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SESSION 4 – CIVIL REGISTRATION AND VITAL STATISTICS

(Document presented by the Secretariat on behalf of the Brisbane Accord Group)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The development of civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) systems is one of the core priorities of the Ten Year Pacific Statistics Strategy (TYPSS). The overall goal is to ensure that Pacific Island countries and territories (PICTs) have a robust source of vital statistics, which help facilitate accurate intercensal and subnational-level planning and monitoring of development.
2. The need for CRVS systems is universally recognised. Goal 16 of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals calls for universal birth registration as the primary means to realisation of a legal identity for populations. Numerous health targets outlined by the agenda further require data on death and causes of death, which can only be reliably acquired from well-functioning CRVS systems. In a bid to accelerate improvements in CRVS systems, PICTs – along with other countries in the Asia-Pacific region declared 2015–2024 to be the Asia-Pacific Decade for CRVS.
3. The development of CRVS systems in the Pacific is guided by the Pacific Vital Statistics Action Plan (PVSAP), whose implementation is coordinated by SPC, with the support of a group of technical agencies known as the Brisbane Accord Group.
4. Significant progress has been realised by PICTs in the development of CRVS systems over the last four years. In line with regional recommendations, most countries have adopted multi-sectoral approaches to the development of systems, and have made commendable efforts towards formalising national CRVS coordination frameworks, and plans. Some of the key achievements include: i) the publication of the first set of vital statistics reports by five countries (with four reports under review); ii) initiation of a review of civil registration legislation in three countries; iii) the establishment of the Pacific Civil Registrars Network (PCRN), which has played a crucial role in facilitating peer-peer learning among PICTs; and iv) the high-level political commitments made by PICTs governments towards the Asia-Pacific Decade for CRVS.
5. Key challenges in implementing the PVSAP and developing CRVS systems in the region include: i) the inaccessibility of registration services to the public (due to direct and indirect costs associated with the registration of vital events); ii) outdated civil registration legislation; iii) weaknesses in human resource capacity, including a high staff turnover in some countries; iv) adopting appropriate information technology for civil registration; and v) the adverse impact of disasters on civil registration records and infrastructure.

6. During this meeting, countries are particularly encouraged to monitor the performance of their civil registration systems through routine estimation of birth and death registration completeness. Moreover, countries are requested to review and consider for adoption the attached regional template on the development of a vital statistics report, and to further establish a national schedule for the publication of vital statistics from administrative sources. The role of statistics offices as leaders and coordinators of national CRVS improvement efforts is well recognised.
7. The role of national statistics offices as leaders and coordinators of national CRVS improvement efforts cannot be overemphasised. During this meeting, countries are particularly encouraged to: i) monitor the performance of their CRVSs through the routine estimation of birth and death registration completeness, and ii) establish a national schedule for the publication of vital statistics from administrative sources. In addition, countries are requested to take note of the regional template on the development of a vital statistics report available at: <http://www.pacific-crvs.org/>

INTRODUCTION

8. Demographic measures of fertility and mortality are routinely required by governments to understand changes in the size, structure and characteristics of populations, and to monitor progress against health and other development targets that governments set. Administrative data sources, in particular civil registration systems, are universally recognised for their fundamental function of providing governments with a continuous and permanent source of population data and statistics. These systems are recognised by the United Nations, as being the most reliable and cost-effective sources of vital statistics (including statistics on causes of death). Countries with universally complete systems are able to undertake register-based population censuses, hence saving governments from enormous costs incurred through population census operations.
9. The value of CRVS systems stretches beyond their statistical functions. Civil registration is the primary means through which an individual's legal identity is established. Through registration, the systems issue identity documents that are used by individual members of the public to identify themselves to each other and to the state. Identification records created through civil registration provide the primary feeder documents for the creation of population databases, such as national identification systems, passport and immigration systems, and electoral databases among others. Records of birth inform the state of new entrants or persons eligible to be included in these databases, while death records provide the legal means to close an identity and to appropriate the rights associated to such an identity.
10. CRVS systems are central to the monitoring of a broad range of Sustainable Development Goal targets and indicators, including those of goal 16, which calls for universal birth registration as the basis for a legal identity, and the numerous health targets and indicators, outlined under goal 3, which requires death registration and cause of death data for their monitoring. The systems are also crucial to the monitoring of political commitments made by Pacific Island countries and territories (PICTs) within the Asia-Pacific Regional Action Framework for CRVS, under which countries have set specific targets for system completeness, legal documentation, and production of vital statistics.
11. The development of CRVS systems is one of the core priorities of TYPSS. The overall goal is to ensure that PICTs have a robust source of vital statistics that can facilitate adequate monitoring of national development goals and targets, and accurate intercensal and subnational-level planning.
12. The development of CRVS systems in the Pacific is guided by PVSAP, whose implementation is coordinated by the Pacific Community (SPC) with the support of Brisbane Accord Group (BAG). PVSAP1 is now in its second phase of implementation (2016–2020). Over the past four years, the plan has focussed on building the capacity of PICTs through: i) training; ii) direct technical support to countries based on specific country needs; iii) development of knowledge products, including regional best practice guidelines on legislation and information technology, CRVS sheets, regional mortality reports;

¹ PVSAP comes under the Ten Year Pacific Statistics Strategy (TYPSS).

and iv) supporting opportunities for peer-peer learning, through South-South country exchange visits, regional meetings and workshops.

13. This paper seeks to provide a summary of the progress made by PICTs in the development of CRVS systems, the challenges experienced over the last four years, and some recommendations. The paper builds on the update provided at the last HOPS meeting in 2013, and therefore focuses on the last four years.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

14. High-level political commitment to CRVS by Pacific ministers responsible for civil registration. The lack of political commitment has been identified as one of the most fundamental challenges in the development of CRVS systems in most countries of the world. At the 2015 historic conference, Pacific ministers responsible for civil registration made resounding commitments towards the development of CRVS systems in their respective countries, and further signed on to the Regional Action Framework for CRVS in Asia and the Pacific. These commitments provide an important foundation for mobilising support and investments into CRVS systems. Through these commitments, a number of PICTs have moved to establish national CRVS coordination committees and have further crafted national targets for CRVS. PICTs have also continued to engage at the regional CRVS steering group through their representation by the Minister of Health and Medical Services of Fiji who chairs the group.
15. Training on data analysis and report writing. Over the last four years, BAG has provided three rounds of training on the analysis of administrative data (i.e. health and civil registration data). These rounds of training were aimed at building the analytical skills of countries, and enabling them to develop vital statistics reports. The training has been critical in assisting countries to unearth weaknesses associated with their civil registration and health information systems, which have been used to feedback into the overall system's strengthening efforts. For example, through the exercise, countries have been able to identify weaknesses in their data collection formats, inconsistencies in data entry, incompleteness of birth and death recording, and poor death certification practices among others. Through the training, five countries have published vital statistics reports: American Samoa, Cook Islands, Nauru, Niue and Tuvalu. Four others are in the process of reviewing their reports for publication: Federated States of Micronesia (Yap), Kiribati, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. Another round of training is scheduled for the first quarter of 2018.
16. Establishment of the Pacific Civil Registrar's Network (PCRN). PCRN, which is a formalised network of registrars in the Pacific, was formed in 2015 with the aim of providing an opportunity to share knowledge and good practices in civil registration and, more broadly, to foster coordination and integration of civil registrars' inputs into implementation of the PVSAP and the Asia-Pacific Regional Action Framework on CRVS. Among the significant achievements of the network is the establishment of cross-border data sharing arrangements between some PICTs (e.g. the governments of Cook Islands, Niue and New Zealand), which is aimed at improving the completeness and quality of death registration records.² In October 2017, PCRN hosted a ground-breaking workshop that looked into civil registration in the context of disasters. The workshop provided important insights and guidance, among them the need to establish 'civil registration focused disaster management plans' and the potential role of civil registration data in the management of disasters. The network provides a unique opportunity for registrars to exchange knowledge and experiences round the year.
17. Regional knowledge products. In order to build knowledge and support learning in the region, BAG has developed a number of resource materials on CRVS described below. These documents have been

² The high mobility of populations in the Pacific often results into deaths occurring in a foreign country (i.e. outside the country where the birth was registered). Sharing this information between registrars is important in ensuring that the identity record of the deceased is closed, a critical element of improving the security of records. It is also important that countries share information on changes in the identification details of persons (e.g. names, sex), to ensure that the original birth records are similarly updated. These data-sharing arrangements have, so far, been established between the governments of Cook Islands, Niue and New Zealand.

developed with countries, and/or based on country input and feedback, and are available on the Pacific CRVS website: <http://www.pacific-crvs.org/>

- a) Regional best practice guidelines on legislation: These guidelines provide foundational principles on the development of civil registration legislation. The guidelines are based on the United Nations principles and recommendations for legislation drafting. The guidelines provide best practice examples on the application of the recommended principles by countries in the Pacific. The objective is to provide countries with guidance on the development of a robust civil registration legislative framework, in support of a robust CRVS system.
 - b) Regional best practice guidelines on information technology (IT): This document was developed to provide guidance to PICTs on the choice and application of IT for CRVS systems. The document recognises the rapid changes in IT and the need to ensure that countries are equipped with relevant knowledge to make appropriate decisions in this regard. The document outlines fundamental attributes of efficient IT for CRVS systems. The greater goal of this work is to support harmonisation of IT Infrastructure in the region, which would facilitate data sharing and ease in providing regional support when needed.
 - c) CRVS fact sheets: These two to four-page documents are designed to provide a quick reference to countries on key subjects and their linkages to CRVS. The fact sheets are envisioned to be a critical resource for national CRVS staff in communicating CRVS messages to policy-makers or the political leadership. The fact sheets cover a wide range of subjects including: CRVS and natural disasters; CRVS and human rights; political commitment to CRVS; road-related deaths; What is CRVS?; improving CRVS through the census; and others.
 - d) Regional mortality reports: These reports seek to provide a regional picture on the state and trends in infant and adult mortality in the Pacific between years 2000 and 2015. The reports provide individual country profiles, comparing data available across years. The development of these reports was led by students from the University of New South Wales in collaboration with SPC staff, under a student internship programme facilitated by SPC. It is envisaged that this programme contributes to the overall building of knowledge and awareness on CRVS among participants.
 - e) Other reports that are still under development are on the themes: “Non-communicable diseases in the Pacific”, “Road traffic accident morbidity and mortality” and “doctors attitudes in the certification of deaths”.
18. Training on the certification of causes of death: The quality of cause of death data remains to be a critical challenge for the Pacific Islands region. This is particularly of concern given the need for the region to monitor fundamental health and mortality goals of the Sustainable Development Agenda. Weaknesses in the quality of certification of cause of death stem from numerous factors, including knowledge and capacity issues among concerned staff; and social influences, including pressure on doctors from relatives and the community to assign more socially accepted causes of death. Coding of causes of death is similarly constrained by staff capacity issues, including inadequate numbers of staff.
19. In 2017, BAG provided certification training to doctors and other health personnel in Samoa and Tuvalu. The training was primarily aimed at building capacity in certification practices based on internationally set standards, while also taking into account national and regional contextual issues affecting certification practices. This training will be followed by a regional training of trainers that will be held in Fiji in November 2017. The training is aimed at reviewing the adequacy of existing training materials and further creating a regional pool of resources that can be used to deliver knowledge in this area. The training will bring together doctors from across the region with selected HIS staff members, university partners and others. The training is led by SPC with support from Fiji National University.
20. Cause of death coding support for smaller island countries: PICTs with small populations face fundamental challenges in retaining staff to undertake cause of death coding functions. At the request of the Government of Nauru, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) recently initiated an arrangement with the Government of Nauru, which should facilitate data sharing and off-island support in coding

causes of death for the country. Arrangements to facilitate this support, including the establishment of the required legislative and policy arrangements, is still underway. This arrangement is viewed to be an important innovative approach to addressing CRVS challenges in the region. It is envisaged that similar arrangements will be established for countries in need of similar support. BAG has also, through the ABS, supported the government of Fiji in the application of IRIS, an automated system of coding of causes of death. This is envisaged to significantly improve the quality and efficiency of cause of death coding in the country. There are ongoing plans to provide similar support to other countries in the region within the near future.

21. Participation of BAG at global CRVS activities: BAG has continued to engage in global CRVS activities, with an objective of sharing the experiences of the Pacific Islands region with the global CRVS community, and also ensuring that the region builds and learns from knowledge available through these platforms. BAG is represented by SPC at the Global CRVS Working Group and the Regional Steering Group on CRVS. Among the most fundamental developments by the Global CRVS Working Group is the recent release of the first ever online CRVS e-learning course, which facilitates individualised learning on CRVS through self-paced and facilitated courses. The materials provided through the course will be used to strengthen BAG's training materials on data analysis and report writing. Countries are encouraged to enrol in the course, which provides foundational knowledge on CRVS. The course can be accessed upon registration at the World Bank's Open learning Campus at: <https://olc.worldbank.org/>.

CHALLENGES AND AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

22. Accessibility to civil registration services: Access to civil registration services continues to be one of the most fundamental challenges to the development of civil registration systems in the region. This is mainly caused by the diverse geographic spread of populations, coupled with costs associated with registration and/or acquisition of certificates. Establishing a collaborative arrangement with the Ministry of Health is an important way of bridging existing distance gaps. The Ministry of health often has an established network of health workers in communities, which could be used to notify the registrar and to facilitate vital event registration. In accordance with international standards, it is recommended that countries eliminate fees associated with registration and/or the issuance of certificates. Penalties for registration could be applied to late reporting and, therefore, act as incentives for timely registration.
23. IT for civil registration: A number of countries are faced with significant challenges in the choice and adoption of appropriate technology for establishing their civil registration systems. The rapidly changing IT environment, and the availability of numerous technological solutions, makes it difficult to make ideal technological choices. There are a number of experiences where systems have failed to meet a minimum standard of performance, despite heavy financial investments by Pacific Island governments. Issues of inadequate Internet coverage, lack of capacity for interoperability, vendor-locked solutions, and problems with succession and in-country skills transfer have been some of the challenges faced by countries. The regional guidelines on IT for CRVS systems provide comprehensive guidance on how countries can mitigate some of the above-mentioned challenges. These guidelines can be accessed on the Pacific CRVS website.
24. Storage and archival of civil registration records and data: Due to their legal standing, civil registration records are, by nature, historic records, which demands that they are recorded and archived in a manner that facilitates access and retrieval over thousands of years. While a number of countries have adopted electronic systems of data capture, most still do not have back-up systems in place, and many are at risk of losing these critical records and documents in the event of a disaster. There are also challenges pertaining to retrieval and archival of data recorded on very old registers, which would be very delicate to manage. Fiji will be undertaking this exercise in the near future. It is recommended that their experience is shared regionally with other countries that may be facing similar needs.
25. Disaster preparedness and management: Civil registration infrastructure and operations are prone to disruption and damage during disasters. For example, while significant improvements in registration

were recorded to have occurred in Vanuatu following Cyclone Pam, civil registration operations are known to have been (initially) significantly disrupted, including the destruction of some registration offices. Nauru is also known to have lost national civil registration data through a fire disaster.

26. Presently, no country in the Pacific is known to have established an elaborate strategy or plan on how to prepare, manage or mitigate the impacts of a disaster on civil registration systems and/or operations. A recent meeting of civil registrars, held in Fiji in October 2017, deliberated on this issue. There was consensus on the need for countries to look into building resilient civil registration systems that can not only withstand the effects of a disaster, but can effectively be used by governments to support disaster management efforts. Countries are encouraged to embed disaster mitigation and disaster management plans into their national CRVS plans and ensure that these are sufficiently resourced. As earlier noted, ensuring proper back-up and archival of civil registration records is an essential component of this plan.
27. Outdated civil registration legislation: Legislation plays a critical role in establishing the framework within which civil registration is conducted, and provides the basic means through which the authenticity of civil registration records and documents can be verified. It is crucial that the legislation aligns with and facilitates registration within internationally recommended principles and standards, and that it is updated to reflect recent political, economic, social and technological developments (nationally, regionally and internationally) and their possible impact on civil registration.
28. Many PICTS have outdated legislation; the legislation in three countries stems from colonial provisions that pre-date independence; eight countries have not revised their laws in the last 20 years; others, although newer, may also have recognised gaps. Vanuatu, Solomon Islands and Tonga commenced processes to review their civil registration laws within the past year. Among the critical developments that old laws are likely to overlook include: the evolving need to use information technology; the movement of people across borders, which may necessitate data sharing; evolving national practices such as growth in the funeral industry, which necessitates links with the civil registry for death registration; the need for data protection amidst the growing need for data sharing; among others. Countries are encouraged to prioritise the review of their legislations, and to adopt regional best practice guidelines on legislation for this process. These guidelines can be found at the Pacific CRVS website.
29. Monitoring performance of civil registration systems: Civil registration systems are generally known to be incomplete in most PICTs. However, there are some developments and improvements in the systems over the past several years owing to their prioritisation by most governments and through the technical investments made through BAG. It is essential that countries establish practices of routinely assessing systems performance and documenting such progress where applicable. Such monitoring is critical in assessing whether initiatives in place are yielding as expected, and also providing the means to mobilise support from the government. Monitoring performance of the systems is also a useful way of demonstrating the reliability of the system as a national source of vital statistics, and building the government's confidence into the system. Basic performance monitoring would entail estimating and publishing estimates on annual basis of: i) completeness of birth and death registration at national and subnational levels; ii) the proportion of deaths with a medically certified cause; and iii) the proportion of ill-defined causes of death. Guidance on how to develop these estimates is available through BAG and in the regional guidelines on vital statistics.
30. Human resources at the BAG Secretariat: SPC has, over the past seven years, served as the Secretariat of BAG. This role has entailed coordination of CRVS activities undertaken by BAG partners, and ensuring that there is harmonisation of messages and maximisation of resources available to countries through the group. SPC is also directly engaged in the provision of technical assistance to countries, primarily through training, technical assistance missions, and development of regional knowledge products among others. SPC endeavours to continue undertaking these roles. However, the scope of support to countries over the next year will, to some extent, be limited due to a reduction in the number of human resources available at the Secretariat. The latter is as a result of resource challenges within the statistics

division. However, there are ongoing efforts to mobilise resources to strengthen the CRVS work programme, particularly human resources.

RECOMMENDATIONS

31. During this meeting, Heads of Planning and Statistics are particularly encouraged to:

- a. Monitor the performance of their civil registration systems, through routine estimation of birth and death registration completeness;³ the next round of census provides a significant opportunity to undertake such an assessment. More information about this is provided in the attached fact sheet.
- b. Establish a national schedule for the publication of vital statistics from administrative sources;
- c. Take note of the regional guidelines on the development of a vital statistics report available at: <http://www.pacific-crvs.org/>;
- d. Embed the development of CRVS systems into National Strategies for the Development of Statistics to ensure that CRVS is recognised as a core national statistics function.

REFERENCES

- a. Fact sheet: Improving Civil Registration systems through the census (attached).
- b. Regional guidelines on the development of a vital statistics report available at: www.spc.int

³ Guidance on how to undertake these estimations is provided in the vital statistics reporting guidelines.

USING POPULATION CENSUSES TO IMPROVE CIVIL REGISTRATION SYSTEMS

Civil registration (CR) systems are an integral part of the national statistical system. These systems collect data on births and deaths for all people in the population on a continuous basis - in contrast to a census, which collects information on every member of a population at a single point in time. This means vital statistics, and population data (when combined with data on migration) can be derived as needed in the inter-censal period, including for small areas.

Routine assessment of the performance of the national CRVS system is critical in enabling governments and other relevant stakeholders to understand specific areas of weakness, accurately prioritise the support needed and build trust in the system and resulting data.

Complete, accurate and well-functioning CR systems provide the most reliable sources of vital statistics. Unfortunately, registration of vital events in many developing countries is incomplete and systems face a variety of data quality challenges which limit the use of these data. Assessing the performance of the CR system primarily entails:

1. estimating the level of coverage and completeness of the system; and
2. reviewing the quality and completeness of individual CR records.

This requires undertaking comparisons between individual and aggregate data/records collected by the system, against those generated from independent collections such as the population censuses or other surveys, primarily through records linkage studies¹. The feasibility of a record linkage study to evaluate registration completeness against the census depends on the ability to uniquely identify and match the

records for individual persons within each data set through a combination of unique characteristics such as an identification number, names, age and sex.

The census also allows direct measurement of key system indicators such as the proportion of registered vital events (births and deaths), and proportion of events for which appropriate documentation was issued. This is a vital identity function of the CR system, and target under the Asia Pacific Regional Action Framework. Census records are also useful in identifying families where events of births and deaths haven't been registered and in facilitating follow-up to complete these processes.

Adapting the census for CRVS system performance assessment

Conventionally, population censuses enumerate births and deaths that occurred within a given period², which is used to estimate the crude birth and death rates and other demographic measures. In addition to providing a denominator for the estimation of the level of completeness of registration for events of birth and death, these questions could yield significant benefits if followed up with questions about the notification, registration and certification of events of birth and registration of deaths.

The next table provides a list of variables that would be useful to collect in a census questionnaire in order to facilitate record-linkage work, and directly evaluate registration functions. It should be noted that some of these questions are not necessarily new additions to generic census questions. In addition, the format, order and wording of these questions would vary widely by country depending on the format and design of the census questionnaire.

¹ Detailed information about methods of estimating completeness can be found in a separate fact sheet titled "Understanding System Completeness and Coverage" (see www.pacific-crvs.org). Check out the other fact sheets at: www.pacific-crvs.org, and www.getinthepicture.org; or contact the Statistics for Development Division at SPC at crvs@spc.int.

² Usually one year. However, for countries with small populations, it is advisable that data is aggregated for a longer time span (3-5 years).

SUPPORTED BY THE BRISBANE ACCORD GROUP (BAG)



Pacific_CRVS Notes: **Tools**

The Kingdom of Tonga and the Republic of Tuvalu are the first two countries in the Pacific region to incorporate the set of questions into their 2016 & 2017 population census questionnaires respectively with an objective of undertaking follow-up record linkage studies.

Recommended additional census questions regarding registration of births and deaths

Question*	Relevance
For all children born within the past one year, provide details of: Full names, date of birth, age, sex and place of birth	<p>While enumeration of the most recent birth is sufficient for standard census calculations, additional information is needed in order to be able to match records between the civil registry and those enumerated by the census. The information collected should be robust enough to facilitate the identification of multiple births as well as births resulting from more than one pregnancy over a 12 month period.</p> <p>Second to an identification number, names are the most reliable way of uniquely identifying individuals. The full names i.e. a combination of the First name, Middle name, Surname or Family name, as used on a child's birth certificate form should be included. Other characteristics such as date and place of birth, sex, mother's age, are important for matching individuals especially for young children where names are not always available. Details of all live born children, regardless of whether the child subsequently died should be collected.</p>
Was the birth recorded by the national civil registry office? Possible responses: 1. Yes 2. No	Registration of birth refers to the formal process through which a parent, family member or guardian of child reports the occurrence of the birth to the national registry office, or to an official registry agency who has been delegated this authority from the national registry office. This process ends with the issuance of a birth certificate. Information should be collected for all live births regardless of whether the child is still alive.
Do you have a copy of the child's birth certificate? Possible responses: 1. Yes 2. No	A birth certificate is issued by the national agency responsible for CR as the legal proof of occurrence of a birth. This question is essential in establishing the proportion of registered births for which a birth certificate was issued.
Do you have a copy of the notification of birth from the hospital of birth? Possible responses: 1. Yes 2. No	A birth notification form is an official record that is issued by the hospital or health facility as proof of the occurrence birth, the characteristics of the child and the mothers' identity. This record is a key supporting document for birth registration as it provides evidence on parentage. Birth notification forms are often confused for birth certificates. This question plays a "quality-check" role; it provides the basic means to validate the proportion of population in possession of a birth certificate.
For any household member who died during the last [set time period], provide details of: Full names, sex, age at death, and date of death.	The full names i.e. a combination of the First name, Middle name, Surname or Family name, as used on the deceased's official documents and any names commonly used by the deceased for official purposes that differ from their legal name should be included. As for births, the sex, age at death and date of death are also important matching criteria. All deaths of children to household members should be included regardless of whether they were considered "resident".
Was the death recorded by the national civil registry office? Possible responses: 1. Yes 2. No	Registration of death refers to the formal process through which the family member, guardian or other person reports the occurrence of death and provides the particulars of death to the national registry office, or official registry agent who is delegated this authority. The information collected for this question would allow the estimation of death registration completeness.
Did the birth or death occur in the country? Possible responses: 1. Yes 2. No	In accordance with United Nations recommendations, events that occur outside the country are expected to be registered within the country where they occurred and hence would ideally not feature within national civil registry records**. However, the practice in some countries is that these events are re-registered within the national system (for returning residents) because such registration is often closely linked to access to other state benefits. For purposes of the record-linkage exercise, and for countries where re-registration is not undertaken, identifying and excluding these events is essential in ensuring that they do not bias the results; these records would generally contribute to a lower matching rate.

*It should be noted that the phrasing and sequencing of the questions would vary widely by country depending on the format and design of the census questionnaire.

** United Nations (2014). Principles and Recommendations for a vital statistics system.