



## Information Note

### What is the Regional Steering Group for Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific?

#### In short

The Regional Steering Group (RSG) for Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) is the group responsible for providing regional oversight and guidance for the implementation of the Regional Action Framework on CRVS in Asia and the Pacific (RAF), including by serving as the custodian for the Asia and Pacific CRVS Decade 2015 – 2024 (CRVS Decade).

#### Composition

The RSG is composed of a geographically balanced combination of representatives from both member states and regional development partners, totalling 30 members, and is serviced by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP).

Pursuant to its Terms of Reference,<sup>1</sup> which were endorsed by the ESCAP Commission during its 71<sup>st</sup> Session in May 2015, the RSG membership is designed to “reflect the multifaceted nature and diverse development perspectives and beneficiaries of civil registration and vital statistics”, and should include “representation from civil registration, health, statistics and other relevant sectors”.



*Group Photo taken during the Fifth RSG Meeting in 2019*

As it exists currently, the RSG membership includes representatives and CRVS stakeholders from national statistical offices, civil registration authorities, planning, interior, home affairs and health ministries, as well as representatives from international development partners.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> United Nations ESCAP, Seventy-first session, Bangkok, 25 – 29 May 2015. E/ESCAP/71/INF/9. Available at <https://bit.ly/2QAI4vB>.

<sup>2</sup> For a complete list and the biographies of the current 30 Regional Steering Group members see <https://bit.ly/2K1u4Zo>.

## History of the RSG

In May 2011, ESCAP adopted resolution 67/12<sup>3</sup> acknowledging the need to improve regional CRVS systems. The resolution recognized the important role CRVS systems play in generating reliable and timely statistical information that not only bolsters “evidence-based planning and development outcomes” but increases “efficiency in resource allocation”.<sup>4</sup>

In December 2012, a high-level meeting was convened to address recommendations for moving forward. As a result of the meeting, the participants reached consensus on a Regional Strategic Plan.<sup>5</sup> The following year in May 2013, ESCAP adopted resolution 69/15<sup>6</sup> to implement the outcome of the high-level meeting and move the Regional Strategic Plan forward.

The first RSG was officially established in September 2013 and held its first meeting in December 2013. Between its first meeting and July 2014, the RSG oversaw the development of the draft RAF, including agreeing on the three goals, fifteen targets, seven action areas and eight implementation steps.<sup>7</sup> The RSG also supported the organization of the Ministerial Conference on CRVS in Asia and the Pacific to be held in November 2014.

The Conference adopted the Ministerial Declaration to “Get Every One in the Picture” in Asia and the Pacific and endorsed the Regional Action Framework on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific. In addition, the Conference proclaimed the years from 2015 to 2024 as the Asian and Pacific Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Decade (CRVS Decade 2015-2024) and entrusted the RSG with the responsibility of providing regional oversight and guidance.

In 2015, ESCAP received 35 nominations for the new RSG, a record number for a Steering Group supported by ESCAP. The membership lasted until 2019 when the RSG decided upon new membership for the period of 2020-2024. The current group is led by Fiji as Chair, Afghanistan, Armenia and Malaysia as Vice-Chairs, and New Zealand as Rapporteur.

## What does the RSG do?

The RSG is driven by three central functions. The first is providing regional oversight, advice and strategic guidance for the implementation of the RAF, including support for carrying out regional reviews. Practically speaking, the group’s meetings always include in-depth discussions on issues

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<sup>3</sup> United Nations ESCAP, Sixty-seventh session, Bangkok, 19 – 25 May 2011. E/ESCAP/67/12. Available at <https://bit.ly/2C4BkkP>.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> United Nations ESCAP, Sixty-ninth session, Bangkok, 25 April – 1 May 2013. E/ESCAP/69/26. Available at <https://bit.ly/2OHjivE>.

<sup>6</sup> United Nations ESCAP, Sixty-ninth session, Bangkok, 25 April – 1 May 2013. E/ESCAP/69/15. Available at <https://bit.ly/2zXNLxi>.

<sup>7</sup> For more information on the RAF’s goals, targets, action areas and implementation steps, see <http://getinthepicture.org/crvs-decade/regional-action-framework>.

relevant to CRVS and guide development partners in which kind of support is needed in countries and facilitate peer-to-peer learning among the members.

The second function of the RSG is fostering coordination of the RAF with various global, sub-regional or country initiatives. These initiatives can stem from the CRVS Decade itself, from regional or global mandates corresponding to CRVS improvement activities, or initiatives from the CRVS Partnership composed of development organisations actively supporting CRVS activities in Asia-Pacific.

The third function is supporting countries which are implementing CRVS strengthening activities and ensuring the countries adhere to the principles articulated in the RAF; namely that countries take the lead in improving CRVS systems by adopting flexible and responsive, stepwise approaches which build on local expertise and coincide with international legal and human rights instruments. This function also includes the development of relevant definitions and guidelines for the collection and processing of monitoring information.

A good example of fostering coordination between the CRVS regional initiative and other initiatives includes the intersecting work being done to address legal identity issues for cross-border migrants. For instance, UNHCR's IBelong campaign is committed to ending statelessness by 2024 and recognizes that statelessness can occur "when people move from the countries where they were born", particularly when those births are not registered.

As such, activities aimed at ending statelessness, including intergovernmental meetings, conferences and workshops, are being designed with CRVS systems improvement in mind to enable stronger birth registration outcomes.

For more information on UNHCR's Global Action Plan to End Statelessness 2014 – 2024 visit: <https://bit.ly/2mbAQ1K>



### Where can I find more information?

Information can be found in two locations. First, additional information on the overall work of the RSG can be found on the "get in the picture" website at <http://getinthepicture.org/crvs-decade/regional-steering-group-crvs-asia-and-pacific>.

Second, in the build-up to the Second Ministerial Conference on CRVS in Asia and the Pacific, the RSG continues to provide guidance and feedback on preparations. Information on the Conference, and the RSG's role, can also be found on the "get in the picture" website at <http://getinthepicture.org/crvs-decade/second-ministerial-conference>.