CRVS and the SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Civil Registration (CR) is the compulsory, continuous, universal and permanent recording of vital events such as births and deaths. From these records, vital statistics (VS) on births, deaths, causes of death, fertility and mortality (and where migration data is also available – population estimates) can be produced for policy and planning. Where civil registration has a high level of both coverage and completeness, it is generally accepted to be the preferred source of vital statistics due to the ongoing and timely collection of data, and the ability to include cause of death information.

There has been growing recognition over the last several years of the importance of accurate vital statistics for the Pacific Islands. CRVS data will be essential for reporting against development frameworks such as the SDGs and the Healthy Islands Framework. CRVS is also increasingly recognised as a critical mechanism for supporting good governance (through data driven planning and accountability, links with electoral rolls etc.), a tool for financial management (linkages with social security) and data linkages (through identity management) and a key element in supporting human rights (through the recognition of identity and associated rights, and the accountability of measuring and recording deaths).

Although indicators for the SDG targets are still being finalised, it is already possible to see the key role that CRVS will play in assisting countries both to measure and to meet their SDG targets.

At its most fundamental, CRVS is essential for population data as a denominator for all population-based targets and indicators. While censuses provide strong population data once every five or ten years, accurate up-to-date information is needed for responsive monitoring of population based indicators. It is therefore essential to be able to accurately update population data between census years through either universal registration of births and deaths, or at the very least through accurate mortality and fertility estimates derived from these collections.

More directly however, CRVS is both a target in its own right (Goal 16); is necessary for monitoring key outcome indicators (such as maternal mortality and NCD related deaths); and is a key strategy for effecting progress in others (such as social inclusion and access to education).

The following table outlines some of these key links between SDGs and CRVS.

How CRVS supports the SDGs

1. NO POVERTY

Target	Role of CRVS	Data needed
1.3 Implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, and by 2030 achieve substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable.	Access to social protection systems is generally predicated on a 'legal identity' – and thereby contingent on birth registration.	▪ Birth registration completeness
1.4 By 2030, ensure that all men and women, in particular the poor and the vulnerable, have equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to basic services, ownership and control over land and other forms of property, inheritance, natural resources, appropriate new technology and financial services, including microfinance.	Ownership, access to banking, and inheritance are difficult without recognised identity documents – while inheritance is greatly simplified through formal death registration procedures that support the deceased persons assets to be legally transferred. However registration is frequently not as complete for women as for men, and may largely exclude other vulnerable populations.	▪ Birth and death registration completeness – disaggregated by sex, region (central vs outer islands) and other vulnerable groups (possibly single mothers, ethnicity etc. depending on the local setting)
1.5 By 2030, build the resilience of the poor and those in vulnerable situations and reduce their exposure and vulnerability to climate-related extreme events and other economic, social and environmental shocks and disasters.	While planning for disaster response requires local area population data (by age and sex where possible), access to post disaster payments, services and support, and the ability to access ones own assets, often relies on adequate identity documents. These may also play an important role in reuniting families after a major event. CRVS systems must be able to respond to events and quickly replace lost or destroyed records.	▪ CRVS back-up storage capacity / systems ▪ Ability of the CRVS system to respond to an emergency and re-issue critical identity documents

Pacific Community
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NO HUNGER

Target	Role of CRVS	Data needed
2.1 By 2030, end hunger and ensure access by all people, in particular the poor and people in vulnerable situations, including infants, to safe, nutritious and sufficient food all year round.	In order to monitor infant nutrition – number of births is needed as a denominator.	▪ Number of births
2.2 By 2030, end all forms of malnutrition, including achieving, by 2025, the internationally agreed targets on stunting and wasting in children under 5 years of age, and address the nutritional needs of adolescent girls, pregnant and lactating women and older persons.	As for 2.1, measurement for this target requires, as a denominator, the number of pregnancies (estimated by the number of births) and number of infants and children.	▪ Number of births

GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

Target	Role of CRVS	Data needed
3.1 By 2030, reduce the global maternal mortality ratio to less than 70 per 100,000 live births.	Direct measurement of this target.	▪ Deaths due to maternal causes (deaths by cause – ICD summary tabulation list) ▪ Number of births
3.2 By 2030, end preventable deaths of newborns and children under 5 years of age, with all countries aiming to reduce neonatal mortality to at least as low as 12 per 1,000 live births and under 5 mortality to at least as low as 25 per 1,000 live births.	Direct measurement of this target.	▪ Deaths by age (<28 days, <1 year and <5 years) ▪ Number of Births
3.3 By 2030, end the epidemics of AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and neglected tropical diseases and combat hepatitis, water-borne diseases and other communicable diseases.	A key measurement of the impact of these epidemic diseases is the number of deaths that are attributed to them.	▪ Deaths by cause (ICD summary tabulation list)
3.4 By 2030, reduce by one third premature mortality from non-communicable diseases through prevention and treatment and promote mental health and well-being.	Direct measurement of premature mortality related to NCDs. Deaths must be reported by age if we are to develop an indication of 'premature deaths' that is relevant to pacific countries. There is also a suggestion to measure deaths due to suicide as an important indicator of mental health and well-being.	▪ Deaths by cause (ICD summary tabulation list) – disaggregated by age group and sex ▪ Life expectancy (calculated by deaths by age group and population)
3.6 By 2020, halve the number of global deaths and injuries from road traffic accidents.	Direct measurement of this target. As deaths due to external causes (such as traffic accidents) tend to occur disproportionately in younger adults – this measure has more value if examined by age group.	▪ Deaths by cause (ICD summary tabulation list) – by age group
3.d Strengthen the capacity of all countries, in particular developing countries, for early warning, risk reduction and management of national and global health risks.	Changes in the number of deaths and the causal patterns of death are a critical surveillance tool to be able to identify (and subsequently respond to) emerging health concerns.	▪ Deaths by cause (ICD summary tabulation list) – by age group, sex, and geographic sub-region

QUALITY EDUCATION

Target	Role of CRVS	Data needed
4.1 By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes.	Access to school (and more critically – subsequent acknowledgement of academic achievements) generally requires a formal identity or birth certificate.	▪ Birth registration coverage by age 5 – by sex and geographical sub-region)
4.2 By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education.		▪ Birth registration coverage by age 5 – by sex and geographical sub-region)
4.3 By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university.		▪ Birth registration coverage by age 5 – by sex and geographical sub-region)
4.5 By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations.	As for 4.1 – Children of single mothers, those raised by extended family (through informal adoption), minorities, and those from outer islands may be less likely to have a formal identification from a birth certificate. Even where these children have been able to access school; there are known instances of children being forced to 'drop out' early as they cannot sit required progression exams without a birth certificate.	▪ Birth registration coverage by age 5 – by sex and geographical sub-region, as well as by other vulnerable groups where possible) ▪ Late registration procedures are accessible to all

GENDER EQUALITY

Target	Role of CRVS	Data needed
5.1 End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere.	Birth registration, and subsequently a legal identity, is central to ensuring social inclusion – such as access to services, participation in government, education, etc. It is essential that birth registration is seen as important for both boys and girls.	▪ Birth registration – completeness by sex
5.2 Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation.	Women and girls who have a legal identity and are formally recognised are better protected from trafficking and other forms of exploitation.	▪ Birth registration – completeness by sex ▪ Age at marriage – by sex
5.3 Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation.	Accurate and universal birth registration is essential to accurately monitoring age at marriage and preventing early marriage (in line with national legislation).	▪ Birth registration – quality and completeness ▪ Age at marriage – by sex

REDUCED INEQUALITIES

Target	Role of CRVS	Data needed
10.7 Facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies.	In addition to the basic population data required to address this target; orderly migration relies on adequate identity documentation and the security (veracity) of this information – in order to ensure confidence between countries that ID documentation is reliable. Strong CRVS systems (that record all births and deaths) provide the foundation for such a national system.	▪ Registration completeness for births and deaths ▪ Procedures for verifying identity documents and evidence for registration are in place

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PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS

Target	Role of CRVS	Data needed
16.1 Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere.	Direct measurement of this indicator – through cause-specific mortality rates. The mode of death in deaths due to external causes – that is whether the injury or external cause was due to an accident, homicide or assault, or self-inflicted, is generally poorly recorded in the region; with medical certification and autopsy / investigation procedures requiring strengthening.	▪ Deaths by cause (ICD summary tabulation list) – by sex and age group
16.2 End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children.	Children who have a legal identity and are formally recognised are better protected from trafficking and other forms of exploitation. In addition, the causes of death amongst children are a critical outcome measure for this target.	▪ Birth registration coverage (especially for girls) – by age 12 months ▪ Cause of death distribution in children (Summary ICD tabulation by gender and age group)
16.9 By 2030, provide legal identity for all, including birth registration.	Direct measurement of this indicator. As noted above – identity is a critical foundation for the protection of human rights and social inclusion.	▪ Birth registration coverage (for both new births within the previous 12 months, the under 5 population and ultimately for the whole population)

PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS

Target	Role of CRVS	Data needed
17.18 By 2020, enhance capacity-building support to developing countries, including for least developed countries and Small Island Developing States, to increase significantly the availability of high-quality, timely and reliable data disaggregated by income, gender, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts.	CRVS is an essential part of a national statistical system and is critical for generating timely, continuous data on births and deaths, and subsequently population measures such as fertility and mortality. A high level of completeness (nearly 100% for births and >80% for deaths) is required in order for data generated from CR to be considered reliable for statistical purposes without substantial correction. Collections should also be representative of the population as a whole.	▪ Birth and death registration coverage (within 12 months of the event) ▪ Publication schedule for vital statistics data derived from CRVS
17.19 By 2030, build on existing initiatives to develop measurements of progress on sustainable development that complement gross domestic product, and support statistical capacity-building in developing countries.	As for 17.18.	▪ Birth and death registration coverage (within 12 months of the event) ▪ Publication schedule for vital statistics data derived from CRVS

The SDGs and the UN Decade for CRVS in Asia and the Pacific (2015–2024) provide a key opportunity for Pacific countries to improve their CRVS systems and subsequently support national development.

Pacific countries have committed to CRVS improvements through a variety of political and regional mechanisms, with support for this work provided by the Brisbane Accord Group under the Pacific Vital Statistics Action Plan (PVSAP).