



Asia-Pacific CRVS Research Forum

3–4 April 2023 | Bangkok, Thailand

Locally Led Budget Advocacy as an Enabler of CRVS Funding Sustainability

Tuesday 4 April 2023: Session 4.2

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Keywords: Advocacy, Budgeting, Domestic Financing, Sustainability.



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Introduction

Countries in Asia-Pacific have committed to improving their CRVS systems and to adequately resourcing these systems through the *Regional Action Framework on CRVS in Asia and the Pacific* and the *Ministerial Declaration on Building a More Resilient Future with Inclusive CRVS*. Yet, they may lack support to mobilize and manage the required domestic resources. The ambitious goals of the Regional Action Framework are predicated on CRVS systems that are adequately and sustainably funded to progressively improve services and deliver on national targets. As part of the eight implementation steps of the Regional Action Framework, many countries have developed comprehensive, multi-sectoral national CRVS strategies to improve their systems.

An information note from UN ESCAP and partners on best practices for developing CRVS strategies suggests that a country's lack of resources for CRVS and why this is important should be covered as a key challenge for system performance.¹ The Framework itself specifies that “allocating adequate national financial resources for the implementation of national comprehensive CRVS strategies” is essential,² but does not provide guidance on how to secure those resources. The Ministerial Declaration, which came out of the Second Ministerial Conference on CRVS in Asia and the Pacific, calls upon members “to ensure sufficient financial resources for CRVS, including by allocating sufficient spending on the development of IT infrastructure necessary for recording vital events.”³

Objectives

To develop and pilot test a country-led budget advocacy approach aimed at strengthening domestic financing and sustainability of national CRVS systems in the Asia-Pacific region, supporting the goals of the CRVS Decade, Regional Action Framework, and Ministerial Declaration.

Methods

In 2022, with support from the Bloomberg Philanthropies Data for Health Initiative, GHAI worked with global and regional CRVS experts to understand key CRVS system financing challenges at the country level, developed a draft *Budget Advocacy Framework and Toolkit for CRVS Funding Sustainability*, and pilot

¹ https://getinthepicture.org/sites/default/files/resources/Information%20note%20national%20CRVS%20strategies-final_1.pdf

² https://getinthepicture.org/sites/default/files/resources/Regional%20Action%20Framework%20on%20Civil%20Registration%20and%20Vital%20Statistics%20in%20Asia%20and%20the%20Pacific_0_0.pdf

³ https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/d8files/event-documents/ESCAP_MCCRVS_2021_8_Add.1_ministerial_declaration_English.pdf

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tested the advocacy planning module of the Framework and Toolkit in the Maldives in partnership with the national agency responsible for civil registration, the Department of National Registration (DNR). Activities included a landscape analysis, participatory multi-stakeholder workshop, and generation and validation of a budget advocacy strategy.

Initial activities included a landscape analysis, participatory multi-stakeholder workshop, generation, and validation of a budget advocacy strategy, and identification of key activities related to the integration of the national identification system and civil registration, followed by pilot implementation of the strategy.



Fig 1: Cycle of Budget Advocacy developed by Global Health Advocacy Incubator.



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Findings

Maldivian CRVS stakeholders were highly engaged throughout the budget advocacy planning and strategy development process, leading to strong ownership for future implementation. The budget advocacy strategy aims to address two CRVS system bottlenecks (one related to IT and one related to HR) in order to demonstrate to decision-makers the value of investing in the system and influence resource allocation decisions in the next fiscal year.

In line with the findings from the multi-stakeholder workshop, DNR initiated the development of IT modules to integrate the national identification system and civil registration with the mobilization of domestic finance and development partners' support. Moreover, the Government of Maldives identified pilot islands to demonstrate the technology and draft a budget for upscaling the technology in the upcoming annual budget proposal.

Conclusions

Budget advocacy shows promise as a catalytic intervention to support countries in their journeys to CRVS system sustainability by facilitating locally-led domestic resource mobilization. Budget advocacy is complementary to other CRVS system improvement activities, focused on a critical component of the enabling environment – funding sustainability – that countries are prioritizing. Further testing of the Framework and Toolkit, through continued engagement in the Maldives and expansion to other Asia-Pacific countries, will be important to refine the approach and demonstrate gains in national CRVS budgets.

Hard-won gains in civil registration and vital statistics coverage must be sustained and scaled up. Budget advocacy shows promise as a catalytic intervention to support countries in their journeys to CRVS system sustainability by facilitating locally-led domestic resource mobilization. The interdependence of health and economic security makes a strong case for advocating for adequate allocation of public domestic resources for health and efficient use of those resources towards CRVS that builds on common goods for civil registration, national identification, and vital statistics. The pandemic shows the imperative of investing in the common goods for health, which includes public health activities such as civil registration, emergency preparedness, integrated surveillance, and strengthening primary health care as a cornerstone of people-centered, integrated service delivery.

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