



Information note¹

Resilience: A theme for the 2024 review and potential extension of the Asia-Pacific Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Decade (2015-2024)

There has been a significant progress in enhancing the coverage and completeness of vital event registration in Asia and the Pacific, resulting in the successful reduction in unregistered births of children under five. However, disasters and emergencies, such as the Covid-19 pandemic, present an important obstacle. Births, deaths, and other vital events are less likely to be registered and crucial information and documentation may be lost or destroyed, consequently, many countries have experienced a decline in overall registration completeness. It is critical to strengthen the resilience of CRVS systems to shocks and crises to safeguard achievements and continue progress towards universal and timely registration.

During the ninth meeting of the Regional Steering Group for Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific, consensus was reached on the inclusion of resilience into the work associated with any extension of the Decade and thus a consideration in the 2024 CRVS Decade Review. Members underscored how resilience is critical to sustaining existing progress and effectively addressing upcoming challenges associated with climate change including displacement which may result in statelessness. Resilience in the face of crises is crucial for the long-term sustainability of a country's development, as emphasized by the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) target 1.5 "build resilience and reduce vulnerability to environmental, economic and social disasters".

Defining resilience for CRVS

The CRVS Centre for Excellence conducted extensive research on resilience and CRVS, both during and after the COVID-19 pandemic², adopting the following ecological definition of resilience: "the capacity of a system to absorb disturbance and reorganize while undergoing change to still retain essentially the same function, structure, identity, and feedback"³. In the context of CRVS systems, the Centre for Excellence

¹ This information note was prepared by Mr. Nicolas Patoine-Hamel, Consultant, Statistics Division, ESCAP and Mr. Sovannaroth Tey, Associate Statistician, Statistics Division, ESCAP under substantive direction by Ms. Tanja Sejersen, Statistician and CRVS Lead, Statistics Division, ESCAP and Ms. Petra Nahmias, Chief, Population and Social Statistics Section, Statistics Division, ESCAP. The information note is issued without formal editing. Views expressed herein do not necessarily reflect that of Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) or any United Nations agencies.

² <https://crvssystem.ca/supporting-crvs-system-resilience>

³ <https://www.ecologyandsociety.org/vol19/iss2/art5/>

further defines it as “the ability to adapt to external shocks and emergencies to maintain essential registration services”⁴.

Competencies for resilient CRVS Systems

Building a resilient CRVS system requires improving different areas of the whole system. To guide this work, the Centre of Excellence for CRVS Systems, in collaboration with researchers from the Swiss Tropical and Public Health Institute, proposed a framework composed of seven core competencies for CRVS systems: integrated, responsive, agile, efficient, essential, inclusive, and robust.

Figure 1: Seven core competencies for CRVS systems



Source: Centre of Excellence for CRVS Systems (2021).
[Building Resilient CRVS Systems: Lessons from the COVID-19 Pandemic and Other Emergencies](#)

The framework offers a comprehensive approach to help countries improve the capability of their CRVS systems in dealing with everyday challenges, while also placing resilient CRVS systems at the centre of the preparedness and response to any disaster or emergency⁵. The competencies listed in the framework and summarized below should be pursued in conjunction with a system-wide resilience building approach because the competencies are not mutually exclusive and, indeed, the achievement of one is largely based upon the achievement of others.

⁴ https://crvssystems.ca/sites/default/files/assets/images/02%20EN%20CRVS%20in%20Conflict%2C%20Emergencies%20and%20Fragile%20Settings_Lessons_WEB.pdf

⁵ https://crvssystems.ca/sites/default/files/assets/images/02%20EN%20CRVS%20in%20Conflict%2C%20Emergencies%20and%20Fragile%20Settings_Lessons_WEB.pdf

Integrated

A well-coordinated CRVS system requires high level of integration between all stakeholders in terms of activity planning and data sharing. This can be facilitated with the creation of a national CRVS coordination mechanism or with the implementation of integrated registration systems.

Essential

Uninterrupted access to CRVS services during crisis periods preserves individual rights, enables access to crisis relief programs, and provide critical insights for designing effective risk management plans to better manage future crises. CRVS is central to any disaster relief programmes and should be considered an essential service by relevant stakeholders.

Inclusive

CRVS systems should register vital events for every person, including hard-to-reach populations and people in vulnerable situations, in their territory including during crisis situations

Efficient

CRVS systems should be financially sound and adequately funded, making efficient and effective use of all available resources, with sufficiently qualified and agile staff members. Efficiency implies internal awareness of differing demands and priorities to effectively allocate resources especially during emergencies.

Responsive

A resilient and inclusive CRVS system is responsive and people-centred and provides services to meet the needs of the people, including hard-to-reach populations and people in vulnerable situations. Responsiveness, in the context of CRVS, requires the CRVS system to be able to anticipate and address the needs for CRVS during exceptional times.

Agile

CRVS systems should be adaptable to new situations and environments. Under crisis conditions, an agile CRVS system should have the capacity to address critical issues in order to prevent failure, maintain essential functions, and retain registration rates. The system should have well-established organizational practices, functioning standard operating procedures, and proactive contingency planning in place, taking into account measures to mitigate failures and allow for prompt and effective responses to a crisis.

Robust

A robust CRVS system has the capacity to absorb and recover from shocks and stress, without major negative consequences. It also should have secure backup and safeguarding strategies for data repositories and registration archives. Under unexpected crisis conditions, a robust CRVS system withstands and endures by retaining essential functions that are necessary to restore full operations in the shortest possible time frame.

Relevant guidance

United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD)

The UN Handbook on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems: Management, Operation and Maintenance has a section dedicated to the maintenance of CRVS, touching on the modernization and improvement of internal system reviews, record preservation, and operations. These recommendations address core resilience building strategies, particularly regarding record keeping and ensuring service continuity during disasters.

For more information:

<https://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic-social/Standards-and-Methods/files/Handbooks/crvs/crvs-mgt-E.pdf>

UN Legal Identity Agenda

The UN Legal Identity Agenda (UNLIA) resources provide insights, guidelines, and best practices related to the administration of legal identity systems, civil registration, vital statistics, and related topics, aiming to support global efforts in ensuring inclusive and robust frameworks. At the onset of COVID-19 the UNLIA, with substantive contributions by ESCAP, UNICEF and the Pacific Community (SPC) published guidelines on Maintaining registration during the COVID-19 pandemic.

For more information:

<https://unstats.un.org/legal-identity-agenda/publications/>

<https://unstats.un.org/legal-identity-agenda/documents/COVID-19-Guidelines.pdf>

<https://getinthepicture.org/resource/report-pacific-civil-registrars-network-disaster-preparation-and-response-workshop>

Pacific Civil Registrars Network

The Pacific Civil Registrars Network, with the support of ESCAP published a report on the learnings and shared experiences of Pacific countries on dealing with disaster and natural crisis, covering various aspects of disaster planning, including countries' experiences on the impact of disasters for CRVS, best practices for disaster preparedness and response, coordination mechanisms among stakeholders, data management during emergencies, and the integration of civil registration into disaster risk reduction strategies.

For more information:

<https://getinthepicture.org/resource/report-pacific-civil-registrars-network-disaster-preparation-and-response-workshop>

Pacific Civil Registrars Network: 2023 Meeting Report | Get Every One in the Picture (getinthepicture.org)

Centre of Excellence for CRVS Systems

The Centre of Excellence for CRVS Systems released numerous reports on civil registration resilience and published several documents regarding the impacts of the pandemic, as well as conflict and humanitarian crises for countries' CRVS systems. Their report Compendium of Good Practices: Harnessing Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) Systems in Conflict, Emergencies, and Fragile Settings provides valuable insights into the specific challenges faced during crises, laying down general guidelines and practical strategies for strengthening the resilience of CRVS systems while exploring a multitude of case studies on the topic.

For more information:

<https://crvssystems.ca/supporting-crvs-system-resilience>

https://crvssystems.ca/sites/default/files/assets/images/CRVS%20in%20Conflict%2C%20Emergencies%20and%20Fragile%20Settings_Full%20Compendium_e_WEB.pdf

Plan International

Plan International's report on Birth Registration in Emergencies: A Review of Best Practices in Humanitarian Action provides a comprehensive literature review on the topic, focusing specifically on birth registration process during crisis. The report highlights several crucial factors and good practices that contribute to the efficacy of birth registration procedures in emergency situations, providing tools to help determine the effectiveness, preparedness, and general resilience of birth registration systems.

For more information:

https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/Children/BirthRegistrationMarginalized/PlanInternationalGeneva_5.pdf

Resilience in the CRVS Decade

The 2021 Ministerial Declaration on Building a More Resilient Future with Inclusive Civil Registration and Vital Statistics highlights the importance of civil registration systems and identity management in promoting resilience and facilitating access to essential services during and after disasters. The declaration calls upon members and associate members to develop civil registration and vital statistics systems in accordance with the principle of respecting and ensuring human rights, with civil registration of vital events treated as an indispensable public administration service and should be supported with adequate financial resources and appropriate infrastructure at all times.

Although the term “resilience” is not directly mentioned in the Regional Action Framework on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific⁶, many of its recommendations indirectly or directly address the concept by emphasizing the need of resilience-building, such as the need for disaster response strategies.

⁶ <https://getinthepicture.org/resource/regional-action-framework-civil-registration-and-vital-statistics-asia-and-pacific>

Implementation Steps

The implementation steps encompass a range of resilience-building practices that focus on disaster planning and preparedness. One of the key steps, “establish an effective and sustainable national CRVS coordination mechanism comprising all relevant stakeholders”⁷, promotes the integration of CRVS systems, and significantly enhances a country's capacity to plan for shocks or disasters.

Another implementation step, “develop and implement a comprehensive multisectoral national CRVS strategy, aligned, where appropriate, with the action areas of the regional action framework, with political commitment, adequate funding, and a clear delineation of responsibilities for stakeholders to establish accountability for the implementation” can involve the integration of resilience-building methods into CRVS systems in collaboration with other spheres of government, such as healthcare or emergency aid relief.

Action Area

- Political commitment
- Public engagement, participation and generating demand
- Coordination
- Policies, legislation and implementation of regulations
- Infrastructure and resources
- Operational procedures, practices and innovations
- Production, dissemination and use of vital statistics

Options for building resilient CRVS

The Centre of Excellence for CRVS Systems proposes general functions to work on to build resilience. It includes governance and legal framework; human resources; operations, people (equity); financing; monitoring and evaluation. Their report suggests general guidelines to follow for resilience-building strategy and calls for country to consider these functions when designing a resilient CRVS system⁸. The Pacific Civil Registrars Network⁹ and Plan International¹⁰ also provide useful guidelines focused on CRVS preparedness for crisis as well.

⁷ Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific. (2021). Getting everyone in the picture: A snapshot of progress midway through the Asian and Pacific Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Decade, p. 3. Retrieved from: <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12870/4701>

⁸ https://crvssystem.ca/sites/default/files/assets/images/02%20EN%20CRVS%20in%20Conflict%2C%20Emergencies%20and%20Fragile%20Settings_Lessons_WEB.pdf

⁹ <https://getinthepicture.org/resource/report-pacific-civil-registrars-network-disaster-preparation-and-response-workshop>

¹⁰ https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/Children/BirthRegistrationMarginalized/PlanInternationalGeneva_5.pdf

There are multiple concrete actions CRVS stakeholders can take to improve the resilience of CRVS systems, most of which closely align with some suggestions that were raised by members during the ninth meeting of the Regional Steering Group for Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific.

Creating an enabling legal framework

It is necessary to reform national legislation to ensure that the civil registration system and other administrative authorities can adapt to change. Adequate governance mechanisms are required to provide a flexible legal environment, which aligns with international standards and established functioning governance bodies responsible for civil registration and vital statistics, where changes can take place. The framework should be adaptable to disasters and emergencies and dynamic enough to accommodate the urgency of crises.

Linking with national data architecture

Interoperability and integration of CRVS with other administrative data align with the “coordination” and the “production, dissemination, and use of vital statistics” action areas. Linking CRVS with national data architecture can facilitate timely vital statistics production, preventing duplicated efforts and contradictory approaches. It also generates institutional channels for coordination across different government agencies as well as improves the capacity of the country for effective data sharing, an essential aspect for emergency response planning.

Flexible registration processes

Flexible registration practices enable a greater ability to adapt and formalise temporary registration or other alternative measures in case of emergency. An effective and adaptable civil registration system can incorporate flexibility in its processes, enabling registration practices to adapt to the specific population they serve. ensures that registration remains accessible and responsive even in challenging circumstances

Digitalization of CRVS systems

Full digitalization of CRVS systems enables streamlined collection and transfer of civil registration data, supporting the production of accurate and timely vital statistics. Digitalization brings multiple benefits to CRVS, enhancing efficiency, adaptability, and resilience. It can help overcome geographical barriers and improves accessibility for remote communities. It also enables the implementation of online registration portals and mobile applications. However, digitalization presents new challenges, requiring governments to prioritize resilient data storage, cybersecurity and protection against unauthorized access or tampering of digitized records. Striking a careful balance between embracing the benefits of digitalization and fortifying the system against potential risks is essential.

Monitoring and improvement of business processes

Performance and resilience of a CRVS system depend on how well its business processes are designed and executed. By assessing, stress-testing, and redesigning business processes to accomplish significant performance improvement and eliminating bottlenecks as part of an iterative and sustainable cycle of continuous CRVS system improvement, countries could strengthen the robustness of their CRVS system to ensure that the system can adapt and respond to evolving needs and technological advancements. By prioritizing the continuous refinement of business processes, countries lay the foundation for a resilient CRVS system.

Development and implementation of business continuity planning

Business continuity planning encompasses a range of strategies, plans and standard operating procedures aimed at anticipating and addressing crises and emergencies as well as ensuring the uninterrupted operation of critical business functions during and after disruptive events. The business continuity plan should align with or be an integral part of a government-wide plan or standard operating procedure for a state of emergency where possible. The plan should clearly identify roles and responsibilities for all stakeholders and should contain recommended measures to enable effective collaboration between the stakeholders and embed civil registration.

Increasing public engagement and awareness of CRVS

Public engagement and awareness raising can address registration issues for sub-populations that are prone to under-registration, especially during a crisis. It involves evaluating and overcoming current and potential barriers to registration for these groups. It involves understanding their vulnerabilities and devising ways to improve access and encourage registration.

Adherence to international standards

Improving CRVS system resilience requires adherence to international standards to the extent possible. The UNSD Handbook on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems can be used as a reference point for the design of resilience-building strategies and plans. The Handbook also refers to fundamental international standards that countries should abide by including during a crisis or emergency. Countries should also refer to other international standards outlined in the Handbook to improve the resilience of their CRVS system.

For more information:
United Nations Statistics Division (2021). [Handbook on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems: Management, Operation and Maintenance](#), p. 50.

Incorporating resilience into the 2024 review of the Decade

During the ninth meeting of the Regional Steering Group for Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific, members agreed on the integration of resilience into the 2024 CRVS Decade Review, emphasising its criticality in both sustaining existing progress, and effectively addressing upcoming challenges associated with climate change and new technologies. Contextual questions need to be used to gain an understanding of the state of resilience management of CRVS systems in the Asia-Pacific region. The following set of questions could be considered for incorporation into the 2024 review of the Decade, which will enable a better understanding of the resilience of CRVS systems:

Proposed questions

Line	Question	Answer	Comment
1. Creating an enabling legal framework			
1.1.	Is there a fee or other penalty for late or delayed registration of vital events? Please provide a brief explanation and link(s) to relevant document(s).		
2. Flexible registration processes			
2.1.	Have you employed mobile registration to increase access to registration services? If yes, please provide more details and link(s) to relevant information/document(s).		
2.2.	Have you implemented other special measures to register unregistered populations? If yes, please give more details about these measures in the comments.		
3. Digitalization of CRVS systems			
3.1.	Do you have an online platform or mobile phone application for registration of vital events? Please provide more details and link(s) to relevant information/document(s).		
3.2.	Do you have a data protection plan for your database?		
3.3.	Do you store civil registration data at multiple or offsite locations?		
4. Linking with national data architecture			
4.1.	Is civil registration data shared with the National Statistics Office (NSO) or equivalent in your country? If yes, please provide a brief summary and link(s) to relevant document(s).		
4.2.	Is there a procedure/protocol in place to facilitate the use of civil registration data by other government entities? If yes, please provide a brief summary and link(s) to relevant document(s).		

Line	Question	Answer	Comment
4.3.	Is the civil registration database linked to relevant administrative databases such as from the health ministry, national identity authority, or NSO? If yes, please provide a brief summary and link(s) to relevant document(s).		
5. Monitoring and improvement of business processes			
5.1.	Have you reviewed CRVS business processes in your country?		
If yes, please answer the question(s) below.			
5.1.1.	When was the most recent review of your CRVS business processes?		
5.1.2.	What methodology do you use to review CRVS business processes in your country? Please provide more details and link(s) to relevant information/document(s).		
5.1.3.	Have findings from reviews been used to inform changes for improving CRVS business processes? If yes, please provide a brief summary and link(s) to relevant document(s).		
6. Development and implementation of business continuity planning			
6.1.	Do you have a business continuity plan for civil registration services? Please provide more details and link(s) to relevant information/document(s). <i>[Note: A business continuity planning is a range of strategies and procedures aimed at ensuring the uninterrupted operation of critical business functions of a government during and after disruptive events or crises such as a natural disaster.]</i>		
If yes, please answer the question(s) below.			
6.1.1.	Is civil registration considered an essential service, including during a crisis? Please provide more details and link(s) to relevant information/document(s). <i>[Note: A service can be considered essential if it is in the best interests of the public to keep the service operational at all times, including crisis situations. Financial and human resources will be prioritized to maintain the operation of essential services.]</i>		
7. Increasing public engagement and awareness with CRVS			
7.1.	Have you undertaken national or subnational campaigns to encourage registration of vital events? If yes, please add a link and summarize the campaigns in the comments.		
7.2.	Have you established incentives (financial, non-financial, or both) to increase registration rates of vital events? If yes, please summarize these and when they were introduced.		
7.3.	Have you established penalties (financial, non-financial, or both) to increase registration rates of vital events? If yes, please summarize these and when they were introduced.		

Line	Question	Answer	Comment
7.4.	Since 2015, have you reviewed incentives and/or penalties to increase registration rates of vital events, including for hard-to-reach populations and people in vulnerable situations? If yes, please summarize what you have done in the comments.		