaumpornv of UNHCR and Jeff Montgomery of PCRN, as well as from contributions provided during the meeting of civil registration professionals in Kathmandu July 2018.

and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies” (United Nations General Assembly, 2015). Without complete civil registration and without each individual possessing the corresponding certificate documents, it will be difficult to achieve this goal. However, the registration of vital events of those crossing borders, as well as the recognition of the certificates issued by another country for the individual and his/her descendants, represent legal and practical challenges to national civil registration systems.

While it is problematic for a migrant to be undocumented, it also has implications for the completeness of the civil register in both the country of origin and the host country. Incomplete civil registration means less reliable vital statistics, which are critical for public policy and planning purposes. Additionally, countries with incomplete civil registration will be unable to uphold their commitments to the SDGs agenda or monitor or measure many of the SDGs indicators as 16 targets and at least 70 of the global indicators require data that are best generated from civil registration systems.

The registration of vital events with an international element can add an extra layer of challenge to national civil registration systems and to achieving the goal of universal registration of births, deaths, and other vital events as set forth in the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) Regional Action Framework on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP, 2015). Cross-border collaboration among national civil registries is needed to support the registration of vital events and contribute to accurate vital statistics, and may also be required by individuals to obtain civil identity documents. Having an established mechanism of cooperation between the civil registries can also support safe cross-border movements. This paper will

discuss methodologies for collaboration as well as present some cases of functional cross-border collaboration between civil registries.

2. Cross-border movements in South Asia

Cross-border migration, permanently and for short or long periods of time, is a perennial feature of South Asia shaped and influenced by a common socio-cultural heritage, proximity, kinship ties (Srivastava and Pandey, 2017) and economic opportunities. Cross-border migration is permitted without passports or visas between India, Nepal, and Bhutan as a result of treaties and bilateral agreements (Khadria, 2005; UNODC, 2018), requiring only a document that indicates where the person is from. Other major migration corridors, sometimes in the form of irregular migration, include the border areas between Bangladesh and India, Afghanistan and Pakistan, and India and Pakistan (Srivastava and Pandey, 2017). The rising price of oil in the 1970s, the resulting economic boom in the Gulf countries and the need for low-skilled labour particularly in the construction sector, created an economic pull for South Asian migrants (Wickramasekars, 2011). Regional migration and migration to Gulf countries – Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates – still continues.

In 2017, South Asia was the source of an estimated 38.4 million emigrants (see Table 1) of which the majority went to the Gulf countries or to other countries in South Asia. The largest proportion of South Asian emigrants (44%) migrated to the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries. Many were on fixed term contracts as temporary contractual labour (Wickramasekars, 2011), which is why return migration and the consideration of circular (repeat) migration is such an important part of South Asian migration patterns (Srivastava and Pandey, 2017).

KEY FACTS ABOUT IMMIGRANTS IN GULF COUNTRIES, 2017

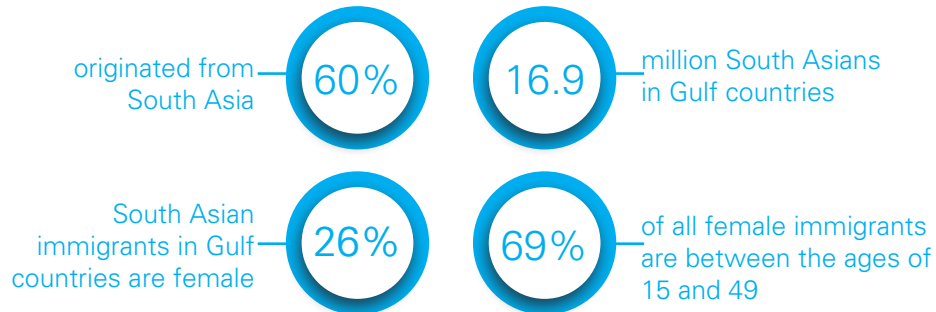


Table 1: Total emigrants from South Asia by country of origin and destination region, 2017

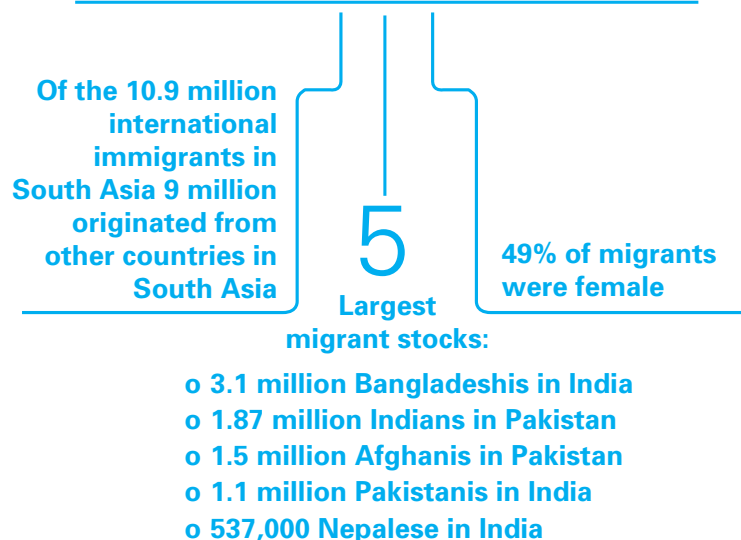
Country of origin	Total emigrants	Destination region for South Asian Emigrants			
		South Asia	Percent to South Asia	Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Countries	Percent of GCC Countries
Afghanistan	4,826,464	1,523,875	32%	448,806	9%
Bangladesh	7,499,919	3,178,887	42%	3,103,607	41%
Bhutan	43,970	35,147	80%	-	0%
India	16,587,720	2,419,636	15%	8,904,781	54%
Maldives	2,883	1,606	56%	-	0%
Nepal	1,738,442	578,582	33%	665,441	38%
Pakistan	5,978,635	1,192,606	20%	3,065,435	51%
Sri Lanka	1,726,900	161,324	9%	726,331	42%
Total	38,404,933	9,091,663	24%	16,914,401	44%

Estimates derived from: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) Population Division (2017); Trends in International Migrant Stock: The 2017 revision, United Nations database, POP/DB/MIG/Stock/Rev.2017.

Almost one quarter of South Asian emigrants migrate to another country in South Asia (see Table 1). In 2017, South Asia was home to approximately 11 million international immigrants 9 million of whom originated from another South Asian country. The top five migration patterns involved:

- Bangladeshis to India
- Indians to Pakistan
- Afghans to Pakistan
- Pakistanis to India
- Nepalis to India

KEY FACTS ABOUT IMMIGRANTS IN SOUTH ASIA, 2017



3. The importance of cross-border collaboration between civil registrars

The large number of migrants in South Asia has important implications for the registration of vital events in the region. Persons who reside or who experienced vital events outside of their country of nationality, persons with dual citizenship, or families where spouses are citizens of different countries all bring an international element and another layer of complexity to the registration of their vital events. In the case of registrations involving persons of two different nationalities, such as marriages between two people of different nationalities or births to a mother and father from two different countries, procedures may be complicated. For example, in Bhutan the minimum age of marriage is different when one spouse is from another country than between two Bhutanese, with a number of vital event registration documents required for the foreign spouse. If a birth happens overseas, for a citizen of Bhutan to register the child in the civil registry of Bhutan, a birth certificate from the country where the birth occurred is required (UNICEF, 2019). When nationality is passed down through the father, as in Nepal, children born to foreign fathers may encounter difficulties when trying to register the births (Cody, 2009).

To support the requirement for registration, cross-border collaboration among civil registry offices can ease the administration of civil registration of vital events with an international element, and support the achievement of the goal of universal registration.

4. Situations where cross-border collaboration may be required

A civil registry office in one country may need to confirm the veracity of a certificate issued by a civil registry in another country in order

to register a vital event. Conversely, they might be called upon by a foreign civil registry office to confirm the veracity of a document issued by their office so that an event may be registered in another country. Verification of certificates issued by the civil registry may also be required for other legal purposes. For example, a person who was habitually living in Nepal but receiving a pension from the UK may pass away in Nepal and be issued a Nepali death certificate. To cancel the pension or to change this to a survivor's pension, the UK will need to receive a copy of the death certificate and authenticate it.

The following are further examples of situations where cross-border collaboration is beneficial or may be required in reference to births, marriages and deaths:

Births

- Where individuals were married overseas but need to register a birth that occurred in their home country. The registry office may need to verify their marriage certificate with a foreign civil registry to register the birth, as is the case in Bhutan, for example (UNICEF, 2019).
- Parents may need to register the birth of a child that occurred in their home country, but one (or both) parent was born overseas, and the registry office needs to verify the parent's birth certificate and potentially their marriage certificate, if the marriage also occurred overseas.
- Where a birth took place overseas and the parents need to register the birth in their own country. This may involve verifying the birth notification or possibly birth certificate (if one was issued abroad) from the country where the birth occurred, as is the requirement in Maldives, for example (UNICEF, 2019).
- If the parents are non-nationals but need to register the birth of their child in the country

where it occurred, a marriage certificate may be required, as would be the case in India, for example (UNICEF, 2019).

- Where the individual is entitled to dual citizenship and needs to register his/her birth in the second country this may involve verifying the birth notification or possibly birth certificate (if one was issued abroad) from the country where the birth occurred as well as verifying the marriage and possibly birth certificates of the parents if either of them were issued overseas.

Marriages

- When one spouse is a national and the other is a foreigner, in order to register their marriage, confirmation that the foreign individual is not currently married, along with previous marriage and divorce records from the foreign civil registry office is needed as is the case in Afghanistan and Bhutan, for example (UNICEF, 2019).
- When non-nationals need to register their marriage in the country where it occurred and embassies or diplomatic missions are not able to provide services, civil registrars may be called on to contact civil registry offices in the relevant countries to verify the birth certificates of those wishing to get married, and to confirm they are not currently married to another individual, as is the case in India, for example (UNICEF, 2019).
- Where a couple married overseas but need to register the marriage in their own country, this may involve verifying the foreign marriage certificate (if one was issued abroad) or other documentation from the country where the marriage occurred.

Deaths

- Where a person died overseas and family members need to register the death in

the home country, civil registrars may be called on to contact civil registry offices in another country to verify the details of the death and receive a copy of the death certificate (if one was issued), as is the case in Maldives, for example (UNICEF, 2019).

- Where a person died overseas and family members need to register the death in the country where it occurred but embassies or diplomatic missions are not able to provide such services, civil registrars may be called on to contact civil registry offices in other countries to verify the birth certificate of the deceased and possibly marriage certificates to list next of kin in order to issue a death certificate for the deceased. If the person died in Bhutan, for example, they would need to provide a copy of identification documents (UNICEF, 2019), such as a birth certificate.
- Where a person died overseas and the civil registrar in the home country wishes to “close out” the records for her/him to prevent fraud and identity theft, the civil registrar will need to contact civil registry offices in other countries to verify death records match birth records in the home country.

Most of the above examples focus on individuals and their life circumstances. However, there are more systemic, generational circumstances in which cross-border collaboration between civil registries is necessary. In cases of more permanent immigration communities, where cross-border migration occurred generations ago, the registration of vital events of younger generations may be affected. The vital event certificates of parents who have migrated may be required to register any child who is born to them in the country they migrated to. For example, if the family migrated to Sri Lanka, to register the birth of the child, the date and place of birth of the mother

and father is required, along with the date and place of their marriage, data found on the birth certificate and marriage certificate, respectively (UNICEF, 2019). Another example is when the marriage and birth certificate of grandparents are required by the grandchild, who was born and is living in another country, in order to obtain citizenship.

5. Benefits of cross-border collaboration

As the examples above show, cross-border collaboration between civil registrars supports the registration of vital events, provides verification of certificates and the biographical, civil and legal identity of individuals. When registrars need to contact a civil registry office in another country, they may spend unnecessary time and resources trying to find the correct person to contact. By collaborating with civil registry offices in other countries, some of this burden can be alleviated by having a point of contact and standard operating procedures for fulfilling requests.

Collaboration may start as an informal professional network, or a semi-formal network, which can be built up over time. A regional network of civil registrars can benefit registrars and have a positive effect on registration by providing a common platform to share knowledge, good practices, and lessons learned in relation to the registration of vital events. This could include sharing innovations on how to provide easier user service, application of information and communications technologies (ICT), connections between civil registration and vital statistics, etc. A regional civil registrars' network can help to coordinate registries to develop compatible procedures and templates across countries, to enable

similar collection processes. This issue is being discussed in the Pacific Civil Registrars Network PCRN (see below). A network could also support countries to enter into more formal agreements for the purposes of data verification such as Afghanistan's agreements with some European countries (see below).

Cross-border collaboration can include developing frameworks for information requests, types of information to share and procedures for information sharing. Civil registrars are compelled to follow the stipulations of the law when registering and certifying vital events.³⁶ However, the law may not include provisions for sharing information or verifying records with civil registry offices of other countries.

When registry offices are contacted for information, they may not have the authority to share the requested information outside of their offices, particularly in regard to data confidentiality regulations. A formal agreement between registries can give them authority to collaborate for a variety of purposes and registrars can be assured that sharing the information specified in the agreement is within their purview. This will allow civil registry offices to develop standard operating procedures for fulfilling such requests in a timely manner. A formal agreement can also provide guidance on how to handle requests from other countries that may be outside the formal agreement.

6. Challenges to cross-border collaboration

Political will plays a large role in both helping and hindering collaboration between countries. Civil registration is the responsibility

³⁶ See the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) Statistical Division, *Principles and recommendations for a vital statistics system, revision 3*, Available online: <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/standmeth/principles/M19Rev3en.pdf>.

of sovereign states, and the vital statistics that are derived from it are important for protecting that sovereignty. Thus, cross-border collaboration requires finding common areas of interest. Leveraging existing bilateral agreements and political commitments should be considered. Limitations or differences in legislation and regulatory frameworks necessitate adaptation of procedures to the specific situations of the countries involved.

When discussing data sharing or data verification between countries, data security and data privacy should be key considerations. This considers what types of information can be shared or verified, and how that information will move back and forth between registries and stay protected. There is a difference between data sharing and verification. The latter may not require as much biographic information be transmitted, and may just elicit a binary confirmed (yes) or unconfirmed (no) response to verify the information of an individual. Similarly, the ability and desire of ICT systems to “talk to each other” (interconnectivity) is a consideration. ICT has made it possible to move large amounts of data rapidly and has the potential to streamline and simplify information sharing, but also comes with some risks in terms of data security and the privacy of an individual’s data. This calls for reflection on confidentiality; the data is owned by the person who provided it and what can be shared with others is only within the scope of what the individual initially agreed could be shared. The financial and human resources costs to enact such data sharing and to ensure privacy and security should not be ignored.

Different countries will have different legislative frameworks, security protocols, and data privacy policies, and thus will have different approaches towards collaborating with counterparts in other countries to improve the registration of vital events.

Differing approaches and policies need to be respected, with the understanding that the goal is to find common ground to work together towards universal registration of vital events in South Asia.

7. Current modalities for cross-border collaboration between countries

While the specific challenges of registering vital events with an international element may vary by country, they are present in some form worldwide. To overcome obstacles, regional civil registration networks have formed to facilitate communication, good practices and innovations. Additionally, several countries have entered into bilateral and regional agreements to improve registration and make services more accessible, as well as to improve national security by better understanding who is residing in their territory and decrease identity fraud by closing out records for deaths of citizens who have passed away overseas. Some examples of cross-border collaboration in South Asia and around the world are outlined below.

Apostille Convention

Within the auspices of the Hague Conference on International Private Law (HCCH) the Apostille Convention (also known as the ‘Hague Convention of 5 October 1961 Abolishing the Requirement of Legalisation for Foreign Public Documents’) facilitates the cross-border authentication of public documents between States parties to the Convention. It does so by replacing the cumbersome and often costly formalities of a full legalization process (chain certification) with the issuance of an Apostille (also called ‘Apostille Certificate’ or ‘Certificate’). Birth, death and marriage certificates are examples of public documents for which an Apostille

Certificate can be issued. Each authority keeps a register of all the Apostilles issued to combat fraud and verify the origin of the Apostille. Also, an electronic Apostille programme operates in 35 States. The Convention has 117 Contracting States, with India currently being the only State from South Asia (HCCHb, 2018). However, the Convention could be a vehicle for facilitating cooperation among countries in South Asia and with other countries to which South Asians are migrating, such as Europe, where many countries have signed.

South Asia: Afghanistan

The Afghanistan Central Civil Registration Authority (ACCRA) oversees both civil registration and civil identification in Afghanistan. ACCRA has collaborated with Australia, Canada, Finland, Sweden and the United States, establishing memorandums of understanding (MOUs) with the authorities in these countries for the purposes of identity verification services. Additionally, ACCRA has helped local embassies to verify identity related documents, and worked with the International Organization for Migration to verify Afghani identity documents for the UK (Mohtaata, 2018).

ACCRA found working directly with the ministries that deal with civil registration and civil identification, as opposed to taking requests through embassies or diplomatic missions, improved response time. Initially, legal roadblocks prevented data sharing, so MOUs were established to overcome some of the barriers and to set up data sharing and verification protocols. The lack of ICT infrastructure in Afghanistan also posed challenges. However, a process was developed where foreign ministries scan and upload the Afghan ID cards for which they are requesting verification, and based on the information received and the request, ACCRA checks its paper-based registers to verify the information.

ACCRA can generally respond within 72 hours of the request (Mohtaata, 2018).

Specific to the South Asia Region, ACCRA, in close collaboration with the Pakistani National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA), set out to provide undocumented Afghans living in Pakistan with Afghan citizen identity cards under the Afghan National Registration Project and the Pakistani Government's Comprehensive Policy on Voluntary Repatriation and Management of Afghan Nationals (NADRA, 2018; UNHCR, 2017; Mohtaata, 2018). The project involves collaboration between NADRA and the Ministry of States and Frontier Regions in Pakistan with ACCRA and the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation in Afghanistan, with support from the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and UNHCR, the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR, 2017). The project will allow Afghans to prove their legal status in Pakistan until the Afghan Government issues identity documents, such as passports (UNHCR, 2017). While the main focus of the project is issuance of identity cards, it includes issuance of birth certificates to children under 18 years of age by proof of registration centres operated by NADRA and mobile registration vans (UNHCR, 2017).

Similarly, ACCRA collaborated with the Government of Saudi Arabia to change the identities of 87,000 Afghans holding Pakistani passports. This work was done via e-mail, phone, and on the spot assessments conducted by ACCRA teams. ACCRA has also collaborated with their Iranian counterparts, exchanging identity-related services (Mohtaata, 2018).

South Asia: Bangladesh and Myanmar

In 2016, Bangladesh introduced birth registration of children born to registered refugees living in the Kutupalong and

Nayapara camps. The Bangladesh Department of Local Government extended the 2004 Birth and Deaths Registration Act to 18,564 children of registered refugees born in Bangladesh between 1 January 1992 and 30 June 2016. With technical support from UNHCR, local civil registrars could register children born to registered refugees after 30 June 2016 directly into the electronic Birth Registration Information System (BRIS) and in the functional refugee registration system. In 2017, registration of the Rohingya in Bangladesh ceased but in April 2018 UNHCR and the Bangladeshi Government signed an MOU on the safe, voluntary and dignified return of refugees in line with international standards. Birth registration of children born to refugees in Bangladesh is reiterated in the agreement (Napaumpornv, 2018). While registration had not yet started in June 2019, negotiations were in progress.

Southeast Asia

Thailand is home to more than 1.8 million non-nationals with irregular status; including undocumented migrant workers from Cambodia, People's Democratic Republic of Lao (Lao PDR) and Myanmar, stateless persons, and refugees. To combat the more systemic instances of under-registration, Thailand registers irregular migrants from Cambodia, Lao PDR and Myanmar. Thailand has entered into bilateral agreements with these three countries to regularize the migrants through civil registration, coordinate a nationality verification process, provide basic protection and facilitate their return. In addition, Thailand reformed its civil registration law in 2008 to ensure birth and death registration of everyone regardless of legal status. As a result, children born to irregular workers or undocumented persons have their birth

registered, are included in the civil registration system and are provided with a unique ID number at birth (Napaumporn, 2018).

Viet Nam is also facing challenges caused by cross-border migration from Lao PDR and Cambodia. In 2013, the Government of Viet Nam and the Government of Lao PDR signed a bilateral agreement to address irregular migration, and birth and marriage registration of people residing in border areas. The two countries are regularizing people residing in the border area by providing legal identity, including birth registration and marriage registration, through civil registration. By doing so, these populations in the border area have a legal basis to either claim citizenship or apply for permanent residence in one country or the other. Additionally, Viet Nam has initiated efforts to improve registration for stateless ethnic Vietnamese³⁷ and their children from Cambodia residing in provinces bordering Cambodia. The initial measure provided local officials with trainings on relevant legislations and step-by-step procedures for registering and issuing official documentation, including birth certificates, to these populations (Napaumporn, 2018). Cambodia is in the process of drafting a unified Civil Registration, Vital Statistics and Identification Law that meets international standards and lays the foundation for a modern and integrated CRVS and ID system. UNHCR supports the Government in drafting special procedures for birth and death registration of hard-to-reach and marginalized population groups (Napaumpornv, 2018).

At a regional level, UNHCR has worked with the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children (ACWC) since 2016 to implement a project on "Promoting inclusion and

³⁷ The Government of Viet Nam uses the term 'free migrants from Cambodia'.

sustainable development in building the ASEAN Community through ensuring the recognition of the legal identity of all women and children in ASEAN.” The ACWC-UNHCR project aims to realize the right of ASEAN’s women and children to birth registration, documentation, inclusion, legal identity and nationality, which are contained in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). In 2018, the project will discuss potential cross-border collaboration among ASEAN Member States and develop a workplan in the abovementioned areas (Napaumpornv, 2018).

The Pacific Region

The Pacific Civil Registrars Network (PCRN) was established in 2014 as a medium for registrars in Pacific Island countries and territories to share information, lessons learned and good practices (Henry-Anguna, 2018; PCRN, 2014). Data sharing between the civil registries in the region has become a major focus of PCRN’s initial workplan, as migration between countries is commonplace among Pacific Islanders (PCRN, 2014).

Many Pacific Islanders are born on their home island but travel overseas for educational and employment purposes or to be closer to their family (Henry-Anguna, 2018). Additionally, many Pacific Island citizens are required to travel overseas for medical treatment when facilities on their home island are inadequate, thus, many pass away in New Zealand and Australia (Henry-Anguna, 2018; PCRN, 2014). Births, deaths, and marriages occurring overseas are not registered on the home island, leaving records ‘open,’ which has implications for both identity theft and for the accurate compilation of vital statistics (Henry-Anguna, 2018).

To overcome this problem, the first data sharing trial of death records and name changes was implemented between New Zealand and the Cook Islands in 2016 (Henry-Anguna, 2018; PCRN, 2018). There was already a provision under the New Zealand Birth, Deaths, Marriages, and Relationships Registration Act of 1995, which gave authority to the New Zealand Registrar General to “share name change and death information with foreign registration authorities relating to a person whose birth is registered in the State in which the foreign registration authority has jurisdiction” (Henry-Anguna, 2018; The Government of New Zealand, 1995).

However, the Cook Islands had no mandate for the sharing of personal information with other countries. Thus, an agreement was formed between the two countries to supply and receive New Zealand name change information, death information, or both for Cook Islanders registered in New Zealand. The sharing of information was meant to: allow for positive identification of an individual, update birth records with death notifications, update birth records with name changes and provide data for statistical analysis and genealogical purposes (Henry-Anguna, 2018). New Zealand now has five data sharing agreements either in place or in the works with New South Wales and Victoria in Australia, and the Cook Islands, Tokelau and Niue (Montgomery, 2018).

Latin America and the Caribbean

In 2005, a group of civil registrars from Latin America and the Caribbean created the Latin American and Caribbean Council for Civil Registration, Identification and Vital Statistics (CLARCIEV is the acronym of its name in Spanish). The group has since grown to 23 member states. Its stated purpose is to:

"Promote and facilitate coordination, support, and cooperation of the member states' government institutions and agencies, modernization, and incorporation of technologies whose compatibility enables interoperability among institutions in order to provide reliable, timely, secure, and credible services that are vested with public trust, in full collaboration with the rest of the public and private agencies of our countries, supporting the democratic system, human and transaction security, but above all individuals' access to their rights through the recognition of their identity, in keeping with the legislation in effect in each country" (CLARCIEV, 2012).

CLARICEV actively supports cross border discussions such as the meeting in 2018 that examined challenges related to migration.³⁸ It also facilitates workshops for civil registration professionals in the region to exchange good practices.³⁹

In 2007, the three key civil registration development partners in that region – the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB), the Organization of American States (OAS) and UNICEF – signed an agreement to collaborate and coordinate efforts in the area of civil registration. Each of these organizations is an allied member of CLARICEV. These partners support the CLARICEV members directly through projects to support the modernization of (IADB) and access to civil registration (UNICEF). They also support cross-border initiatives such as improving birth registration in the border regions where El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala meet (OAS, 2015).

CLARCIEV as an organization does not have legal status and functions as a forum for

exchange of information. The OAS, through its Program for Universal Civil Registration (PUICA), provides the secretariat for CLARCIEV and as such organizes annual meetings and maintains the webpage. IADB and UNICEF have also contributed financially and technically to the annual meetings.

This collaborative coordinated effort between countries in Latin American and three key development partners has undoubtedly contributed to the major improvement in the regional registration rate, which has increased from less than 70 per cent to over 95 per cent in the past 15 years.

European Union

The European Association of Civil Registrars (EVS) (Europäischer Verband der Standesbeamtinnen und Standesbeamten) was formed in 2000 for the purpose of exchanging information and best practices related to civil registration, identity management and family law in the European Union (EVS, n.d.). Currently, 10 European countries are members of the EVS, with several other countries closely contributing to and/or in the process of joining (EVS, 2015a; EVS, 2015b). EVS facilitates the sharing of legal developments within member countries that could affect the registration of vital events. EVS also plays a key role in advising European Union policymakers on the need for harmonization of laws related to civil registration in the European Union in close cooperation with the International Commission on Civil Status (ICCS), an intergovernmental organization that facilitates international cooperation in European civil status matters and aims to

³⁸ <<https://clarciev.com/the-xv-clarciev-meeting-in-cartagena-comes-to-an-end-with-an-assessment-of-the-challenges-related-to-migration-vital-statistics-and-recognition-of-gender-diversity/>>.

³⁹ For example the meeting on improving the completion of registration and the quality of statistics held in 2018. <<https://clarciev.com/regional-workshop-on-the-use-completion-and-quality-of-statistics-on-births-and-deaths-strengthening-the-administrative-registries-with-a-perspective-to-follow-up-the-agenda-2030-and-the-montevideo/>>.

improve the operation of national civil status departments (ICCS, n.d.; EVS, 2015a). To allow members to network, share experiences and discuss the implications of belonging to the European Union, the EVS organizes an annual two-day congress in a member State (EVS, 2015a).

Due to the large number of European citizens who migrate to other European countries for work, education and even for health care, the European Union has recognized the need to share and verify data across civil registries. In order to do this, a pilot project was set up in Belgium, Germany, Italy and the Netherlands, which established a secure and certified electronic infrastructure to exchange information on births, deaths and marriages (European Union, 2017). The European Civil Registry Network (ECRN) was established "to ensure the safe and certified transmission of Civil Act (birth, death, and marriage) certificates exchanged among the local administrations of the EU member States (European Civil Registry Network, 2010).

In establishing ECRN, an analysis of the existing regulations and legislation regarding civil registration in each member State was conducted, along with an analysis on how to standardize systems and create interoperability in a sustainable way without sacrificing security (D'Amico, 2010). Under ECRN, a certificate can now be obtained from a member State in 2–3 working days and without persons and/or paper crossing a border. The secure web platform also ensures the authenticity of certificates (European Civil Registry Network, 2010; D'Amico, 2010).

The ECRN follows the recommendations and conventions developed by the ICCS (D'Amico, 2010). The Vienna Convention on multilingual extracts from civil status acts, which is signed by almost all EU countries, is the basis for international cooperation among EU civil

registries (D'Amico, 2010; ICCS, 2017). The Vienna Convention outlines the minimum information to be filled out for a valid birth, death, and marriage record and sets up a standard template that can be translated to many different languages so the information can be used in member countries (ICCS, 2017). Another 33 conventions regarding data exchange among civil registrars or the issuance of civil documents to citizens of the EU also form the legal framework for the ECRN but their ratification varies by country (ICCS, 2017).

In 2016, EU Regulation 2016/1191 on promoting the free movement of citizens by simplifying the requirements for presenting certain public documents in the European Union eliminated the requirement for an Apostille when sending birth, death, and marriage certificates between EU countries, and required mutual recognition of public documents of other EU member States (The European Parliament and The Council Of The European Union, 2016).

8. Conclusion

Cross-border collaboration among national civil registries can support civil registrars in achieving universal registration and improve the quality of vital statistics. Thereby, collaboration can ensure access to basic human rights and dignified treatment of migrants and immigrants.

While privacy and security of individual data must be considered before sharing information with a foreign entity, and the limitations of financial and human resources, legal frameworks, and political will could make cross-border collaboration challenging, the benefits far outweigh these costs. Cross-border collaboration has proven to be a cost-effective way to deliver registration services to improve registration completeness for both

resident and migrant populations, allowing for the issuance of certificates for vital events occurring in another country.

The formation of a regional network of civil registrars as a framework for collaboration can facilitate the sharing of innovations and good practices, which could improve the registration of births, deaths and marriages in all countries of the network. Regional networks foster relationships between civil registrars, providing them with a point of contact when they need to verify or confirm information regarding vital events that occurred in another country. Regional civil registration networks can support countries to enter into formal agreements with other countries in the network on data verification for improving the veracity of civil registration

records. A number of tools, such as bilateral memorandums of understanding, can be used to establish these agreements, and being party to the Apostille Convention can facilitate the actual verification process.

In summary, collaboration supports civil registrars in overcoming the challenges posed by cross-border movements and is necessary to ensure all vital events are registered regardless of where they occurred or to whom they occurred. Cross-border collaboration will thus play a key role in achieving the 2030 Agenda target of 'legal identity for all, including birth registration' and indicator of '100 per cent birth registration and 80 per cent death registration,' as well as the goal of universal civil registration in South Asia.

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CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

“MEETING OF THE CIVIL REGISTRARS OF SOUTH ASIA”

**Annapurna Hotel, Kathmandu, Nepal
24-25 July 2018**

From 24-25 July 2018, a group of professionals engaged in civil registration in South Asia met in Kathmandu, Nepal, for a meeting co-organized by the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) in South Asia and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia-Pacific (ESCAP) titled the “Meeting of the Civil Registrars of South Asia”. The group comprised twenty-two government experts from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, as well as representatives from UNICEF, ESCAP, UNHCR, UNSD and the World Bank. In addition, government representatives from Namibia, New Zealand and Thailand, and four independent consultants attended.

The meeting was organized to (i) discuss areas of common concern for the civil registrars; (ii) identify where there is mutual benefit for the civil registrars to collaborate across borders; and (iii) provide a forum to share innovative practices. The meeting aimed to (a) provide input into the design of the mid-term review of the Regional Action Framework on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific (2015-2024) and (b) consider the creation of an informal network of professionals who work in civil registration in the eight South Asian countries.

Participants were informed about the global and regional situation of civil registration, including the “Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System”, the Asia-Pacific CRVS Decade 2015-2024, and recent progress on birth registration. The group explored what is ‘identity’ and discussed efforts to link civil registration with a country’s identity-management system. Government experts shared their experiences with

national civil registration and vital statistics coordination mechanisms, cross-border collaboration and the relationship between civil registration and civil identification. The group exchanged challenges and opportunities in each of these areas.

COORDINATION

The successful implementation and maintenance of a national civil registration and vital statistics system in large measure hinges on systematic and active coordination among the civil registration office and other ministries and departments that directly or indirectly support or benefit from the system. The inter-dependent nature of civil registration functions in collection, registration and transmission of vital event records, demands close and continuous coordination and collaboration at all levels of administration. Coordination should not be an afterthought but must be addressed early on. Beyond government coordination, the meeting recognised the importance of development partners and donors aligning their support to government priorities. The participants recognised the importance of using registration data for vital statistics production by national statistical offices and international development partners.

All countries present at the meeting have coordination mechanisms in place, with the government ministries and administrative levels involved, and degrees of formality varying and reflecting the civil registry structure of the country. Challenges faced by one or more countries include: data security, inefficient bureaucracy, technical infrastructure and connectivity, geography, the limitations of current legislation, the low profile of civil registration in the government structures, and lack of human capacity. That

said, coordination has facilitated the coverage of civil registration, interagency coordination, and the provision of international support.

CROSS-BORDER COLLABORATION

High migration rates and cross-border movement was the backdrop for a dedicated session on cross-border collaboration among civil registrars and registries. Vital events for a single person may occur in different countries. Events of family members in one country may impact on a person who is residing in another country. Concrete examples of registrations with an international element were provided along with the solution implemented. Examples included Afghanistan's collaboration with Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Iran, UK, Canada, Sweden, etc. as well as many examples from South-East Asia of how to reach and include the refugee and stateless populations and the experience in the Pacific with cross-border data sharing. Depending on the situation in the countries involved, political agendas, common interests, personal contacts, professional relationships (not necessarily at the top level) as well as legislation and regulatory frameworks, different approaches should be taken. To be effective, a level of trust must be established between the registration systems.

The meeting emphasised beginning small to breed greater successes in the future. The meeting identified several common challenges to cross-border collaboration between civil registration offices including: privacy and security of individual data, the financial and human resource costs, limitations in the legal frameworks and political will. The group articulated the differences between data sharing, verification and authentication, and noted that different countries in the region have different approaches to each of these

areas. It was agreed that the benefits of cross border collaboration, such as better service delivery to resident and migrant populations, provision of clear documentation for those who are affected by events that occur in another country, and cost-effectiveness in delivery of registration services, fully justify efforts to overcome these challenges.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CIVIL REGISTRATION AND CIVIL IDENTIFICATION

With the need for a secure and efficient identification management system, the meeting discussed the relationship between, and uniqueness of, civil registration and civil identification systems. Both are primary registers as they provide the institutional anchoring for the verification and authentication of identities through the identity credentials they issue, with civil registration being the necessary foundation of any civil identification system. The systems and related responsibilities may or may not be in the same institution; in any case, a trustworthy relationship between the two protect the individual and facilitate the provision of services to citizens. Both are integral to a national identity-management system; a system, which needs to be tailored to each country context and capacity and with clear governance rules.

In the region, all countries have civil registration and civil identification systems at different stages of development. In strengthening the relationship between the two it is important

to consider the institutional, administrative, legislative, and ICT frameworks. Challenges faced include technology development, the different resources available for the two systems, the governance rules and legislative frameworks, and the human resource capacity. Security is a key consideration, noting it is 'when it will be hacked' rather than 'if'. With increased focus and resources being directed to civil identification, there is a risk that it may crowd out civil registration; jeopardize the sustainability and integrity of both registers; and that the importance of the legal identity of people, especially children, which is provided by civil registration, may be lost. The focus on the identity management systems are an opportunity to improve civil registration systems. There are many opportunities for closer coordination between civil registration and civil identification, such as the use of a common unique identity number in both civil registration and civil identification documents, use of similar infrastructure and registration processes, and the possibility for interconnection and interoperability around the commonly needed data to complete both civil registration and civil identification.

CIVIL REGISTRATION NETWORK (CR8)

The value of cooperation and communication between civil registration professionals across South Asia was acknowledged throughout the meeting. The group learned about the experience of the civil registration network in the Pacific, as well as heard of the experience in Central America. The participants saw value in having the ability to easily coordinate

with the other registrars in the region and to exchange experiences and good practices. A network would have a common platform to facilitate the communication. One of the themes of the group could be developing compatible procedures and templates across the countries. The network would provide inspiration, and positive peer pressure to accelerate improvements. There is an opportunity to capitalise on existing events and programmes that may support an informal network and/or be a place where the network may gather.

NEXT STEPS:

- 1) Participants committed to continue the collaboration and information exchange through an informal professional network comprised of those who work, or have worked, with civil registration from the eight countries in South Asia and other entities.
- 2) A core group of a chair, deputy and secretariat was established to initiate the network, with Homayoun Mohtaata (chair), Anir Chowdhury (deputy) and Kendra Gregson (secretariat) volunteering for an initial period of up to one year. The acceptance of the membership of this initial group was endorsed and applauded by the meeting.
- 3) The task of this initial core group is to develop a workplan, create a list of priority themes for the network to focus on, identify events where CR8 members may gather, develop an initial platform for communication, and define indicators to measure the success. Further, the group is to explore a potential event during the Pakistan civil registration summit in November 2018.
- 4) Participants are interested in further discussing: national coordination mechanisms; cross-border collaboration of civil registrars; the relationship between civil registration, civil identification, vital statistics and health information systems; and the use of ICT in civil registration. Each of these need to be further articulated.
- 5) Participants recognised the importance of having 'ambassadors' from other networks such as PCRN (Jeff Montgomery), AeHIN (Boonchai Kijjanayotin) and Latin America (Mia Harbitz will provide the introduction).
- 6) UNICEF and ESCAP agreed to circulate and publish the three background documents and conclusions and recommendations, incorporating the input from the Meeting.
- 7) The meeting will forward the conclusions and recommendations to the Regional Steering Group for Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific for information and consideration for the agenda of the mid-term review of the Regional Action Framework on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Plan.

MEETING ATTENDEES

This publication benefited from the input of civil registration professionals who attended the consultation in Kathmandu Nepal in July 2018.

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AFGHANISTAN	Homayoun Mohtaat	General Director	Afghanistan Central Civil Registration Authority, Kabul
BANGLADESH	Joytirmoy Barman	Registrar General (Additional Secretary)	Office of the Registrar General, Birth and Death Registration, Local Govt. Division, Dhaka
	Md. Mahbub Ul Alam	Deputy Registrar General	Office of the Registrar General, Birth and Death Registration, Local Govt. Division, Dhaka
	Md. Moyeen Uddin	Country Coordinator	CRVS Secretariat, Cabinet Division, Dhaka
	Anir Chowdhury	Policy Adviser	Access to Information (a2i) Programme
BHUTAN	Tashi Tobgye	Director	Department of Civil Registration and Census, Thimphu
	Thinley Wangchuk	Chief Civil Registration and Census Officer	Department of Civil Registration and Census, Thimphu
MALDIVES	Hussain Shifau	IT Executive, E-Government Development	National Centre for Information Technology, Malé
	Ibrahim Shaugee	Systems Analyst	Department of National Registration, Malé
NEPAL	Bhagawan Aryal	Director General a.i.	Department of Civil Registration
	Keshar Bahadur Pandit	Director	Department of Civil Registration
	Muktinath Subedi	Section Officer	Department of Civil Registration
	Sanjay Bahadur Rajlawat	Section Officer	Department of Civil Registration
	Nirmal Sharma	System Engineer	Department of Civil Registration
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	Surender Prasad Pandey	Demographer	Department of Civil Registration
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	Indra Kumari Thapaliya	Under-Secretary	Ministry of Federal Affairs and General Administration
PAKISTAN	Muhammad Asif	Chief Health/ National CRVS Focal Person	Ministry of Planning, Development and Reform
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	Nissanka Wijesiri	Assistant Registrar General	Registrar General's Department, Colombo
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THAILAND	Boonchai Kijsanayotin	Manager	Thai Health Information Standards Development Center (THIS), Health Systems Research Institute
	Gemma Van Halderen	Director of Statistics Division	ESCAP
	Rikke Munk Hansen	Chief, Economic and Environment Statistics Section	ESCAP
	Ziad Elgendy	Consultant	ESCAP
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	Renee Sorchik	Consultant, Cross Border	UNICEF ROSA
	Samuel Lantei Mills	Senior Health Specialist	World Bank, Washington
	Srdjan Mrkic	Chief Demographic Statistics Section	UNSD
	Claudia Cappa	Senior Statistics Specialist	UNICEF HQ
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