

CIVIL REGISTRATION AND VITAL STATISTICS (CRVS) AND NATURAL DISASTERS

Data for planning and response

A critical part of disaster risk management is managing the flow of information. Getting the right information to the right people at the right time saves lives and reduces losses, while also strengthening people's resilience to disasters. Some countries have state-of-the-art disaster information management systems, but others have major gaps in data and analysis.¹

Civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) systems have two major outputs: (1) a legal record of a birth, death or other vital event – the basis of a legal identity; and (2) the production of vital statistics concerning (amongst other things) population, births and deaths. Well-functioning CRVS systems offer great potential to provide timely and accurate data about the population, which is one of the critical elements of disaster response strategies. As such, **CRVS systems provide important information at both the planning and recovery stages of a natural disaster.**



How CRVS data is used to plan and respond to Natural Disasters

Phase:	Planning	During/Recovery
Individual records	Access to services such as insurance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Proof of identity to access government support programs (i.e. building loans/ support payments etc.) ▪ Proof of identity to re-establish ownership and property rights when returning home ▪ Re-unification of separated family, particularly children. ▪ Providing official records for deaths that have occurred as a result of the disaster
Vital statistics	Identification on population at risk and their characteristics	Monitoring the mortality impact of the disaster. Population data for provision of support and services. Examples include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Calculation of number of vaccine doses needed for affected population ▪ Estimates of emergency housing needs ▪ Budget planning for social welfare payments

Vital events in a disaster

CRVS systems need to be resilient enough to continue and expand functions during a disaster. Deaths, both those due to the disaster and those from other causes must be monitored, and children born during this period registered. Children born at this time may be particularly vulnerable due to the disruption of services and displacement. It is critical they are registered as quickly as possible to ensure adequate provisions for support and that their birth is formally recognised and they do not miss out on this important step.

Not only must CRVS services continue in a disaster, but they must also be able to meet an increased need for services created by the extra events to register, the need to replace vital documents for families, and an increased risk of exploitation.

¹ *Disasters without Borders, UNESCAP 2015: www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/Chapter%204%20.pdf*

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Creating system resilience

Ensuring that the national CRVS system is able to both continue and scale up activities in a disaster setting requires:

1. Resilient CRVS infrastructure, and
2. Resilient CRVS data bases.

Key elements that countries should consider when assessing the resilience of their systems include:

- The physical infrastructure and buildings that house their systems and access points
- How is data (paper and digital) backed up so that it can be accessed after an emergency – this should include both the frequency with which data is backed up, and whether there is off-site backup/multiple locations
- Whether access to the database can be made mobile; to assist replacing registry services at damaged locations, and to reach out to displaced or affected communities
- Can mobile teams access the national registry database to minimise the risk of duplicate registrations being created while “off-line”
- Are there existing provisions to waive the usual fees so that affected people can access the registry services
- Are there enough staff with training and delegation that services can be delivered in the absence of staff who have been affected by the disaster themselves
- Have CRVS services been considered as part of the national disaster planning



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Disasters as opportunities

In recent years, Vanuatu and Fiji (with the help of UNICEF) have both demonstrated how mobilising CRVS at the community level in response to a disaster can be an opportunity to also reach out to those who have never been registered and increase the completeness of registration at the national level. Following cyclone Pam, the Ministry of Internal Affairs with support from UNICEF launched the National Birth Registration campaign to assist the people of Vanuatu with obtaining either a reissue of birth

certificates that may have been lost during cyclone Pam but also provides an opportunity for others to register their births for the first time.

Where to from here?

The Pacific Civil Registrars Network (PCRN) Strategic Plan 2015–2026 has “Strengthening Regional CRVS Disaster Planning and Response” as its priority for 2017. With the support of Brisbane Accord Group (BAG), PCRN will be hosting a regional meeting later this year for national registrars to discuss this topic and share experiences from recent disasters such as cyclones Pam and Winston.



Where can I get more information?

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.