



CRVS Insight

March 2022



The 8th meeting of the Regional Steering Group for Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) in Asia and the Pacific

The online meeting took place on 9 and 10 March 2022 and focused on reviewing the decisions made at the [Second Ministerial Conference on CRVS in Asia and the Pacific](#) and identify how the Regional Steering Group and development partners can support countries in implementing those decisions.

The [Regional Steering Group](#) discussed a number of issues, including how to strengthen data exchange between stakeholders and ensure data protection and privacy; improving the resilience of CRVS systems and the role CRVS systems play in building resilience; the importance of removing barriers to registration; strengthening the vital event notification of the health sector and how to ensure sufficient funding for CRVS systems.



The Regional Steering Group also welcomed a new Chair of the group, **Mr Neel Singh**, who is the Registrar-General, Births, Deaths and Marriages ('BDM') Office, Ministry of Justice, Fiji. Prior to taking up appointment as the Registrar-General in 2020, Mr Singh served as the Acting Official Receiver at Ministry of Justice from 2017 till 2019 and also served as an Executive Officer, Litigation at the Office of the Attorney-General from 2012-2017. Mr Singh holds a Bachelor's degree in Banking Finance and Economics and also a diploma in Economics. As a Registrar-General, he has a passion *to make sure that every child gets registered and has a legal identity*.

Mr Singh has taken over as the chair of the Regional Steering Group from [Ms. Kamni Naidu](#), Fiji, who did an excellent job as the chair of the group for a number of years.



The 53rd UN Statistical Commission has concluded!

Side event. [Implementation of the UN Legal Identity Agenda](#), was organized in the margins of the 53rd Session of the UN Statistical Commission.

During the Statistical Commission, CRVS was discussed during [agenda item 3\(f\)](#). Several statements on CRVS were made from countries in Asia and the Pacific, including from [New Zealand](#), [Australia](#), [Philippines](#), [Myanmar](#), [Malaysia](#), [Bangladesh](#), [Indonesia](#) and [India](#).

The Commission also took a decision regarding CRVS: [Decision 8: Civil registration, vital statistics and statelessness statistics \(Item 3f\)](#)

In the decision, the Statistical Commission reiterated its call from its 51st session to implement the United Nations Legal Identity Agenda, namely, universal registration of all vital events, the production of regular, accurate and comprehensive vital statistics and ensuring legal identity for all from birth to death, as a matter of high priority, especially in the light of the adverse impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The commission also expressed concern regarding the negative impact of the pandemic on the availability and quality of vital statistics owing to interruptions in the functioning of national civil registration systems, and urged designating civil registration as an essential service and conforming to international standards.

The commission expressed its support for the work and activities of the [Technical Advisory Group on COVID19 Mortality Assessment](#), welcomed its findings and outputs, and encouraged the Group to continue its work and continue to report to the Commission;

WHO informed the Commission of its intention to inaugurate a new international conference on health statistics. The first session is tentatively scheduled for the third quarter of 2023.

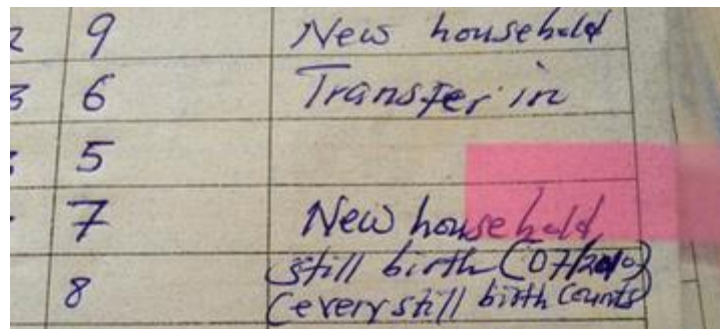


Launch of the CRVS business process improvement project in Vanuatu

A multi sectoral team of CRVS stakeholders in Vanuatu participated in the inception workshop for conducting an assessment, analysis and redesign of CRVS processes, held on the 16th February. During the workshop, stakeholders were introduced to the concepts and methodologies underlying the [CRVS Systems Improvement Framework](#) and discussed the activities involved in the project.

The project aims to support the Government of Vanuatu to strengthen its CRVS system by analyzing the birth and death registration processes to identify key performance issues and bottlenecks, which will inform redesign ideas and improvement policies. Through a series of one-on-one consultations and whole-group consultations, the activities under this project adopt a participatory approach to engage stakeholders in mapping current CRVS processes to improve understanding of the system and its weaknesses, and identify solutions and monitor change. Implementation of this project is also being supported by the UNDP Vanuatu Country Office who

have been supporting Vanuatu to establish its [new central civil register](#) as one of the first countries in the Pacific to establish legal identity and national ID cards for all citizens.



2	9	New household
3	6	Transfer in
	5	
	7	New household
	8	still birth (Official) (every still birth counts)

Stillbirth: The “neglected stepchild” of civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS)

Above picture: Community health worker pregnancy register reporting a stillbirth at 8 months gestation along with the comment, ‘Every stillbirth counts.’

Stillbirth registration is often overlooked in the global conversation and policies on birth and death registration. Reducing stillbirth is not a specific target under the 17 [Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#). However, the World Health Organization and UNICEF work to fill this gap with the [Every Newborn Action Plan](#) stillbirth targets to be achieved by 2030.

While reducing stillbirths is ultimately the goal, we must first understand the global burden of stillbirths by improving stillbirth registration. Two recently released resources to increase capacity for health sector managers, civil registrars, and development partners, include:

[WHO/UNICEF Health Sector Contributions Toward Improving the Civil Registration of Births and Deaths in Low-Income Countries](#). This resource includes practical and operational guidance for the health sector on birth and death registration.

[Global Health Advocacy Incubator Legal and Regulatory Toolkit for CRVSID Stillbirth Reporting and Registration](#). This chapter describes best practices for reporting methods and how the law can help ensure all stillbirths are registered.



Marriage registration: Bangladesh and Plan International partnership

CRVS systems have the power to transform the lives of women or girls. Marriage registration is a core component of the Government of Bangladesh's holistic CRVS++ strategy. The importance of marriage registration has also been recognized as critical to help achieve the Government's target of eradicating child marriage by 2041. While great progress has been made under the CRVS++ strategy in the area of birth and death registration, marriage registration progress is slower and registration remains paper-based.

Plan International, in partnership with the Government of Bangladesh, conducted a study to analyse and assess the current marriage registration system in Bangladesh in order to identify recommendations for both process and system improvements. The study assessed existing marriage registration processes, people's knowledge and attitudes towards marriage registration, supporting IT systems, and existing initiatives. The study consisted of a sample size of 430 respondents spread over 3 locations: Dhaka (city corporation), Nilphamari (rural) and Bhola (peri-urban), and across Bangladesh's main religious communities: Muslim, Hindu, Christian and Buddhist.

Some key research findings included:

1. Not all marriages can be registered in Bangladesh due to the absence of an inclusive legal framework e.g. there is no legal way for a Buddhist to register their marriage;
2. There is no clear unified marriage registration process and standards and practices vary from religion to religion;
3. The number and availability of Marriage Registrars is limited and marriage registrars are not government employees so there is little accountability and motivation for them to register marriages;
4. Marriage registration is still a paper-based process meaning there is no centralised view of marriage registration levels or discrepancies;

5. Marriage registration data is not used to inform decision-making as part of an integrated CRVS system.

Based on these findings, it is clear that there are numerous opportunities to strengthen the marriage registration system in Bangladesh as part of a wider CRVS ecosystem. The research identified some key strategies to be incorporated within an integrated system strengthening approach. Some examples include:

1. Standardise and simplify the marriage registration process across Bangladesh, updating the rules and regulations to be inclusive;
2. Digitise marriage registration (data collection, processing and sharing) as part of an integrated digital CRVS system;
3. Simplify certificate issuance and enable verification of marriage by authorised actors;
4. Extend the role of Marriage Registrar to all relevant religious leaders and allow registrars to marry any type of marriage;
5. Educate people on marriage registration and its importance;
6. Visualise marriage registration data along with other vital events so that it is meaningful and actionable for policy makers;
7. Develop a marriage registration strategy as part of the CRVS++ initiative and establish active marriage registration focused governance mechanisms to implement this strategy.

You can access the full research report [here](#). If you are interested in conducting similar marriage registration research in your country context please contact Sophie Shugg from Plan International Australia - Sophie.Shugg@plan.org.au



OpenCRVS has a new home!

[OpenCRVS.org](https://opencrvs.org) is a new not for profit organisation that is being established to ensure that OpenCRVS, the Digital Public Good for CRVS in low-resource settings, is a sustainable, long-term solution.

One of the organisation's key objectives is to build an active community that responds to the needs of implementing countries, technology service providers and development partners. The

OpenCRVS Community can be joined by taking a [short survey](#) (2 mins max!), which will also help the organisation understanding how best to respond to country needs.

A OpenCRVS Product Council is being established to ensure that the OpenCRVS product reflects the needs of governments and their users around the world.

CRVS experts are being asked to register interest in joining the **OpenCRVS Product Council** by sending an email to team@opencrvs.org, with the following details: Name; Organisation; Role (explaining specific relevance to CRVS); Country; Why you should be a part of the OpenCRVS Product Council.

OpenCRVS.org is generously supported by NORAD, Plan International Australia and Vital Strategies.

UPCOMING EVENTS

- The [9th Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development \(APFSD\)](#) will be organized on **28-31 March 2022** with the theme of "Building back better from COVID-19 while advancing the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Asia and the Pacific". Side events can be organized and sponsored by Member States, UN agencies, other Intergovernmental organizations, accredited Civil Society Organizations or other stakeholders.
- National workshop on demographic and statistical techniques for inequality assessments will take place in Islamabad, Pakistan on **25-26 March 2022**.
- [Regional Workshop on Estimating Completeness of Civil Registration of Births and Deaths](#) will be organized as part of Inequality Assessment project of ESCAP, on **28 March to 1 Apr 2022**. For more information please see the concept note [here](#).
- The WHO Classifications and Terminologies Unit invites you to [a webinar upon the release of 2022 WHO verbal autopsy instrument](#) on the **6th of April 2022**.
- The [78th session of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific \(ESCAP\)](#) will be held in a hybrid modality from **23 to 27 May 2022** at the United Nations Conference Centre in Bangkok and online. Guided by the theme "A common agenda to advance sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific", the annual session will be an opportunity to discuss and shape the future of regional cooperation centered around a new form of multilateralism and regional cooperation. The outcomes of the Second Ministerial Conference on CRVS in Asia and the Pacific will be highlighted during the session.
- Asia-Pacific Stats Café Series organized by Statistics Division of ESCAP: More information is available at website [here](#). Tentative upcoming events are;
 - *Estimating completeness on civil registration of birth and death*, on **28 March 2022**. Please register [here](#)
 - This Stats Café will mark the launch of ESCAP guidelines on measuring the completeness of CRVS data for in-country practitioners to use the designed associated toolkit, to estimate the completeness of their registration system with a focus on births and deaths.

- *Use of administrative sources in Census*, on 4 **April 2022**, and
 - *Estimating excess mortality in the context of COVID-19*, on **20 April 2022**.
 - Excess mortality estimates measure the gap between the number of deaths in an average year under normal conditions and the number of deaths during a crisis, adjusting for relevant demographic changes as far as possible. This Stats Café aims to share a snapshot of some of the varied approaches taken by countries and organizations to produce estimates of excess mortality, as well as providing a journalistic insight of best practices in reporting on it.
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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.

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.

This e-mail has been sent to rattanakittiaporn@un.org because you have expressed interest in CRVS activities in Asia and the Pacific. If you would like to stop receiving future communications, please [click here to unsubscribe](#).