



## CRVS Insight

December 2020



### Sixth Regional Steering Group Meeting for CRVS in Asia and the Pacific

The [Regional Steering Group for CRVS in Asia and the Pacific](#) met again for the sixth time on 8-9 December 2020.

The group discussed the findings from the [midterm review](#) of the CRVS Decade and various topics key to CRVS in Asia and the Pacific. In preparation for the [Second Ministerial Conference on CRVS in Asia and the Pacific](#), scheduled for 16-19 November 2021, attendees also reviewed plans for the Conference sessions and background papers. More details on the meeting's programme, as well as country and partner presentations can be found on [www.getinthepicture.org](http://www.getinthepicture.org).



## Upcoming Stats Café on adopting rapid mortality surveillance for a post-COVID-19 era

The COVID-19 pandemic is challenging country mortality surveillance systems in unprecedented ways, while also highlighting the necessity for accurate, timely and reliable mortality data. Without high quality data on communities impacted by the virus, local decision-makers are unable to direct resources to the most vulnerable. Implementing [rapid mortality surveillance](#) and improving the quality of death statistics—including causes of death—therefore has never been more relevant as the global community calculates and responds to the toll of the virus' impact. Rapid mortality surveillance bolsters availability and quality of critical data in CRVS systems unable to universally register deaths nationwide.

Currently, a number of ESCAP member states, including Bangladesh, are working to establish rapid mortality surveillance as a means for generating high-quality mortality data. And as part of the [Asia-Pacific Stats Café Series](#), Vital Strategies and Bangladesh will highlight the lessons learned from this valuable tool and describe how they are using the rapid mortality surveillance to generate high-quality statistics to get every one in the picture. For more information and to read more about rapid mortality surveillance, [please also visit the ESCAP blog site](#).

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## The current pandemic is not stopping CRVS developments in the Pacific

[Regional Steering Group](#) members, Ms. Kamni Naidu (Fiji), Mr. Jeff Montgomery (NZ) and Ms. Gloria Mathenge (Pacific Community, Brisbane Accord Group), [recently presented Pacific developments](#) during a series of virtual seminars on the impact of COVID-19 on CRVS. Organised by the [United Nations Statistics Division for CARICOM countries](#), both Fiji and New Zealand were asked to share their practical experiences, drawing on the similarities between the countries of the Pacific and the Caribbean. Participants showed particular interest in the moves towards digital registration in both Fiji and NZ, as well as the successful use of Business Continuity Planning in NZ. A [video of the webinars is available](#) and readers can see Mr. Montgomery's presentation by visiting [www.getinthepicture.org](http://www.getinthepicture.org).

New Zealand is now half-way through a [six year programme to transform the way New Zealanders access identity and life event services](#) by putting customers at the heart of service delivery and continuously making it easier for them to access services. So far, this journey involved moving all high volume civil registration services online (such as births, deaths and marriages), enabling citizenship applications to be completed online, and very soon, first-time passport applications will be done online as well. The next stage of the transformation will see the underlying civil registration infrastructure being moved into a cloud-based environment, the ability for New Zealanders to access and share their own identity information digitally, and more sharing of civil registration data between government and non-government agencies. The new

online citizenship service is [being promoted here](#).

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### Getting every Iranian in the picture

In Iran, in November of 2019, the first [Iranian identity card was issued for a child](#) born to an Iranian mother and a foreign father. The news follows an October announcement by the Guardian Council to ratify a bill amending the law on conferring citizenship on children born to an Iranian mother and a foreign father regardless of where they are born. According to article one of the new law, children of Iranian women and non-Iranian men who were born before or after the law can be an Iranian citizen in case the Iranian mother requested if they have no security problem before the age of 18. The UN Refugee Agency also welcomed the law as a step toward reducing statelessness around the world.

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### CRVS Champion: Mr. Jeff Montgomery

Each month, our community newsletter puts a spotlight on one person from Asia-Pacific that has gone above and beyond in their efforts to support CRVS programmes, raise awareness of CRVS issues or lead CRVS improvement efforts in their home country. This month we are happy to highlight Mr. Jeff Montgomery from New Zealand.

#### ***What is your current title and role?***

I am the Registrar-General of Births, Deaths and Marriages, as well as the General Manager of Services and Access at the New Zealand Department of Internal Affairs.

My key role is to lead the provision of life event and identity services which include civil

my key role is to lead the provision of the event and identity services which include civil registrations, citizenship (naturalisation), passports and digital identity. My team of 450 staff are based in four New Zealand locations as well as in Sydney, Australia and London, UK.

***Can you please share with us a particular experience which highlighted the importance of CRVS to you?***

I have had the honour of working closely with colleagues in Bangladesh and Papua New Guinea to strengthen their CRVS systems. This included several visits to these amazing countries and also hosting study groups within New Zealand. Like many countries in our region, Bangladesh and PNG have low death registration levels however both are now experiencing significant improvement. During these COVID times, timely and accurate fact and cause of death information is even more important, and it has been heartening to see civil registration data being used to inform the public.

***How are you currently involved in CRVS improvements?***

New Zealand has very high levels of birth and death registration, with 95% of registrations being completed online and parents being able to order certificates and access entitlements using our SmartStart app. Last year we moved medical cause of death reporting between doctors, funeral directors and my office online too. Our next innovation is to develop a 'digital wallet' which will allow individuals to access and share their key identity documents themselves rather than having to come to us first.

As convener of the Pacific Civil Registrars Network (PCRN), I am working with Gloria Mathenge, CRVS Advisor at the Pacific Community, ESCAP and PLAN International to support the government of Niue in moving to a new, cloud-based civil registration system. This is a significant step towards achieving PCRNs vision of a comprehensive, modern and connected civil registration across the Pacific.

***Which advice would you give to others trying to improve CRVS systems?***

Be bold and seize opportunities. Our communities are embracing digital technologies and this provides an opportunity for governments to significantly improve registration rates and also enhance customer experience. The disruption caused by the COVID crisis also provides an opportunity to be bold and try new things. During our recent lockdown we were able to implement, very quickly, weekly publication of death statistics – something we wouldn't have contemplated in the past.

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### **UPCOMING EVENTS**

On **15 December at 14:00 (Bangkok time)**, ESCAP will co-host another [Asia-Pacific Stats Cafe](#) with Vital Strategies to discuss the work they are doing in Bangladesh on rapid mortality surveillance. In addition to discussing how RMS is strengthening CRVS systems, an in-country stakeholder from the Bangladesh health services will also present on lessons learned from practical application. Interested parties can register and read more by visiting the [Asia-Pacific Stats Cafe](#) site.

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### **NEW RESOURCES**

The most recent videos from ESCAP's ongoing Stats Café webinar series can be found by visiting the [Asia-Pacific Stats Café Series website](#). Each webinar is organized in collaboration with relevant development partners and countries and covers a variety of statistics-related topics.

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As we are always looking to improve content, we'd love to hear your feedback and input for articles. CRVS Insight is written for you and your feedback matters to us!

If you have a new resource, upcoming event or article you would like highlighted, please send submissions along with an accompanying photo to [escap-crvs@un.org](mailto:escap-crvs@un.org).

Please note by submitting photos you are granting ESCAP Statistics Division permission to publish the photo in the current article and any future articles it deems appropriate.

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