Ninth meeting of the Regional Steering Group for Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific, 10-12 May 2023

CRVS RESILIENCE
LESSONS FROM COVID-19

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CRVS SYSTEM IN MALAYSIA
Malaysia’s Commitment

Malaysia has adopted the resolutions proposed in the Ministerial Conference in a Ministerial Declaration to ‘Get Everyone in The Picture’ and Regional Action Framework (RAF) for the Decade in 2014.

Stakeholders

- Ministry of Home Affairs (MOHA)
- Ministry of Health (MOH)
- National Registration Department (NRD)
GOVERNANCE FOR CRVS

1 STEERING COMMITTEE
Chaired by Secretary General of Ministry of Home Affairs (MOHA)

MEMBERS
Consist of representatives from various related government agencies:
- Ministry of Home Affairs (MOHA)
- Ministry of Health (MOH)
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Ministry of Women & Family
- Ministry of Education (MOE)
- Ministry of Economy Affairs (MEA)
- National Registration Department (NRD)
- Department of Statistics Malaysia (DOSM)
- Attorney General's Chambers (AGC)
- Malaysian Administrative Modernisation and Management Planning Unit (MAMPU)
- Department of Islamic Development

TERM OF REFERENCE (ToR)
To evaluate and endorse the suggestion, planning or enhancement activities on CRVS

2 TECHNICAL COMMITTEE
Chaired by Director General of National Registration Department (NRD)

MEMBERS
Consist of representatives from various related government agencies:
- National Registration Department (NRD)
- Ministry of Home Affairs (MOHA)
- Ministry of Health (MOH)
- Department of Statistics Malaysia (DOSM)
- Immigration Department of Malaysia
- Royal Malaysian Police (RMP)
- Social Welfare
- Department of Islamic Development
- Sabah State Secretary
- Sarawak State Secretary

TERM OF REFERENCE (ToR)
To prepare suggestion, planning and execute the enhancement on CRVS

3 TECHNICAL WORKING GROUP (TWG)
Chaired by Director of Population and Demography Statistics Division, DOSM

MEMBERS
Technical unit, MOH & DOSM

TERM OF REFERENCE
To check and verify the data

Maternal Mortality Data
Under-5 Mortality Data
Stillbirth Mortality Data
Covid-19 Mortality Data
Suicide Data

4 INTER AGENCY PLANNING GROUP (IAPG)
Chaired by Chief Statistician, DOSM

MEMBERS
All data providers & Stakeholders

TERM OF REFERENCE
To validate and endorse the statistics

Vital Statistics
Cause of Deaths Statistics
Marriage & Divorce Statistics
Population Statistics

CRVS PUBLICATIONS
- Vital Statistics
- Statistics Causes of Death
- Abridged Life Tables
- Marriage and Divorce Statistics
- Population Current Estimates
**FRAMEWORK OF CRVS SYSTEM IN MALAYSIA**

**CIVIL REGISTRATION AGENCIES**
- National Registration Department (NRD)
- Royal Malaysia Police (RMP)
- Ministry of Health (MOH)
- Federal and States Religious Department
- National Registration Department (NRD)
- Department of Syariah Judiciary Malaysia
- Council For Native Customs And Traditions

**VITAL STATISTICS AGENCY**
- NRD is centralise agency for CR
  - Civil Registration, including population registers
  - Principles:
    - Compulsory
    - Universal
    - Continuous
    - Confidentiality
  - To give individual legal identity such as:

**CRVS USES**
- Vital Statistics
  - Compilation
  - Processing
  - Validation
  - Quality control
  - Dissemination
- Complementary/Interim sources
  - Population estimation
  - Census
  - Surveys
- DOSM is responsible agency to process VS in Malaysia
- National ID’s (MyCard/MyKid/MyPR)
- Birth & Death Certificates

**Inputs for the formulation of policies and planning of programmes related to population development, health, education and occupation as well as a useful source of reference for researchers and academia.**
CHALLENGES DURING COVID-19
The 2020 Movement Control Order commonly referred to as the MCO, is a quarantine implemented as a preventive measure by the federal government of Malaysia in response to the COVID-19 pandemic in the country on some phases. Only an essential services are allowed to run the business during MCO and Malaysians are not allowed to travel more than 10 kilometers away from home except for banking and financial services, to buy everyday necessities, to obtain health services and so on. Registration for births and deaths only by appointment or online.

Level of MCO’s Phase

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PHASE</th>
<th>KNOWN AS</th>
<th>DURATION</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PHASE 1</td>
<td>MCO</td>
<td>18 MARCH – 31 MARCH 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHASE 2</td>
<td>MCO</td>
<td>1 APRIL – 14 APRIL 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHASE 3</td>
<td>MCO</td>
<td>15 APRIL – 28 APRIL 2020</td>
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<tr>
<td>PHASE 4</td>
<td>MCO (CONDITIONAL)</td>
<td>29 APRIL – 12 MAY 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHASE 5</td>
<td>MCO (CONDITIONAL)</td>
<td>13 MAY – 9 JUNE 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHASE 6</td>
<td>MCO (RECOVERY)</td>
<td>10 JUNE – 31 AUGUST 2020</td>
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<tr>
<td>PHASE 7</td>
<td>MCO (RECOVERY)</td>
<td>31 AUGUST – 31 DECEMBER 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHASE 8</td>
<td>MCO (RECOVERY)</td>
<td>JANUARY-MARCH 2021</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Malaysia began its transition to the endemic phase from 1 April 2022.
Civil registration are not included in essential services as stipulated in the Federal Constitution of Malaysia

- Registration offices were closed from mid-March to mid-May 2020, and later only available by appointment. This meant the births and deaths registration accessible by DOSM represented only a fraction of the expected births and deaths.
- Lagging up to 90 days for registration (by appointment).
- For example, Average monthly data for Birth (35,000), Death (14,000), Non-Muslim Marriage (4,000) and Divorce (1,000). During COVID-19, the average shows a declining trend due to late registration.
- However, all the occurrences during pandemic have been late registered starting June 2020 and onwards.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>JAN</th>
<th>FEB</th>
<th>MAR</th>
<th>APR</th>
<th>MAY</th>
<th>JUN</th>
<th>JUL</th>
<th>AUG</th>
<th>SEP</th>
<th>OCT</th>
<th>NOV</th>
<th>DEC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BIRTHS</td>
<td>40,582</td>
<td>36,151</td>
<td>25,245</td>
<td>862</td>
<td>37,426</td>
<td>73,411</td>
<td>49,946</td>
<td>40,914</td>
<td>43,550</td>
<td>36,238</td>
<td>35,262</td>
<td>39,333</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEATHS</td>
<td>15,741</td>
<td>13,310</td>
<td>9,791</td>
<td>10,222</td>
<td>16,348</td>
<td>14,624</td>
<td>14,244</td>
<td>15,074</td>
<td>13,323</td>
<td>12,820</td>
<td>12,666</td>
<td>13,956</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MARRIAGE*</td>
<td>2,862</td>
<td>4,926</td>
<td>2,841</td>
<td>2,862</td>
<td>894</td>
<td>3,484</td>
<td>3,612</td>
<td>3,674</td>
<td>3,638</td>
<td>4,353</td>
<td>3,350</td>
<td>4,091</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DIVORCE*</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>216</td>
<td>222</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>648</td>
<td>854</td>
<td>598</td>
<td>670</td>
<td>448</td>
<td>927</td>
<td>773</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: * refer to Non-muslim Marriage and Divorce
2 Estimation of live birth and deaths statistics

- Using Time Series Modeler- Exponential Smoothing Models (10 years time series data).
- Estimation was based on scenario during pandemics:
  - The **rate of road accidents** has dropped by nearly 70 per cent;
  - 4 or 5 **deaths daily** caused by road accidents as compared to average of death for March 2010-2019 recorded **380 deaths per month and 12 deaths per day**.
- In practical, we have to estimate the **third month of every quarter**, but because of the pandemic and late registration data, the estimation was also applied for the **second month**.
- At this point of time, **quarterly data are not revised** and considered as preliminary data, but the annual data will be revised later.
In normal situation, late registrations recorded an average of 3,000 for births and 250 for deaths. However, during the COVID-19 pandemic (2020 and 2021) the average of late registration were increased to 24,000 for births and 350 for deaths.

Subsequently, late registrations were recorded of 1,900 for births and 350 for deaths in 2022. This situation can illustrate that civil registration in Malaysia is recovering after the COVID-19 pandemic.
LESSONS FROM COVID-19
1. Importance of **data sharing** among agencies using an integrated data system. Improve cooperation with data provider to strengthen the process as well as data access and data sharing.

2. **The Strengthening of the National Statistical System (SNSS)** was launched during National Statistics Day in October 2021. SNSS is implemented to prepare and enhance the Malaysian Statistical System to meet the complexities of the environment and the challenges that are dynamic in the present and future.

3. Civil registration should be considered an **essential service** mandated to continue operations during a pandemic.

4. **Strengthening the capacity of public health services in Malaysia** by allocating more budget in health services and several new hospitals, clinics and facility construction projects will be implemented.

5. DOSM have **accessed to COVID-19 cases and death** to monitor number of death due to COVID-19. Technical Working Group with MOH has been established in 2021 to check and verify before dissemination of data.
5. Demographic statistics in Malaysia

- This situation affects the change in the structure of the age of marriage and the increase in the average age of maternal mothers and implications for reducing the productive age of women aged 15-64 years. This will directly affect the decline in the total fertility rate in Malaysia in the long term.
- Over the last five decades, Total fertility rate declined significantly from 4.9 children per woman of childbearing age in 1970 to 1.7 in 2021.
LESSONS FROM COVID-19 (cont.)

- From 2020 to 2022 (3 years), life expectancy at birth decreased by 1.3 years with males decreased by 1.2 years while females decreased by 1.4 years. The decline in life expectancy for 2020 to 2022 is attributed to the increase in the number of excess deaths during pandemic COVID-19 in 2021.

- In 2021, the number of deaths in Malaysia increased drastically, an increase of 34.5 per cent as compared to 2020 due to COVID-19 pandemic. Crude death rate also increased to 6.9 as compared to 5.1 in 2020. Based on a preliminary analysis conducted by the Institute of Public Health, Ministry of Health Malaysia, the excess deaths during the COVID-19 pandemic in Malaysia were lower than in most countries at 18,011 deaths (Ministry of Health Malaysia, 2022).
Malaysia has made important progress in the production of vital statistics in the country over the past few years. The Department of Statistics Malaysia (DOSM) and the National Registration Department (NRD) have a long-standing relationship and are continuously improving their collaboration to facilitate the sharing of birth and death registration records to produce vital statistics. As a result, the data exchange protocols between the two agencies gradually evolved from hardcopy documents to monthly online transfers since 2016. This has allowed DOSM to produce quarterly statistics on births and deaths and to shorten the timeframe in producing annual vital statistics from 24 months to less than 12 months.

However, the COVID-19 pandemic had a disruptive effect on this system. The offices of NRD had to close due to the implementation of the Movement Control Order to prevent the spread of the virus, since birth and death registration are not included as essential services in the Federal Constitution of Malaysia. Registration offices were fully closed from mid-March to mid-May 2020, and later only available by appointment. NRD also offered an extension of up to 90 days to register births and deaths after the order was lifted. As a result, from mid-March 2020 birth and death registration data accessible by DOSM represent only a fraction of the expected births and deaths. In parallel to the NRD, the Ministry of Health registers and keeps records of births within and outside its facilities as well as deaths within its facilities and the Royal Malaysian Police keep records of deaths outside of health facilities. These records are transmitted online to NRD for issuance of birth and death certificates. Unlike NRD, both agencies continued operating during the Movement Control Order. DOSM only has access to the records consolidated and verified by NRD, and it has no direct access to the records of the Ministry of Health and the Royal Malaysian Police. These data could not, therefore, be used for vital statistics.

DOSM still produced its Vital Statistics report for the first quarter of 2020, but in the absence of complete data, it resorted to estimation methods based on time-series data from the past 10 years, as well as methods more specific to the situation. For example, DOSM considered the drop in the number of road accidents and the late registration of births and deaths due to the Movement Control Order. The department was able to use past experience, especially the adjustments performed on death data in Sabah Province, to compensate for underregistration.

The pandemic, by bringing an unexpected challenge to civil registration processes in many countries, highlighted the need for resilient systems such as the one in Malaysia. This is especially critical considering the importance of accurate and timely data to respond to crises. The prompt action from DOSM is proof that human resources are a key element to a well-functioning CRVS system, with the application of complex demographic models to ensure the continuity of vital statistics. However, there is a need to further strengthen the collaboration with the stakeholders and the potential to have access to their data in times of emergency. CRVS stakeholders in Malaysia have learned the importance of enhanced CRVS data sharing and subsequently a data sharing agreement was formalized between the Ministry of Health and DOSM, which will certainly lead to a more resilient CRVS system.
WAY FORWARD

- Improve cooperation with data provider to strengthen the process as well as data access and data sharing.
- Civil registration should be considered an essential service mandated to continue operations during a pandemic.
- Conducting study on under reporting civil registration in West Malaysia (Sabah and Sarawak) to assess the coverage level of birth and death registration in Sabah and Sarawak.
 Doesn’t matter far or near
Strength in numbers
we don’t live in fear

Birds of feather flock together
Statistics our form of adour
We, will always live it up

So let us live in solidarity
And in the world arena we’ll succeed
It is statistics that will come to be
The reason we will bloom in harmony

Everybody undivided
Data’s where our hearts reside in
There will always be a bind

Just like fire that ignites
That’s how brightly lit our dreams are
We’ll reach higher than the stars

Sending love to one another
Leaving no one in a slumber
We will stand with unity

Muster ing our courage while
Embracing our disparities
We’ll achieve our victory

One dream with unity
One love with harmony

“STATISTICS BLOOM IN HARMONY”