**Pacific Civil Registrars Network:
2023 Meeting Report**

Suva, Fiji, 20–23 March 2023

Get every one in the picture

Civil Registration and Vital Statistics
in Asia and the Pacific

Contents

Acknowledgements

Foreword

It was great pleasure to welcome all the participants in person and those who joined us online for this excellent three-day Pacific Civil Registrar's Network. Eminent speakers and guests from all over the Pacific, from different walks of life came to share their knowledge and vast experience in Civil Registration and Vital Statistics.

CRVS is about a person's legal identity, including their right to recognition as a person before the law and their formal relationship with the State. A birth certificate provides individuals with documentary evidence proving their name, age, family relationships and nationality; documentation of which is important for accessing essential services like healthcare and education. Legal identity through civil registration also brings access to rights and activities such as political participation, recourse to justice, property ownership, formal employment, financial services and inheritance.

Yet, in the Pacific, around 1 million children under the age of 5 do not have their births registered. Such a lack of identity denies these children a basic human right.

It is our shared vision that Civil Registrars across the Pacific work together in ways that are flexible to local needs, with a shared approach to legislative change, enabling technology and data exchange. This meeting provided an opportunity to share information, lessons learned and good practice. We, as part of the Asia and Pacific region, have a shared vision people in the region will benefit from universal and responsive civil registration and vital statistics systems, facilitating the realization of their rights, and supporting good governance, health and development. We have some way to go!

With targets of 100% birth and 80% death registration by 2030, our countries in the Pacific are employing different information and communication technologies to achieve their objectives. We are glad to have opportunities in this meeting and after it to learn from our colleagues the different to tackle the challenges we all face.

Our conclusion after the three days is that while we are on the right path, we still have much to do. We believe that we have much to learn and share with each other.

Finally, we would like to take this opportunity to thank all Civil Registrars and our development partners for their commitment to civil registration and vital statistics. In particular, we want to acknowledge the tremendous support from ESCAP and Bloomberg Philanthropies in organising and funding this meeting, and to Nicola Richards who authored this report.

Jeff Montgomery	Neel Singh
Ex-Registrar General, New Zealand	Registrar General, Fiji
Outgoing Convenor PCRN	Incoming Convenor PCRN

1   Background

The Pacific Civil Registrars Network (PCRN) was created in 2014 with a vision that, by 2024, civil registrars across the Pacific will work together in ways that are flexible to local needs, and with a shared approach to legislative change, enabling technology, and data exchange. PCRN provides an opportunity to share information, lessons learned, and good practice – fostering coordination and integration of civil registrars' input and ideas into implementation of the Pacific Vital Statistics Action Plan[1] and the Regional Action Framework for Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) in Asia and the Pacific.[2]

In the Asia-Pacific region, approximately 64 million children under the age of 5 years do not have their births registered.[3] **The Pacific subregion has the highest proportion of children under five not registered (at 30 per cent) – equivalent to 1 million children without a legal identity**. This lack of identity denies these children an existence before the law, and as they grow it also prevents them from participating in governmental processes, and 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.

With the ambitious targets of 100 per cent birth and 80 per cent death registration completeness by 2030, countries are employing different information and communication technologies to achieve their objectives. These are also being placed, at times, within the rapidly changing broader identity-management ecosystem, bringing additional challenges and opportunities for civil registration. While civil registrars in Asia and the Pacific face unique national challenges in achieving universal registration, they must also address practical registration issues, as well as cross-border issues including migration caused by natural hazards and climate change. As such, strengthening information and communication 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 peer-to-peer cooperation.

Each nation in the Pacific has an operational civil registration office, reflecting the subregion's prioritisation of civil registration in its domestic policy agenda, and governments' commitment to the realisation of the goals of the Regional Action Framework for CRVS. Although the countries and territories in the region exercise different coordination mechanisms and methods to conduct civil registration tasks, there remains a fundamental commitment to achieve complete civil registration.

PCRN ultimately promotes peer-to-peer cooperation through disseminating knowledge of innovative methods for improving CRVS systems, developing data sharing approaches, and 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 have generated collective approaches to CRVS data storage and retrieval, while allowing national stakeholders to regularly communicate with one another.

2 Civil registration and vital statistics systems in Asia and the Pacific

Effective CRVS systems secure a person's legal identity and track major events in an individual's including birth, adoption, marriage, divorce, and death. At the 2014 Ministerial Conference on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics

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[1] Pacific Community (SPC) and Brisbane Accord Group (BAG). 2017. The Pacific Vital Statistics Action Plan (PVSAP). Noumea, New Caledonia: SPC. Available at: https://sdd.spc.int/digital_library/pacific-vital-statistics-action-plan-pvsap

[2] United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UN ESCAP). 2014. Regional Action Framework for Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific. Bangkok: UN ESCAP. Available at: https://getinthepicture.org/resource/regional-action-framework-civil-registration-and-vital-statistics-asia-and-pacific

[3] United Nations Children's Fund. 2019. Birth Registration for Every Child by 2030: Are we on track? New York: Division of Data, Analytics, Planning and Monitoring, UNICEF. Available at: https://www.unicef.org/media/62981/file/Birth-registration-for-every-child-by-2030.pdf

in Asia and the Pacific, Governments adopted the Ministerial Declaration to 'Get Every One in the Picture' and proclaimed the 'Asian and Pacific CRVS Decade'.[4] The Ministerial Declaration outlines the commitment of governments to achieve the shared vision that, by 2024, all people in Asia and the Pacific will benefit from universal and responsive CRVS systems that facilitate the realisation of their rights and support good governance, health, and development. The Declaration also lays out the following three goals:

1. Universal civil registration of births, deaths, and other vital events.
2. All individuals are provided with legal documentation of civil registration of births, deaths, and other vital events, as necessary, in order to claim identity, civil status and ensuing rights.
3. Accurate, complete, and timely vital statistics (including on causes of death), based on registration records, are produced and disseminated.

In addition to the three goals, Governments committed to the implementation of the Regional Action Framework for Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific composed of 15 nationally set targets, a set of principles, and eight implementation steps for countries to complete. The Regional Action Framework reflects the urgent need to improve CRVS systems in Asia and the Pacific.

Three years after the Ministerial Conference, the Regional Steering Group on CRVS in Asia and the Pacific – comprised of 22 member states and eight development partners who are responsible for guiding implementation of the Regional Action Framework – noted significant but mixed progress among countries and territories in the Asia-Pacific. **Within the Pacific, 13 of 14 countries had established national CRVS coordination mechanisms, and six had developed national CRVS strategies.** Baseline reports, submitted during 2015 and 2016, analysed the status of countries' CRVS systems against the 15 targets they set under the Regional Action Framework.

According to the baselines, most births in the region were registered, but there were still millions of unregistered children and adults. While most countries set ambitious targets for improving birth registration during the Decade, assessing the baseline rate of completeness of birth registration was difficult for many countries, highlighting the challenge of measuring and tracking progress towards the goal of providing a legal identity for all. Death registration was particularly challenging, and many countries reported they would not be able to achieve universal death registration within the Decade. Several baseline reports also highlighted that causes of death were not being routinely recorded.

The region also showed wide variation in the production of vital statistics based on registration records: with some countries already disseminating timely and accessible statistics on births, deaths, and causes of deaths, while others aimed to do this by the end of the Decade. The use of registration records as the main source for statistics on causes of death was a noted challenge for several countries who still primarily rely on household surveys.

The midpoint of the CRVS Decade (2019/2020) occurred during the global COVID-19 pandemic –further highlighting the importance of CRVS systems by revealing the stark inequalities and fragility of health care and social protection systems. Despite the unprecedented challenges, the midterm review showed that the Asia-Pacific region is on the right path to reach goals of universal and responsive CRVS systems.[5] CRVS systems were also much better positioned to respond to the pandemic than they would have been five years ago.

The level of development of CRVS systems varies greatly in Asia and the Pacific, with major differences in the achievements of the targets of the Regional Action Framework in the five Asia-Pacific subregions. Most of the countries in East and North-East Asia and North and Central Asia benefit from well-functioning CRVS systems as almost all births and deaths are registered, and registration records are used for vital statistics. The situation in the Pacific, South East Asia, and South and South-West Asia is vastly different, where many countries have weaker

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[4] Ministerial Declaration to "Get every one in the picture in Asia and the Pacific". 2014. Bangkok: UN ESCAP. Available at: https://getinthepicture.org/resource/ministerial-declaration-get-every-one-picture-asia-and-pacific

[5] United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific. 2021. A snapshot of progress midway through the Asian and Pacific Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Decade. Bangkok: United Nations. Available at: https://www.getinthepicture.org/sites/default/files/resources/CRVS-midterm-FINAL.pdf

systems and progress is still needed to achieve the vision of universal and responsive CRVS systems by the end of the Decade. Although these differences are long-standing, they are decreasing over time.

Encouraging trends were visible in the region. First, the percentage of births registered, also called birth registration completeness, is rapidly increasing in countries which had low birth registration rates at the beginning of the Decade. **For example, from 2014 to 2018, birth registration completeness increased from 64 to 72 per cent in Fiji and from 52 to 80 per cent in Samoa.** These countries are closing the gap with the 26 countries that are already registering more than 90 per cent of their births.

As a result, the number of children under five years old in Asia and the Pacific whose birth was never registered decreased from 135 million in 2012, to 64 million in 2019. Out of the 64 million unregistered children in the region, about 50 million of them live in South and South-West Asia, and they represent 27 per cent of all children under five. **The Pacific subregion has the highest proportion of children under five not registered (30 per cent).** Nevertheless, even for countries with high birth registration completeness, it is not clear if they have truly achieved universal registration and even one unregistered birth is one too many clear if they have truly achieved universal registration and even one unregistered birth is one too many.

The registration of deaths followed the same trend as the registration of births, with countries from the Pacific, South-East Asia, and South and South-West Asia that had low death registration completeness at the beginning of the Decade catching up with countries that already achieved high registration completeness. **From 2014 to 2018 Fiji improved the percentage of deaths registered from 73 to 88 per cent while Tonga improved from 72 to 80 per cent. Nevertheless, in many countries, death registration is still less common than birth registration.**

Along with limited incentives for death registration, another reason for the low completeness of death registration in the region is that many deaths take place outside of health facilities or without the attendance of a medical practitioner. These deaths are often not recorded by the health sector and thus do not have a medically certified cause of death. **Moreover, six countries (including one from the Pacific) reported lacking legislation stating the cause of death must be medically certified. Another two countries from within the Pacific reported using medical certificates of cause of death that do not align with international standards developed by WHO**.

The provision of a medical certificate of cause of death alone does not mean the information available on the certificate is sufficient to accurately classify the cause of death. The lack of training for medical professionals is one reason for this. **Among the 14 Pacific countries and territories that provided midterm reports, only four indicated they had regular training for doctors or coroners on medical certification of cause of death. Further, 11 countries and territories in the region did not have regular training provided on cause of death coding (necessary to enable statistical use), and six did not offer ad hoc training either.** This is important for the many countries in the region where a medically certified cause of death is recorded for few deaths and causes of death are often ill-defined. The implications of this are significant as this information is key to understanding mortality in the region, including the impact of crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

As civil registration improves, more countries can use it for vital statistics. **In Asia and the Pacific, 32 countries reported that they are already producing vital statistics based on civil registration. Nevertheless, 17 countries have yet to do so, including seven countries and territories from the Pacific.** Furthermore, dissemination practices have also changed recently in many countries. The Regional Action Framework emphasizes annual releases of vital statistics, however, many countries are going further and releasing key vital statistics such as the number of births or deaths on a quarterly or monthly basis. This trend towards more timely releases took on new relevance during the COVID-19 pandemic which created a need for almost instant information on mortality.

While the midterm report provided an overview of progress made by countries and showcased their success stories, it remained clear that universal registration has yet to be achieved and some people have been left behind. Moreover, the quality of the information on deaths and their causes must be improved for the region to be prepared for future health crises.

3   Pacific Civil Registrars Network

Established in 2014, the core membership of PCRN is composed of all civil registrars with State or Country level responsibility for civil registration or vital statistics, or their respective nominees. Members are from 22 countries and 14 territories across the Pacific. Associate membership has also been extended to 21 relevant partner agencies and business, including key United Nations organisations. PCRN gives all nations in the Pacific (including Australia and New Zealand) an opportunity to meet and discuss the goals set by the countries as part of the CRVS Decade.

A wide network of partners in Asia and the Pacific are engaged in improving CRVS systems across the region. These development partners work together to support countries in their implementation of the Regional Action Framework and meet regularly to facilitate coordination and alignment of activities. In addition to the regional partnership of organisations working on CRVS, several subregional initiatives also support CRVS improvement activities in different subsets of countries in Asia and the Pacific. In the Pacific, implementation of the Regional Action Framework and CRVS improvement more generally are supported by the Brisbane Accord Group (BAG), which includes PCRN.

3.1   2023 Meeting

With the support of ESCAP, SPC, and partners, PCRN hosted a Meeting in Suva, Fiji, from March 20 – 22, 2023. The objectives of the meeting were to:

1. share progress and challenges in CRVS improvement efforts and identify common challenges
2. facilitate knowledge exchange and potential collaboration on issues of concern for civil registrars in the region
3. encourage capacity building for sustainable institutional development leading to improved decision-making processes, and
4. document existing practices in the region.

The meeting was designed to provide a professional forum for civil registrars to discuss priority areas that are of common concern across the region. Along with presentations from countries and territories on existing CRVS challenges and recent CRVS coordination and improvement efforts, two priority areas were identified in collaboration with PCRN members prior to the meeting for extensive discussion: digitisation of CRVS systems and climate change and CRVS.

3.1.1   CRVS system digitisation

Over the last two decades, the digitisation of civil registration and identity management systems has paved the way for a more enabling environment to collect and store identity data using a coherent electronic database architecture. These advancements have also been accompanied by an increasing ability to share data. The digitisation of identity systems has resulted in significant changes to the design of registration business processes, including how registered vital events can be defined, configured, created, stored, shared, and processed.

Digital processing of identity data has further enabled the creation of systems with an improved efficiency for data processing and sharing between different components of a system, including with other government systems. Digitisation, in addition to the development of new tools, offers an improved means to integrate different systems into one seamless system that reinforces a holistic approach to civil registration, vital statistics, and identity management, including the possibility to share information with functional registers.[6] In recent years, many countries in the Pacific have invested significant resources to digitise their civil registration and legal identity systems, and more efforts are currently in process or underway.

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[6] Functional registers are established to ensure efficient service delivery as part of government responsibilities under a specific function. Examples include electoral roles and health insurance registers. Foundational registers, such as CRVS, are created to serve as authoritative sources of legal identity information for the whole population, for a variety of public and private sector uses.

Thematic discussions on this topic evolved around the following questions:

- What is the status of CRVS system digitisation in the region? What are the main areas of CRVS system digitisation conducted by countries and territories in the Pacific since the last meeting of PCRN in 2019 (e.g., digitisation of registry books, archives, the registration process itself, facilitation of online/mobile registration etc.)?
- Has digitisation been linked with the establishment of a national ID and/or unique identifier?
- To which extent has digitisation been practically linked to increased interoperability with other government systems (social protection, education, digital identity, etc.)?
- What has been the role of development partners in supporting the digitisation process?
- What considerations should be given when implementing digital systems and/or processes in CRVS?
- What have been the key challenges and barriers?
- How are digital systems addressing issues around data protection and privacy?

3.1.2 Climate change and CRVS

Resilient civil registration and vital statistics systems are central to supporting adaptation to climate change as well-functioning systems are the best source of timely and granular data on the population. The statistics produced from this data is essential for planning, implementing, and monitoring policies in a large range of areas. Unregistered persons are often invisible to the State and, as a result, their level of vulnerability and the limitations in access to social protection and services can be very difficult to assess.

Millions of people around the world are displaced and moving in the context of disasters and the adverse effects of climate change and islands in the Pacific are facing dramatic changes to their territories and ways of living due to climate change. Potential displacement creates major challenges for civil registration and vital statistics systems and can compound the negative impacts of lack of registration. However, the displaced are among those most in need of the social and legal protection underpinned by civil registration and vital statistics systems.

Thematic discussions on this topic were focused on current challenges and potential solutions, and the importance of well-functioning CRVS systems for effective climate change related preparedness and response, and the need for accelerating efforts to support resilient civil registration and vital statistics systems.

4   Meeting outcomes

4.1   Participation

Over 50 civil registration professionals and development partners attended the meeting in-person, with an additional twelve participants dialling-in remotely (see **Annex 1** for the full list of participants). During the meeting, civil registrars from each country or territory were invited to provide an update on the following broad topics:

- Country or territory overview, including birth and death registration completeness, vital statistics production, and coordination mechanisms.
- Electronic processes for civil registration and digitisation.
- CRVS improvement activities implemented in the previous three years.
- Current challenges and requests for assistance (see **Annex 2** for the agenda).

Presentations were given by 17 countries and territories. Participants were given a template in advance of the meeting, which meant that similar issues were covered in all presentations. Key points from the presentations are provided below, and in the following sections on digitisation and climate change.

4.2   Country or territory overview

Please note that data and information provided by participants during the country updates have not been validated and may contain errors or inconsistencies with other published sources.

4.2.1   Birth and death registration completeness

One of the key challenges faced by many countries and territories in the Pacific is ensuring universal registration of births and deaths, i.e., that all births and deaths are registered. Nations with high registration completeness have generally implemented proactive systems to encourage registration, such as in the Cook Islands where families receive a 'baby bonus' upon birth registration, and in Niue, where part of the documentation required to obtain approval to bury a body includes the death certificate issued after death registration. An overview of the current situation as reported by countries during the meeting is provided in **Table 1**.

Compared with data provided at the previous PCRN meeting in 2017, while a small number of countries reported improvements in birth registration (Fiji, Nauru, and Solomon Islands) and death registration completeness (Kiribati), several participants commented on the comparatively lower registration rates in the most recent reporting period than in previous years due to ongoing disruptions from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Table 1 Registration completeness according to goals from the Regional Action Framework[7]

Country or territory (reporting year)	1.A. Births registered within one year of the event (%)	1.B. Children under 5 with their birth registered (%)	1.C. People living in the country who have their birth registered (%)	1.D. Deaths registered within one year of the event (%)	1.E. Deaths recorded by the health sector that have a medically certified cause of death (%)
Western Australia, Australia (2018-2022)	98.0	98.0		99.7	83.0
Cook Islands (2022)	100.0		100.0	100.0	100.0
Pohnpei, Federated States of Micronesia (2021)	75.0	75.0	60.0		100.0
Fiji (2017)	71.4	71.4	88.5	88.3	96.2
Kiribati (2022)	66.0	66.0	70.0	81.0	60.0
Nauru (2022)	100.0	100.0	98.0	100.0	100.0
New Zealand* (2021/22)	99.3			99.9	
Niue (2022)	100.0			100.0	
Palau (2022)	79.0			84.0	100.0
Papua New Guinea					
Republic of the Marshall Islands (2011)	62.0	62.0	1.7		95.0
Samoa (2022)	65.0				
Solomon Islands (2022)	87.0	87.0		12.0	6.0
Tokelau (2022)	100.0	100.0	45.0	100.0	100.0
Tonga (2022)	92.5	99.0	94.0	94.2	99.0
Tuvalu (2021)	70.0		75.0	30.0	90.0
Vanuatu (2022)			92.0		2.0

*Source notes for New Zealand: 1.A. Births notified within 100 days of birth; 1.C. Sourced from Statistics NZ; 1.D. Deaths registered within 21 days of death.

4.2.2   Vital statistics production

Of the 11 countries and territories that provided updates on routine vital statistics production, all apart from one used a combination of registration data from the civil registry and records from the ministry of health – often complemented by data from household surveys and censuses (see **Table 2**).

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[7] Additional information on goals and progress is available at: https://getinthepicture.org/regional-picture/goals/goal-1-civil-registration

Table 2 Data sources used in the production of vital statistics

Country or territory	Civil registration records	Ministry of health records	Household surveys and census	Other
Western Australia, Australia				
Cook Islands	X	X	X	
Pohnpei, Federated States of Micronesia	X	X		
Fiji	X	X		
Kiribati	X	X		
Nauru	X	X		
New Zealand				
Niue	X	X		Migration database
Palau	X	X		
Papua New Guinea				
Republic of the Marshall Islands	X			
Samoa				
Solomon Islands	X	X	X	
Tokelau			X	
Tonga	X	X	X	
Tuvalu				
Vanuatu	X			

4.2.3   CRVS coordination mechanisms

Establishing national, multi-sectoral CRVS coordination mechanisms is recognised as a central activity in supporting improvements to CRVS systems and is an implementation step as part of the Regional Action Framework on CRVS in Asia and the Pacific. During the meeting, six participants reported their country or territory had established formalised CRVS coordination mechanisms, including Nauru (see **Annex 3**). Established by Government on 28 November 2022, the CRVS Core Team is led by the Office of Births, Deaths, and Marriages and includes representatives from six government departments and agencies. The team is currently working to improve Nauru's CRVS system and digitise the existing database.

The CRVS committee in Fiji meets regularly and are currently working collaboratively in completing an updated Vital Statistics Report and CRVS Inequality Assessment Report; and in the Solomon Islands, the advisory committee has played a critical coordination mechanism as part of the legislative review taskforce. While a committee exists in Kiribati, the lack of secure funding for implementation of the CRVS strategic plan was a noted challenge. In Niue, as both the ministries of health and justice are overseen by the Ministry of Social Services, coordination is more informal and largely governed by the Birth and Death Registration Regulations of 1982. There is no formal committee currently active in Palau.

Stakeholders involved in CRVS committees vary between countries but are usually comprised of at least the Civil Registration Office, the National Statistics Office, and the Ministry of Health. Some countries have significantly more members than these basic institutions, as seen in Nauru and Tonga, for example. Some countries also have the national information and communications technology (ICT) office on their committees to help coordinate digitisation efforts (such as in the Solomon Islands and Fiji).

4.2.4   CRVS improvement activities

Despite significant challenges to routine civil registration activities due to the COVID-19 pandemic over the past three years, a wide range of CRVS improvement activities were implemented across the region during this time (see **Annex 4**). In Niue, a multi-sectoral team of CRVS stakeholders were engaged to examine current birth and death registration processes to identify gaps and determine areas for improvement using Stage 1 of the CRVS

Systems Improvement Framework.[8] An additional aspect of the project involved mapping linkages between the civil registration and social protection systems to streamline service delivery, with the Niuean Cabinet recently endorsing the outcome report and agreeing to replace their aged database with OpenCRVS.[9]

In Samoa, an exploratory study on issues, challenges, and potential solutions to strengthen the current birth registration system was conducted in partnership with the UNDP Accelerator Lab. Based on study insights, two key activities were implemented, beginning with updates to the current birth registration software to allow remote access – enabling birth registration processes at the local level, including issuing birth certificates. These updates were successfully piloted as part of a mass registration campaign in the outer islands, which registered 1,000 births in 10 days. As part of this broader program of work with UNDP, Samoa will be testing a prototype of the OpenCRVS system and designing a systemic CRVS digitisation and modernisation plan.

With the support of UNICEF, Kiribati offered mobile birth registration services in remote and isolated islands during 2022, along with implementing an online registration system. As part of the system, all civil registration officers from the outer islands can report vital events online. Amendments to the CRVS law are being finalised, with a focus on improving the formal recognition of birth certificates issued in other countries, to prevent the practice of re-registering births for i-Kiribati children born overseas on their return to the country.

In the Republic of the Marshall Islands, a Child Protection in Emergency pilot project was implemented to improve the reporting of birth registration and certification among children living in outer islands to ensure all children have access to their birth certificate, in line with the United Nation's Legal Identity Agenda. The project also aimed to provide more accurate data on the number and ages of children living in outer islands, to help with disaster preparedness and response.

Significant progress on integrating civil registration and national identity management systems and services has taken place in Vanuatu, starting with the establishment of the Department Civil Registration & Identity Management (CRIM), in place of the Vanuatu Civil Status Office (established in 1974). Along with a significant review and revision to civil registration acts and regulations, the country is transforming their central register from paper to digital, including archiving and entering old civil records and reconciling records between different village-level population registers. As of the end of 2022, birth registration was estimated to be 92% complete for the entire population, and over 90% of citizens have a national ID card (see **Figure 1**).

Figure 1 Digitalisation and integration of civil registration and national identity management systems in Vanuatu

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[8] Available at: https://getinthepicture.org/resource/crvs-systems-improvement-framework

[9] Available at: https://getinthepicture.org/resource/assessment-analysis-and-redesign-birth-and-death-registration-business-processes-niue-2021

4.2.5   Current challenges

A significant challenge identified by participants was the need for legislative review and reform, with eight countries and territories identifying this as a critical challenge (see **Annex 5**). Outdated legislation in the Cook Islands, Fiji, and Niue, whose respective civil registration laws date back to the late 1970s and early 1980s, was identified as a key barrier in the implementation of digital technologies and services, such as online registration. The remaining countries and territories each discussed various challenges arising due to outdated or inadequate legislation, such as issues in recording the name of the father on the birth certificate of Nauruan children born overseas to non-married parents; the lack of enforceable reporting periods for sharing vital event notification data from health to civil registration in Palau; and the non-compulsory nature of vital event registration in Tuvalu, which continues to impede civil registration completeness rates.

Challenges around civil registration processes were also mentioned by eight countries and territories. For the Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Palau, and Vanuatu, civil registration processes remain passive and dependent upon family members notifying vital events to trigger the registration process. This was recognised as a key barrier in terms of improving registration completeness. In Papua New Guinea, the time-consuming verification processes required during data entry are causing large backlogs of registration data for entry into the system; while in Tuvalu, the manual processes required to retrieve vital event reports from outer islands are delaying timely registrations.

Data sharing was the next most common challenge, with seven countries and territories mentioning this in their presentations. Common challenges included timely transfer of information between regional/outer island registration offices and the central office, as well as improved links between different government agencies – particularly ministries of health. In Kiribati, the use of paper-based forms and manual processes at health facilities was discussed as a major challenge in terms of data sharing. In Samoa, data sharing from health to civil registration only occurs through main the hospitals, while the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu both reported that data sharing continues to be ad-hoc and informal.

For the Cook Islands, difficulties in sharing data between agencies using time-consuming Excel spreadsheets was discussed, while Tokelau mentioned the lack of alignment and budget for data sharing between agencies as their primary challenge.

4.2.6   Current priorities and requests for assistance

Digitisation was identified as a top priority for 12 countries and territories, and also an area where the most requests for assistance were raised, with for instance, Papua New Guinea requesting financial support to assist in system upgrades, Samoa requesting technical assistance to continue with the prototyping of OpenCRVS, and Tokelau, Tonga, and Tuvalu all requesting technical assistance with systems and processes for the digital archiving of historical records (see **Annex 6**).

Several countries mentioned current or planned activities to improve CRVS processes, including expanding access and improving completeness through changes to fees around late or delayed registrations, and offering mobile registration services. Five countries also discussed priority activities around strengthening human resource capacity, with requests for assistance from Kiribati to support a civil registration offer to conduct civil registration activities in remote areas and requests from Nauru for capacity building on topics such as data reporting and analysis, while in Niue, additional coder training support was mentioned.

4.3   CRVS system digitisation: building resilient systems

While most countries and territories in the region continue to use a mixture of paper-based and electronic civil registration records, full digitalisation of CRVS processes is becoming more common, with advanced systems now operating in several countries (see **Table 3**). The Electronic Birth, Death and Marriage Registry (eBDM) in Fiji, for example, is used by the Ministry of Justice to register births, deaths, and marriages. The system allows officers to register and monitor the approval process births, deaths, and marriages, and enables Fijian citizens to register births remotely, eliminating the need for physical visits to the office.

Most of the American territories have electronic systems in place, however, due to local governance arrangements over civil registration, they are primarily designed for case management as part of the judicial system, limiting their usefulness in CRVS processes more broadly. Several nations, including the Cook Islands, Nauru, Niue, Tokelau, and Tuvalu, primarily use off-the-shelf products for their central register, including Microsoft Excel spreadsheets and databases. Of the countries and territories that have electronic records, most have processes in place for routine backups, such as in Fiji, where the eBDM system does incremental and full backups as per industry standards. Several nations maintain an off-site backup as part of disaster preparedness and response. In the Solomon Islands, snapshots of data are backed-up every four hours and full backups are stored at their offsite Data Recovery Site, while in Palau, data are stored in servers located in two different complexes, on two different islands. After the November 2022 government system hacking, Vanuatu has introduced several data protection policies, including the need for one offline and two online data backup systems, which they are considering as part of RV5 implementation.

Several countries and territories do not have an external backup site, generally using an external hard drive for data storage, including the Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, Nauru, and Tuvalu. A small number of nations have a significant proportion of their records not backed-up or duplicated; meaning that, in the event of a disaster, such records could be permanently destroyed. In the case of Niue, no records are backed-up, making the country particularly vulnerable to a natural disaster. This was the experience of the Federated States of Micronesia, who lost all their civil registration records from 2009 to 2019 after a fire in the courthouse.

Another challenge facing some countries is the distribution of records across multiple sites and difficulties in consolidating records into a single location. In the Federated States of Micronesia, for example, original birth and death certificates are stored in Pohnpei State Hospital, while original marriage certificates are stored at the court. In other countries records are distributed across different sub-registries located in different islands. This can cause delays in replacing lost or damaged records. While there was a lot of discussion on improving databases and backups, it was also highlighted that these important tools to support resilience need to be appropriate to the underlying structure of the CRVS system.

Table 3 Summary of CRVS system digitisation (as of April 2023)

Country or territory	ICT system in use	Data storage site(s)	Processes for back-ups	Linkages with other systems	Digitisation plans
Australia, Western Australia	Western Australia Registration System (WARS)	Central Paper and digital scans	Yes Data are backed up in real-time using mirrored servers at an offsite facility	No	Minimal Enhancements as required
Cook Islands	Database	Central Paper and digital scans	Yes Database is backed up and protected	No	Yes Would like to move to an electronic registry
Federated States of Micronesia, Pohnpei	Judicial case management system	Central Paper and digital scans	Yes Database is saved to hard drives	No	Yes Planning underway
Fiji	Electronic Birth, Death, and Marriage Registry (eBDM) (web-based)	Central Electronic records are kept in the cloud	Yes Incremental and full backups according to industry standards	Yes Linked as part of the Government's Data Exchange Platform	Minimal Enhancements as required
Kiribati	Database	Central Paper and digital scans	Yes Database is saved to hard drives	Yes National ID system, some government sectors	Yes Planning underway
Nauru	Database (Excel, others)	Central	Yes	No	Yes

		Paper and digital scans	Database is saved to hard drives		Planning underway
New Zealand	LifeData, OTS and CBB Workbench (web-based)	Central	Yes	Yes	Yes Moving to new system, Reggie, in two releases during 2024
Niue	Database (Excel)	Central	No	No	Yes Implementation of OpenCRVS approved
Palau	Judiciary Information System (JIS) (web-based)	Central Paper and digital scans	Yes Data are backed up every day in Koror and a backup server in Ngerulmud	No	Yes Plans to link with other systems
Papua New Guinea	Birth and national identity registry system (web-based)	Central Paper and digital scans		Yes Linked with national ID system	Yes System upgrades planned for 2023
Republic of the Marshall Islands	Vital Records Information System (VRIS)	Central Paper and digital scans	Yes Data are backed up offsite	No	Yes Plans to upgrade to the Marshall Island Health Information System
Samoa	LifeData	Central Paper and digital scans	Yes Data are backed up onsite		
Solomon Islands	Promadis DBMS (web-based)	Central Paper and digital scans	Yes Snapshots are backed up every four hours and offsite backup at the Data Recovery Site	No	Yes Upgrading hardware and preliminary work to link with DHIS-2 (ministry of health)
Tokelau	Database	Central Paper and digital scans	Yes Daily backups	No	Yes Planning underway
Tonga	Ministry of Justice Registration System (MOJRS) (web-based)	Central Paper and digital scans	Yes Daily Backups	No	Yes eGov Project will link every approved database in Tonga
Tuvalu	Database	Central Paper and digital scans	Yes Weekly backups to an external drive	No	Yes Planning underway to link with outer islands
Vanuatu	RegisterVIZ – Version 4 (RV4)	Central Paper and digital scans	Yes Managed by the Government ICT Department	Yes Electoral Office, Presidents Office, schools, police, area councils	Yes Moving to RV5 (web-based system) with increased interoperability

4.4   Climate change and CRVS

Universal civil registration is critically important for populations living in disaster-prone and vulnerable settings, including those at risk from the impacts of climate change – as is the case for most countries and territories in the

Pacific. Having the right information accessible to the right people at the right time is a key component of disaster preparedness and response, however major data gaps continue to exist in the region. Even when data exist, there are often challenges with integration, leading to, for example, discrepancies on population data at the sub-national level. Disasters are associated with increased morbidity and mortality, both during and after the event, requiring efficient and effective systems and processes in place for ICD coding to ensure emerging trends are identified quickly and health responses are planned accordingly. Both slow-onset disasters, such as climate change, and rapid-onset disasters, such as earthquakes, cause population displacement, with displaced persons often at higher risk of not being able to provide a legal identity to claim services and benefits.

Effective preparedness was highlighted several times, with the need to identify and catalogue existing CRVS system infrastructure and resources to help with planning – identifying for example, if civil registry offices are located in areas that are generally cut-off or inaccessible during a disaster, if buildings have backup electricity options (such as a generator or solar panels), and for web-based systems, if there are risk-mitigation strategies in place to help plan for service provision during prolonged Internet outages. Pre-emergency networks and coordination points were also discussed, with participants discussing the need for CRVS committees to include disaster planning, and for representatives from CRVS systems to be present on national disaster management committees as well. An important point raised was the fact that civil registration is not the only government department who needs data during an emergency, or who needs processes and resources in place to ensure data are routinely backed-up – with a whole-of-government approach to disaster preparedness and response the preferred option.

The importance of recording vital events during a disaster, particularly deaths, was discussed, with many participants commenting that death registration is already low under normal circumstances, making registration during an emergency particularly challenging. The need for guidelines was mentioned, with clear processes and standard operating procedures around things such as the systematic reporting of deaths, how to handle cases of missing persons or when there is no body, and identification and medico-legal death investigation processes. Pre-identifying vulnerable groups before a disaster, to help with targeted service delivery in the aftermath, was also mentioned as a priority planning consideration, given the fact that at-risk groups are often more vulnerable during an emergency. Depending on the type of emergency, establishing a crisis centre that includes a coordinated, one-stop-shop of critical government services, including civil registration, was offered as both a way to effectively engage with and offer services to the community, while also making effective use of available government staff, who have their own individual responsibilities.

The need for empathy and compassion during an emergency or disaster was raised, with CRVS staff (and government workers more broadly) also members of the community and in need of support to both manage their workload and look after themselves and their families. The difficult working conditions and significant stress placed on civil registry staff during the recent COVID-19 pandemic was provided as an example of the need for this.

Regarding 'getting back to business' after a disaster, discussions focused on the fact that, in the immediate aftermath of a disaster, CRVS systems may have to function at a level that is 'good enough' to ensure the urgent reissue of lost or damaged identity credentials to ensure individuals can access services and benefits; with a gradual shift to recovery and reconstruction and 'gold standard' operating procedures. When dealing with the potentially significant issue of re-issuing documents after a disaster, participants agreed that having community leaders involved in the verification process was an effective strategy for many countries and territories in the region, given the active role they continue to play in communities.

5   Recommendations and the way forward

The meeting concluded with strong support from all country participants that PCRN should continue, with participants requesting time after the meeting to review current priorities and identify priorities and plans for the network for the next few years. As part of country presentations earlier in the week, several countries provided examples of areas of expertise they can share with the group (see **Table 4**), which may form the basis of upcoming peer-to-peer networking opportunities and webinars.

Table 4 Areas of expertise for information sharing among PCRN

Country or territory	Area of expertise
Federated States of Micronesia, Pohnpei	Regular (daily) backups and supporting processes
Fiji	e-Services and digitisation
Kiribati	Mobile birth registration
New Zealand	Lessons on digitisation as part of the ongoing system upgrades
Solomon Islands	Decentralisation of registration services to the sub-national level Legislative review experiences
Vanuatu	National ID program

It was noted that Mr Jeff Montgomery was standing down as the PCRN Chairperson as he has taken a new role at the Pacific Community (SPC). Jeff was thanked for his contribution over the eight years since PCRN was formed. New Zealand was also thanked for providing secretariat support over this period. It was agreed that SPC would now provide Secretariat support to PCRN.

Mr Neel Singh, Registrar-General of the Fijian Births, Deaths and Marriages (BDM) Office, Ministry of Justice, was selected as the new PCRN chairperson. Several participants offered to support Neel, and it was agreed that a committee would be formed for this purpose. The Secretariat would call for volunteers in a future newsletter and suggest people who may want to be involved.

Annex 1 List of participants

Country	Organisation	Name	Role	Email
Australia	RBDM Western Australia	Mr Rohan Quinn	Manager Registry Services	rohan.quinn@justice.wa.gov.au
	BDM New South Wales	Mr David John (online)	Director, National Products and Program Delivery	david.john@customerservice.nsw.gov.au
		Ms Vineet Gounder (online)	National Partnerships and Engagement Manager	vineet.gounder@customerservice.nsw.gov.au
Cook Islands	Ministry of Justice	Ms Rimmel Mokoroa	Registrar	rimmel.poila@cookislands.gov.ck
Pohnpei, Federated States of Micronesia	Pohnpei State Judiciary	Mr Justin Michael Hetiback	Chief Clerk	hetibackjus09@gmail.com
Fiji	Births, Deaths and Marriages (BDM) Office, Ministry of Justice	Mr Neel Kant Singh	Registrar-General	neel.singh@justice.gov.fj
	Ministry of Justice	Ms Makereta Sotutu		msotutu@justice.gov.fj
Kiribati	Civil Registration Office	Ms Tiensi Teea	Registrar	tiensi.kaua@gmail.com
Republic of the Marshall Islands	Ministry of Health and Human Services	Ms Jane Matanaicake	Epidemiologist - Majuro	jmatanaicake-lumon@rmihealth.org
	Ministry of Health and Human Services	Mr Brandon Alex	Data Entry Clerk	balex@rmihealth.org
Nauru	Nauru Registry for Births, Deaths and Marriages	Ms Kyra Daoe	Acting Registrar for Births, Deaths and Marriages	vanity.daoe@gmail.com
New Zealand	Department of Internal Affairs – NZ	Ms Jenkins-Kirkwood Ella	Strategic projects and international engagement advisor	ella.jenkins-kirkwood@dia.govt.nz
	Department of Internal Affairs – NZ	Mr Adrian Jarvis	Deputy Registrar General – NZ	adrian.jarvis@dia.govt.nz
Niue	National Statistics Office	Ms Fanuma Nogihautino Nemaia Sioneholo	Statistics Officer	numa.niue@gmail.com
Palau	Palau Supreme Court	Ms Allison Sengebau	Clerk of Courts	asengebau@palausupremecourt.net
Papua New Guinea	Papua New Guinea Civil and Identity Registry	Ms Salome Iwotian Bogosia	A/Deputy Registrar General	salome.bogosia@pngcir.gov.pg
	PNG Civil & Identity Registry	Ms Jennifer Kunjip	Acting Human Resource Manager	jennifer.kunjip@pngcir.gov.pg
Samoa	Samoa Bureau of Statistics	Mr Ponifasio Vasa	Registrar	ponifasio.vasa@sbs.gov.ws
Solomon Islands	Ministry of Home Affairs/ Civil Registration Office	Mr Rodrick Kipili Kidoe	Registrar	rkidoe@mha.gov.sb
	Ministry of Health and Medical Services	Ms Seraphina Elisha	Principal Medical Statistician	SElisha@moh.gov.sb

Tokelau	Tokelau Government	Ms Margaret Pedro	Manager Support Services-Deputy Registrar	m.pedro@tokelau.org.nz
Tonga	Ministry of Justice	Ms Temaleti Manakovi Pahulu	CEO MoJ/Sub-registrar Registrar General's Office	tmapahulu@justice.gov.to
	Ministry of Justice	Ms Kafo'atu Mele Mafile'o	Vital Statistics Officer	kmafileo@justice.gov.to
Tuvalu	Attorney General's Office	Mr Paul Falavi	Registration Officer	pj.alexy@gmail.com
Vanuatu	Civil Registration and Identity Management	Mr Andy Calo (online)	Registrar General	acalo@vanuatu.gov.vu
	Civil Registration and Identity Management	Mr Ettienne Ravo (online)	Deputy Director	eravo@vanuatu.gov.vu
Partners				
	Australian Bureau of Statistics	Ms Lauren Moran (online)		lauren.moran@abs.gov.au
	Ancestry	Mr Jason Reeve	Head of Content & Community	jreeve@ancestry.com
	Australian Institute of Health and Welfare	Ms Vicki Ann Bennett	Head, Metadata, Information Management and Classifications Unit	vicki.bennett@aihw.gov.au
	Canadian Bank Note	Mr Arthur Prats (online)	Product Manager	aprats@cbnco.com
	CDC Foundation	Dr Viola Kwa	Country Coordinator and Technical Advisor D4H	vkwa@cdcfoundation.org
	ESCAP	Mr Chris Ryan	Statistician	ryanc@un.org
	ESCAP	Ms Petra Nahmias	Section Chief	nahmiasp@un.org
	ESCAP	Ms Nicola Richards (online)	Consultant	nicola.richards@un.org
	ESCAP	Ms Tanja Sejersen (online)	Statistician	sejersent@un.org
	ESCAP	Ms Chloe Harvey (online)	Associate Population Affairs Officer	chloe.harvey@un.org
	OpenCRVS	Mr Euan Millar	Technical architect	euan@opencrvs.org
	Plan International	Ms Tracy Shields	Senior Advisor, Child Rights and Protection	tracy.shields@plan.org.au
	Pacific Community	Mr Jeff Montgomery	Advisor - CRVS	jeffm@spc.int
	Pacific Community	Mr Espen Ronneberg (online)	Adviser, Climate Change and Environmental Sustainability Programme	espenr@spc.int
	Pacific Community, Public Health Division	Ms Rumanusina Maua	HIS Adviser	rumanusinam@spc.int

	UNDP	Mr Jonathan Hodder	Governance Specialist	jonathan.hodder@undp.org
	UNDP	Mr Chahine Hamila (online)	Technical Expert	chahine.hamila@undp.org
	UNDP	Mr Daniel Hinchcliff	Lead Technical Adviser - Nauru	daniel.hinchcliff@undp.org
	UNICEF	Ms Salote Kaimacuata		skaimacuata@unicef.org
	Vital Strategies	Mr Romain Santon	Regional Deputy Director, Asia and the Pacific	rsanton@vitalstrategies.org
	Vital Strategies	Ms Carah Figueroa	Consultant - CRVS	carah@unsw.edu.au
	WHO	Ms Tracy Yuen		yuent@who.int

Annex 2 Meeting agenda

Time		Agenda item	Speaker
Monday 20 March			
08:30	09:00	Registration	
Opening			
09:00	09:05	Welcome by the convenor of PCRN	Jeff Montgomery (SPC)
09:05	09:10	Welcome by the host country Fiji, including opening prayer	Treta Sharma and Neel Singh (Fiji)
09:10	09:15	Welcome by host partner ESCAP	Petra Nahmias (ESCAP)
09:15	09:30	Quick tour de table with introductions	Jeff
09:30	10:20	Speed dat(a)ing	Facilitated by Petra
10:20	10:45	Group photo and coffee break	
Current situation in the Pacific			
10:45	11:15	Overview of regional initiatives	Jeff
11:15	12:15	Country presentations: ▪ Niue ▪ Samoa ▪ Tonga ▪ New Zealand ▪ Western Australia	Rapporteur: Tracy Shields (Plan)
12:15	13:00	Lunch	
13:00	14:00	Country presentations: ▪ Nauru ▪ Tuvalu	Rapporteur: Romain Santo (Vital Strategies)
14:00	14:30	HIMF: Healthy Islands Monitoring Framework	Tracy Yuen (WHO) & Rumanusina Maua (SPC)
14:30	14:45	Coffee break	
Digitisation of civil registration systems			
14:45	15:15	An overview of digitisation options	Chahine Hamila (UNFPA – online)
15:15	15:45	eCRVS digital asset for the Pacific	Tracy Shields (Plan International) & Euan Millar (OpenCRVS)
15:45	16:15	The emergence of digital credentials in the identity space	Arthur Prats (Canadian Bank Note – online)
16:15	16:30	Wrap up	Jeff
16:30	17:30	Side event: Demo of OpenCRVS	Euan Millar (OpenCRVS)

Time		Agenda item	Speaker
Tuesday 21 March			
09:00	09:15	Good morning and introduction to World Café on digitisation	Jeff
09:15	10:00	World Café Each table has a table host who will facilitate the discussions and ensure they are documented. Participants can move between their tables of choice every 10 minutes and can stay at the same table for more than one round if interested. Tables: 1. Mapping existing business processes as an input into digitization efforts (Petra) 2. Online registration (Adrian) 3. Digitization of existing records (Romain)	

		4. Links with the health sector and notifications (Vicki)	
		5. Making historic records available globally (Jason)	
10:00	10:30	Feedback from World Café	Facilitated by Petra
10:30	10:45	Coffee break	
Climate change and CRVS			
10:45	11:15	Climate change basics	Espen Ronneberg (SPC – online)
11:15	11:30	Climate change and CRVS	Petra
11:30	12:00	Discussion	
12:00	12:45	Lunch	
12:45	15:30	Country presentations: ▪ Cook Islands ▪ Kiribati ▪ Marshall Islands ▪ Palau ▪ Tokelau ▪ Vanuatu ▪ Fiji	Rapporteur: Salote Kaimacuata (UNICEF)
15:30	16:00	Wrap up and introduction to site visit	Jeff and Neel
16:00	17:00	Site visit to registration department	

Time		Agenda item	Speaker
Wednesday 22 March			
09:00	09:15	Good morning	Jeff
09:15	09:45	Ensuring no one is left behind - experiences with inequality assessments in Fiji	Neel
09:45	10:30	World Café setup Each table has a table host who will facilitate the discussions and ensure they are documented. Participants can move between their tables of choice every 10 minutes and can stay at the same table for more than one round if interested. Tables: 1. Getting back to business after a disaster or emergency (Tracy) 2. Re-issuing of documents and IT during a disaster (Euan) 3. Displacement during an emergency or disaster (Petra) 4. Recording vital events that occur during a disaster (Romain) 5. Impacts of climate change on health and what it means to civil registration (Vicki)	
10:30	10:45	Coffee break	
10:45	11:15	Feedback from World Café	Facilitated by Petra
11:15	12:15	Country presentations: ▪ Papua New Guinea ▪ Solomon Islands ▪ Federated States of Micronesia	Rapporteur: Viola Kwa (SPC)
12:15	13:00	Lunch	
13:00	13:30	Australian Digital Birth Certificate	David John and Vineet Gounder (New South Wales) By video
13:30	15:00	The way forward for PCRN	Jeff
15:00	15:15	Wrap up, host farewell, and coffee	Jeff and Neel

Annex 3 Status of CRVS coordination mechanisms

Country or territory	Established (year)	Membership	Status
Western Australia, Australia			
Cook Islands		Ministry of Justice Ministry of Health National Statistics Office	Operational
Pohnpei, Federated States of Micronesia			
Fiji		Registrar General's Office, Ministry of Justice Ministry of Health and Medical Services Fiji Bureau of Statistics Fiji Police Force Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation Digital Government Transformation Office-Fiji Ministry of Education, Heritage, and Arts Ministry of iTaukei Affairs Fiji Immigration Department Fiji National Disaster Management Office Ministry of Finance Strategic Planning, National Development and Statistics	Operational
Kiribati			Active but with limited budget to support implementation
Nauru	2022	Office of Births, Deaths, and Marriages Ministry of Health Office of Bureau of Statistics Department of Justice and Border Control Department of Judiciary (Court House) Department of ICT Ministry of Nauru Electoral Commission	Operational
New Zealand			
Niue		Niue Health Department Civil Registration Office Department of Justice, Land Surveying, and Community Services National Statistics Office	Operational but informal
Palau	No CRVS committee		
Papua New Guinea			
Republic of the Marshall Islands			
Samoa			
Solomon Islands			Operational
Tokelau		Ministry of Health	Operational but informal
Tonga		Ministry of Health Ministry of Justice Tonga Statistics Department Ministry of Internal Affairs Ministry of Finance Ministry of Education Ministry of Police	Active and operational

		Elections Office National ID Office The courts	
Tuvalu			
Vanuatu			

Annex 4 Summary of CRVS improvement activities implemented in the last three years

Country or territory	Topic/area	Activities	Partners
Australia, Western Australia	Digitalisation	New online portals developed for marriage registration and ordering birth certificates	
Cook Islands	CRVS and ID	Developed an information paper and proposal to Cabinet to support and develop a National ID System	Ministry of Justice
Federated States of Micronesia, Pohnpei	Adoptions	General Court Order 1-19 to allow for the insertion of adoptive parent's names on birth certificates	
	Digitisation	Working with the Pacific Justice Support Programme to create a new system	
Fiji	Inequalities	Assessed completeness and inequalities in the registration of births and deaths	Vital Strategies
	Inequalities	Conducted a CRVS inequality assessment	Bureau of Statistics, Ministry of Health and Medical Services, & ESCAP
	Digitisation	Implemented eBDM for online birth registration, including the ability to order copies of birth certificates online	
Kiribati	Birth registration	Mobile birth registration offered in select remote/isolated islands (over 2,000 children registered)	UNICEF
	Digitisation	Online registration implemented in 2022. All civil registration officers from the outer islands can report vital events through the online system	
	Birth certificates	New certificates have a QR code for authentication	
	Legislation	Amendment bill to current CRVS law to recognise certificates from other countries, period of registration, and supporting documentation	
Nauru	System strengthening	Improved recording of details on births and deaths managed by the health sector	Department of Health
	Electoral registry	Registering voters and managing the electoral registry	Nauru Electoral Commission
New Zealand	Digitalisation	Updating customer portals and introducing new ones for online registration	
	Equity	Development of Crown paper and business case on if civil registration should collect iwi affiliation (Māori tribal) data, and how to do this respectfully	
Niue	System strengthening	Multi-sectoral team of CRVS stakeholders examined current birth and death registration processes to identify gaps and determine areas for improvement	Ministry of Justice Ministry of Social Services Niue Statistics Office
Palau	Digital archiving	Birth Certificate Project to scan and upload historical birth certificates, including quality control and checking for duplicate records	
	Digital archiving	Project to scan and upload all pertinent name change/adoption decrees	
Papua New Guinea	Human resources	Concerted effort to recruit younger staff into civil registration to create a culture for CRVS. Introduced KPI system for salaries	

	Access	Redistribution of resources from central to provincial and lower areas to improve access to civil registration services	
	Legislation	Amended CIR Bill pending final clearance at CACC before going to the floor of Parliament	
	Access	PNGCIR and UNICEF Partnership established three registration sites in three hospitals	UNICEF
Republic of the Marshall Islands	Coordination	CRVS Committee Stakeholders meeting held to strengthen and improve coordination between CRVS stakeholders on their roles and responsibilities concerning birth and death certificate processing.	Micronesian Legal Services CRVS Committee
	System strengthening	Reviewed and streamlined processes around name changes.	Micronesian Legal Services CRVS Committee
	Birth registration Disaster preparedness & response	Child Protection in Emergency pilot project to improve the reporting of birth certificates in outer islands as part of disaster preparedness and response.	Ministry of Culture and Internal Affairs
Samoa	Birth registration	Conducted a detailed exploratory study on the current birth registration system, including identifying solutions to strengthen the system.	UNDP Accelerator Lab
	Birth registration Digitisation	Successfully piloted remote access to birth registration software to enable complete birth registration processes, including issuing birth certificates, at the community level.	UNDP Accelerator Lab
	Birth registration Access	Organized a mass birth registration drive, scaling up remote access and registering 1,000 events in 10 days.	UNDP Accelerator Lab
Solomon Islands	Access	Decentralisation of registration centres at three provincial health facilities	UNICEF
	Legislation	Comprehensive review and update of civil registration laws and regulations, drafting instructions are ongoing	Vital Strategies
	Access Equity	Ongoing efforts to register births for children at school, and to register vital events for public/civil servants	MFAT, New Zealand
Tokelau	Digitisation	Implementation of Document Management System and centralising storage of BDM records	
Tonga	Digitisation	System upgrades to allow communication with other approved (government) databases	World Bank
	Legislation	Amendment to births, deaths, and marriages act	
Tuvalu	Legislation	Birth, Death and Marriage Laws were amended, currently awaiting approval in Parliament	
Vanuatu	Legislation	CRVS Acts and Regulations were updated to replace the Vanuatu Civil Status Office with the Department of Civil Registration & Identity Management (CRIM), to ensure an integrated national ID system	
	Digitisation	Migration from current desktop CRVS database (RV4) to an online system (RV5) that can be accessed from anywhere within the government network	
	Digitalisation Digital archives	Major project to update, clean, and consolidate data in the central register, including archiving and entering old civil records and reconciliation of records between different village-level population registers	

Annex 5 Summary of current CRVS system challenges

Country or territory	Topic/area	Challenges
Australia, Western Australia	Data sharing	▪ Do not currently share data between government agencies, which means that individuals must provide the same data to different government agencies multiple times
	Digitisation	▪ Often not a useful solution due to the vastness and remoteness of WA
	Equity	▪ Large number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and adults do not have their births registered or access to their birth certificates
	Financial resources	▪ Do not receive any funds from the national government to provide registration services, and so must generate funding through fees for certificates and products
Cook Islands	Data sharing	▪ Most government agencies rely heavily on the Ministry of Justice database; however, data are currently shared using Excel spreadsheets, which is time-consuming and prone to errors
	Data quality	▪ Issues with data quality remain, including duplicate records in the system
	Legislation	▪ Births and Death Registration Act (1975) is old and out-dated and new issues are not well covered, for example, families are unable to register their children using a hyphenated surname ▪ The Act does not allow for advances such as electronic/online registration
Federated States of Micronesia, Pohnpei	Archiving	▪ During a fire in the court house in 2019, all records from 2009-2019 were lost (either from the fire, or from water damage). Only some records that were stored in the hospital remain
	Completeness	▪ Death registration remains low as families generally do not register a death unless there is a claim to make
	Processes	▪ To register a death, the family must provide the birth certificate. This is difficult for individuals who were born outside of health facilities or hospitals, as many of these births are never reported or registered
Fiji	Completeness	▪ With the ending of economic incentives for birth registration, such as the Parenthood Assistance Payment Program, rates of birth registration have decreased
	Data quality	▪ With the integration of data sources, an increasing number of duplicate records are being identified and it is difficult for the registry to identify which record is the correct one ▪ The process to verify details on registration records is very time-consuming
	Legislation	▪ The Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Act (1978) is outdated and not in line with recent advances in digital registration services ▪ The current Act is also a limiting factor in terms of further expanding digital services
	Processes	▪ Registration continues to be dependent on families providing birth information to the registry office, resulting in low completeness rates ▪ Because of this, access to registration services in remote areas and outer islands remains challenging
Kiribati	Data sharing	▪ Data sharing with the Ministry of Health remains paper-based and this leads to many difficulties
	Digitisation	▪ The outer islands do not have access to the civil registration system
	Processes	▪ Access to registration remains limited to people who live in towns or near a registration office ▪ Registration processes still rely on families to report in timely manner ▪ There are not any permanent staff from the civil registration office based in outer islands, with registration processes dependent upon assistant social welfare officers from other ministries
Nauru	Legislation	▪ According to the Births, Deaths and Marriages Act of 2017 (S14(3)), when the registry office receives a birth certificate from a foreign country, and when both parents are Nauruan and are not married, the details of the father will be excluded from the Nauruan birth certificate

	Overseas events	• For births and deaths occurring overseas, and where there are no Nauruan embassies, the process of registering vital events is difficult
New Zealand	Digitalisation	• Implementation of the new digital system required a significant re-plan, including changing from a single 'go live' date to a dual phased approach • Significant risks associated with the service outage during gov live (anywhere from 72 to 96 hours)
Niue	Data quality	• The use of paper records and numerous manual handling points continues to impact on poor data quality
	Human resources	• High staff turnover
	Legislation	• The Births and Deaths Registration Regulations (1982) is outdated and needs to be reviewed, particularly regarding implementation of new digital tools and technologies, such as OpenCRVS
	Overseas events	• There are no formal or official processes to include data on deaths of Niuean's that occur overseas (primarily in New Zealand) • Information on overseas deaths is sent directly to civil registration, which can cause issues for coding the underlying cause of death (which should be done through health)
Palau	Completeness	• Many births are not registered until the child is of school age, when a birth certificate is required for enrolment
	Data quality	• Ongoing work to review and reconcile paper records as part of digital data entry • There is no consistency or law regarding the use of surnames as part of registration, so an individual can have many variations of their name (for example, using their family surname or their father's first name, or the use of chiefly titles) • Due to the use of paper forms and processes, duplicate records have been created when slightly different information was provided during registration, or if a record could not be found
	Legislation	• Legislation and regulations need updating to help improve registration processes, including setting a fixed timeline within which birth and death notifications are transmitted from health to the Clerk of Courts for registration
	Processes	• Birth and death registration are reliant upon family members coming to provide information and complete forms at a Ministry of Health and Human Services Medical Records Office • There are no automated processes to transfer records from health to the Clerk of Courts office for registration – many events go unregistered • Many customary adoptions occur without any formal legal paperwork
Papua New Guinea	Completeness	• PNG is geographically and culturally challenging. With over 800+ languages, inaccessibility to the nearest government station, and high illiteracy rates, it has become almost impossible to realise the vision of complete registration of births and deaths
	Financial resources	• The cost of registration in remote areas can be extremely high (as much as ten-times more)
	Processes	• Data entry and verification of registrations is very labour intensive, with a backlog of approximately 1,500 records accumulating each day • Many processes have collapsed
Republic of the Marshall Islands	Digitisation	• Improvement of IT infrastructure to support data sharing and record searches
Samoa	Completeness	• Access to registration services remains limited, with only two registry offices in the country • The cost to register events (in terms of time and money) is high
	Data sharing	• Better data sharing systems and processes are needed to improve the flow of information from the Ministry of Health, as currently civil registration only receives notifications from the main hospitals, excluding district hospitals
	Legislation	• Legislation needs to be reviewed to ensure it can support the national ID project

Solomon Islands	Data sharing	▪	Data on deaths occurring in health facilities are not routinely shared with the registry office
	Legislation	▪	Enforcement of the legislation is weak and needs strengthening
		▪	The ability to use a statutory declaration in place of a formal civil registration document continues to act as a disincentive to register
	Processes	▪	The reporting of community deaths needs to be clearly defined
Tokelau	Data sharing	▪	Limited resources and a lack of alignment between civil registration and the Health Department is creating a barrier to effective data sharing
	Human resources	▪	Limited budget for human resource capacity building often means that training and staff development are not prioritised
Tonga	Completeness	▪	Despite new initiatives to improve registration, such as the Amnesty Program and REACH Project, timely registrations remain a challenge
Tuvalu	Legislation	▪	Vital events do not get registered automatically or as a compulsory event, this means that they are generally only registered when there is a need for a certificate
	Processes	▪	Registrars on the outer islands are required to send their records quarterly, however they often do not send them, and the central office must send staff to retrieve them
		▪	The current database system used by the central office is not available for use by island registrars
Vanuatu	Data sharing	▪	Information on deaths recorded by the Ministry of Health is not routinely shared with the registry office, however a data sharing agreement is currently being finalised between civil registration and health
	Data quality	▪	Data in the central register is of varied quality, with many duplicate records and the use of different names (including French spellings) for the same individual
	Processes	▪	Registration is dependent on the family providing information to the registry office, resulting in low completeness

Annex 6 Summary of current priorities and requests for assistance in strengthening CRVS systems

Country or territory	Topic/area	Priorities and requests for assistance
Australia, Western Australia	Digitisation	▪ Enhancement of system to allow for greater online lodgement, including online registration of births
	Equity	▪ Continued work on 'Closing the Gap' to address the under-registration of births among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders
Cook Islands	Data sharing	▪ Improve the sharing of information and data among agencies and with the general population
	Digitisation	▪ Develop an IT system with the goal of working towards an e-registry
	Processes	▪ Improve accessibility to civil registration services ▪ More efficient and effective registration process
Federated States of Micronesia, Pohnpei		▪ -
Fiji	Digitisation	▪ Continued expansion of electronic registration services, including death and marriage applications online ▪ Ability for individuals to print their birth certificates online, rather than having to visit a BDM office
	Legislation	▪ *Request for assistance: Review of existing civil registration legislation to ensure it is in line with recent digital innovations, and to assist the country in further digitalisation efforts*
Kiribati	Data sharing	▪ Focused efforts on improved data sharing with the ministry of health, including links between health and civil registration to share notifications electronically
	Digitisation	▪ Develop a population register ▪ Enhance digital registration and digital archiving of records
	Human resources	▪ Capacity building for civil registration officers ▪ *Request for assistance: Funding to support a civil registration officer to conduct registration activities in remote areas*
	Processes	▪ Continue mobile birth registration activities
Nauru	Digitisation	▪ Digitisation of the CRVS system ▪ Establishment of a national ID management system
	Human resources	▪ *Request for assistance: Capacity building for staff on topics including data recording and report writing*
New Zealand	Digitisation	▪ Implementation of the new system and expansion of online services
Niue	Human resources	▪ *Request for assistance: Assistance with mortality coding, particularly for overseas deaths*
	Processes	▪ Including other information not yet on analytical reports, such as gestation period for births ▪ Improved processes for adoptions and legal name changes
Palau	Completeness	▪ Improving birth and death registration completeness rates
Papua New Guinea	Digitisation	▪ *Request for assistance: System upgrades are required to increase the flexibility of the system and allow for system integration*
	Human resources	▪ Continued focus on building a culture of trust in the workplace by recruiting youth and fostering a strong organisational culture for CRVS
	Legislation	▪ Continued support to have the 2019 Civil Registration Bill passed on the floor of Parliament
	Data sharing	▪ Improved coordination and data sharing between stakeholders, particularly between the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Home Affairs

Republic of the Marshall Islands	Digitisation	▪ Improvement of the IT infrastructure at the Ministry of Internal Affairs to better support data sharing and record searches
	Human resources	▪ Revision and update of roles and responsibilities in line with technological advances and digital processes ▪ Greater engagement and advocacy with staff across the CRVS ecosystem on the importance of their role
Samoa	Digitisation	▪ Working towards a digital transformation of the CRVS system to make it modern, interoperable, and integral to Samoa's digital public infrastructure ▪ *Request for assistance: Technical support and collaboration for ongoing efforts around prototyping the OpenCRVS software* ▪ *Request for assistance: Technical support and multiyear funding for implementing the digital transformation and modernisation of the CRVS system in a systematic way*
Solomon Islands	Completeness	▪ Continue efforts to improve registration completeness
	Human resources	▪ *Request for assistance: Capacity building on data analysis, quality, dissemination and use to ensure that registration data are used to produce vital statistics*
	Legislation	▪ Continu efforts around legislative review and reform
	Processes	▪ Options for improving late and delayed registrations
Tokelau	Collaboration	▪ Re-establish the CRVS committee ▪ Strengthen partner agencies by facilitating consistent communication
	Completeness	▪ Carry out extensive advocacy consultations with three villages to raise awareness
	Digitisation	▪ Engage with regional and international partners to ensure the BDM system is suitable for Tokelau ▪ *Request for assistance: Upgrades to the BDM database* ▪ *Request for assistance: Sharing of experiences and challenges with digital archiving*
	Legislation	▪ Review the Births, Deaths and Marriages Rule from 1969
	Processes	▪ Re-visit the Strategic Plan and work activities that were deferred during COVID-19
Tonga	Completeness	▪ Improve death registration completeness
	Digitisation	▪ Continuing of digitisation work including archiving of manual records ▪ *Request for assistance: New archive room/building, upgrade of equipment for digital archiving, additional staffing*
	Processes	▪ Improve registration processes in sub-registries ▪ Revise practices and procedures in sub-registries and bring them up to the standard of the main office
Tuvalu	Digitisation	▪ *Request for assistance: Assistance on funding phase two of the system database* ▪ *Request for assistance: Assistance with digitising historical records*
	Legislation	▪ Table civil registration bill to Parliament
Vanuatu	Processes	▪ Improve death reporting from health facilities to civil registration (through a memorandum of understanding, interoperability, and digitisation)