

Civil Registration & Vital Statistics (CRVS)

and

The Pacific Vital Statistics Action Plan (PVSAP)



CIVIL REGISTRATION OFFICE

BIRTH, DEATH & MARRIAGES

OFFICE OPENING HOURS-MONDAY TO FRIDAY

09.00 - 12.00 am 02.00 - 04.00 pm

Statistics for health and development.

Accurate data on births, deaths, and causes-of-death are indispensable for:

- monitoring the health of a population
- identifying health priorities and evaluating health and program impacts, and progress towards Universal Health Coverage (UHC)
- access to real-time information on population size and structure,
- providing the necessary data for the calculation of all population-based development indicators used to track development progress (such as, but not restricted to MDGs, and the emerging post-2015 sustainable development goals).

Real data for real decisions

While **estimates** of fertility and mortality serve an important function in highlighting the potential scale of a problem or calling attention to issues which would otherwise go unnoticed, they are **not a substitute for real data**. Estimated data cannot adequately monitor changes over time or account for differences in local conditions that may not be built into models. There is a real **risk** that policy decisions based on incorrect estimates could lead to poorer health and development outcomes, and that policy makers may not understand the uncertainty that is associated with estimated statistics. The only way to **reduce the uncertainty** of health and development statistics is to improve the collection, analysis, and dissemination of empirical data, sourced from a robust **civil registration and vital statistics system**.

CRVS is cost effective

In the long term, investing in CRVS **reduces costs and inefficiencies** by lessening dependence on very costly surveys (such as the DHS or MICS), and censuses. Because it is routinely collected, CRVS provides more **timely** data, supporting more efficient and effective service provision.



Registration protects rights

Civil registration also has an important legal function in providing a **legal identity**.

"The child shall be registered immediately after birth and has the right to a name and nationality..."

International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 7

- Signed by all countries of the Pacific

Registration:

- provides proof of nationality by birth or descent
- facilitates access to social services such as education, health and social protection,
- offers protection under law.

A birth certificate may be needed to obtain a passport, marriage or driver's license, a bank account, formal employment or to inherit property.



CRVS supports the right of:

- A child to live past their 1st and 5th birthdays
- A child to live into adulthood, and for young adults not to die prematurely, but to live through to old age
- Communities to know why they are losing community members to premature mortality so that they can respond accordingly

The Pacific Vital Statistics Action Plan, 2011–2014

This plan was developed by the Brisbane Accord Group (BAG), a consortium of development partners¹, with the aim of **improving vital statistics in the Pacific region**, and improving **coordination between development partners**. The Pacific Vital Statistics Action Plan (PVSAP) sits under the *Ten Year Pacific Statistics Strategy, 2011–2020*, to ensure CRVS is fully incorporated into regional strategic statistical priorities.

The basic premise of the PVSAP is to work with countries to assess their collection and reporting systems for births, deaths, and causes of death, and develop a country-specific improvement plan. Partner agencies are then able to focus their support in a coordinated manner to meet countries' needs.

Steps in developing a national plan

Build stakeholder support and conduct a rapid assessment of the CRVS system

Establish and formalize a national coordination committee

Conduct a comprehensive CRVS assessment and prioritize key issues

Develop a national CRVS improvement strategy and ensure key stakeholder support

Implement CRVS improvement plan and monitor progress

¹ BAG partners include Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC), University of Queensland (UQ), UNFPA, WHO, UNICEF, Pacific Health Information Network (PHIN), Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), Queensland University of Technology (QUT) and University of New South Wales (UNSW).

Strengths of the PVSAP include:

- emphasis on **country ownership** and fostering strong interdepartmental relationships between stakeholders in country
- true **collaboration** between partner agencies, aligning individual agency work programs and drawing on the strengths of each agency

Countries have committed to improving CRVS

In 2013, Pacific Island countries' Ministers of Health and Heads of national statistical and planning agencies endorsed the **improvement of CRVS as a core regional priority**.

Pacific Health Ministers, and heads of the region's statistics and planning agencies encouraged countries to:

- Formalise their CRVS committees
- Conduct an assessment of CRVS systems and develop detailed national improvement plans.
- Obtain high-level endorsement and support for the improvement plans.
- Ensure CRVS is embedded in National Strategies for the Development of Statistics (NSDS).
- Regularly update vital statistics in SPC's *National Minimum Development Indicators* database (www.spc.int/nmdi)



Significant progress has been made

The region has demonstrated that through the combination of strong political commitment from countries and sustained and coordinated support from development partners, it is possible to make significant improvements to CRVS, as illustrated in some of the key achievements over the past four years:

- 14 of the 15 Pacific countries and the 3 US-affiliated Pacific territories have conducted some assessment of their CRVS system, started to identify national priorities for improvement, and have formed a national committee to oversee this work. Discussions are underway to commence this work in PNG.
- In just one year (2013), birth registration in children under age 5 improved from 40% to 52% in Vanuatu and 68% to 82% in Kiribati.
- The Solomon Islands has introduced a computerised civil registration database
- Niue produced a national vital statistics report.
- Tuvalu, Fiji, Tonga, Samoa, and Vanuatu made policy changes to adopt the WHO International Cause-of-Death Certificate.
- Doctors graduating from Fiji National University and Oceania University are trained in death certification in accordance with the International Classification of Diseases
- Tonga has made substantial health policy changes based on improved calculation and reporting of life expectancy figures.



But there is a need to do more

Until all births and deaths are registered, and we have a reliable causes of death for every death in the Pacific, there is a need to do more. We need to ensure that vital statistics are available, analysed, and reported in a way that is meaningful to those who need it.

Moving forward

The post-2015 development agenda and growing NCD epidemic will both require reliable and timely CRVS data. CRVS has again been identified as a core priority for the second phase of the Ten Year Pacific Statistics Strategy, and **BAG partners**:

- have confirmed their commitment to a second round of the PVSAP for 2015 onwards
- will continue to provide on-the-ground support to assist countries with the activities under the PVSAP (outlined on the previous page)
- will support improvements in quality and availability of vital statistics through regional reporting standards and training such as the data analysis and report writing course to be held for 6 countries in April this year



In 2014, countries will be invited to participate in the broader **Asia-Pacific Regional Action Framework for CRVS** led by UN ESCAP which recognises the PVSAP. While being consistent with the work under the PVSAP, the action framework commits countries to more tangible reporting by asking them to set their own measurable goals and targets and report progress against their national plans. A Ministerial meeting will be held in November in relation to this action framework.

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