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DATA FOR
HEALTH INITIATIVE

STRENGTHENING CRVS SYSTEMS

**Sustainable Development
Goal achievement will depend
on strong CRVS systems**

CRVS Roadmaps for Action

Sept 2017

Introduction

The Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) agenda is an Action Agenda unanimously agreed by the UN Member States at a High-Level UN Summit in September 2015.¹ The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is applicable to all countries until the year 2030. It aims to ensure “No One is Left Behind” in global sustainable development efforts, regardless of who they are and where they live.



Common roadblocks

The SDG agenda comprises 17 goals, 169 associated targets and means of implementation, as well as over 200 indicators.² This ambitious development agenda, and its intersectoral nature, is no doubt overwhelming to many seasoned policy and planning officers in countries around the world. Due to its expansive nature, countries will likely manage SDG implementation by determining which country-specific priorities they will incrementally achieve within the SDG framework in coming years. However, countries’ SDG monitoring and evaluation will be significantly enhanced by strong and reliable civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) systems.

Civil registration is the process through which major vital events that occur in a population – including births, deaths, marriages, divorces and adoptions – are officially recorded. CRVS systems generate vital statistics using the information contained in individual civil registration records, and such statistics include:

- *Numbers and rates of births;*
- *Key characteristics of births, such as births by sex, location, and maternal age;*
- *Numbers and rates of deaths;*
- *Deaths by key characteristics such as age, sex, location, and cause of death.*

A well-functioning civil registration system produces vital statistics data that is continuous, permanent, compulsory, and universal.³

Moving forward

CRVS systems are the foundation of sustainable development and will be critical to SDG achievement.⁴ In fact, the SDGs are increasing the demands of international donors, including the World Bank, for countries to strengthen their CRVS systems.⁵ The vital statistics data generated from strong and reliable CRVS systems on birth, death and cause of death will be crucial “to assess countries’ progress towards the goals and to design and adjust policies and programmes to ensure progress”.⁶

1 UN General Assembly. *Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. A/RES/70/1. 2015. Available online: http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/70/1&Lang=E

2 UN Economic and Social Council. Report of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators (E/CN.3/2017/2*), Forty-eighth session 7-10 March 2017. Available online: <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/files/meetings/iaeg-sdgs-meeting-05/2017-2-IAEG-SDGs-E.pdf>

3 UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (Statistical Division). Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System, Revision 3. 2014. Available Online: <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/standmeth/principles/M19Rev3en.pdf>

4 Editorial. CRVS systems: a cornerstone of sustainable development. *The Lancet*. 2015;385(9981):1917.

5 De Savigny et al. Integrating community-based verbal autopsy into civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS): system-level considerations. *Global Health Action*. 2017;10:1272992. Mills et al. Civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) for monitoring the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), May 2017. World Bank. Available Online: <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/979321495190619598/pdf/115150-WP-CRVS-for-Monitoring-the-SDGs-web-version-May-18-2017-PUBLIC.pdf>

6 Sankoh O, Byass P, on behalf of INDEPTH Network and Partners. New INDEPTH strategy for the SDGs using robust population data. *The Lancet*. 2017;5:e647-e648.

Improving CRVS systems is an inherently important part of the SDG action agenda

For example -



SDG Target 16.9 aims that by 2030, countries will provide legal identity for all members of their populations, including birth registration. SDG Indicator 16.9.1 clarifies achievement of the target will be assessed by the proportion of children under 5 years of age whose births have been registered with a civil authority, by age.

SDG Target 17.19 further aims that by 2030, countries build on initiatives to develop measures of progress on sustainable development that complement GDP and support statistical capacity-building in developing countries. SDG Indicator 17.19.2 clarifies that achievement of this target will be measured by the proportion of countries that have achieved 100 per cent birth registration and 80 per cent death registration.

Population data dis-aggregations that data from CRVS systems can produce are key to realising the SDG agenda's central tenet that "No One is Left Behind"

The SDGs call for data by key equity stratifiers as part of the "Leave No One Behind" strategy.

For example -



SDG Target 4.5 aims that by 2030, countries will 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. SDG Indicator 4.5.1 clarifies measurement of this target will be obtained through disaggregated population data – "Parity indices (female/male, rural/urban, bottom/top wealth quintile and others such as disability status, indigenous peoples and conflict-affected, as data become available) for all education indicators on this list that can be disaggregated".

The robust population data that CRVS systems generate are particularly essential for achievement of the global health goal, SDG 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote wellbeing for all at all ages

Certainly, quality cause of death data will be key for assessing country achievement of many of SDG 3's targets. Yet on the other hand, the legal documentation generated through strong CRVS systems will be crucial for achievement of the Universal Health Coverage (UHC) SDG target.

For example -



SDG Target 3.8 Achieve UHC, including financial risk protection, access to quality essential health-care services and access to safe, effective, quality and affordable essential medicines and vaccines for all.

- Birth certificate/legal identification will facilitate access to social protection systems and services (including health care systems and services and national health insurance schemes), along with other legal rights and entitlements to progress the social determinants of health (such as education, and housing).

The SDGs require timely and continuing data series to enable comparisons over time

Vital statistics information can be produced from other data sources, such as the census, household surveys, and demographic surveillance sites. However, complete civil registration is advantageous over sampled data by providing continuous, timely information that is regionally and nationally representative, allowing informed local-level decision making in SDG achievement.

The legal documentation of identity, civil status and family relationships acquired through strong and reliable CRVS systems will be crucial for achieving several SDG metrics

For example -



SDG Target 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.

- Birth certificate/legal identification will facilitate access to social protection systems and services, legal rights and entitlements.
- Death certificate/legal identification will facilitate surviving kin's access to social protection systems and services (including health services), survivor benefits (e.g. pensions), legal rights and entitlements (e.g. property, business and inheritance rights, nationality).



SDG Target 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;

SDG Target 5.3: Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation.

- Birth certificate/legal identification and marriage certificate documentation will facilitate the elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation.
- Birth certificate/legal identification and marriage certificate documentation will facilitate the elimination of all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage.

Summary

Accurate and reliable data from well-functioning CRVS systems will be crucial not only for monitoring but also for achieving the SDGs. CRVS systems will play an important role in assisting countries and regions to measure, monitor and meet their SDG targets and indicators. Many of the SDG indicators are population-based indicators. CRVS, at its most elementary, is critical for population data.

For more information, contact:
E: CRVS-info@unimelb.edu.au
W: mspgh.unimelb.edu.au/dataforhealth

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