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CRVS Insight Newsletter

November 2025

Mapping the Way Forward: Launching the New CRVS Systems Improvement Framework

**4 December 2025
13:00-14:30 pm (UTC+7)**
Asia-Pacific Stats Café

Business process improvement can support transformation from paper-heavy to people-centered civil registration and vital statistics systems. The Stats Café will explore how the Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Improvement Framework has been used in Ghana, South Sudan and India.

The framework has recently been through a large revision with a larger focus on equity and links with ID systems. The changes and new features will be presented. Join us to gain a deeper understanding of the framework, its implementation and practical ideas for strengthening national CRVS systems.

Speakers:

- Nicola Richards
Resource Lead,
CRVS Team,
ESCAP
- Emmanuel Nwoboy Botchway
Principal Research
Registration Lead,
Projects
Birth and Deaths
Registry - Ghana
- Pravin Kumar
Deputy Chief
High Level, Directorate
of Economics and
Statistics (DRES),
Government of Bihar,
India

Moderator:

- Chloe Harvey
Associate
Statistician,
Statistics Division,
ESCAP

Register here:
<https://stats.office.co/my/aptsmylogin>

Join the meeting:
<https://indiaand.bnykz.me>

ESCAP
STATS CAFE
Good coffee makes your day
A great idea makes you do it

Mapping the Way Forward: Launching the New CRVS Systems Improvement Framework

The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) is hosting the next Stats Café on 4 December 2025, focusing on the theme: “Mapping the Way Forward: Launching the New CRVS Systems Improvement Framework”

Transitioning from paper-heavy procedures to people-centered civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) systems requires strategic business process improvements. The upcoming Stats Café will examine how the CRVS Improvement Framework has been applied in Ghana and India to strengthen national systems and enhance service delivery.

Recently revised, the framework now places greater emphasis on equity and integration with identity systems. The session will present these updates and explore their practical implications. Participants will gain insights into how streamlined processes and innovative approaches can reinforce CRVS systems, improve accessibility, and support inclusive social protection.

Join us to deepen your understanding of business process improvement and discover actionable strategies for advancing CRVS systems.

Date: Thursday 4 December 2025

Time: 13:00-14:30 hrs. (UTC+7)

Registration: [Here](#)

Venue: [MS Teams](#)

Event page: [Asia-Pacific Stats Café Series](#)



Stats Brief: Uncounted Lives: Gender Gaps in Death Registration Across Asia and the Pacific

In an era where data drives decision-making, the lack of complete and accurate death registration—especially when disaggregated by sex—poses a silent but significant threat to public health, equity, and accountability. Across Asia and the Pacific, millions of deaths go unrecorded each year, with female deaths disproportionately affected. This gap not only obscures the true burden of mortality but also reflects deeper societal inequities that hinder progress toward inclusive and evidence-based development.

This [new Stats Brief](#) published by ESCAP seeks to deepen understanding of death registration completeness—with a specific focus on gender disparities—across countries in the Asia-Pacific region. The objectives include exploring variations in death registration by sex at the country level, quantifying and comparing the extent of these disparities with other countries within the same subregion. In addition, the study contributes to the existing literature by examining nuanced aspects, specifically examining sex differentials in the registration of deaths occurring at various intervals after the occurrence of event. Given that information on the sex of the deceased is missing in many countries, the paper attempts to investigate whether the absence of sex information in death records is associated with observed disparities in death registration completeness.



Asia-Pacific Migration Data Report 2025

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) Regional Data Hub for Asia and the Pacific has released the Asia-Pacific Migration Data Report 2025, which offers comprehensive and timely insights into regional migration trends.

During the virtual launch event, IOM Deputy Regional Director underscored the report's fundamental importance for driving evidence-based policymaking and strengthening regional cooperation. The publication highlights key developments across international corridors, labour mobility, mixed migration routes, and addresses forced displacement resulting from conflict and disasters.

The report also examines the vulnerabilities faced by migrants and reviews the region's progress toward achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Global

Compact for Migration (GCM). The report is a resource for governments, researchers, and stakeholders, fully aligned with IOM's Strategic Framework.

The report highlights persistent barriers to rights and services for migrants and refugees, including lack of citizenship and civil documentation, which restrict access to protection and healthcare. Strengthening CRVS systems, particularly birth registration, remains essential for addressing statelessness and enabling inclusion in health and social services, thereby advancing durable solutions and migration governance objectives.

The full document is now available [here](#). Click [here](#) for the recording of the launch webinar.



A Policy Solutions Report

Accelerating progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals and beyond

Policy Solutions Report: Proven Solutions for Children

UNICEF is calling on governments and development partners to accelerate efforts toward universal birth registration (UBR), a critical measure to uphold every child's right to legal identity and protection under international law. Despite notable progress, with more than 500 million children under five registered globally in the past five years, an estimated 150 million remain unregistered, and 55 million lack birth certificates.

The Policy Solutions Report underscores birth registration as a foundational pillar for child protection and equitable access to essential services, including healthcare, education, and social protection. Countries with robust Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) systems report child outcomes nearly three times better on average. The report also highlights the transformative potential of combining UBR with universal child benefits, a policy synergy that could dramatically reduce poverty and vulnerability worldwide.

To achieve universal registration by 2030, UNICEF stresses the need for simplified registration processes supported by inclusive legal frameworks, increased investment in CRVS systems and digital integration to enhance reach, and stronger collaboration across sectors to identify and serve marginalized populations. Evidence-based policymaking is essential to monitor effectiveness and strengthen alignment with child-focused policies. Accelerated UBR is indispensable for achieving SDG 16.9 and reinforcing social protection systems under SDG 1.3.

The full report, Proven Solutions for Children, is available on [UNICEF's website](#).



Advancing Nationality Rights and Addressing Statelessness: Achievements and Challenges in Central Asia

The Statelessness and Dignified Citizenship Coalition – Asia Pacific (SDCC-AP) is organising their quarterly webinar, which will spotlight Central Asia’s progress in addressing statelessness.

Central Asian countries have achieved notable success in addressing statelessness, offering valuable lessons for the wider Asia-Pacific region, where legal gaps, implementation challenges, cross-border mobility, and gender-based discrimination continue to perpetuate statelessness.

As part of SDCC-AP's Quarterly Webinar Series, the event aims to strengthen cross-regional solidarity, share effective strategies, and advance collective advocacy to ensure dignified citizenship and full nationality rights for all.

Date: Thursday, 27 November 2025

Time: 9:30 AM – 11:10 AM (Tashkent, GMT+5)

Venue: Zoom

Register: [Link](#)



Photo credit: UNICEF

AI Partnership to Strengthen CRVS Systems

Vital Strategies and the Center for Global Digital Health Innovation at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health have partnered for a new collaboration under

Bloomberg Philanthropies' Data for Health Initiative. The partnership aims to leverage artificial intelligence (AI) to strengthen Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) systems, improving data quality and enabling governments to transform health data into actionable insights for public health.

The initiative will focus on two key areas:

- AI Tools for CRVS Systems: Applying AI to strengthen CRVS functions, and
- AI for Data Impact: Using AI to convert CRVS and other health data into timely, practical insights that inform public health decision-making.

Working closely with country partners, the collaboration will pilot responsible AI solutions to accelerate digitization, interoperability, and integration of civil registration systems, supporting the development of robust local digital public infrastructure.

Learn more about the initiative [here](#).



Blog: Persons with disabilities, belonging on paper and in society?

Millions of persons with disabilities, particularly children, in Asia and the Pacific are being left unregistered in civil systems, a silent crisis highlighted by the experts from Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). This legal invisibility, often due to the lack of a birth certificate, denies them basic rights and essential services like education, healthcare, and social protection. The problem is systemic, driven by inaccessible offices and forms, a lack of trained staff, and persistent social stigma. These factors effectively exclude the most vulnerable from the support they need.

ESCAP urges the adoption of inclusive Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) systems, embedding accessibility into every facet, from law to staff training. Countries like Indonesia are setting an example by shifting responsibility from families to the state, allowing registration at health centers and conducting home visits. The key message remains: Accessibility is a right, not a privilege. Counting every person is the first, indispensable step toward building an inclusive society where no one is left behind.

Read the full blog [here](#).



New framework aims to increase Cause-of-Death data accuracy

Vital Strategies and the Pacific Community (SPC) have released a new Quality Assurance and Improvement Framework aimed at strengthening the accuracy and consistency of cause-of-death data across countries. This initiative provides a structured roadmap for governments seeking to enhance the reliability of mortality statistics, which are critical for informed health policy and planning.

The framework emphasizes two core processes: medical certification of causes of death and subsequent coding using the International Classification of Diseases (ICD). It offers practical, step-by-step guidance for Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) systems to evaluate and improve data quality. Included in the resource are recommended indicators, audit tools, and mechanisms for establishing feedback loops, which are essential components for identifying and correcting common errors in mortality reporting.

Accurate mortality data is indispensable for evidence-based decision-making. By adopting this framework, countries can ensure their health information systems produce robust and reliable data, enabling targeted public health interventions, monitoring disease trends, and ultimately saving lives. The initiative represents a significant step toward building stronger CRVS systems that support sustainable health outcomes.

Download the framework [here](#).



Photo credit: General Department of Identification, Ministry of Interior, Cambodia

Cambodia advances toward Self-Reliant Civil Registration System

The Global Health Advocacy Incubator (GHAi) strengthens its efforts on budget advocacy and domestic sustainability by presenting a key Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) sustainability study for Cambodia, together with Dr. Chan Sopha of the Centre

for Policy Studies. The presentation was delivered to senior government officials, including Dr. Top Neth, Director General of the General Department of Identification. It underscored a critical path to self-reliance. Key message included integrating CRVS financing directly into national and sub-national budgets is vital for securing the long-term resilience of the system.

Globally, GHAI champions robust fiscal measures to ensure CRVS systems are self-reliant, advocating for innovative co-financing mechanisms and the development of decentralized, integrated system. Achieving this sustainability requires essential collaboration among key ministries.



Global Progress in Identification: Key Insights from World Bank's ID4D-Findex 2025

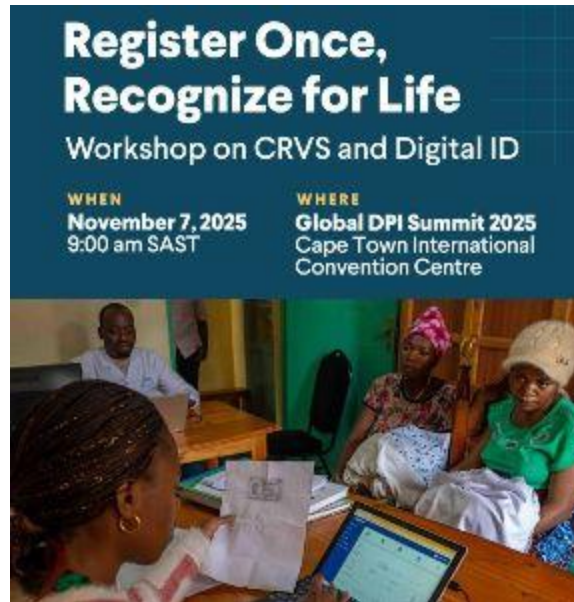
The World Bank's ID4D-Findex 2025 Database shows notable progress in identification systems but warns of persistent digital and equity divides affecting billions. Asia-Pacific

countries lead in digital identity innovation, with platforms like Singapore's SingPass enabling secure online transactions across government and private services. Yet, 2.9 billion people worldwide still lack access to online digital IDs for remote transactions, underscoring the need for practical use cases such as Thailand's linkage of IDs to bank accounts for rapid emergency aid.

Exclusion remains a critical challenge, disproportionately impacting women, rural communities, and the less educated. As economies digitize, these gaps risk deepening inequality. Countries like Indonesia are prioritizing inclusion through initiatives such as the Identitas Kependudukan Digital (IKD) app, designed to expand access for marginalized groups.

The report concludes that infrastructure alone is insufficient. Sustained efforts are needed to ensure ID systems are trusted, widely used, and fully inclusive, to provide the legal identity essential for secure access to services both online and offline.

Read the full blog [here](#).



Register Once, Recognize for Life

At the Global DPI Summit 2025, development and health organizations joined government officials to advocate for civil registration as the foundation of inclusive and trustworthy digital identity systems. The initiative, “Register Once, Recognize for Life,” underscores the need to link birth and death registration (CRVS) with digital ID to ensure no one is left behind.

The urgency is underscored by the fact that an estimated 850 million individuals worldwide lack official proof of identity, with over a billion people lacking any digital record of their identity. Experts from the World Bank ID4D Initiative, UNDP, UNICEF, WHO, and ADB emphasized that systematic CRVS is essential for equitable access to services and accurate population data.

To support implementation, Vital Strategies and the World Bank have released a joint working paper and convened a peer-learning workshop on the sidelines of the Global DPI Summit. The workshop explored practical steps for building interoperable, people-centered systems, with outputs informing an upcoming action guide for governments.

See the event details [here](#).



**Leveraging Administrative Data for Inclusive and High-Quality Official Statistics:
Tools from the Collaborative on Administrative Data**

The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), in collaboration with the UN Women, hosted the Asia-Pacific Stats Café on “Leveraging Administrative Data for Inclusive and High-Quality Official Statistics.” The session introduced crucial tools developed by the [Collaborative on Administrative Data \(CAD\)](#), featuring e-learning modules and toolkits. These resources are specifically designed to empower countries to modernize their data infrastructure by systematically integrating administrative records to boost data coverage, accuracy, and inclusivity.

Experts emphasized that successful data modernization is linked to cross-sectoral collaboration and technical interoperability. Presentations, including case studies from the Maldives and Mongolia, demonstrated the practical application of the CAD tools. The discussion highlighted that administrative data, once linked and validated, is a powerful mechanism for significantly improving the completeness of statistics, thereby providing a clearer picture of populations and accelerating progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Visit the event page [here](#) for presentations and recording.

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Behind the Certificates at the "Hatch, Match, and Dispatch" Office

Behind the scenes, the staff in the Births, Deaths and Marriages offices in New Zealand engage with life's most significant moments, often becoming trusted guides through emotionally charged experiences. Whether celebrating births, processing marriages, or supporting families through loss, their work transforms personal stories into official records. In doing so, the office not only preserves the legal framework of belonging but also honors the human journey at the heart of every certificate.

A previous staff wrote a recollection of his work in the office, sometimes fondly referred to as the “hatch, match, and dispatch” division, portraying the vital role in both personal identity and national governance.

The certificates it issues are more than administrative records; they are essential legal documents that connect individuals to the state, enabling access to services, travel, and civic participation. At a broader level, the data collected informs public health policy, demographic planning, and resource distribution, making BDM a quiet but powerful force in shaping society.

The BDM archive also offers a rich lens into New Zealand's social evolution. Historical records reflect changing norms, from outdated terminology to past requirements for racial classification. Today, the office continues to adapt to modern realities It manages diverse naming conventions, complex family structures, and sensitive adoption records, to ensure that its practices remain inclusive, respectful, and aligned with contemporary values.

Click [here](#) for the full story.



Report: Barriers and Facilitators to Female Death Registration in Bangladesh

A recent study, by the Humanitarian Hub at BRAC James P Grant School of Public Health, BRAC University, in collaboration with Vital Strategies, Bloomberg Philanthropies, Gender Equity Unit of Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, and the

Government of Bangladesh, conducted in the Dinajpur and Panchagarh districts of Rangpur, Bangladesh, reveals a significant gender disparity in civil death registration. Despite legal mandates for comprehensive vital statistics, female deaths are consistently under-reported, undermining the accuracy of public health data and impeding equitable resource distribution. This gap highlights the urgent need to strengthen civil registration systems to ensure inclusive and representative data collection.

Using qualitative interviews with community members and local leaders, the study identifies entrenched social norms as key barriers. The perception that registering female deaths is unnecessary, rooted in patriarchal structures where men are primary legal and economic actors, results in male deaths being documented more reliably due to associated financial and legal obligations. This utility-driven approach to registration reflects broader gender inequalities in civic recognition.

To address these challenges, the report recommends a multi-level strategy combining administrative reform with cultural engagement. Proposed measures include gender-sensitive training for all staff involved, increased deployment of female staff, and targeted awareness campaigns to emphasize the importance of registering all deaths. These interventions aim to promote gender equity in civil registration and ensure that every life is formally acknowledged within the public record.

The full report is available [here](#).



Fiji launches first CRVS law review in 50 years

Fiji has initiated its first comprehensive review of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) legislation in five decades, aiming to modernize systems for recording births, deaths, and other vital events. The reform seeks to replace outdated processes and strengthen the country's capacity to deliver accurate, timely data for governance and development planning.

Justice Ministry Permanent Secretary Selina Kuruleca emphasized that the overhaul will move civil registration “from the typewriter to the tablet era.” The current framework, dating back to 1975, relies on paper-based forms and manual signatures, creating inefficiencies and limiting data integration across health, registry, and statistical agencies. These gaps hinder service delivery and the establishment of legal identity, which is essential for access to education, banking, and social services.

The year-long initiative, supported by the Pacific Community (SPC) and Bloomberg Philanthropies' Data for Health Initiative, will be led by Pacific legal experts to build regional capacity. Modernization is expected to improve data quality—particularly on causes of death—informing health and education policy. Currently, Fiji records 71% of births and 88% of deaths, underscoring the need for systemic reform to achieve universal coverage.

Read the news [here](#).

Fiji also marked a key milestone in its efforts to modernize its CRVS system with the conclusion of a two-day Stakeholder Engagement Workshop. The session successfully convened representatives from government agencies, technical partners, development organizations, and civil society. Participants validated findings from an extensive desk review and initial interviews while refining a preliminary gap analysis and specific reform options. The critical input gathered will directly shape the content of an upcoming Recommendations Report aimed at strengthening Fiji's CRVS framework.

The collaborative workshop was organized in partnership with the Fiji Ministry of Justice and the Pacific Community (SPC). Support for the project is provided by Vital Strategies under the Bloomberg Philanthropies Data for Health Initiative. The constructive discussions reinforced a shared, strong commitment among all stakeholders to building a modern, resilient, and accurate CRVS system for Fiji.

Monitoring progress on
universal health coverage
and the health-related
Sustainable Development
Goals in the
South-East Asia Region



2025 update

Progress on the decade for strengthening
the role of the health sector for improving
civil registration and vital statistics in the
South-East Asia Region (2015-2024)



Monitoring progress on universal health coverage and the health-related Sustainable Development Goals in the South-East Asia Region: 2025 update

The World Health Organization (WHO) has published its tenth annual report on Monitoring Progress on Universal Health Coverage and Health-Related SDGs in the South-East Asia Region: 2025 Update, showcasing significant advances in civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) systems.

Focusing on the theme “Progress on the Decade for Strengthening the Role of the Health Sector in Improving CRVS,” the report documents how Member States have improved birth and death registration completeness and enhanced cause-of-death reporting between 2015 and 2024. These achievements reflect stronger integration between health systems and CRVS, which has been a critical foundation for reliable mortality data.

By presenting detailed country profiles and evidence-based progress, WHO aims to equip governments with practical tools to identify gaps and prioritize investments. This guidance is intended to accelerate efforts toward achieving the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through robust, data-driven health planning.

Click [here](#) for the report.



Photo credit: UN Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka implements new delivery service for certificates

Sri Lanka's Registrar General's Department has initiated a pilot program under the e-Civil Registration Programme to deliver birth certificates directly to citizens using the Postal Courier Service. In partnership with the Department of Posts, this modernization effort aims to enhance secure and efficient delivery while significantly reducing the need for citizens to visit government offices in person.

Currently operating in ten divisional secretariats, the pilot covers certificates for children born on or after January 1, 2021. This initiative is a component of a larger national digitization strategy that includes streamlining the assignment of national identity numbers when children reach age 15. The program, if successful, is set for nationwide expansion, signaling a major advance in Sri Lanka's digital governance goals.

Click [here](#) for the news.

Alongside its new postal delivery pilot for birth certificates, Sri Lanka is advancing the civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) with the support of WHO-led training. Supported by Vital Strategies, the workshop introduced mortality coders at the Registrar General's Department to ANACoD3 and ICD-11. Part of the OneRegistry Initiative backed by the UN Sri Lanka SDG Fund, this effort ensures that innovations in service delivery are matched by stronger data quality to track progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals.

CRVS Champion



Russell Burnard - New Zealand

*Our community newsletter puts a spotlight on people who have gone above and beyond in their efforts to support CRVS programmes in Asia and the Pacific, raise awareness of CRVS issues or lead CRVS improvement efforts in their home country or in the region. This month, we would like to dedicate this issue of Insight to **Russell Burnard**.*

What is your current title and role?

I'm the Registrar-General of Births, Deaths and Marriages for New Zealand. I also have the role of General Manager, Operations in the Regulatory and Identity Services Branch of the Department of Internal Affairs (DIA). This means I deal with Civil Registry services, Passports, Citizenship and digital identity services. In New Zealand, DIA is the home of civil registration decisions.

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

A really early example in my time as Registrar-General was an interaction with a mother whose son had passed away on the high seas and there was a debate about which country would register the death. We finally managed to get an appropriate recognition that the death could be recorded. This took many months of engagement with NZ and other nations. The mother spoke to us after the registration, thanking us for our efforts. She described that she had been unable - without appropriate registration of the death – to gain probate and manage the financial implications of her son's passing. The lack of our registration (which was a very complex one) meant she couldn't manage those practical matters which meant she couldn't begin the process of managing emotional grief.

This was the first time I saw the direct impact on a person where the 'normal process' couldn't work. Most of our interactions are straightforward but there are daily instances of problems with birth, death, adoption, marriage records that my staff work on every day. Managing these more difficult cases lawfully and empathetically is so important for our customers and our staff.

How are you currently involved in CRVS improvements?

As Registrar-General, I'm involved in reviewing all suggestions for business improvement and changes to operational policy. I work with DIA's policy team to address any updates or other changes to legislation and regulations, and I keep in touch with key groups providing input to our registers (e.g. funeral directors, marriage celebrants, midwives). I

also keep a sharp eye on our ongoing maintenance of technology systems to support civil registration services.

Probably my biggest role in CRVS improvements for New Zealand is in guiding and providing oversight to a major project to replace our ageing civil registration computer system and provide better and more efficient services. This is still in very early stages, seeking government approval to put forward a detailed business case for investment.

I also work with other jurisdictions in Australia and the Pacific – particularly NZ Realm countries (Cook Island, Niue, Tokelau) – to improve registration outcomes across the wider region. One current focus is to facilitate information sharing, particularly death and change of name details for individuals who were born in one jurisdiction and then changed name or status in another. This will help to detect and deter attempts to commit identity fraud using civil registration records.

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

There is no silver bullet, no failsafe solution when thinking about a high quality, resilient CRVS. I tend to think about the following domains:

- a) Legislation – is it fit for purpose? Does it reflect current country's norms? What is being considered by your Parliament?
- b) Customers – who are you serving? How do you make it easy for customers to comply with legal requirements? What services do they want from you? How do you maintain trust that data collected is secure and is used for permitted purposes? How do you reach hard-to-reach communities?
- c) People – how are you recruiting and training your staff? What development and training do you put in place to enhance their performance and ensure consistency of decision making? How do you encourage feedback to improve processes and systems you use?

d) Processes – how do you establish robust, lawful, trustworthy and consistent processes? What are your business continuity, cybersecurity, privacy protection and disaster recovery approaches?

e) Technology – how do you maximise the use of technology? How do you create safe data sharing models (privacy and security centric)? What are your long-term investment approaches?

f) Relationships – you are part of a national system of statistics; how do you engage with Health, Statistics, etc.? How do you engage with communities of interest – midwives, funeral directors, indigenous communities, celebrants etc.? How do you engage with other nations and bodies (e.g. for us Australia, Realm, SPC and Pacific Islands, ESCAP etc.)?

A good CRVS team is consistently trying to improve across all these domains – consistent with your own political and cultural environment.

Events

- [UNSD: Global calendar of statistical events](#)
 - [27 November 2025: SDCC-AP Quarterly Webinar: Advancing Nationality Rights and Addressing Statelessness: Achievements and Challenges in Central Asia](#)
 - [3 - 5 December 2025: Global Digital Health Forum](#)
 - [4 December 2025: Asia-Pacific Stats Café Series: Mapping the Way Forward: Launching the New CRVS Systems Improvement Framework](#)
 - [30 March - 1 April 2026: 2026 CRVS Research Forum](#)
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Resources

- [Asia-Pacific Stats Café Series](#)
 - [LinkedIn: Asia and Pacific Collaborative - Global Network](#)
 - [CRVS eLearning courses](#)
 - [2025 Progress Made on CRVS in Asia-Pacific After a Decade \(Russian version\)](#)
 - [The Medicolegal Death Investigation technical hub at Howard University](#)
 - [UNECE publication: Measuring Hard-to-Reach Groups in Administrative Sources](#)
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Professional Opportunities

- [Internship: ESCAP Statistics Division \(Statistical Data Management Unit \(SDMU\)\)](#)
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