
CRVS Insight

April 2023



More than 30 speakers and interactive sessions provided insights and highlighted innovations during the first Asia Pacific CRVS Research Forum

The first [Asia-Pacific CRVS Research Forum](#) was held from 3-4 April 2023. The two-day online forum was organized by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). It focused on innovative methods and approaches contributing to achievement of the goals of the Asia-Pacific CRVS Decade and showcased country-level success stories. Some of the themes covered included enhancing community engagement in civil registration, addressing systemic issues to strengthen CRVS systems and improving mortality statistics, among others. Overall, the Forum offered a major research, information sharing, and capacity-building opportunity for participants, who shared experiences in more than 15 countries through paper presentations and interactive sessions. Abstracts, papers and recordings of the sessions will be made available on the forum website.

Participants included experienced CRVS practitioners and researchers from ESCAP Member States as well as representatives from international organizations, academia, private institutions and civil society.

ESCAP will support selected authors to finalize and publish their papers in peer-reviewed journals.

Funding was provided by the [Bloomberg Philanthropies Data for Health Initiative](#).



CRVS improvement opportunities and challenges discussed at a meeting of the Pacific Civil Registrars Network in Suva, Fiji

A [meeting of the Pacific Civil Registrars Network](#) was held on 20-22 March 2023 in Suva, Fiji. The meeting was co-organized by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific and the [Pacific Community](#) with support from other development partners. The meeting provided a professional forum for civil registrars to discuss priority areas that are of common concern in the region, with a particular focus on digitization and climate change and CRVS. Participants included professionals in civil registration from 17 Pacific countries. The objectives of the meeting were to:

1. Share progress and challenges in CRVS improvement efforts and identify common challenges
2. Facilitate knowledge exchange and potential collaboration on issues of concern of civil registrars in the region
3. Provide capacity building for sustainable institutional development leading to improved decision-making processes
4. Document existing practices in the Pacific

The meeting also featured status updates from participating countries on their existing CRVS challenges and CRVS improvement efforts. Presentations covered improving registration completeness, national coordination, digitization efforts, including data storage and protection, and key challenges.

Additionally, participants of the meeting benefited from field visits to registration facilities in Suva to see how the registration practices work on the ground.

The meeting documents are available from <https://sdd.spc.int/events/2023/03/pcrn-2023-meeting>



Review of CRVS Progress in the Pacific at a Meeting of the Brisbane Accord Group

A [meeting of the Brisbane Accord Group \(BAG\)](#) was organised on 23-24 March 2023 in Suva, Fiji by the [Pacific Community \(SPC\)](#), who are the secretariat of the group. Participants at the meeting included representatives from BAG member organizations. The group aims to coordinate CRVS related support to countries in the Pacific.



CRIM Director Signs Standard Operating Procedures, Preserving Corporate Practices and Knowledge in Vanuatu

Andy Kap Calo, Director of the Civil Registration & Identity Management (CRIM) Department in Vanuatu, recently [signed a raft of critically important Standard Operating Procedures](#) to ensure the preservation of the corporate knowledge and practices guiding the work of the Department.

The CRIM Department captured the exact procedures to register the birth of a child, undertake a name change or prepare the necessary documents for a marriage certificate. The procedures are recorded in a Standard Operating Procedure, which corresponds to the documentation of a detailed step-by-step process. The initiative is supported by the [UNDP/Vanuatu Electoral](#)

[Environment Project](#) as part of a larger delivery of new foundational identity management system.

In addition, the CRIM Department is in advanced stages of digitization of all records onto a comprehensive database. The new foundational identity management system is known as “RV5” and it replace the existing RV4 database. The database will provide up-to-date, accessible and validated data for use by different government and non-government entities.



Samoa begins to assess inequalities in CRVS

Samoa has been selected to receive support to undertake a CRVS inequality assessment. [An inception workshop was organized on 4 April 2023](#) by The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific. The objective of the workshop was to introduce the [inequality assessment project](#), further develop relationships among relevant stakeholders (data providers, data users, and policy makers), discuss challenges with doing such an inequality assessment, and collaboratively develop a plan for the way forward.

The inequality assessment project seeks to provide technical support and capacity strengthening to the Samoa Bureau of Statistics and other relevant national stakeholders to facilitate the implementation of CRVS inequality assessments using secondary data sources in Samoa. This will involve building capacity for demographic analysis to undertake inequality assessments in the future as well as dialogue with policy-makers to ensure the results are used for policy formulation.



CRVS Legal Review work in the Philippines, Indonesia, Bangladesh, and Cambodia

The Global Health Advocacy Incubator (GHA) is undertaking [legal reviews](#) to support the development of more effective CRVS systems in Asia and the Pacific.

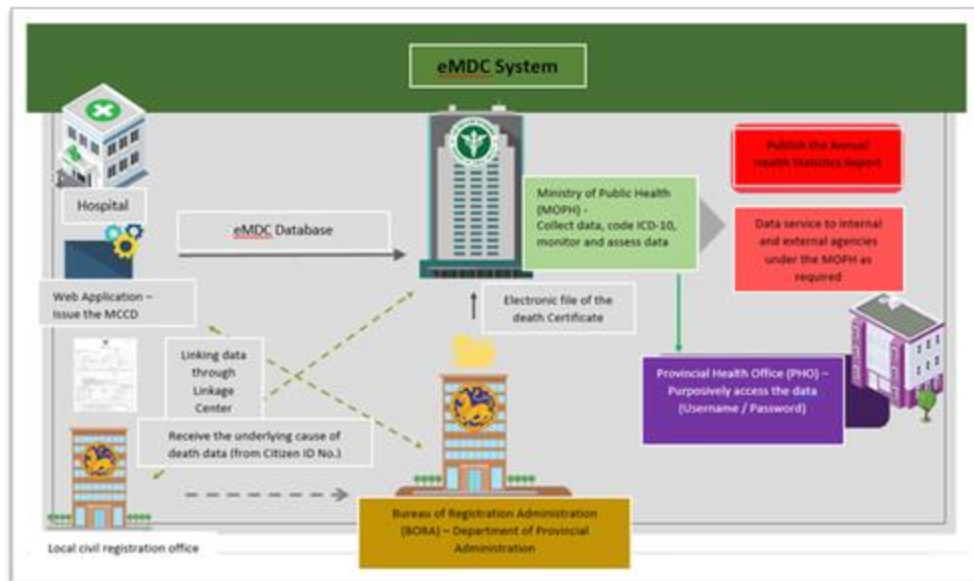
On 20-21 March 2023, a workshop was held to develop a draft CRVS law for the Philippines. It followed previous discussions held between the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) and GHA.

The Department of Health and PSA agreed to jointly develop a CRVS bill incorporating the policy recommendations identified by both agencies and advocate for enactment with local civil society support.

GHA also participated and supported a meeting in Indonesia organized during the week of 6 March by Vital Strategies and PUSKAPA (the local NGO conducting the CRVS legal review). During the meeting, GHA introduced the government stakeholders to the concept of the legal review.

Further, GHA and the Vital Strategies teams, are supporting discussions on key gaps in draft amendments to the Bangladesh Births and Deaths Registration Act and Rules.

Finally, In Cambodia, H.E. Sotheavy Chan, the Chair of the Legislative Drafting Workshop Group, presented the draft law on CRVSID to the National Steering Committee on Identification on 9 March 2023. In February, the Deputy Prime Minister addressed the Congress of the Ministry of Interior and stated that the draft law is a high priority as a sign of political commitment to this draft law. The draft law must now go to the Cabinet for approval before being submitted to Parliament.



Improving the Cause of Hospital Facility Deaths in Thailand

In 2015, Thailand was ranked as having the 4th highest rate of ill-defined cause of death in the world by the World Health Organization. While the Medical Certificate of Cause of Death (MCCD) is routinely implemented for all facility deaths in Thailand, the quality of cause of death data recorded in MCCDs has remained a challenge for the country and a priority for the Ministry of Public Health (MOPH). While improved training for physicians has been identified as one channel towards improvement, implementation of routine quality assurance of MCCDs has been identified as essential to improve facility cause of death data in the country.

Starting in 2021, with the support of Bloomberg Philanthropies Data for Health Initiative (D4H), Vital Strategies in collaboration with MOPH of Thailand, supported the design of and testing of a routine MCCD quality assurance system in one province of each health region in Thailand. The system includes the development and roll out of an electronic Medical Death Certificate (EMDC) to replace paper based MCCDs. The EMDC system not only grants access to MCCD data by provincial auditors, but also improves quality of MCCDs through automated checks at point of data entry and is linked to the civil registration database to allow for automated entering of shared patient data. In November 2022, the EMDC system was introduced to health facilities in Bangkok and some of them are using this system.

The data stored in the EMDC system is reviewed by trained provincial MCCD auditors before being sent to the national MOPH database. The physicians issued the MCCD can also re-access and review feedback and corrected MCCDs through the electronic platform. Auditors and physician errors are supervised closely by supervisors through an electronic dashboard and monthly provincial meetings. Site visits to monitor progress, raise awareness, and conduct further trainings have been held in each province for all health facilities in that province.

With successful completion of testing and positive feedback from physicians, it is planned to propose this implementation to the MOPH management for further instructing other public health facilities to switch from paper based MCCD forms to EMDC. The EMDC platform also allows for individual physicians to view their MCCD error percentage, and the current supervisory dashboard allows for monitoring and evaluation of each province and physician for further intervention targeting. This is an integral step for using the digitalizing tool for

improving the quality of cause of facility deaths. Looking forward, Vital Strategies and MOPH are developing a tool, using machine learning techniques, to automatize MCCD audit processes and further improve the quality of COD data derived from the electronic MCCD (eMDC) system.



The devastating human consequences of lack of registration described by New York Times Magazine

A [recent New York Times Magazine article](#) highlights that tallying births and deaths is one of the most needed public-health measures in many parts of the world. The article discusses the case of a Columbian family, unable to treat their child in a hospital facility due to the absence of a civil identification or registration number. In Colombia and other countries, birth and death registration is especially spotty in Indigenous and hard-to-reach communities. This situation prevents families from accessing the rights and benefits of citizenship.

The article also stresses that because many low- and-middle-income nations do not have well functioning systems for CRVS, about one-third of all births and a vast majority of deaths are not being counted globally. Rather than developing those systems, health officials need to rely on surveys, censuses and computer models that provide only crude estimates of specific illnesses. The article makes the case for the need to have effective CRVS systems in order to draw a more accurate picture of the situation.

Although difficulties persist in many countries, the article notes that progress is nonetheless being made. For instance, in Bangladesh, the national government has created a cabinet-level office devoted to building a modern civil registration and vital statistics program. In Colombia, a new central computerized system will soon make it far easier to vital event data into statistics that can be used to guide health policy. Verbal autopsy initiatives are also taking root and mobile technology is increasingly being employed in those countries and elsewhere.

RESOURCES

- Brief on Assessment, Analysis and Redesign of Birth and Death Registration Business Processes: Niue. ESCAP. [Available here](#).
 - Brief on Assessment, Analysis and Redesign of Birth and Death Registration Business Processes: Maldives. ESCAP. [Available here](#).
 - Getting everyone in the Picture for More Effective Climate Change Action. Document for the 79th session of the ESCAP. [Available here](#).
 - Levels and Trends in Child Mortality: 2022 Report. UNICEF. Available [here](#).
 - Never Forgotten: The Situation of Stillbirth Around the Globe. UNICEF. Available [here](#).
 - Implementation Research for Mortality Statistics Development: Findings from Indonesia. Research Square. Available [here](#).
 - Analysis of Death Due to Gender-based Violence: An Autopsy-based Cross-sectional Study from Mumbai. Vital Strategies. Available [here](#).
 - Factors Associated with Birth Registration in Indonesia. Electronic Journal of General Medicine. Available [here](#).
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UPCOMING EVENTS

- **24-27 April 2023:** [United Nations World Data Forum](#).
 - **27 April 2023:** [Towards a World Where Everyone Count: A Virtual Roundtable Event](#).
 - **8-9 May 2023:** [Regional Workshop for Assessing Inequalities in Registration in Asia and the Pacific](#).
 - **10-12 May 2023:** [Meeting of the Regional Steering Group for CRVS in Asia Pacific](#).
 - **15-19 May 2023:** [79th Session of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific](#).
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CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

- ESCAP, National consultant for Fiji supporting evidence to inform policy outcomes. Job opening based in Bangkok. More details [here](#).
- ESCAP, National consultant for Bangladesh supporting evidence to inform policy outcomes. Job opening based in Bangkok. More details [here](#).
- Vital Strategies, Technical Advisor, CRVS Improvement Program. Job opening based in Singapore. Find more details [here](#).
- ESCAP, Internship (Civil Registration and Vital Statistics) - Statistics Division. Job opening based in Bangkok, Thailand. Find more details [here](#).



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