

Engaging stakeholders in a national CRVS Improvement Plan

H.E. Ms Veena Bhatnagar,
Assistant Minister, Ministry of
Health & Medical Services



Pacific Vital Statistics Action Plan: Experiences and lessons for the Asia-Pacific region

Introduction and Country Background

- Fiji is an island nation of 865,000 people
- It has a decentralised civil registration system, with registration of births, deaths and marriages required by law.
- Additionally, the law dictates that all deaths have a medical certificate of death completed by a medical practitioner before burial.
- Births and deaths are also recorded through the Ministry of Health and Medical Services (MoHMS), and entered into a national database.
- While health data is more than 95% complete, birth registrations often lag due to late registrations (when children reach school age) and the need for families to present to a registration point in person.
- A national committee has been established involving the Fiji Bureau of Statistics, the Civil Registry office (Ministry of Justice) and the Ministry of Health and Medical Services. The Government information Communication and Technology Services (ITCS) is co-opted whenever required.



Pacific Vital Statistics Action Plan: Experiences and lessons for the Asia-Pacific region

CRVS challenges

- The assessment work in Fiji highlighted a range of challenges for the committee to work through, including:
 - Quality of cause of death data (through death certification and coding)
 - Access to registration points, and linkage of provincial registration offices with the national office
 - Review legislation to support improved registration practices
 - Data sharing and reconciliation to improve data quality
 - IT processes and ownership to support registry functions
 - Community engagement and knowledge on the importance of registration.
- **However- the key challenge was bringing together departments with very different needs and practices; and getting buy in from departments to work together to action the issues identified.**



What was done

- In 2012 BAG partners assisted Fiji to conduct a national workshop with representatives from Health, Statistics, Civil Registry, Provincial and local leaders, Community organisations, Justice, Education and the National IT authority.
 - This workshop was the catalyst for development of a national CRVS implementation plan.
 - The prioritisation process undertaken through this process also helped Fiji to draw together the results of a range of different assessments that had been undertaken and agree upon a clear set of national priorities moving forward.
 - These priorities have formed the basis of a national plan for CRVS improvement
- The Committee meets regularly, with members reporting back routinely on their progress and outcomes.



Impacts

- Key achievements in Fiji have been the prioritisation of CRVS on the national agenda across key ministries
- Reporting procedures have been updated to better streamline the capture and sharing of information between departments. This has included
 - Updating the birth and death registration forms
 - Introducing procedures to share data directly between departments and minimise reliance on family members to transfer this information
 - Routine data quality checks and reconciliation
 - Removal of duplicate processes such as moving coding of deaths so that this is only done at the Ministry of Health and Medical Services
- Availability of latest statistics to improve processes



A regional collaboration

- As noted earlier - The work in Fiji has benefitted significantly from the regional support under the Pacific Vital Statistics Action plan - such as through the national workshop and system mapping.
- While Fiji has undertaken many of the identified projects internally, they have also been able to draw on regional support and technical expertise as part of their ongoing process improvements, and for specific projects such as
 - Analysis and report writing (which brought together FIBOS and MoHMS staff with others from the region)
 - Off island and Civil Registration process issues
 - Coding and certification training (see poster)
- Fiji has also been able to share their experiences with others in the region through engagement in networks such as PHIN (Pacific Health Information Network), and has just been a trial site for the review of a regional coding proposal.



Next steps and lessons learnt

- Fiji has made substantial progress in many areas, and now needs to re-visit and update the national priorities.
- Specific projects such as certification training and medical coding (please see our poster), along with IT upgrades will continue.
- Regular meetings are essential for maintaining relationships and support must be provided to ensuring these are scheduled and documented.

Lessons from the Fiji experience include:

- Political leadership is imperative in translating commitment at the technical level to sustainable changes in the system
- Small wins/ changes are useful in building political support and cementing inter-departmental relationships
- Multi-sectoral changes are not easy and take significant investments of time and energy of all those involved. Staff must understand the importance of the work that they do, and see the outcomes of these changes
- **Country ownership and broad engagement are essential for embedding action in departmental functions**