

Introduction



Civil registration is linked to a person's legal identity, including their right to recognition as a person before the law and their formal relationship with the State. The birth certificate issued after the registration of a birth provides an official and permanent recognition of a person's existence. Birth registration also establishes the connection of a child to her or his family through the recording of the parents' names. Later in life, the proof of legal identity provided by birth registration and the subsequent issuance of an official birth certificate as well as the registration of other vital events, such as marriages, allows individuals to access services and exercise their rights. These rights and services can be as varied as political participation, recourse to justice, property ownership, formal employment, financial services and inheritance. At the end of life, the death certificate represents a final and permanent record of the fact of death, which next of kin need to manage the legal or financial consequences of death. A universal and well-maintained civil registration system is recognized as the best source of information on vital events.² Statistics based on registration records, with causes of death recorded and disaggregated by key demographic characteristics, are critical to design, implement and monitor public health policies. They are also necessary for monitoring the 2030 Agenda, which includes 67 indicators benefiting from data from CRVS systems.³

² United Nations (2014). *Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System*. Revision 3. Available at <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/standmeth/principles/M19Rev3en.pdf>.

³ For more information on the establishment, functioning and characteristics of civil registration and its use for statistics, please refer to: United Nations (2014). *Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System*.

There is a long-standing commitment to CRVS in Asia and the Pacific. Indeed, governments and development partners in Asia and the Pacific recognized that many countries did not have universal and responsive CRVS systems, and this impeded inclusive and sustainable development. Those leaders came together in 2014 at the first Ministerial Conference on CRVS in Asia and the Pacific to accelerate and focus efforts to improve CRVS systems in the region. As a result, they proclaimed their shared vision, that by 2024 all people in Asia and the Pacific will benefit from universal and responsive CRVS systems facilitating the realization of their rights and supporting good governance, health and development. To mark a timeframe for realizing their shared vision, governments proclaimed the Asian and Pacific CRVS Decade, 2015–2024.

During the Ministerial Conference, governments committed to focusing their efforts on improving national CRVS systems by endorsing the Regional Action Framework on CRVS in Asia and the Pacific. The Regional Action Framework facilitates collaborative action at local, provincial, national and international levels by enabling stakeholders to align and prioritize efforts, as well as by monitoring progress toward achieving the shared vision. It contains three goals, 15 nationally set targets and eight implementation steps for countries to follow while improving their CRVS systems (see Box 1 for more information on the Regional Action Framework).⁴

Acting on commitments made at the Ministerial Conference in 2014, governments started implementing the Regional Action Framework. Forty-one member States and associate members of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) set their own targets for 2024 and reported them to ESCAP.

Most member States and associate members of ESCAP established ambitious

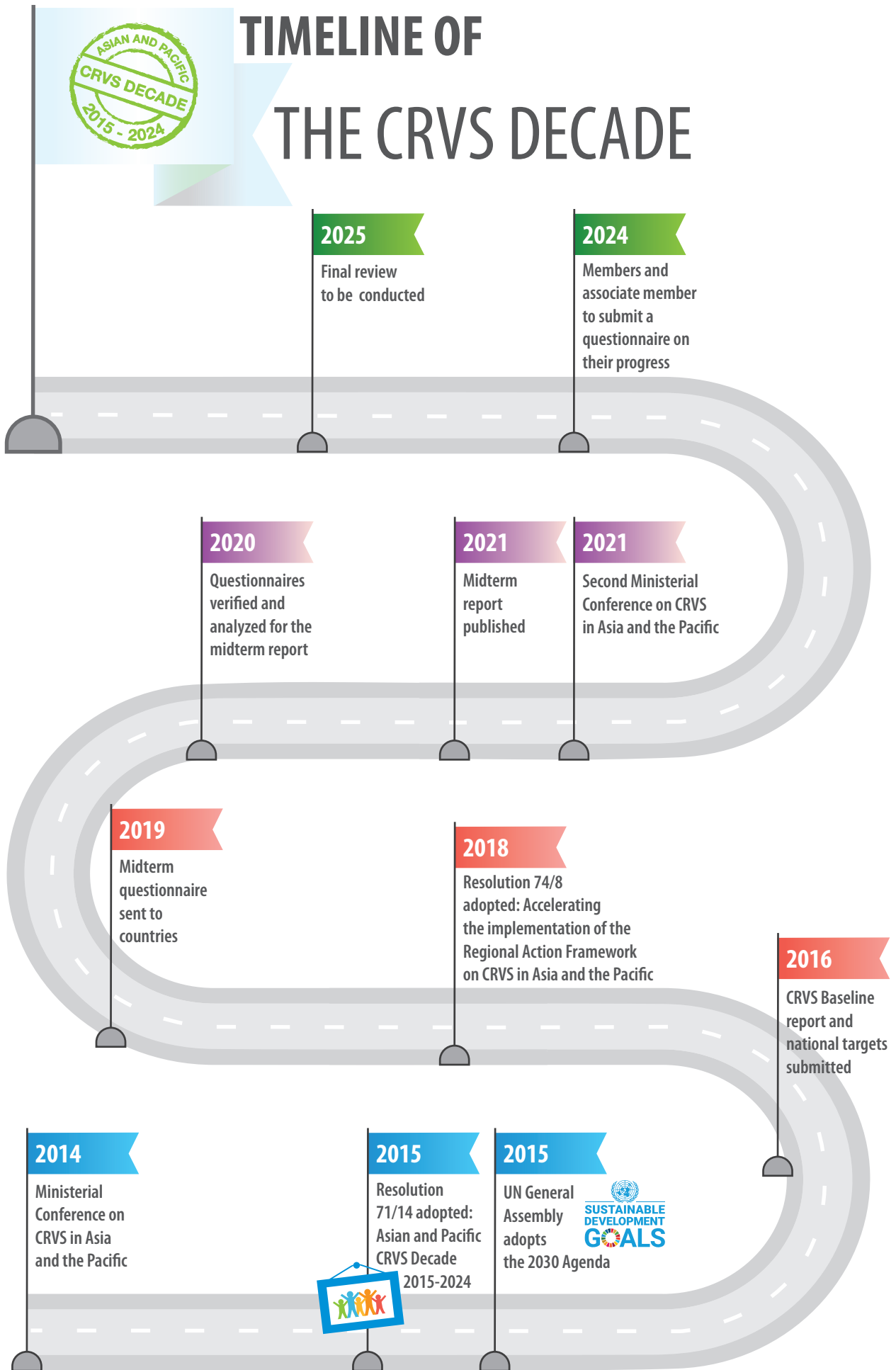
targets for improvements throughout the Decade. By themselves or with support from development partners and donors, they have worked since then to strengthen different aspects of their CRVS systems, from improving birth registration processes to ensuring causes of death are assigned in compliance with international guidelines and standards.

Asia and the Pacific has reached the midpoint of the Decade, and, as agreed in the Regional Action Framework, this is the moment to look at progress made since the beginning of the Decade and identify remaining barriers to achieving the shared vision of universal and responsive CRVS systems. For this purpose, a questionnaire was prepared by the Regional Steering Group for CRVS in Asia and the Pacific and sent to all member States and associate members. In all, forty-five countries responded to the questionnaire on their progress towards the targets of the Regional Action Framework, and the implementation steps conducted. The secretariat and other development partners reviewed and cross-validated their responses with other sources of information. Additional exchanges between the secretariat and the countries took place before the responses were finalized.⁵ A preliminary progress report based on the responses to the midterm questionnaire and the regional baseline report was drafted and presented to the 2020 session of the ESCAP Committee on Statistics.⁶ It constitutes the basis for this report. Although the reports on the midterm review of progress have already been developed, member States and associate members are still welcome to respond to the midterm questionnaire to facilitate the evaluation of progress.

⁵ For more information on the midterm questionnaire process, please consult the Technical Report on the Midterm Questionnaire on the implementation of the Regional Action Framework on CRVS in Asia and the Pacific. Available at <https://getinthepicture.org/resource/technical-report-crvs-decade-midterm-report>

⁶ ESCAP/CST/2020/INF/3. *Report on progress towards the achievement of the goals of the Asia and Pacific Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Decade (2015–2024)*. Available at www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/ESCAP_CST_2020.INF_3_Progress_of_CRVS_Decade.pdf.

⁴ More information on the Regional Action Framework at <https://getinthepicture.org/crvs-decade/regional-action-framework>.



This report presents progress countries have made in the implementation of the Regional Action Framework, including success stories which could be replicated elsewhere. The report highlights remaining challenges and discusses solutions to address them. It is divided into five chapters:

1. Achieving universal birth registration;
2. Recording all deaths and causes of death;
3. Using civil registration records for vital statistics;
4. The Regional Action Framework, a catalyst to improve CRVS systems; and
5. Horizons for CRVS in Asia and the Pacific.

The chapters on **achieving universal birth registration**, **recording all deaths and causes of death**, and **using civil registration records for vital statistics** all highlight progress made in the region towards their corresponding targets. They examine indicators such as the proportion of births or deaths registered within a year and whether vital statistics based on civil registration are released in the public domain in a timely manner. They also contain suggestions for improvements in the second half of the Decade.

The fourth chapter discusses how countries and development partners have used the **Regional Action Framework as a catalyst to improve CRVS systems**. The Regional Action Framework contains eight implementation steps countries should take to improve their CRVS systems. This chapter shows how the implementation steps have translated in more collaboration for action and enhanced the understanding of CRVS systems, and how they have facilitated the planning of improvements and the monitoring of progress.

Finally, chapter 5 presents some **horizons for CRVS in Asia and the Pacific**. Since the inception of the Decade major developments related to CRVS have taken place. The 2030 Agenda was launched, an increasing number of countries are implementing

identity management systems and the entire region has been impacted by the COVID-19 crisis. This chapter describes how CRVS system improvements can respond to these developments, and how CRVS systems can be an accelerator for monitoring the 2030 Agenda. CRVS systems are enablers for implementing identity management systems, which are necessary to build back better and be prepared for future health crises.

To strengthen the momentum around CRVS in the region and celebrate progress during the first half of the Decade, a Second Ministerial Conference on CRVS will be convened in 2021. The Ministerial Conference will promote civil registration systems as the foundation for legal identity management, consider the integration of CRVS into national and international development agendas, including the 2030 Agenda, and discuss lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic. This report will serve as a basis for the discussions at the Ministerial Conference, and the discussion of the remaining challenges will support governments and development partners to identify solutions to overcome them.



**Box
1**
The Regional Action Framework on CRVS in Asia and the Pacific

The Regional Action Framework is a catalyst for governments and development partners to focus and accelerate their efforts to realize the shared vision of universal and responsive CRVS systems in Asia and the Pacific. It aims to facilitate collaborative action at the local, provincial, national and international levels by enabling multiple stakeholders to align and prioritize their efforts under agreed upon goals and targets.

The Regional Action Framework is structured around three goals and 15 underlying nationally set targets. These goals address the three essential outputs of CRVS systems: the civil registration of vital events, which is a precursor to the other two goals; the provision of legal documentation to individuals and families; and the production and dissemination of vital statistics based on civil registration records. The targets are designed to enable monitoring and evaluation in ways that are objective, efficient, technically sound and time bound during the Asian and Pacific Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Decade, 2015–2024. They recognize core human rights principles of progressive realization, non-regression, non-discrimination and equity, which apply to all countries and areas. They were set by countries based on their situation at the beginning of the Decade and have therefore different values depending on the country (see Annex II for more information on the targets and progress by countries and for more information on the Regional Action Framework, please visit <https://getinthepicture.org/crvs-decade/regional-action-framework>).

REGIONAL ACTION FRAMEWORK (RAF)
