



Asia-Pacific Civil Registrars' Meeting and CRVS Innovations Fair

15-17 July 2014 - Dusit Thani Hotel, Pattaya, Thailand

Concept Note: Asia-Pacific Civil Registrars Meeting

Location: Pattaya, Thailand
Dates: 15-17 July 2014

Hosted by: UNICEF, UNHCR, UNESCAP, Plan International, and WHO

*In collaboration with the Regional Steering Group for CRVS Asia and Pacific
With the support of the European Union*

Background

Every child is born with the right to a name and an identity, yet 230 million children under the age of 5 remain unregistered. Data released by UNICEF in December 2013 estimated that 135 million children in Asia and the Pacific have not had their birth registered, representing 59 per cent of the global total. Without birth registration, children may face exclusion from essential services such as healthcare, education, social services and protection. An effective Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) system, through the production of relevant statistics, helps secure a person's legal identity, tracks the major events of an individual's life such as; birth, adoption, marriage, divorce, death, and cause of death, and is essential for planning, measuring and monitoring progress of development. Civil registration can also be a means of empowerment and strongly linked with equity and inclusive development.

Article 7 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) provides that "The child shall be registered immediately after birth and shall have the right from birth to a name, the right to acquire a nationality..." All countries in the Asia-Pacific region are Parties to the CRC. As such, States have committed themselves to protecting and realizing children's rights and have agreed to hold themselves accountable for this commitment before the international community. States in Asia and the Pacific have taken a number of measures to help ensure that the children of all communities are able to access birth registration, including hard-to-reach, marginalized and vulnerable children such as migrants, minorities, victims of natural disasters and refugees.

These legal commitments are complemented by initiatives to enable development for all. For example, in line with the United Nations Secretary-General's Global Strategy for Women's and Children's Health, the Commission on Information and Accountability recommended in their 2011 report that "by 2015, all countries have taken significant steps to establish a system for registration of births, deaths and causes of death, and have well-functioning health information systems that combine data from facilities, administrative sources and surveys." To further this, the independent Expert Review Group (iERG) 2013 report recommended that a new movement for better data be launched and that a universal and effective CRVS system should be made a post-2015 development target.

Organized by 
unicef
unite for children

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By November 2013, 48 countries in Asia and the Pacific had conducted a rapid self-assessment of their CRVS systems with overall scores ranging from 7 per cent functionality to 96 per cent functionality. Noting the existence of this wide variation across the region, in December 2012, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) with support from UNICEF, UNHCR, WHO, Plan International and 15 other development partners organized a High-Level Meeting on CRVS.

At that meeting over 230 senior officials from 46 countries and 22 organizations reached consensus on a Regional Strategic Plan for the Improvement of CRVS in Asia and the Pacific.

In May 2013, ESCAP adopted resolution 69/15 on implementing the outcome of the High Level Meeting. The resolution endorsed the Regional Strategic Plan and requested the Secretariat to organize a Ministerial Meeting in 2014 and to establish a Regional Steering Group (RSG). The RSG was formed in October 2013 and held its first meeting on 9-11 December 2013 in Bangkok.

Innovations in CRVS

Many countries do not have an adequate legal framework or sufficient infrastructure to register all individuals. Without birth registration, many children face exclusion from essential services such as healthcare, education, social services and protection. When births and deaths go uncounted and causes of death are not documented, governments cannot design effective public policies or provide essential services in key areas or comprehensively measure their impact.

Some of these challenges could be addressed by adopting an integrated and holistic approach to relevant innovation through Information and Communication Technology (ICT). By its very nature CRVS presents enormous ICT design challenges, given the multi-sectoral linkages that must be considered within various government ministries mandated to collect data related to CRVS purposes. However, in the past few years, several promising initiatives have begun to harness the potential of ICT to strengthen CRVS systems.

Civil Registrars are key stakeholders in the development and operationalization of innovations to strengthen CRVS systems. The most successful, cost-efficient, and sustainable ICT-enhanced CRVS solutions are informed by the actual users themselves through their involvement in the planning, design, development, deployment, and use of technologies.

Civil Registrars' Network

Civil Registrars are an essential part of an effective CRVS system. To provide opportunities for learning and sharing of experiences among Asian countries, UNICEF and Plan International have jointly organized four regional conferences on birth registration. In one of those conferences, the Civil Registrars have expressed the need to strengthen their networking efforts by establishing a Civil Registrars' Network. This call to establish a network was reiterated, in respect of ASEAN Member States, at the Workshop on Good Practices in Birth Registration jointly hosted by the ASEAN Inter-governmental Commission on Human Rights and UNHCR. Considering the revitalized global momentum around CRVS, this is an opportune time for the Civil Registrars realise the goal of establishing a Civil Registrars' Network within the region. On 11 December 2013, an informal meeting was held to discuss establishing a Civil Registrars' Network following the first RSG meeting and participants considered that a Civil Registrars' Network would be a platform for Civil Registrars to work together in advancing the CRVS agenda in the region.

In this context, and as part of the implementation of the Regional Strategic Plan, UNICEF, UNHCR, UNESCAP, Plan International, and WHO, in collaboration the CRVS Regional Steering Group and other partners, will host the **Asia-Pacific Civil Registrars Meeting**. The main objectives of this meeting are to provide an opportunity for Civil Registrars to convene and agree on the formulation of such a network and the objectives, principles, roles, modalities and its proposed structure. For example, it may be appropriate to organise the Network on the basis of sub-regions where existing regional structures exist, such as in the Pacific or amongst the Association of South East Asian Nations

This event will be a crucial milestone leading towards the Ministerial Conference for CRVS in Asia and the Pacific, an intergovernmental meeting aiming to have ESCAP member States to provide input into and, as appropriate, endorse a framework of goals, targets and indicators to create regional accountability for all Asian and Pacific countries to achieve universal and responsive CRVS systems by 2024. The event may also consider what role a Civil Registrar's Network may have in helping to realise the goals of the initiative to improve CRVS in the Asia-Pacific.

The Asia-Pacific Civil Registrars Meeting will aim to:

1. Agree on the formulation of the proposed Asia-Pacific Civil Registrars' Network and the objectives, principals, roles, modalities and structure.
2. Present good practices, pilots and promising innovations at national level, and provide guidance on how to most effectively manage and scale up innovations to strengthen CRVS systems.
3. Identify what role the Civil Registrar's Network may have to contribute to ralising the goals of the initiative to improve CRVS in the Asia-Pacific.

Participants

Participants will include Government Representatives, Civil Registrars from Asia and the Pacific, members of the Regional Steering Group for CRVS in Asia and the Pacific, sponsoring UN agencies and Partners, and the European Union.

Programme at a Glance:

Day 1: Innovations for Improved Registration Services

Day one will provide an overview of how using innovations, including ICT, could improve CRVS systems. This will be highlighted with country examples. The Innovations Fair will directly follow after the closing of Day 1.

Day 2: Reaching the Hardest to Register

Day two will provide examples of some of the challenges and opportunities for reaching some of the most vulnerable and marginalized groups in order to achieve universal CRVS.

Day 3: Civil Registrar's Network Meeting (CLOSED MEETING)

Day three will be a closed meeting for Civil Registrar's and government counterparts to discuss the idea of forming a Civil Registrar's Network for Asia and the Pacific, and to discuss the Regional Action Framework.