

## Bangladesh Country Paper

### 3<sup>rd</sup> CR8 Conference, Dhaka

(6-8 June, 2023)

**1. Introduction:** Civil Registration is an administrative system used to record vital events such as births and deaths. The United Nations defines civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) as the "continuous, permanent, compulsory and universal recording of the occurrence and characteristics of vital events of the population in accordance with the law." Six major components of CRVS are Birth and Death registration; Determination of Causes Deaths; Marriage and Divorce Registration and Adoption.

**2. Context of civil registration in Bangladesh**

The Sustainable Development Goal 16.9 agenda- "No one should be without a legal identity. No life should be allowed to remain invisible to policymakers. No person should fall between the cracks of incomplete official data. Vital registration is fundamental to the logical operation of health care and education services, thereby ensuring equity, empowerment, and improved economic productivity.

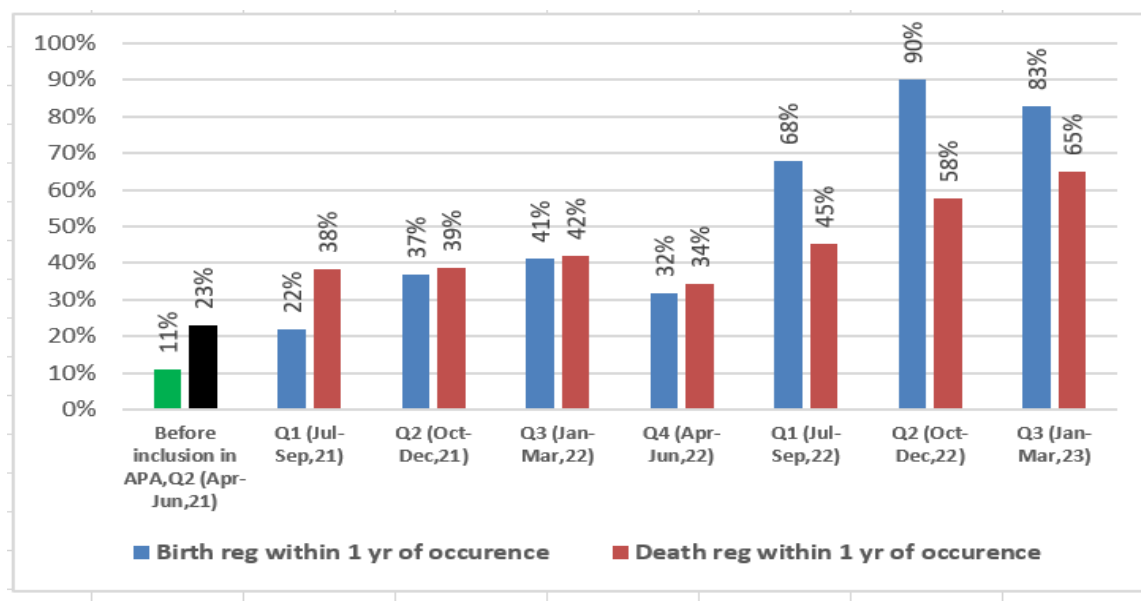
2.1 Bangladesh is a developing country in South Asia with a population of 165 million around. Every year, 3 million births and 0.9 million deaths are estimated to occur in the country. Local Government has a historical role in civil registration in Bangladesh. The colonial government of British India established a civil registration system that was promulgated in 1873. Under that law, birth registration was mandatory within eight days of a child's birth. This system remained in operation for over a century, but achieved only very

low levels of event registration. Due to the importance of timely data on births and deaths, the government of Bangladesh repealed this registration system and enacted the Birth and Death Registration Act, 2004 to establish a new functional CRVS system. The 2004 act has been amended in 2013. The current CRVS system follows the most recent amendment, adopted in 2018.

2.2 Later, union parishad and municipality (pourosova) chairmen were given responsibility of birth and death registrations under Local Government Ordinance 1976 and Poursava Ordinance 1977. Since 1996 the Local Government Division with assistance from UNICEF and other development partners has been conducting various activities regarding birth registration. In 2016, the Office of the Registrar General, Birth and Death Registration has been established under Local Government Division to administer and scale up birth and death registration activities.

2.3 At present, local government institutions such as 12 city corporations, municipalities in suburban areas, union councils in rural areas are working with birth and death registration. Besides cantonment boards actively register vital events, including deaths. Registration can also be done in the 79 embassies abroad, mainly located in countries with a high density of Bangladeshi nationals.

2.4 Efficient maneuvering of monitoring tool, engagement of community-based frontline local government and health workers, and district and divisional level sensitization workshops, Bangladesh has successfully reached to 83% birth and 65% death registration within one year of occurrence of birth and death nationally at the end of quarter 1 of 2023. This successful journey is graphically depicted below:



2.5 According to the law, the birth of a child has to be registered within 45 days. If a child does not have full name he or she will have to be registered by nickname and within next 45 days the child must be registered by his or her full name. In the case of late registration, one has to pay late registration fee. The law states that Union Parishad (UP) members and secretaries, village police, city corporation or municipality councilors, health workers and family welfare workers employed at UPs, pourasavas, city corporations and cantonment areas, fieldworkers of health and family planning related NGOs, medical officers or doctors of hospitals or clinics, caretakers of graveyards or crematoriums shall assist with birth and death registrations.

2.6 In Bangladesh, the birth and death registration process involves 2 steps: (1) identification and notification and (2) registration. The Birth and Death Registration Act 2014 promotes notification within 45 days and identifies a set of

entities as possible notifiers across different government bodies and the community. The second part, the registration, is a mechanical process of availing and distributing a legal document, the certificate, for individual records.

2.7 Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) has been given a special importance in Bangladesh. The civil registration processes being administered by different government agencies like, Office of the Registrar General, Birth and Death Registration; Office of Inspector General of Registration, Law and Justice Division; Directorate General of Health Services, Health Services Division; Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (the national vital statistics producer) and also to develop a common service platform for the people of the country. To realize this opportunity, we adopted a “whole-of-government” approach and the Cabinet Division **has been** given the responsibility to lead the effort. It established a “CRVS Secretariat” and formed a national level inter-ministerial coordination and supervision committee.

2.8 Bangladesh wants to establish a robust and effective CRVS process based on a Unique ID (UID) system and linked it with service delivery processes. Along with the six components (birth, death, marriage, divorce, adoption and cause of death) have also added enrolment in the education system, and migration (in and out) as major components of CRVS in Bangladesh. And then to link them with the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) for generation of Vital Statistics (VS) and with other services delivery processes especially the Social Protection Programs. An Integrated Service Delivery Platform as part of CRVS implementation plan are being developing. There are multiple ministries within the government that are involved in the identification of vital events. An inter-ministerial approach labelled as “CRVS++” has been undertaken by the Cabinet Division of Bangladesh.

**3. Success/Progress: Bangladesh achieved significant success in birth and death registration. Some of them are mentioned below:**

3.1 Progress/success steps are following.

- a) Bangladesh introduced the Birth and Death Registration Information System (BDRIS) in 2019 - a sophisticated online system of prompt service deliveries.
- b) BDRIS data base: Recognize as Critical Information Infrastructure (CII)
- c) Application Programming Interface (API) with 17 organizations
- d) Digitize system (can be access from anywhere in the world).
- e) E-payment
- f) Electronic Notification
- g) Structured Legal and organizational frameworks.

3.2 The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare developed a new death certificate which meets WHO standards allowing the collection of high-quality cause of death information. The new form was tested in multiple medical colleges and lower-level hospitals. Approximately 1000 master trainers have trained 20,000 physicians and other relevant staff.

3.3 The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare implemented the application of verbal autopsy - a method that can be used to determine the most probable cause of death based on information obtained from a caregiver of the deceased. More than 47,000 verbal autopsies have been collected, giving the government access for the first time to cause-of-death data for communities collected as part of routine CRVS activities.

3.4 Law and Justice Division along with Information and Communication Technology Division are working to create software 'Bhondhon' for online registration of marriages and divorces. With implementation of online registration early marriage and child marriage will be eliminated.

3.5 Specific guidelines have been given to all relevant agencies for sharing civil

registration data with Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics for generating statistics on CR data.

#### **4. Challenges:**

- a) Developing a unique ID system and linking it to the service delivery processes of various ministries
- b) The limited coverage of death registration, particularly among women
- c) The large majority of deaths occurs outside of health facilities in this area of Bangladesh.
- d) Lack of community-based interventions and the deployment of recording systems that reach villages and remote areas.
- e) Lack of an efficient birth/death notification system from health facility to CRVS system
- f) Every additional source adds an extra level of complexity to the overall database system and its accountability and sustainability.
- g) Lack of sufficient technical manpower and data interoperability among core CRVS implementing agencies sometime delays service deliveries.
- h) Funding for scaling up of determining facility cause of death to all 6,000 public and private hospitals,
- i) Verbal Autopsy to remaining 31 of 69 sub-districts (full sample size) and Introducing ICD 11 coding in health facilities is emerging as big obstacle.

#### **5. Opportunities:**

##### **5.1 Infrastructure:**

**Bangladesh a country of around 169 million population having crude birth rate 18 and crude death rate 5, requires registering 3 million birth and 0.85 million death per year. To fulfil such a gigantic task Bangladesh is blessed with very good civil registration infrastructure across the country**

**and missions abroad.**

## **5.2 Regional and International Commitment:**

Since the first Ministerial Conference-2014, Bangladesh is heading towards the implementation of CRVS with the shared vision of the Regional Action Framework (RAF) of CRVS decade by 2024. As per declaration, Bangladesh was pledge bound to complete 100% birth and 50% death registration within one year of birth and death by the end 2024.

**5.3 UNICEF and DP support:** Massive financial and technical support of UNICEF for building up awareness through workshop and training as well as maintenance of BDRIS with technical experts are added strengths of ORG to provide service deliveries smoothly. Unicef is supporting for achieving technical capabilities for completeness of birth and death registration and Vital Strategies with mortality data improvement.

## **5.4 Legal and policy level support:**

In Bangladesh senior policy makers are involved for coordination and implementation of CRVS in Bangladesh. CRVS Steering Committee is constituted with 20 ministries/divisions of the government with honorable Cabinet Secretary in the Chair. CRVS Implementation Committee, National Mortality Technical Working Group and other CRVS committees are associated with senior officials of the government.

Local Government Division enacted Birth and Death Registration Act 2004 and Birth and Death Registration Rules in 2006. Guidelines has been prepared to do registration activities in 2021 and Task force committees has been established to supervise and monitor registration activities at the field level.

## **6 Way forward:**

- a) Enhancing capacity of the Office of the Registrar General, Birth and Death Registration with increased manpower and resources
- b) Offices at district and division level require to establish directly under the office of the Registrar General for monitoring activities of CR offices.

- c) Review the Birth and Death Registration Acts to examine the possibility of making necessary changes under the current provisions of the laws
- d) Work closely with civil registration, statistical authorities, and other partners for timely compilation and dissemination of vital statistics reports in line with SDG recommendations.
- e) Work with civil registration authorities to evaluate measures initiated in response to the pandemic and institutionalize them as part of overall CRVS improvement to strengthen the resilience of CRVS systems in anticipation of future emergencies as well as prolonged crises.
- f) Work with civil registration and health authorities to use initiatives for improving death registration to implement or expand the coverage of WHO prescribed Medical Certificate of Cause of Death (MCCOD) forms, and advocate with WHO to train physicians on International Certificate of Disease (ICD), and establish a linkage between MCCOD and the death registry.
- g) Work with other authorities to harmonize and align the data standards in other registers/systems with civil registration and national ID prescribed standards, including IDs, dates, and naming standards.
- h) Develop joint work plans and deliverables between ORG and DG Health to aid smooth and timely birth registration based on immunization record.
- i) Commit to joint resource mobilization to bridge the funding gaps and foster innovative partnerships with other agencies to synergize efforts and resources.
- j) Work together on the rollout and reporting to assess the extent of interoperability between CR and other sectors.
- k) Explore the possibility of declaring health facilities as registration points for institutional births and deaths to promote registration at birth/death.



- 1) Interoperability of all agencies implementing CRVS with BDRIS system needs to be established. Efficient dashboard for real time intensive monitoring of birth and death registration based on monthly target of each registration office needs to be established