

Concept Note for a meeting of the Pacific Civil Registrars Network

20 – 23 March 2023

The Pacific Civil Registrars Network (PCRN) was created in 2014. Our vision is that by 2024 the Civil Registrars across the Pacific will work together in ways that are flexible to local needs, with a shared approach to legislative change, enabling technology and data exchange. We provide an opportunity to share information, lessons learned and good practice. This fosters coordination and integration of Civil Registrars' input and ideas into the implementation of the Pacific Vital Statistics Action Plan and Asia Pacific Regional Action Framework for Civil Registration and Vital Statistics.

In Asia-Pacific, approximately 64 million children under the age of 5 do not have their births registered, including around 1 million children in the Pacific.¹ Such a lack of identity denies these children an existence before the law, and as they grow it also prevents them from participating in governmental processes, or from accessing social and financial services, employment markets and legal protections necessary for increasing their quality of life and for sustainable and inclusive development. Universal civil registration and legal identity for all consequently strengthens a country's ability to measure, monitor and meet a wide variety of goals and targets for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Each country in the Pacific has an operational civil registration office, reflecting this region's prioritization of civil registration in its domestic policy agenda, and governments' commitment to the realization of the goals of the Regional Action Framework on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) in Asia and the Pacific. Although each country in the region exercises different coordination mechanisms and methods to conduct civil registration tasks, there remains a fundamental commitment to achieve complete civil registration.

With the ambitious targets of 100% birth and 80% death registration by 2030, countries are employing different information and communication technologies to achieve their objectives. These are also being placed, at times, within a broader ID-Management structure. For these reasons, as well as the intra-regional fluidity and movement of migrants, also requires cross-border collaboration.

While Asia-Pacific civil registrars face unique national challenges in achieving universal registration, they must also address practical registration issues, as well as cross-border issues such as migration caused by labour mobility, health, natural hazards and climate change. As such, strengthening information and communications technology, and adopting innovative approaches to meet these challenges requires registrars to network in a space suitable for sharing ideas, learning from each other, and finding common solutions through South-South cooperation.

The Pacific Civil Registrars Network ultimately promote South-South cooperation through disseminating knowledge of innovative methods for improving CRVS systems, developing data-

¹ <https://getinthepicture.org/midterm-report>

sharing approaches and sharing good practices for improving systems to ensure no one is left behind. Stemming from shared visions to improve subregional systems, platforms for sharing information allow stakeholders to regularly communicate with one another and have even generated collective approaches to CRVS data storage and retrieval.

Objectives of the 2023 meeting of PCRN

A meeting of PCRN will be organized with support of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), the Pacific Community (SPC) and other partners on 20-22 March 2023 in Suva, Fiji.

The objectives of the meeting are:

1. For civil registrars to share progress and challenges in CRVS improvement efforts and identify common challenges
2. To facilitate knowledge exchange and potential collaboration on issues of concern of civil registrars in the region
3. capacity building for sustainable institutional development leading to improved decision-making processes
4. To document existing practices in the region

The meeting will provide a professional forum for civil registrars to discuss priority areas that are of common concern to the civil registrars in the region. Two priority areas have been identified in collaboration with PCRN members and include the following:

CRVS digitisation in the Pacific

Over the last two decades, the digitization of civil registration and identity management systems has paved the way for a more enabling environment to collect and store identity data using a coherent electronic database architecture. These advancements have also been accompanied by an increasing ability to share data. The digitization of identity systems has resulted in significant changes to the design of registration business processes, including how registered vital events can be defined, configured, created, stored, shared, and processed.

Digital processing of identity data has further enabled the creation of systems with an improved efficiency for data processing and sharing between different components of a system, including with other government systems. Digitization, in addition to the development of new tools, offers an improved means to integrate different systems into one seamless system that reinforces a holistic approach to civil registration, vital statistics, and identity management, including the possibility to share information with functional registers. In recent years, many countries in the Pacific have invested significant resources to digitise their civil registration and legal identity systems, and more efforts are currently in process or underway. The thematic discussions around this topic will evolve around the following questions:

- What is the status of CRVS system digitisation in the region?

- What are the main areas of CRVS system digitisation conducted by countries in the Pacific since the last meeting of PCRN in 2019 (e.g., digitisation of registry books, archives, the registration process itself, facilitation of online/mobile registration etc.)?
- Has digitisation been linked with the establishment of a national ID and/or unique identifier?
- To which extent has digitisation been practically linked to increased interoperability with other government systems (social protection, education, digital identity, etc.)
- What has been the role of development partners in supporting the digitisation process?

Key lessons learned and considerations when implementing digital CRVS systems and processes

- What considerations should be given when implementing digital systems and/or processes in CRVS?
- What have been the key challenges and barriers?
- How are digital systems addressing issues around data protection and privacy?

Climate change and CRVS – what does it mean for civil registrars?

Legal identity plays in ensuring that the global community and national governments uphold their promise to leave no one behind, including those impacted by climate change. The importance of legal identity is underscored in Sustainable Development Goal target 16.9, universal legal identity for all, including birth registration. Furthermore, legal identity is acknowledged as a catalyst for the achievement of 12 of the 17 Goals, and data generated from civil registration supports the measurement of more than 60 Sustainable Development Goal indicators.

Resilient civil registration and vital statistics systems are central to supporting adaptation to climate change as well-functioning systems are the best source of timely and granular data on the population. The statistics produced from this data is essential for planning, implementing and monitoring policies in a large range of areas. Unregistered persons are often invisible to the State and, as a result, their level of vulnerability and the limitations in access to social protection and services can be very difficult to assess.

Millions of people around the world are displaced and moving in the context of disasters and the adverse effects of climate change and islands in the Pacific are facing dramatic changes to their territories and ways of living due to climate change. Potential displacement creates major challenges for civil registration and vital statistics systems and can compound the negative impacts of lack of registration. However, the displaced are among those most in need of the social and legal protection underpinned by civil registration and vital statistics systems.

The discussions will narrow down on the current challenges and potential solutions and the importance of well-functioning CRVS systems for effective climate change and the need for accelerating efforts to support resilient civil registration and vital statistics systems.

Status updates from participating countries

The civil registrars have requested presentations from countries on their existing CRVS challenges and current and recent CRVS coordination and improvement efforts. Presentations will be given by attending civil registrars using a template provided in advance of the meeting, to ensure similar issues are covered in all presentations. The key issues outlined in presentations should cover improving registration completeness, national coordination, digitization efforts, including data storage and protection, and key challenges.

Visits to registration facilities

Finally, past meetings of PCRN have also benefited from visits to registration facilities in the host countries of meetings. The Registrar General's office in Fiji will arrange for visits to facilities for participants to see how the registration practices work on the ground.

Participants

Participants at the meeting will include 1-3 professionals (Ideally the civil registrar general or deputy) working in civil registration from each of the Pacific countries. In addition, relevant development partners will be invited to participate in the meeting.

Invitations will be sent from the chair of PCRN with the administrative support of ESCAP to the countries' civil registrar general (or equivalent) asking them to nominate participants to the meeting

Report of the meeting

As the meeting provides a unique opportunity to document some of the key developments in CRVS in the Pacific, following the meeting, an extensive report will be published by PCRN and ESCAP. The report will outline the key discussions had and key issues and challenges reflected in status updates from countries as well as the consultations on digitization and climate change. The report and other meeting documents will be disseminated via www.getinthepicture.org , [CRVS Insight](#), and the PCRN newsletter.