

Concept Note for a meeting of civil registrars in South-East Asia in January 2025¹

Context

In Asia-Pacific, approximately 64 million children under the age of 5 do not have their births registered.² Such a lack of identity denies these children an existence before the law, and as they grow it also prevents them from participating in governmental processes, or from accessing social and financial services, employment markets and legal protections necessary for increasing their quality of life and for sustainable and inclusive development. Universal civil registration and legal identity for all consequently strengthens a country's ability to measure, monitor and meet a wide variety of goals and targets for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Each country in South-East Asia has an operational civil registration office, reflecting this region's prioritization of civil registration in its domestic policy agenda, and their commitment to the realization of the goals of the Regional Action Framework on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) in Asia and the Pacific. Although each country in the region exercises different coordination mechanisms and methods to conduct civil registration tasks, there remains a fundamental commitment to achieve complete civil registration.

Birth and death registration, as well as identity management, are a priority of most governments, however, across South-East Asia there are similar issues and questions faced by civil registrars. With the ambitious targets of 100% birth and 80% death registration by 2030, countries are employing different information and communication technologies to achieve their objectives. These are also being placed, at times, within a broader ID-Management structure. For these reasons, as well as the intra-regional fluidity and movement of refugees and migrants, also requires cross-border collaboration.

What can a network of civil registrars achieve?

While Asia-Pacific civil registrars face unique national challenges in achieving universal registration, they must also address practical registration issues, as well as cross-border issues such as migration caused by conflict, natural hazards and climate change. As such, strengthening information and communications technology, and adopting innovative approaches to meet these challenges requires registrars to network in a space suitable for sharing ideas, learning from each other, and finding common solutions through South-South cooperation.

Civil registrars networks in Asia and the Pacific have assisted members in developing methods to foster coordination and prioritize shared technological approaches to collaborate on common, transboundary challenges. For instance, PCRN's data sharing plan assists members in building resiliency to natural hazards by enabling members to adopt best practices in data archiving and use of vital statistics to inform the provision of public services responding to crises.

The subregional mechanisms ultimately promote South-South cooperation through disseminating knowledge of innovative methods for improving CRVS systems, developing data-sharing approaches and

¹ Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor-Leste and Viet Nam

² <https://getinthepicture.org/midterm-report>

sharing good practices for improving systems to ensure no one is left behind. Stemming from shared visions to improve subregional systems, platforms for sharing information allow stakeholders to regularly communicate with one another and have even generated collective approaches to CRVS data storage and retrieval.

The subregional mechanisms are also the first of their kind in Asia-Pacific, which specifically prioritize the needs of civil registration authorities while still accounting for cross-border interests. Each mechanism is also based on a shared vision for addressing common issues while maintaining flexibility to local needs and supporting the implementation of the shared vision that, by 2024, all people in Asia and the Pacific will benefit from universal and responsive civil registration and vital statistics systems that facilitate the realization of their rights and support good governance, health and development.³

An initial meeting of the SEA registrars was organized with support of the Philippines Statistics Authority on 7-9 February 2023 in Manila. Multiple partners supported the event including ESCAP, Vital Strategies, Global Health Advocacy Incubator, UNICEF, UNFPA, UNHCR and WHO.

The participants initiated the establishment of a network for civil registrars in South-East Asia. During the meeting potential collaboration on issues of concern of civil registrars in the region was discussed. The meeting provided a professional forum for civil registrars to discuss priority areas that are of common concern to the civil registrars in the region

Issues of legislative frameworks, CRVS digitalization in South East Asia and assessing and addressing inequalities in CRVS were discussed in depth at the meeting and the current state of these issues in South East Asia was documented in the report of the meeting: [Civil Registration in South-East Asia: Legislation, Digitalization, and Inequality](#)

Finally, participants during the meeting also benefited from visits to various offices of the Philippines Statistics Authority.

Objectives of the 2025 meeting of the South East Asian Civil Registrars

1. To identify key achievements across the CRVS Decade to highlight at the Third Ministerial Conference on CRVS in Asia and the Pacific, to be held from 24 to 26 June 2025
2. To discuss focus areas for future CRVS improvement initiatives
3. To facilitate knowledge exchange and potential collaboration on issues of concern of civil registrars in the region
4. To document existing practices in the region and common challenges

The meeting will facilitate discussions on key CRVS achievements in South-East Asia to highlight at the Third Ministerial Conference on CRVS in Asia and the Pacific (24-26 June 2025) and the South-East Asia sub-regional forum to be held on 23 June 2025. In addition, thematic discussions will focus on digitalization of registration systems, inclusivity and resilience in civil registration and vital statistics systems and the 2025 review of progress in implementing the Regional Action Framework for CRVS in Asia

³ <https://getinthepicture.org/resource/ministerial-declaration-get-every-one-picture-asia-and-pacific>

and the Pacific. The Government of Cambodia will host visits to relevant registration facilities and health centers.

Participants

Participants at the meeting will include 2-3 professionals (Ideally the civil registrar general or deputy) working in civil registration from each of the SEA countries. In addition, relevant development partners will be invited to participate and co-organize the meeting.

Joint invitations will be sent from ESCAP and General Department of Identification, Ministry of Interior of Cambodia (awaiting confirmation from GDI whether this is the preferred approach) to the countries' civil registrar general (or equivalent) asking them to nominate a participant or participants depending on the country.

Report of the meeting

Following the meeting, a report will be published by ESCAP. The report and other meeting documents will be disseminated via www.getinthepicture.org and through [CRVS Insight](#).