

Improving development outcomes for Tonga through better CRVS data

TONGA



- Over the last several years, Tonga has formalised an active multi-sectoral Civil Registration and Vital Statistics committee, and undertaken a significant amount of work to improve CRVS.
- One example of this work has been the reconciliation of registered births and deaths with those reported through health. This work involved both the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) and Ministry of Health (MOH), and was overseen by the National Statistics Office (NSO).
- Improved CRVS data has facilitated core government functions and improved development outcomes.

Improved CRVS data has been used to update the electoral role for the 2014 election - and therefore to support fair elections.

A 2011 exercise to reconcile data (through MOH, MOJ and the University of Queensland) revealed higher than anticipated early adult mortality from non-communicable diseases (NCDs). *

As a result, existing NCD responses were reviewed and Tonga was able to attract additional support for health programs.

Tonga has developed a strong process for linking data to national planning

Prioritising CRVS against other competing needs is a key challenge for governments



Collaboration across ministries is essential for high quality data



CRVS in Tonga

Registration of births and deaths is compulsory by law in Tonga, with all deaths required to have a medical certification of death. Official registration is done through the Civil Registry Office under the MOJ, with a sub-registry in each of the major island groups. There is also a system of town and district officers who are required to record events in their community and share this information with the registry.

Health data is collected through the health clinics and hospitals, with reports collated and coded (for deaths) at the national hospital. Reporting processes have been revised over the last several years to improve data completion and quality.

There is no requirement for registration of a death before burial. Although reporting in each source is less than fully complete, nearly all events are captured somewhere in the government system.

Improving CRVS data

- Following the earlier exercise in 2011, data reconciliation has now been adopted as a routine data quality exercise in the Tonga CRVS system.
- In 2014, both birth and deaths from health and civil registry data have been reconciled with the work oversighted by the Tonga National Statistics Office. Analysis is due to be completed by the end of 2014, and reconciled data should be made available shortly thereafter.
- Substantial work has been undertaken to digitise records at the Civil Registry office, to improve record management and subsequently data quality, better preserve records, and facilitate better linkages with other departments. This work has been supported by the Commonwealth Secretariat.
- A medical record review was also completed in 2011, and highlighted a range of certification and coding issues for review. This exercise is currently being repeated by the Ministry of Health.
- The MOH, MOJ, and the NSO, have jointly held both community workshops to highlight the importance of CRVS, and training for staff in the outer islands.

Next steps for Tonga include formalising key priorities into a multi-sectoral national plan.

* Ref: Hufanga, Carter, Rao, Lopez and Taylor. "Mortality trends in Tonga: an assessment based on a synthesis of local data." *Population health metrics* 10, no. 1 (2012)

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