



CIVIL REGISTRATION & VITAL STATISTICS
Asia and the Pacific

Regional Strategic Plan for the Improvement of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific

3 December 2012

DRAFT

ESCAP Statistics Division

The present draft has been prepared by ESCAP with inputs from UN organizations and other development partners for the High-level Meeting on the Improvement of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics, to be held in Bangkok on 10-11 December 2012

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I. Introduction

1. The draft regional strategic plan for the improvement of civil registration and vital statistics in Asia and the Pacific represents a commitment by countries and development partners to make sustained and coordinated efforts to improve the coverage and completeness of civil registration and the availability and quality of vital statistics in Asia and the Pacific by 2020.
2. The impetus for the regional strategic plan arises from recognition among countries and development partners in the region of the following:
 - (a) Functional and reliable civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) systems are an important national resource as they facilitate services and produce statistics that are the foundation for building a modern, efficient and informed public administration system and play a key role in efforts to realize human, legal and economic rights as well as to provide for social protection and achieve integration;
 - (b) Many countries in Asia and the Pacific lack adequate CRVS systems and of the ones that do exist, many of them are in urgent need of improvement;
 - (c) Concerted improvement is definitely achievable;
 - (d) As concisely stated by former World Health Organization (WHO) Director-General Lee Jong-wook, “to make people count, we first need to be able to count people.”¹
3. Bearing in mind the opportunities and challenges, the regional strategic plan aims to achieve eight feasible and measurable outcomes:
 - (a) Enhanced **public awareness** of the value of civil registration and vital statistics systems and actions taken to remove barriers to registration at all levels;
 - (b) Sustained **political commitment** to support the development and improvement of civil registration and vital statistics systems;
 - (c) Sufficient and sustainable **investments** towards making incremental improvements in civil registration and vital statistics systems;
 - (d) Improved and strengthened **policies, legislation and implementation of regulations** for civil registration and vital statistics systems;

¹ Lawrence K. Altman, “The doctor's world; rising from the ranks to lead the W.H.O.”, *New York Times*, 22 July 2003.

- (e) Improved availability and quality of *legal documentation* for all individuals;
 - (f) Increased capacity of countries in Asia and the Pacific to record, compile, analyse and disseminate complete and reliable *statistics on vital events*;
 - (g) Mechanisms established for effective *coordination among key stakeholders* within civil registration and vital statistics systems;
 - (h) Increased capacity of countries in Asia and the Pacific to effectively *use vital statistics*.
4. The regional strategic plan supports national action for improving CRVS systems in Asia and the Pacific by bringing countries and development partners together to share knowledge, experiences and resources. It aims to raise awareness of the benefits and feasibility of improving CRVS systems, particularly with regard to developing countries, and the regional support that is available from many development partners that cover a wide range of issues and perspectives.
 5. Reflecting the multi-sectoral nature of CRVS systems, the regional strategic plan brings together relevant government stakeholders, such as civil registration offices, national statistics offices (NSOs) and ministries of health, as well as civil society. Improved coordination and collaboration within countries, and among development partners, is both the means and an expected outcome of the regional strategic plan.
 6. The regional strategic plan recognizes that improving the quality, coverage and efficiency of CRVS systems is increasingly feasible due to the availability of advanced technologies, resource kits, tools and methods, and a better understanding of how they can be applied.² For example, innovations, such as mobile technology, have the potential to facilitate at a lower cost speedier and higher quality collection, transmission, storage and dissemination of data, as well as be instrumental in addressing the physical and logistical challenges of civil registration in remote areas.

A. The roles of civil registration and vital statistics systems

7. Civil registration consists of the compulsory, permanent, continuous and universal recording of the occurrence and characteristics of vital events.³ From the perspective of individuals, civil registration systems are a unique and crucial service. Through the official recording of births, deaths, marriages, divorces and adoption, individuals have the documentary evidence

² Health Information Systems Knowledge Hub, “Strengthening practice and systems in civil registration and vital statistics: a resource kit”, University of Queensland: HISHub Working Paper Series, No. 19, January 2012. Available from www.uq.edu.au/hishub/docs/WP_19.pdf.

³ United Nations Department of Economics and Social Affairs, Statistics Division, *Handbook on Training in Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems*, 1973, Sales No. 02.XVII.10.

often required to secure recognition of their legal identity, their family relationships, their nationality and their ensuing rights. In turn, access to public services, such as health, education, social welfare and protection, is strengthened and statelessness may be prevented. Most countries require an identity document. Therefore, legal proof of identity is necessary to bring individuals into the modern economy by enabling them to seek employment, exercise electoral rights, claim inheritance, transmit property, open bank accounts, access credits, obtain passports and obtain driving licenses.

8. Universal civil registration is crucial because it helps safeguard human rights. Every individual has the right to obtain documentary evidence of identity from birth, and for that proof of identity to be securely registered and to publicly recognize family relationships. In March 2012, the Human Rights Council reaffirmed, "...the human right of everyone to be recognized everywhere as a person before the law..."⁴ Moreover, by providing legal identity to individuals and contributing to their social identity, civil registration enables individuals to access benefits, as internationally agreed on, *inter alia*, in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights,⁵ the United Nations Millennium Declaration⁶ and the Declaration on the Right to Development.⁷ In this regard, civil registration is especially important for individuals in poverty, migrants, ethnic minorities and other marginalized groups as individuals from these groups represent the majority of the undocumented.
9. Civil registration systems generate administrative data that can be compiled to produce vital statistics that serve the needs of multiple sectors. A well-functioning civil registration system that records vital events, such as births, deaths, marriages, divorces and adoptions is the most effective and efficient data source of vital statistics.⁸ Unlike other sources of vital statistics, such as censuses or household surveys, the timely and accurate reporting by civil registration systems to well-functioning vital statistics systems generates statistics on population dynamics and health indicators on a continuous basis for the country as a whole and at a local level for its administrative subdivisions.
10. Vital statistics generated from civil registration significantly contribute to the formulation of effective and efficient evidence-based policy across multiple sectors. Reliable information on births, fertility and deaths enable the calculation and production of timely and accurate population estimates and other demographic and health statistics, which are basic requirements for effective policymaking for inclusive and sustainable development, efficient resource allocation and accurate evaluation and monitoring.
11. Well-functioning CRVS systems, including the timely and accurate reporting by civil registration systems to the national statistics system, enhance the credibility of national and

⁴ See Human Rights Council resolution 19/9.

⁵ See General Assembly resolution 21/2200.

⁶ See General Assembly resolution 55/2.

⁷ See General Assembly resolution 41/128, annex.

⁸ *Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System, Revision 2*, 2001, (United Nations publication, Sales No. 01.XVI.10).

local administrators and their capacity to deliver services by helping them to identify what services are needed and by whom. High-quality vital statistics makes it possible for governments and donors to consider the direction of resources to the areas of most need within a country, and allow citizens, governments and donors to evaluate the use of scarce resources. For instance, gender statistics, including sex-disaggregated data, assist in the formulation of evidence-based health policy and in addressing issues related to gender equality and equal opportunities.

B. The impetus for regional action

1. Aligning with a growing global movement

12. In 2000, the General Assembly adopted the Millennium Declaration, which emphasized the link between human rights, good governance and development.⁶ The global commitment to the Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals that were subsequently established has led to increased recognition of the critical need for reliable, continuous and comparable vital statistics to monitor progress, and created momentum to improve these data. As the world gets closer to 2015, attention is mounting towards understanding and addressing the challenges posed by the post-Millennium Development Goal agenda, especially with regard to human rights, equity, sustainable development and access to basic services. With this attention, it is becoming even more apparent that the long neglect of CRVS systems in some countries has had a detrimental impact on their ability to develop and monitor targeted development policies.⁹
13. Launched in 2010, the Commission on Information and Accountability for Women’s and Children’s Health (COIA) was convened by WHO at the request of the Secretary-General. The COIA 2011 report recommended that all countries, as a priority, increase their efforts to strengthen their CRVS systems.¹⁰ COIA is focusing its support on 74 high-priority countries globally, of which 20 are in Asia and the Pacific.¹¹ The Health Metrics Network (HMN)—a global partnership of countries, development agencies and the private sector¹² to strengthen health information systems—is the lead partner for implementing this recommendation.
14. At the Fourth High-level Forum on Aid Effectiveness, which was held in Busan, Republic of Korea, from 29 November to 1 December 2011, the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century (PARIS21) presented the Busan Action Plan for Statistics,¹³ which recognized that “reliable and accessible statistics provide the evidence needed to improve

⁹ Data on births and deaths provide inputs for deriving 42 out of the 60 Millennium Development Goals indicators.

¹⁰ World Health Organization, *Keeping Promises, Measuring Results*, Commission on Information and Accountability for Women’s and Children’s Health (WHO, 2011).

¹¹ Afghanistan; Azerbaijan; Bangladesh; Cambodia; China; Democratic People’s Republic of Korea; India; Indonesia; Kyrgyzstan; Lao People’s Democratic Republic; Myanmar; Nepal; Pakistan; Papua New Guinea; Philippines; Solomon Islands; Tajikistan; Turkmenistan; Uzbekistan; and Viet Nam.

¹² A complete list of partners is available from www.who.int/healthmetrics/network/partners/en/index.html.

¹³ PARIS21, *Statistics for Transparency, Accountability and Results: A Busan Action Plan for Statistics*, (Paris, 2011). Available from www.paris21.org/sites/default/files/Busanactionplan_nov2011.pdf.

decision making, document results, and heighten public accountability”. In the first of five action points in the Plan, countries were called upon to address weaknesses in vital registration systems. PARIS21, with support from HMN, is drafting implementation arrangements, which will include actions to improve CRVS systems.

15. A regional initiative to improve CRVS systems is already well underway in Africa. Since 2010, the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and the African Development Bank (AfDB) have been sponsoring ministerial and expert working group meetings on CRVS and have thus far developed the Regional Medium Term Plan: 2010-2015¹⁴ to support reforms and improve CRVS systems in Africa. The Regional Medium-Term Plan can be used as a guide for countries and regional and international organizations in managing interventions and monitoring the progress made in strengthening CRVS systems in Africa. Most recently, at the Second Conference of African Ministers Responsible for Civil Registration, which was held in Durban, South Africa, on 6 and 7 September, the Ministers urged all ECA member States to undertake a comprehensive assessment of their CRVS systems and to develop national action plans for improvement.¹⁵
16. The Americas are also undertaking a comparable regional initiative. The Pan American Health Organization has been implementing the Regional Plan of Action for Strengthening Vital and Health Statistics¹⁶ since 2008 as part of broader efforts to strengthen health information systems in that region. The Inter-American Development Bank has worked on civil registration issues for a decade, and is financing projects that seek to improve the interconnectivity and interoperability between civil registries and vital statistics agencies to ensure timely and complete reporting of vital events as part of the Institutions for Growth and Social Welfare Strategy, approved in 2011. Two of the pillars in the strategy are registry and identity management and national statistics systems.
17. For the Pacific islands, the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) has developed the Ten Year Pacific Statistics Strategy (TYPSS) 2011-2020, with the improvement of CRVS featured as one of four priority areas under phase I of this strategy. In line with this, the Pacific Vital Statistics Action Plan (PVSAP) 2011-2014 was developed by 11 development partners, which form the Brisbane Accord Group (BAG).¹⁷ The Group’s objectives are to coordinate, facilitate and support vital statistics (specifically births, deaths and cause-of-death) investments in the region through collaborative activities.
18. In October 2010, TYPSS was endorsed by the fortieth Committee of Representatives of Governments and Administrations (CRGA), the governing body of SPC, the subsequent ministerial conference and the Pacific Islands Forum Economic Ministers’ Meeting. The

¹⁴ ECA and AfDB, “Reforming and Improving Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems in Africa, Regional Medium-Term Plan: 2010-2015”, February 2011. Available from www.unescap.org/stat/vital-stat/vs-May12/Reforming-improving-CRVS-in-Africa.pdf.

¹⁵ See <http://new.uneca.org/Portals/crmc/2012/documents/CRVS-Conference-Ministerial-Statement-clean.pdf>.

¹⁶ See www.paho.org/English/GOV/CD/cd48-09-e.pdf.

¹⁷ An outline of the Pacific Vital Statistics Action Plan is available at www.uq.edu.au/hishub/docs/Brisbane-Accord-Group/vital-stats-outline-final.pdf.

implementation of the PVSAP is overseen by the Pacific Statistics Steering Committee (PSCC), which is comprised of national, regional and international stakeholders, and reports regularly to the Pacific Ministers of Health Meeting and CRGA.

2. The realities on the ground

19. Many countries in Asia and the Pacific cannot meet minimum international standards in vital statistics.¹⁸ Registration coverage is often incomplete, vital events are not recorded properly and registration records do not reach the vital statistics system in a timely manner. Even when vital statistics are available, they are often not adequately used to guide decision-making. As a result, many countries have resorted to using alternative sources of data on vital events, such as population censuses, household sample surveys and health and demographic surveillance in sentinel sites or sample registration systems, to generate vital statistics. Although these sources do provide important information on vital events, they cannot replace civil registration records as a source of data that is available on a continuous and universal basis and disaggregated to a level that enables decision makers to identify marginalized groups and vulnerable areas. Moreover, these sources do not bring the legal and human rights benefits of civil registration.
20. As of November 2012, some 34 countries in Asia and the Pacific had conducted a rapid self-assessment of their CRVS systems with overall scores ranging from 7 per cent functional to 96 per cent functional. This reveals the wide variation that exists across the region. Four countries¹⁹ in the region had completed a comprehensive assessment, and an additional twelve countries²⁰ are at various stages of completing the process. The assessments are being conducted using standards-based tools^{21, 22} developed by the University of Queensland Health Information Systems Knowledge Hub (HISHub)²³ and WHO. Annex 2 contains more details on the rapid self-assessment results.
21. Based on the rapid self-assessment tool's classifications, only 11, or less than one third, of the 34 countries in the region that have taken the rapid self-assessment possess satisfactory

¹⁸ Lene Mikkelsen, "Rapid assessment of vital statistics systems: evaluation of the application of the WHO/HISHub tool in 26 countries in the Asia-Pacific region", University of Queensland: HISHub Working Paper Series, No. 10, November 2010. Available from www.uq.edu.au/hishub/docs/WP10/HISHUB-WP10-08-WEB-3Oct12%20A.pdf.

¹⁹ Maldives, Philippines, Sri Lanka, and Timor-Leste.

²⁰ Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Tajikistan, and Thailand.

²¹ Rapid self-assessment tool: WHO and HISHub, "Rapid assessment methods for vital statistics systems", University of Queensland: HISHub Working Paper Series, No. 2 (Geneva, WHO, 2010). Available from www.uq.edu.au/hishub/docs/WP02/WP_02.pdf.

²² Comprehensive assessment tool: WHO and HISHub, *Improving the quality of birth, death and cause-of-death information: guidance for a standards-based review of country practices* (Geneva, WHO, 2010). Available from www.uq.edu.au/hishub/docs/WP01/WP_01.pdf.

²³ HISHub is one of four knowledge hubs for health funded by the Australian Agency for International Development that work with development partners committed to supporting the Millennium Development Goals in Asia and the Pacific.

CRVS systems and 33 per cent of them have CRVS systems that are classified as weak or dysfunctional.

22. Other troubling conclusions can be drawn from the rapid self-assessments conducted thus far in Asia and the Pacific. With regard to CRVS systems infrastructure, 50 per cent of the countries have issues with inadequate equipment for civil registration offices to carry out their functions, and the same proportion have insufficient training. In terms of completeness of registration, 32 and 44 per cent of countries, respectively, have reported that coverage of birth and death registration is below 90 per cent.²⁴ In addition, 24 per cent of the countries reported that absolutely no training on International Classification of Diseases (ICD) and death certification had been given to doctors, while 44 per cent indicated that interagency coordination was limited or that the coordination in place faced data quality issues, bottlenecks or duplication of work.
23. The findings of the rapid self-assessments confirm the urgent need to implement the regional strategic plan.

3. Leveraging regional diversity

24. The regional approach that characterizes the regional strategic plan is motivated by the large diversity in the state of development and maturity of CRVS systems among countries in Asia and the Pacific. The rapid self-assessment results only demonstrate a fraction of those disparities. In some countries, CRVS systems are well-established and complete, covering all persons and generating both reliable legal documentation and sound vital statistics. At the other extreme, the CRVS systems in other countries are barely functioning and serve neither the needs of individuals for legal documentation nor the needs of governments and economic and social sectors for statistical information. It is disconcerting that in some settings, the coverage and quality of CRVS have declined, especially among poor and marginalized populations.
25. For the regional strategic plan, the extent of diversity in Asia and the Pacific presents an opportunity to draw upon and share a wealth of experience and knowledge to facilitate CRVS capacity development in the region. The regional strategic plan will establish a regional platform that has been designed to catalyse the sharing of expertise from across the region and globally. It will achieve this by stimulating and fostering partnerships, networking and collaboration to more effectively leverage obtainable resources for the benefit of the 61 per cent of the world's population who consider Asia and the Pacific their home.
26. Given the overall socioeconomic development of Asia and the Pacific over the past half-century, and the modernization in areas of public policy and administration, the current

²⁴ UNICEF has estimated, based on data sources covering the years 2000 to 2009, that 44 per cent of children aged between 0 and 5 years in Asia (excluding China) are registered (State of the World's Children 2011, Adolescence: An Age of Opportunity (Sales No. E.11.XX.1), statistical table on birth registration, p.120).

reality of poor or declining CRVS systems in the region must be addressed as soon as possible. The benefits of improving CRVS systems are indisputable and far outweigh the costs.

4. Building regional momentum

27. As indicated above, the regional strategic plan is part of a global movement stimulated by increased recognition of the value of CRVS as an important national resource for individuals and society in every country. The heightened commitment of a wide range of development partners has resulted in an array of resources available for and targeted initiatives directed at promoting the development and improvement of CRVS both globally and also specifically in Asia and the Pacific.
28. The regional strategic plan is a broad initiative driven by practitioners, governments and the development community. This initiative began in February 2009 at the first session of the Committee on Statistics, which noted the importance of improving CRVS systems in the region (E/ESCAP/CST/10). As a result, in June 2010, the secretariat, in collaboration with the Asian Development Bank (ADB), Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), HISHub and WHO, organized a regional forum of development partners and representatives of civil registration offices, NSOs and ministries of health of 20 countries, which explored ways and means of improving CRVS systems in Asia and the Pacific.
29. Based on the call from the first session of the Committee on Statistics and the recommendations of the regional forum, the Committee on Statistics at its second session, which was held in December 2010, endorsed the main components of a proposed regional programme for improving vital statistics systems in Asia and the Pacific and recommended that the secretariat fully develop the regional programme in close collaboration with countries and other relevant development partners (E/ESCAP/CST(2)/9).
30. The Commission, in its resolution 67/12 of 25 May 2011, encouraged all members and associate members to review and assess the functioning of their CRVS systems, and recommended that the results of those assessments be utilized by members and associate members and stakeholders to develop and implement comprehensive national strategies or plans to strengthen CRVS systems. It also requested the Executive Secretary to consider collaborating closely with relevant partner agencies to coordinate and harmonize global, regional and country resources to support these efforts.
31. In the same resolution, the Commission requested the Executive Secretary to convene a high-level regional meeting of decision makers from NSOs, civil registration offices, ministries of health and other relevant stakeholders to raise awareness and foster increased commitment to improving CRVS.

C. A broad development partnership

32. Epitomizing the diverse development interests in and commitment for improving CRVS systems in Asia and the Pacific, 20 partners²⁵ are contributing to the regional initiative that embodies the regional strategic plan. Annex 3 presents the mandate and contribution of those partners.

II. Goal and scope

33. The goal of the regional strategic plan is, through improved civil registration and the increased availability and use of reliable vital statistics derived from civil registration systems, to contribute to the improvement of evidence-based policymaking, efficiency in resource allocation and good governance, as well as the progressive realization of the basic rights of all individuals.
34. In pursuance of this goal, countries have committed to, over the period 2012-2020, processes and actions to generate political commitment for, assess the current status of, develop and implement multi-sectoral action plans for improving, disseminating and using vital statistics for policy and programming, and monitoring and evaluating the quality, completeness and timeliness of CRVS systems. Development partners have committed to support these actions in a cost-effective and coordinated manner.
35. The regional strategic plan encompasses all ESCAP members and associate members. It recognizes the work already underway under the pre-existing Pacific Vital Statistics Action Plan for 2011-2014, including proposed activities and governance arrangements.¹⁷ These plans represent parallel and complementary initiatives, and together form a regional strategy that will support global initiatives such as the Busan Action Plan for Statistics and COIA. Coordination and implementation of activities in the Pacific islands will continue to be managed through the existing PVSAP and the BAG.

III. Guiding principles

36. The development of the regional strategic plan is derived from an ongoing dialogue among country, regional and international partners, the results of which have led to the formation of a set of principles to guide the actions of governments and international development partners:

²⁵ ADB; ABS; Health Metrics Network; International Organization for Migration Asia and Pacific Regional Office; Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights; PARIS21; Plan International; Regional Coordination Mechanism Thematic Working Group on Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women; Government of Thailand (Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Public Health, and National Statistical Office); SPC; Statistics Division, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs; UNICEF; United Nations Development Programme Asia-Pacific Regional Centre; ESCAP; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Bangkok; United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women; Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees; UNFPA; University of Queensland; HISHub; and WHO.

- (a) ***Countries take the lead:*** The regional strategic plan supports country efforts to build political commitment, assess the current status of CRVS systems and develop and implement multi-sectoral national action plans;
- (b) ***A stepwise approach:*** The regional strategic plan seeks to harness current strengths in countries and supports the development and incremental implementation of feasible and sustainable improvement strategies;
- (c) ***Flexibility and responsiveness:*** Recognizing that there is no single blueprint for improving CRVS systems in every setting, the regional strategic plan offers a flexible mix of support activities that are responsive to local needs and circumstances;
- (d) ***Consistency with international legal principles:*** The regional strategic plan is consistent with the relevant international legal framework and the principles of non-discrimination;
- (e) ***Building on local expertise and strategies:*** In recognition of regional diversities, the regional strategic plan seeks to harness local knowledge and expertise and ensure that CRVS improvement efforts are aligned with and contribute to existing country and regional health, statistical and development strategies;
- (f) ***Partnerships and coordination:*** The regional strategic plan relies on partnerships and seeks to improve coordination among key stakeholders at the national, regional and international level, and across all sectors, including, among others, business, education, health, labor and social insurance, etc;
- (g) ***Harmonization and alignment:*** In order to avoid risks of duplication and overlap, the regional strategic plan fosters harmonization among national, regional and international development partners, and alignment of support around country-led multi-sectoral national action plans and activities.

IV. Outcomes and activities

37. The regional strategic plan will be implemented through a combination of national and regional activities. While multi-sectoral national action plans will be developed within the framework of the regional strategic plan, each country will determine its own priorities and may choose not to pursue all eight outcomes of the regional strategic plan. The country actions outlined below are therefore indicative. Similarly, the regional support activities listed for each outcome below are contingent upon the establishment and resourcing of a regional support office (RSO) and a regional steering and coordination group (RSCG). See the governance and coordination section for more details.

Outcome A: Public awareness

Enhanced public awareness of the value of civil registration and vital statistics systems and actions taken to remove barriers to registration at all levels

38. Civil registration depends upon individuals and families registering vital events. Well-functioning CRVS systems are built upon a relationship of mutual trust and accountability between national authorities and the public. Complete CRVS systems are respectful of cultural and behavioral sensitivities and actively seek to raise public awareness of the importance of registration and the value of sound vital statistics.

39. ***Potential country actions:***

- (a) Develop national advocacy strategies for CRVS targeting diverse audiences and stakeholders and focusing in particular on communities, marginalized groups and remote populations;
- (b) Develop national communications strategies and outreach to women and underserved groups;
- (c) Develop multi-sectoral national action plans that include strategies to identify and remove barriers to registration, in particular those that impede access by persons from marginalized groups;
- (d) Include civil society and NGO representation on national CRVS coordination committees.

40. ***Regional support activities:***

- (a) Launch a regional advocacy campaign to heighten the visibility and importance of CRVS, such as through the declaration of a year/decade for CRVS and other similar region-wide advocacy channels and instruments;
- (b) Provide technical and advisory services to support country outreach efforts to women and underserved groups;
- (c) Provide technical and advisory services to support country advocacy events;
- (d) Establish a regional platform, comprising a web repository and other interactive features, such as a web-based forum, to be complemented by knowledge exchange seminars and facilitation of exchange visits. The platform will be aimed at promoting the exchange of experiences and information on strategies and plans to strengthen civil registration and vital statistics systems, reporting on accomplishments, compiling lessons learned and fostering South-South and peer-to-peer cooperation to improve civil registration and vital statistics systems.

Outcome B: Political commitment

Sustained political commitment to support the development and improvement of civil registration and vital statistics systems

41. High-level political commitment is a powerful force that can galvanize all stakeholders and levels of society around the need for well-functioning CRVS systems. Importantly, it plays an essential role in ensuring that relevant government agencies effectively play their part in CRVS systems. In terms of allocating resources, political commitment is critical to break the perpetuating circle of neglect of underinvestment in CRVS systems. Weak and dysfunctional CRVS systems are unable to generate vital statistics or provide documentary evidence for legal purposes and, as a result, there is little support for allocating resources to improve the system.

42. ***Potential country actions:***

- (a) Issue a high-level declaration on the importance of CRVS for all individuals;
- (b) Conduct a comprehensive multi-stakeholder assessment of CRVS systems;
- (c) Develop a prioritized multi-sectoral national action plan to improve CRVS systems detailing commitments required to implement those plans.

43. ***Regional support activities:***

- (a) Encourage and support countries in conducting a rapid self-assessment;
- (b) Support countries in carrying out a comprehensive multi-stakeholder assessment of CRVS systems;
- (c) Support countries in formulating results-oriented multi-sectoral national action plans to accelerate the improvement of CRVS systems;
- (d) Convene a ministerial-level regional forum of decision-makers to raise awareness and understanding of the importance of CRVS;
- (e) Through the regional platform, establish a regional web-based repository of assessments of CRVS systems and multi-sectoral national action plans to direct development partners in developing and implementing capacity development programmes that support national priorities, and to facilitate technical cooperation among countries in the region.

Outcome C: Investments

Sufficient and sustainable investments towards incremental improvements in civil registration and vital statistics systems

44. The benefits of well-functioning CRVS systems, including improvements in public administration and the efficiency of resource allocation, and enabling individuals to realize their human, legal and economic rights, far outweigh the costs. With mounting research and development interest in the area of CRVS at regional and global levels, there is a growing movement that is creating evidence to support the case of governments investing in improving CRVS systems.²⁶ Nevertheless, many CRVS systems in Asia and the Pacific suffer from underinvestment, sometimes as a result of resource allocation to alternative data-collection methods that have a number of limitations compared to well-functioning CRVS systems.

45. **Potential country actions:**

- (a) Analyse the business processes within CRVS systems with a view to identifying options for enhanced cost-effectiveness as well as resource gaps;
- (b) Allocate adequate national financial resources for the implementation of CRVS multi-sectoral national action plans;

46. **Regional support activities:**

- (a) Produce evidence that proves the value of investing in CRVS systems to support advocacy for improving CRVS systems at the national level, particularly in terms of the costs versus the benefits;
- (b) Develop a CRVS business process analysis tool and assist countries in applying it to identify resource gaps and efficiency improvement opportunities;
- (c) Develop a business case tool for investing in the improvement of CRVS systems and assist countries in applying it for national resource mobilization.

Outcome D: Policies, legislation and implementation of regulations

Improved and strengthened policies, legislation and implementation of regulations for civil registration and vital statistics systems

47. A sound and supportive legal framework provides the basis for well-functioning CRVS systems. The legal framework for registration of vital events makes registration compulsory, and defines the functions, duties and responsibilities of local registrars and of those who are obliged to register, thus helping to ensure the completeness of registration and to improve the

²⁶ Anneke Schmider, “Advocating for civil registration: guide to developing a business case for civil registration”, University of Queensland: HISHub Working Paper Series, No. 15 (Health Information Systems Knowledge Hub, November 2011). Available from www.uq.edu.au/hishub/docs/WP15/HISHUB-WP15-FULL-10-WEB-6Mar12.pdf.

accuracy of information held in civil records. In terms of vital statistics, legislation ensures that stakeholders in CRVS systems have clearly defined roles and responsibilities, which assists in ensuring the compliance, quality, timeliness and completeness of the vital statistics produced.

48. **Potential country actions:**

- (a) Assess compliance with international legal frameworks and standards through multi-stakeholder reviews of CRVS legislation;
- (b) Include reform of legislation and regulations in multi-sectoral national action plans;
- (c) Implement legislative and regulatory reform in line with international legal frameworks and standards;
- (d) Ensure linkages with related national strategies, such as national strategies for the development of statistics (NSDS), development strategies and sectoral plans.

49. **Regional support activities:**

- (a) Provide technical advisory services to support country efforts in strengthening legislation;
- (b) Ensure that the international legal frameworks relating to civil registration are reflected in national legislation;
- (c) Promote the provision of sufficient registration infrastructure and support the development of skills and capacities for the registration of events and compilation of vital statistics;
- (d) Through the regional platform, facilitate the exchange of good practices in civil registration laws;
- (e) Support stronger links between CRVS legislation and policies and related national strategies, such as NSDS.

Outcome E: Legal documentation

Improved availability and quality of legal documentation for all individuals

50. An essential function of civil registration is to provide documentary evidence from which to base claims of identity, legal status and ensuing rights. Without this documentation, individuals are likely to face difficulties in realizing their human, legal and economic rights, as have been established by numerous international conventions, or to access public services such as health and education. With documentary evidence of identity and status, individuals are brought into the modern economy because they are able to, for example, transfer property, apply for passports, possess driving licenses, open bank accounts and vote.

51. **Potential country actions:**

- (a) Improve the capacity of the civil registration system to issue legal documentation on appropriately evidenced vital events;
- (b) Harness the capacity of hospitals, health centres, religious institutions and schools that can play significant roles in registering vital events;
- (c) Enhance the capacity of CRVS systems to issue legal documentation of a high quality, including the information required to establish an individual's nationality;
- (d) Increase national capacity to assure the safe and secure long-term management and archiving of legal records.

52. **Regional support activities:**

- (a) Through the regional platform, facilitate the exchange of knowledge and good practices that ensure accuracy and completeness in the reporting of vital events and in the compilation, management and archiving of registration records;
- (b) Through the regional platform, facilitate the exchange of good practices in improving registration in remote areas and among poorly covered sub-populations, as well as the registration of specific types of vital events, including through the use of information and communications technology (for example, community birth and death reporting using mobile phones);
- (c) Strengthen the capacity of the national civil registration to provide high quality legal documentation to all persons, including the information required to establish nationality.

Outcome F: Statistics on vital events

Increased capacity of countries in Asia and the Pacific to record, compile, analyze and disseminate complete and reliable statistics on vital events

53. It is becoming increasingly feasible to overcome the technical and logistical challenges that countries face to record, compile, analyse and disseminate complete and reliable information on vital events. The use of information and communications technology, including mobile technology, can facilitate the registration of vital events in remote, isolated, small island and mountainous areas. In addition, advances in technology enable more secure storage and protection of civil registration archives from natural catastrophes, war and cyber-attacks. Institutional and human resource capacities can be enhanced by drawing upon hospitals, health centres, religious institutions and schools that can play significant roles in registering vital events. The health sector, in particular, can play an important role in the notification of

births and deaths to the registration authorities, and in encouraging families to register births and deaths.

54. *Potential country actions:*

- (a) Expand infrastructure availability, quality and equitable distribution, especially in poorly serviced areas and population groups;
- (b) Enhance CRVS human resources availability and distribution;
- (c) Provide training and skills enhancement on key aspects of CRVS, covering all aspects of vital events (including causes of death) recording, data reporting compilation, archiving and analysis;
- (d) Improve the completeness of birth registration in line with a nationally determined target;
- (e) Improve the completeness of death registration in line with a nationally determined target;
- (f) Improve the quality of cause-of-death certification and coding in line with international standards as defined by WHO;
- (g) Develop and test, in collaboration with academic and research institutions, innovative and efficient methods and tools for accelerating the improvement of CRVS systems.

55. *Regional support activities:*

- (a) Through the regional platform, promote the sharing of technical knowledge, expertise and resources to overcome the technical and logistical challenges facing countries to record, compile, analyse and disseminate complete and reliable information on vital events;
- (b) Develop training curricula and assist national training institutions in strengthening their capacity to deliver training on the skills and knowledge needed to improve technical capacities of countries to record, compile, analyse and disseminate complete and reliable information on vital events;
- (c) Support the strengthening of capacity of national training institutions to deliver effective training on ICD-compliant medical certification and coding to improve the quality of cause-of-death data;
- (d) Work with regional academic and research groups, support a research and development programme on the basis of identified gaps in country assessments, and facilitate the sharing of research and study results and formulate guidelines on their potential application.

Outcome G: Coordination among key stakeholders

Mechanisms established for effective coordination among key stakeholders within civil registration and vital statistics systems

56. Coordination is the hallmark of well-functioning CRVS systems. It must take place among the various responsible agencies in countries, between development partners, and between countries and partner agencies. At the national level, effective coordination among different agencies involved in reporting, registering and recording the occurrence of vital events is essential. Good management at each functional level within each part of the system is not enough; good coordination is crucial across sectors in order to minimize duplication of functions across different areas of government and facilitate the effective use of registration records for statistical purposes.

57. *Potential country actions:*

- (a) Establish a representative and functioning multi-sectoral committee responsible for CRVS coordination;
- (b) Hold regular and productive meetings of the national CRVS coordination committee;
- (c) Assign the national CRVS coordination committee with the task of overseeing the implementation of the multi-sectoral national action plan;
- (d) Issue regular updates on improvement progress and report, when relevant, to the National Statistical Council.

58. *Regional support activities:*

- (a) Promote the establishment of a national coordination structure or mechanism comprised of key institutions and stakeholders of the civil registration and vital statistics system;
- (b) Actively support the inclusion of the improvement of CRVS in United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAF), through outreach to United Nations Country Teams;
- (c) Provide technical advisory services to support country efforts in strengthening coordination;
- (d) Through the regional platform, identify, review and compile good practices in the coordination of civil registration and vital statistics functions, and facilitate the exchange of good practices in coordination mechanisms, documentation and online/offline dissemination;

- (e) Through meetings of RSCG and interim support from RSO, coordinate and cooperate on ongoing and planned activities among relevant development partners involved in the regional strategic plan;
- (f) Through periodic reports from RSO, ensure that countries are informed of and actively contribute to the coordination of capacity-building activities.

Outcome H: Use of vital statistics

Increased capacity of countries in Asia and the Pacific to effectively use vital statistics

59. High quality, standards-based registration of vital events enables the production of reliable and complete vital statistics, which support national and local decision-making across a range of social and economic sectors to facilitate evidence-based policy.²⁷ The contribution of vital statistics to evidence-based decision-making is dependent upon timely dissemination to and appropriate uptake by the relevant decision-makers.

60. *Potential country actions:*

- (a) Include vital statistics derived from civil registration systems in national statistical, health and development plans for planning and monitoring purposes;
- (b) Make available in the public domain, within one year of the end of the reporting year, the reports of numbers and distribution of total births and deaths by age and sex;
- (c) Make available in the public domain, within two years of the end of the reporting year, reports of the major causes of death by age and sex at national and subnational levels;
- (d) Report up-to-date vital statistics to United Nations entities, including the Statistics Division and WHO.

61. *Regional support activities:*

- (a) Provide training on guidelines and recommendations for the analysis, dissemination and use of vital statistics, as contained in the *United*

²⁷ The *United Nations Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System* states that the compilation of vital statistics should have as its ultimate minimum goal: (a) the provision of total monthly or quarterly summary counts of live births, deaths, foetal deaths, marriages and divorces on a time schedule prompt enough to provide information for health intervention and population estimation programmes; and (b) the production of detailed annual tabulations of each type of vital event cross classified by its demographic and socioeconomic characteristics. *Source:* United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Statistics Division, *Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System, Revision 2*, Sales No. E.01.XVII.10, para. 62.

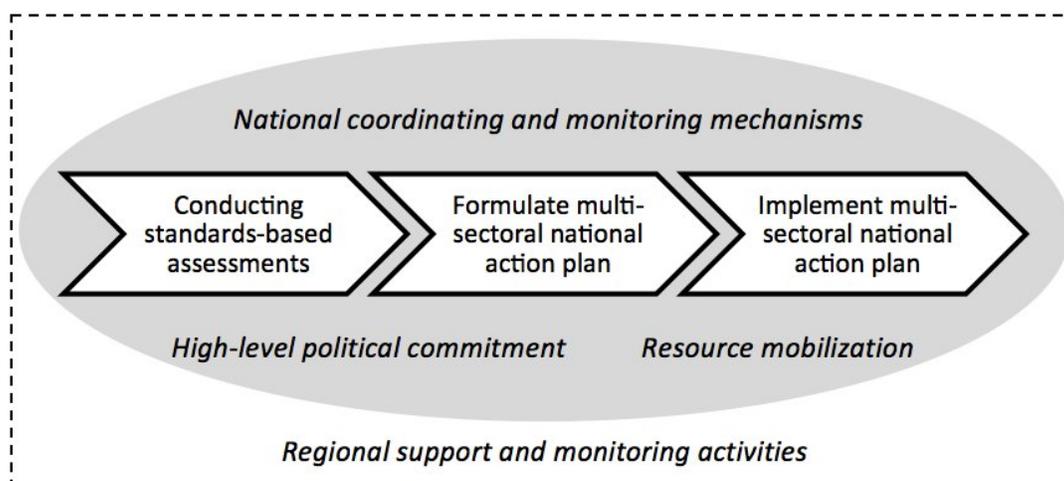
Nations Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System, Revision 2;

- (b) Through the regional platform, facilitate the exchange of knowledge and good practices that ensure timeliness in the collection and compilation of civil registration records for statistical purposes;
- (c) Through the regional platform, facilitate the exchange of knowledge and good practices on how vital statistics have been used to guide policy and programmes, including through documentation and offline/online dissemination;
- (d) Provide technical advisory services to countries to support the implementation of principles and recommendations, including the development of an engagement strategy to regularly discuss data needs with the main data users, the preparation of analytical reports and the development of dissemination strategies and policy;
- (e) Develop training curricula and assist national training institutions in strengthening their capacity to deliver training on the skills and knowledge needed to improve the analysis of vital statistics data.

V. Steps for implementation

62. Based on the experiences of countries that have successfully embarked on efforts to improve CRVS systems, major actions required by countries in implementing the regional strategic plan comprise key steps, most of which may take place in parallel or be iterative in nature (see figure). Relevant regional activities will support countries during each step of the process.

Figure 1 – Implementation of the Regional Strategic Plan, 2012-2020



63. Although circumstances in countries vary, there is a general logical process of three steps that countries should take to improve their CRVS systems:
- (a) Conduct a standards-based assessment of current status, capacities and resources;
 - (b) Formulate a multi-sectoral national action plan that addresses the range of challenges and defined feasible, measurable results within the framework of the outcomes of the regional strategic plan;
 - (c) Implement the multi-sectoral national action plan.
64. The following processes will contribute significantly to the successful completion of each of those steps. These processes are fundamental to any effort to improve CRVS systems:
- (a) Establishing a national coordination mechanism to oversee and monitor improvement efforts, including monitoring and evaluating the multi-sectoral national action plan once developed;
 - (b) Generating high-level political commitment for improving CRVS systems;
 - (c) Mobilizing the resources needed, including human, technical and financial resources.

VI. Governance and coordination

65. The regional strategic plan aims to achieve its goal and outcomes through the sharing of expertise from across the region and globally. It establishes a regional platform for leveraging support and resources in a coordinated and effective manner. Therefore, a key purpose of the governing and coordination structure outlined below is to guide, stimulate and foster partnerships, networking and collaboration among the multitude of national, regional and international organizations with a stake in the improvement of CRVS systems in the region. Annex 3 presents the mandate of and some of the support available from development partners.

A. Regional Steering and Coordination Group

65. An RSCG will be established to provide strategic guidance and oversight to the implementation of the regional strategic plan. It will function within the framework defined by the regional strategic plan, consistent with mandates of involved governments and other national and international development partners.
66. RSCG will bring together country implementing agencies, civil society, development partners and training and research institutions. Coordination and implementation of activities in the Pacific islands will continue to be managed through the existing Pacific Vital Statistics Action Plan and BAG, including existing governance and reporting structures. BAG will be

represented in RSCG to facilitate coordination with related activities in Pacific island States that are being carried out under PVSAP.

67. RSCG will ensure coordination and integration of the implementation of the regional strategic plan with other related capacity development activities for synergy, complementarities and greater impact at the regional level. It will review progress in the implementation of the regional strategic plan and ensure that actions to implement the regional strategic plan uphold the seven guiding principles agreed to by the country, regional and international partners in this initiative.
68. Subject to the mechanisms of its formal establishment, RSCG may report to the Commission or if so delegated, to the Committee on Statistics.

B. Regional Support Office

69. An RSO will be set up. It will report to and act as the secretariat for RSCG and be tasked with coordinating and monitoring the implementation of the regional strategic plan in close consultation and partnership with countries and development partners.
70. The primary role of RSO is to coordinate and facilitate country assessments and the implementation of multi-sectoral national action plans. In carrying out this function, RSO will serve as the “one-stop” access point for countries and development partners for the implementation of the regional strategic plan. RSO will actively liaise with international, regional, and subregional offices of development partners operating in Asia and the Pacific in order to coordinate their support to countries, thereby avoiding duplication of efforts and ensuring that international standards are being followed.
71. RSO will function as the regional platform aimed at promoting the exchange of expertise, experiences, resources and other information on improving CRVS systems. It will report on accomplishments, compile lessons learned and foster South-South and peer-to-peer cooperation to improve CRVS systems.
72. The regional platform will comprise a web repository and other interactive features, such as a web-based forum, to be complemented by the organization of knowledge exchange seminars and facilitation of exchange visits to promote and demonstrate the use of the platform. The web repository will include a directory of CRVS stakeholders, such as development partners and experts, and a resource base, comprising training and advocacy materials, computer-based resource kits, and assessment and analysis tools. The repository will also contain completed assessments of CRVS systems and multi-sectoral national action plans.
73. RSO will be hosted by one of the regional development partners committed to the regional strategic plan.

C. National coordination

74. Broad-based and high-level political support is necessary for the successful implementation of multi-sectoral national action plans, especially as regards resource allocation and legislative reviews. The establishment of a national multi-stakeholder coordination mechanism to coordinate the assessment and the development and implementation of a multi-sectoral national action plan is therefore of critical importance for ensuring the long-term results of the regional strategic plan. The mechanism should be able to directly involve or reach out to all relevant stakeholders within the country's CRVS systems.
75. Core agencies at the national-level comprise those with responsibilities for registration, such as civil registration offices, local governments and ministries of justice or the interior, those responsible for the production and dissemination of statistics (usually NSOs), and the health sector, which has a particularly important role to play in the notification of vital events. Additional important stakeholders and potential partners are other sectoral agencies, such as the ministries of education, labor, security, public information or foreign affairs, the business and private sectors, donors and development partners, civil society and NGOs, and representatives of communities.
76. Pathways and timescales for the multi-sectoral national action plans will vary greatly across countries according to the current status of their CRVS systems, their institutional and administrative features and state of development. The exact mechanism, such as national statistical councils for coordination, will therefore be decided by each country. If possible, existing coordination mechanisms will be made use of and revised as necessary, rather than establishing new ones.
77. The country coordinating mechanisms will be the entry point for RSO to liaise and communicate with countries.

VII. Monitoring

A. Annual progress assessment reports

78. RSO will monitor the implementation of activities for improving CRVS systems, whether they are conducted by national, regional or international partners. On this basis, annual progress assessment reports presenting an overview of efforts by all stakeholders will be prepared for review by RSCG. The annual progress assessment reports will be produced on the basis of information that has been provided to RSO by partners.

B. Periodic monitoring reports

79. While the framework and approach of the regional strategic plan is regional, improvement of CRVS systems will ultimately happen at the national level and be primarily driven by countries. Hence, progress towards achieving the outcomes of the regional strategic plan will be evidenced in the national context. It is therefore proposed that the annual activity-level progress assessment reports be complemented periodically, in 2016 and 2020, by a more comprehensive monitoring report.

80. RSO will produce the monitoring report through questionnaires circulated to all countries and development partners operating in the region. As with the annual progress assessment reports, the monitoring reports will be prepared for review by the regional steering and coordination group.
81. A proposed monitoring framework for the regional strategic plan is presented in Annex 1.

Annex 1: Proposed monitoring framework

Outcome	Proposed monitoring indicators
<p>Outcome A Enhanced public awareness of the value of civil registration and vital statistics systems and actions taken to remove barriers to registration at all levels</p>	<p>Number and proportion of countries within Asia and the Pacific that have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Developed national advocacy strategies for CRVS targeting diverse audiences and stakeholders and focusing in particular on communities, marginalized groups and remote populations; (b) Developed national communications strategies and outreach to women and underserved groups; (c) Developed multi-sectoral national action plans that include strategies to identify and remove barriers to registration, in particular those that impede access by persons from marginalized groups; and (d) Included civil society and NGO representation on national CRVS coordination committees.
<p>Outcome B Sustained political commitment to support the development and improvement of civil registration and vital statistics systems</p>	<p>Number and proportion of countries within Asia and the Pacific that have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Issued a high-level declaration on the importance of CRVS for all individuals; b. Conducted a comprehensive multi-stakeholder assessments of CRVS systems; and c. Developed a prioritized multi-sectoral national action plan to improve CRVS systems detailing commitments required to implement those plans.
<p>Outcome C Sufficient and sustainable investments towards incremental improvements in civil registration and vital statistics systems</p>	<p>Number and proportion of countries within Asia and the Pacific that have</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Analyzed the business processes within CRVS systems with a view to identifying options for enhanced cost-effectiveness as well as resource gaps; and b. Allocated adequate national financial resources for the implementation of CRVS multi-sectoral national action plans.
<p>Outcome D Improved and strengthened policies, legislation and implementation of regulations for civil registration and vital statistics systems</p>	<p>Number and proportion of countries within Asia and the Pacific that have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Assessed compliance with international legal frameworks and standards through multi-stakeholder reviews of CRVS legislation; b. Included reform of legislation and regulations in multi-sectoral national action plans; c. Implemented legislative and regulatory reform, in line with international legal frameworks and standards; and d. Ensured linkages with related national strategies such as National Strategies for the Development of Statistics (NSDS), development strategies and sectoral plans.

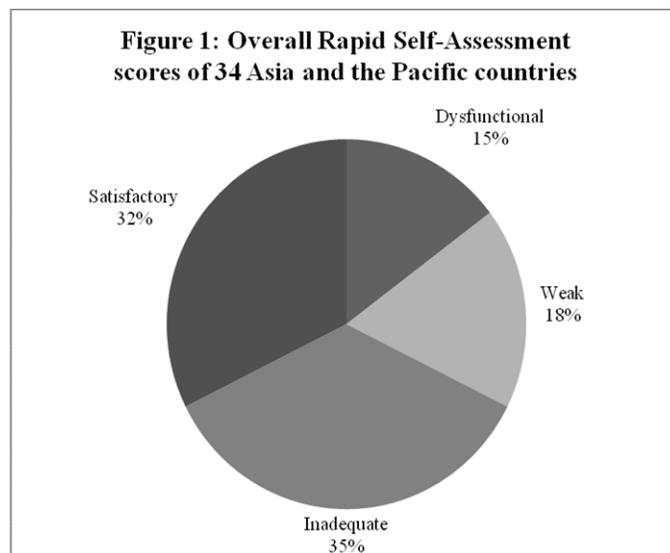
Outcome	Proposed monitoring indicators
<p>Outcome E Improved availability and quality of legal documentation for all individuals</p>	<p>Number and proportion of countries within Asia and the Pacific that have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Improved the capacity of the civil registration system to issue legal documentation on appropriately evidenced vital events; b. Harnessed the capacity of hospitals, health centers, religious institutions and schools that can play significant roles in registering vital events; c. Enhanced the capacity of CRVS systems to issue legal documentation of a high quality, including the information required to establish an individual's nationality; and d. Increased national capacity to assure the safe and secure long-term management and archiving of legal records.
<p>Outcome F Increased capacity of countries in Asia and the Pacific to record, compile, analyze and disseminate complete and reliable statistics on vital events</p>	<p>Number and proportion of countries within Asia and the Pacific that have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Expanded infrastructure availability, quality and equitable distribution, especially in poorly serviced areas and population groups; b. Enhanced CRVS human resources availability and distribution; c. Provided training and skills enhancement covering key aspects of CRVS, covering all aspects of vital events (including causes of death) recording, data reporting, compilation, archiving and analysis; d. Improved the completeness of birth registration in line with a nationally determined target; e. Improved the completeness of death registration in line with a nationally determined target; f. Improved the quality of cause-of-death certification and coding, in line with international standards as defined by WHO; and g. Developed and tested, in collaboration with academic and research institutions, innovative and efficient methods and tools for accelerating the improvement of CRVS systems.
<p>Outcome G Mechanisms established for effective coordination among key stakeholders within civil registration and vital statistics systems</p>	<p>Number and proportion of countries within Asia and the Pacific that have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Established a representative and functioning multi-sectoral committee responsible for CRVS coordination; b. Held regular and productive meetings of the national CRVS coordination committee; c. Assigned to the national CRVS coordination committee, oversight of the implementation of the multi-sectoral national action plan; and d. Issued regular updates on improvement progress and report, where relevant, back to the National Statistical Council.
<p>Outcome H Increased capacity of countries in Asia and the Pacific to effectively use vital statistics</p>	<p>Number and proportion of countries within Asia and the Pacific that have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Included vital statistics derived from civil registration systems in national statistical, health and development plans for planning and monitoring purposes; b. Made available in the public domain, within one year of the end of the reporting year, the reports of numbers and distribution of total births and deaths by age and sex; c. Made available in the public domain, within two years of the end of the reporting year, reports of the major causes of death by age and sex at national and sub-national levels; and d. Reported up-to-date vital statistics to United Nations agencies, including UNSD and WHO.

Annex 2: Rapid self-assessments of CRVS systems in the region

1. As of September 2012, 34 countries in the Asia-Pacific region have assessed their CRVS systems, using the rapid self-assessment tool developed by HISHub and WHO.²⁸
2. The rapid self-assessment tool consists of 25 questions, grouped into 11 areas, about the functioning of the civil registration and vital statistics systems of a country. For each question, one of four possible scenarios can be selected; each scenario being assigned with a numerical value from zero to three (0-3) indicating how well the systems functions in this aspect. Summing up the values from the 11 areas provides an overall score for the functioning of the civil registration and vital statistics systems in a country.

Overall results

3. The overall scores from the 34 Asia-Pacific countries that have undertaken the rapid self-assessment have in Figure 1 been transformed into percentage scores and on this basis classified as dysfunctional (<34 per cent), weak (35-64 per cent), functional but inadequate (65-84 per cent) and satisfactory (85-100 per cent). The overall scores range from 7 per cent to 96 per cent.
4. This result reveals the wide variations of CRVS systems in Asia and the Pacific, including that less than one-third of countries in the region have satisfactory systems that require minor adjustments.
5. The rapid self-assessment results by area (see Table 1) can be utilized to guide and mobilize support for a more detailed, comprehensive assessment²⁹ of CRVS systems and the development of national action plans to improve the systems.
6. The following sections provide a summary of the results of rapid self-assessments by area.³⁰



²⁸ *Rapid self-assessment tool*: WHO and HISHub (2010). "Rapid assessment methods for vital statistics systems", University of Queensland: HISHub Working Paper Series, No. 2.

²⁹ *Comprehensive assessment tool*: WHO and HISHub (2010). "Improving the quality of birth, death and cause-of-death information: guidance for a standards-based review of country practices", University of Queensland: HISHub Working Paper Series, No. 1.

³⁰ The 11 areas of the WHO/HISHub Rapid Assessment Tool have for the present overview been condensed to 8. The area's entitled 'ICD compliance', 'Practices affecting the quality and cause of death data', 'ICD coding practices' and 'Coder qualifications and training' have been combined into one area entitled 'Quality of cause of death data; ICD compliance, practices and training.'

Table 1: Averages of 34 country rapid self-assessment results conducted in Asia and the Pacific by area

Area No.	Rapid self-assessment results by area	Average (max. =3)
1	Legal Framework	2.25
2	Registration Infrastructure	2.36
3	Organization and Function of VS systems	1.81
4	Completeness of Birth and Death Registration	2.16
5	Data Storage and Transmission	1.89
6-9	<i>Quality of Cause of Death Data: ICD Compliance, Practices and</i>	1.91
	<i>ICD Compliance</i>	1.97
	<i>Practices Affecting the Quality of Cause of Death Data</i>	1.91
	<i>ICD Coding Practices</i>	2.33
	<i>Coder Qualification and Training</i>	1.42
10	Data Quality and Plausibility Checks	1.73
11	Data Access, Dissemination and Use	2.44

Legal framework

7. The findings of the rapid self-assessments demonstrate that most countries, which completed the assessment, have in place adequate and enforced legislation on civil registration, stating that registration of births and deaths is compulsory. Only 12 per cent of countries mentioned that their legislation requires amendment, whilst 18 per cent of countries reported that the legislation exists but it is not enforced. However, 1 country mentioned that there is no law that makes it obligatory to register births and deaths.
8. 20 countries reported that medical establishments are obliged to report all vital events within a given time period. However, in 9 per cent of countries, regulations exist, but not all medical establishments report the events. Only 3 countries reported that regulations cover public medical establishments exclusively; whilst in 24 per cent of countries there is no regulation at all.

Registration infrastructure

9. 79 per cent of countries consider that there are sufficient places where citizens can register births and deaths, and only 5 countries reported that urban areas are better covered than rural areas. However, 16 countries consider that necessary supplies and equipment are widely available, while 38 per cent of countries reported that supplies are generally available everywhere, but there are widespread shortages of equipment.
10. All registrars have received adequate training in 47 per cent of the countries. 44 per cent of countries consider that the training is insufficient, and skills and knowledge are largely acquired on the job. However, 3 countries provide no training, with negative effects upon the functioning of civil registration.

Organization and function of vital statistics systems

11. In terms of collaboration, the countries in the region still face many challenges. In 35 per cent of countries, there is little interagency collaboration, with the various agencies functioning independently, resulting in problems such as duplication of work and inconsistencies in the estimates derived from vital statistics issued. However, 14 countries

mentioned that although there is no formal interagency committee, the agencies involved have regular meetings to identify and resolve problems.

Completeness of birth and death registration

12. In 68 per cent of the countries, a recent evaluation (in the last 10 years) showed that completeness of birth registration was 90 per cent or higher. The remaining 11 countries reported that completeness of the birth registration is less than 90 per cent. Very similar results were obtained when the completeness of death registration was assessed. Only 53 per cent of countries reported that a recent evaluation (in the last 10 years) showed that completeness of death registration was 90 per cent or higher. The remaining 16 countries reported that the completeness of death registration was lower than 90 per cent.

Data storage and transmission

13. The transmission of birth and death records from local and regional offices to a central storage in the capital city varies significantly in the region. 26 per cent of countries have the capacity to transmit all information electronically from local to regional offices, and then to a central office. However, 13 countries still use paper copies, which are sent from local offices to the regional office and processed there for electronic transmission to the central office. The remaining 12 countries only process the records at the central office or rely completely on paper copies throughout the system to transfer birth and death records to a central storage facility.
14. In 50 per cent of countries, there is an agreed schedule for reporting to the central office, with reporting deadlines taken seriously and closely monitored – it is rarely necessary to send out reminders. Whilst in 10 countries, the schedule is not strictly adhered to and there is little effort by the central office to encourage more timely and regular reporting.

Practices affecting the quality of cause of death data; ICD compliance, practices and training

15. 65 per cent of countries state that the cause of death must be indicated on the death certificate according to the International Classification of Diseases (ICD), and can only be certified by a medical doctor. Whilst, 10 countries, state that cause of death must be indicated, but only under broad categories, and may be certified by non-medical officials.
16. Only in 24 per cent of countries, are all medical students introduced to the ICD during their studies, and are taught how to certify cause of death and correctly complete the medical death certificate.

Data quality and plausibility checks

17. In 47 per cent of countries, checks on overall levels of fertility and mortality derived from the vital statistics data are made routinely by calculating rates and comparing these over time; rates are also compared to data derived from other sources, such as censuses and surveys. However, in 9 countries, no specific checks are routinely carried out for data quality and plausibility of birth and death statistics.
18. In addition to checking the stability of patterns in cause of death over time, the proportion of ill- defined and unknown deaths is routinely monitored, and the age and sex patterns for major causes of death are checked for plausibility in 35 per cent of countries. However, 12

countries do not carry out consistency and plausibility checks routinely on data for cause of death.

Data access, dissemination and use

19. 71 per cent of countries publish annual data on births and 71 per cent publish annual data on deaths by all three disaggregations (sex, age and geographical or administrative region). 6 countries are not able to publish annual statistics on birth, and 7 countries do not publish annual statistics on death.
20. The delay between the reference year and the time when detailed national statistics on cause of death, classified by sex and age, are made available to the public is less than two years for 71 per cent of countries. In 5 countries, it was reported that the delay is five years or more.
21. Data on births, deaths, and causes of death are utilized in 74 per cent of countries for socioeconomic planning and for monitoring the health status of the population, including the use of data on cause of death for public health purposes. In 2 countries, data from the civil registration and vital statistics systems are not routinely used for policy and programme purposes.

Annex 3: Development partners

Partner	Mandate and contribution for the Regional Strategic Plan
Asian Development Bank (ADB)	<p>ADB is a development finance institution with the vision of “An Asia and Pacific Region Free of Poverty” and mission to help its developing member countries (DMCs) reduce poverty and improve living conditions and quality of life by focusing on three complementary strategic agendas: (i) inclusive growth; (ii) environmentally sustainable growth; and (iii) regional integration.</p> <p>ADB is also engaged in monitoring the progress on MDGs in the Asia Pacific region in partnership with the UNDP and UNESCAP. With regard to regional initiative on improving CRVS Systems in the Asia Pacific region, ADB has been partnering with ESCAP and other development partners and has supported various activities such as regional forum and training workshop and assessments of the CRVS systems in selected countries under the ESCAP/UNDP/ADB regional MDG program. As member of the drafting group it is contributing to the development of the Regional Plan and organizing committee for the High Level Meeting in December 2012. ADB aims to provide limited support through technical assistance to selected DMCs to undertake comprehensive assessments and preparing national action plans for improving the CRVS systems and strengthening capacity to implement some recommendations to improve these systems.</p>
Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS)	<p>Through its membership on the ESCAP Committee of Statistics, the ABS is committed to advocating for and supporting where possible the strengthening of statistical information and sharing of the same within Asia and the Pacific. One plan of this work focuses on improving CRVS. A key goal of this work from the ABS perspective is to assist National Statistical Offices in target countries to build their capacity to provide support and leadership in terms of vital statistics and to strengthen their role in CVRS. ABS has critical skills in data collection, collation, management and analysis skills relating to economic, environmental and social statistical information including CRVS.</p> <p>ABS's contribution to the Regional Strategic Plan can be seen through: (i) joint support (with HISHub) of an ABS outposted officer to provide technical assistance to target countries for another two years; (ii) participation in the Statistical Capability Working Group proposed at the 7-8 May 2012 meeting of partners; (iii) engaging (advocating) with National Statistical Offices in the target countries to strengthen their commitment to and involvement in improving CRVS; (iv) undertaking capacity building activities to more broadly strengthen NSOs in the region; (v) partnering with HISHub; and (vi) participation at the December 2012 High-level Meeting on the Improvement Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific.</p>

Partner	Mandate and contribution for the Regional Strategic Plan
Health Metrics Network (HMN)	<p>A committed partner to the Asia Pacific regional plan, HMN is a global partnership focused on strengthening country health information systems. HMN is actively pursuing a regional agenda to strengthen country health information systems.</p> <p>HMN is the global focal point for the UN Commission on Information and Accountability for Women’s and Children’s Health (CoIA) for CRVS and has a current priority focus on CRVS. With its technical and financial resources, HMN works with regional partners to support country CRVS strengthening, including: (i) tools; (ii) capacity building; (iii) innovation; and (iv) resource mobilization. HMN is currently supporting innovative CRVS initiatives in Thailand, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Philippines and Cambodia.</p>
International Organization for Migration (IOM) Asia and the Pacific Regional Office	<p>IOM is an intergovernmental agency committed to the principle that humane and orderly migration benefits migrants and society. Founded in 1951, it has 146 member states and an annual operating budget of close to \$1 billion. Its 5,400 staff work in over 100 countries worldwide. As the leading international organization for migration, IOM acts with its partners in the international community to: (i) assist in meeting the growing operational challenges of migration management; (ii) advance the understanding of migration issues; (iii) encourage social and economic development through migration; and (iv) to uphold the human dignity and well-being of migrants.</p> <p>IOM works on capacity building for migration management to facilitate global mobility with security. In relation to the supporting the Regional Strategic Plan, IOM can apply technical expertise (identity solutions, data management, infrastructure/IT capacity, personal identification and registration system and developing security documents), research, cooperation and operational assistance to States, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and other stakeholders in order to help improve civil registration and vital statistics as part of implementation solutions to build national capacities and facilitate international, regional and bilateral cooperation.</p>
Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)	<p>The OHCHR is mandated to promote and protect the enjoyment and full realization, by all people, of all rights established in the Charter of the United Nations and in international human rights laws and treaties. The mandate includes:(i)preventing human rights violations; (ii) securing respect for all human rights; (iii) promoting international cooperation to protect human rights; (iv) coordinating related activities throughout the United Nations; and (v) strengthening and streamlining the United Nations system in the field of human rights. In addition to its mandated responsibilities, the Office leads efforts to integrate a human rights approach within all work carried out by United Nations agencies. OHCHR aims to contribute to the Regional Strategic Plan through the provision of technical expertise.</p>

Partner	Mandate and contribution for the Regional Strategic Plan
Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century (PARIS21)	<p>PARIS21 is a global partnership that seeks to improve the statistical capacities in developing countries to produce and use better statistics. PARIS21 focuses its work on promoting and assisting countries to prepare National Strategies for the Development of Statistics (NSDS), a system-wide strategic planning process. PARIS21 does not work on CRVS per se but on the overall management of national statistical systems (e.g., strategic planning, co-ordination). PARIS21 emphasizes the need to incorporate all statistical operations into NSDS. As such, PARIS21 will advocate the mainstreaming of programmes targeting the improvement of CRVS into NSDS in order to: (i) ensure national ownership; and (ii) increase the probability of mobilizing resources and ensuring sustainability.</p>
Plan International	<p>Plan aims to achieve lasting improvements in the quality of life of deprived children in developing countries, through a process that unites people across cultures and adds meaning and value to their lives, by: (i) enabling deprived children, their families and their communities to meet their basic needs and to increase their ability to participate in and benefit from their societies; (ii) building relationships to increase understanding and unity among peoples of different cultures and countries; and (iii) promoting the rights and interests of the world's children.</p> <p>Plan is interested in supporting the Regional Strategic Plan and it has over a decade of experience of addressing barriers to birth registration in partnership with governments and other bodies. It also has documentation of what works and materials for promoting birth registration.</p>
Regional Coordination Mechanism Thematic Working Group on Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women (TWG-GEEW)	<p>TWG-GEEW was established as part of the Asia-Pacific United Nations Regional Coordination Mechanism on 19 February 2008. The work of the TWG-GEEW complements that of the other five Thematic Working Groups established in 2005 as part of a reformed regional TWG structure. The goal of TWG-GEEW is to ensure a coordinated UN system approach to promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in the Asia-Pacific Region. UN Women and ESCAP co-chair and act as the joint secretariat of TWG-GEEW. It currently has 27 members and meets at least quarterly.</p> <p>The indicative Annual Work Plan 2011-2012 was endorsed by the TWG-GEEW at its 17th Meeting on 2 September 2011. It addresses four areas of work: (i) advocacy/campaigning; (ii) gender mainstreaming; (iii) outreach to stakeholders; and (iv) policy makers and capacity development. The priority themes include Gender and HIV/AIDS, ERAW and Gender Statistics. UN Women co chairs the Working Group on Gender Statistics along with ESCAP Statistics Division.</p>

Partner	Mandate and contribution for the Regional Strategic Plan
<p>Royal Thai Government (Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Public Health and National Statistical Office)</p>	<p>Ministry of Interior – Under the Department of Provincial Administration (DOPA), the Bureau of Registration Administration (BORA) is the national authority responsible for directing, coordinating, aggregating, processing and supervising the registration functions and population database throughout Thailand. Since 1996, when the civil registration system of the Ministry of Interior provided nation-wide online electronic death and birth data directly to the vital statistics management process of the national public health system, among other things, the quality of vital statistics in Thailand has greatly improved.</p> <p>Ministry of Public Health – The Ministry of Public Health has responsibilities for compilation, coding cause of death to International Classification of Disease (ICD-WHO), statistical processing, and publication of vital statistics. After a restructure in 1993, the vital statistics function has been conducted by the Health Information Center, Bureau of the Health Policy and Strategy, the Office of the Permanent secretary of the Ministry of Public Health.</p> <p>National Statistics Office – The National Statistics Office is the statistical information center of the country. Beyond producing statistics, its responsibilities include: (i) promoting and developing government statistical activities; (ii) compiling statistics from other statistical agencies; (iii) coordinating and directing technical aspects of all statistical projects of government agencies; (iv) cooperate with, participating in the coordination of the work of foreign states or international organizations; and (v) issuing periodicals and publishing statistical data.</p> <p>With regards to the Regional Strategic Plan, the Royal Thai Government is able to promote the sharing of technical knowledge, expertise and resources across Asia and the Pacific, as well as sharing its own.</p>
<p>Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC)</p>	<p>The region’s policy-makers and analysts depend on having access to timely and accurate demographic, economic and social indicators to support their work, and our Statistics for Development Programme (SDP) aims to strengthen the capacity of national statistical systems and social and economic planning agencies to supply this data.</p> <p>The SDP’s ‘core business’ is to provide technical assistance and training. There is a strong emphasis on helping Pacific Island Countries and Territories establish good data collection systems. We also seek to improve the quantity and quality of data, indicators and reports being published in the region. SDP and its national partners undertake a range of data collection activities (e.g. censuses, demographic health surveys and household income and expenditure surveys). Dissemination and utilization of data has continued to improve through the successful Pacific Regional Information System and Population Geographic Information System projects.</p> <p>Along with HISHub, the SPC’s SDP serves as a focal point for the Brisbane Accord Group (BAG) and the Pacific Vital Statistics Action Plan (PVSAP). BAG was established at to coordinate, facilitate and support investments in the region through collaborative activities. The overarching aim of the PVSAP is to assist Pacific countries to understand the critical importance of vital statistics on births, deaths and causes of deaths and to improve their availability, accuracy and use. The PVSAP also focuses specifically on helping countries to improve the completeness of registration of births and deaths and to improve the quality and reliability of data on causes of death through a range of strategies and linked activities.</p>

Partner	Mandate and contribution for the Regional Strategic Plan
Statistics Division, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNSD)	<p>Recognizing that the development of vital statistics is contingent on a complete and accurate civil registration system, UNSD has focused closely on the development of vital statistics systems. UNSD develops international statistical standards and guidelines for CRVS, and publishes them as the <i>Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System</i>. It also produces methodological and technical manuals to assist countries in generating reliable and accurate vital statistics. Through the <i>United Nations Demographic Yearbook</i> data collection system, UNSD regularly collects, compiles and disseminates official vital statistics, while monitoring the development of CRVS for countries worldwide.</p> <p>UNSD will contribute to the development of Regional Strategic Plan by: (i) ensuring its compliance with international statistical standards; and (ii) offering technical assistance or undertake capacity building activities for national statisticians and civil registrars in the region to provide support for the implementation of such international standards and guidelines.</p>
United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)	<p>UNICEF is mandated by the United Nations General Assembly to advocate for the protection of children's rights, to help meet their basic needs, and to expand their opportunities to reach their full potential. Article 7 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child accords the right to be registered at birth by the State within whose jurisdiction the child is born. Birth registration strengthens children's access to legal protection and social services, and supports the implementation of national legislation on minimum ages, including for child labour, child recruitment and child marriage, and is invaluable to family tracing efforts. By documenting the relationship between the child, his or her parents and place of birth, registration facilitates the acquisition of nationality by birth or descent, helping to prevent statelessness. As specified in the 2008 UNICEF Child Protection Strategy, UNICEF's main actions for supporting birth registration include: (i) legal and policy reform; (ii) civil registry strategic planning; (iii) capacity building and awareness-raising; (iv) the integration of birth registration into other services, such as health and education; and (v) community-based registration and social mobilization campaigns.</p> <p>In relation to the Regional Strategic Plan, most of UNICEF's Country Offices in the Asia and Pacific region are working on strengthening birth registration, and are also beginning to improve the registration of child adoptions. In coordination with other partners, some are also supporting assessments of civil registration systems, and may be able to support planning and implementation of national and regional strategies. Furthermore, through a partnership with the EU, UNICEF will focus on the strengthening of normative and regulatory frameworks, and improving the operations of access to birth registration in Myanmar and Pacific Island Countries.</p>
United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Asia-Pacific Regional Centre	<p>UNDP's APRC provides technical and policy advice to its Country Offices. The APRC builds partnerships and promotes regional capacity building initiatives, which allow UNDP, governments and other development partners to identify, create and share knowledge relevant to development challenges. Its broad areas of works cover: (i) democratic governance; (ii) energy and environment; (iii) crisis prevention and recovery; and (iv) poverty reduction and human development with an overarching effort to achieving the Millennium Development Goals.</p>

Partner	Mandate and contribution for the Regional Strategic Plan
United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)	<p>ESCAP is the regional development arm of the UN and serves as the main economic and social development centre for the UN in Asia and the Pacific. Its mandate is to foster cooperation between the 53 members and 9 associate members. It supports Governments of the region in consolidating regional positions and advocates regional approaches to meeting the region's unique socio-economic challenges in a globalizing world.</p> <p>The ESCAP resolution 67/12 on improvement of CRVS in Asia and the Pacific positions the ESCAP secretariat to take a central role in implementing the Regional Strategic Plan and the broader regional initiative to improve CRVS systems. It places ESCAP as the focal point for coordination amongst development partners operating in the region, and between development organizations and countries, sharing or providing access to technical expertise and resources, and for monitoring and reporting on progress.</p>
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Bangkok	<p>UNESCO works to create the conditions for dialogue among civilizations, cultures and peoples, based upon respect for commonly shared values. It is through this dialogue that the world can achieve global visions of sustainable development encompassing observance of human rights, mutual respect and the alleviation of poverty, all of which are at the heart of UNESCO'S mission and activities. The broad goals and concrete objectives of the international community – as set out in the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) – underpin all UNESCO's strategies and activities. Thus UNESCO's unique competencies in education, science, culture and communication and information contribute to the building of peace, the eradication of poverty, sustainable development and intercultural dialogue.</p> <p>Within this context, UNESCO actively promotes cultural approaches to development interventions, and specifically the use of culturally and linguistically appropriate methodologies and information materials. Beside capacity-building activities on birth and citizenship registration, UNESCO has piloted a programme in Thailand for the development of audio clips and animation cartoons on why birth registration is important and how to register a child at birth. These materials have been developed in 8 minority languages to reach the most vulnerable populations. GIS mapping has also been used to understand the cultural, social and economic situation in target areas of interventions.</p>
United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women)	<p>UN Women is the UN entity dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women. A global champion for women and girls, UN Women was established to accelerate progress on meeting their needs worldwide. Created by the UN General Assembly in July 2010, UN Women became operational on 1st January 2011, and supports UN Member States as they set global standards for achieving gender equality, and works with governments and civil society to design laws, policies, programmes and services needed to implement these standards. It stands behind women's equal participation in all aspects of life, focusing on six priority areas: (i) increasing women's leadership and participation; (ii) ending violence against women; (iii) engaging women in all aspects of peace and security processes; (iv) enhancing women's economic empowerment; (v) making gender equality central to national development planning and budgeting; and (vi) increasing coordination and accountability across the UN system for gender equality.</p>

Partner	Mandate and contribution for the Regional Strategic Plan
<p>United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)</p>	<p>UNHCR has a Global Strategic Priority for 2012-13 of securing birth registration, profiling and individual documentation based on registration for persons of concern which include refugees and asylum-seekers, internally displaced persons and stateless persons. The UN General Assembly has entrusted UNHCR with a mandate relating to the identification, prevention and reduction of statelessness and the protection of stateless persons. As part of its Mandate to prevent statelessness, UNHCR works with Governments, Regional Organizations, UNICEF, UNFPA, Plan International and other partners to try that all persons of concern are registered at birth.</p> <p>A number of UNHCR's Country Offices are already working on birth registration and, in consultation with the Regional Coordinator's Office, Thailand and the Bureau for the Asia-Pacific may be able to support country assessments, plans or implementation. UNHCR has experience of providing technical assistance to States in respect of their nationality and birth registration laws, as has extensive operational experience in respect of registration of the populations of concern. UNHCR has been contributing to the development of the Regional Plan and participates in the Organizing Committee, Drafting Committee and the Communications and Advocacy Committee.</p>
<p>United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)</p>	<p>UNFPA is an international development agency that promotes the right of every woman, man and child to enjoy a life of health and equal opportunity. In addition to carrying out programmes on sexual and reproductive health and gender aspects, UNFPA works on major population issues (ageing, migration...) and their interrelations with development processes. The availability of population statistics is essential in that perspective and UNFPA activities can include at country level the strengthening of statistical systems in order to make it possible to monitor demographic trends and to integrate population dynamics into development planning. As an important component of population statistics, vital statistics are therefore of high interest to UNFPA. They also provide stakeholders with the best source of information on maternal mortality or prenatal sex selection that are important areas of work for UNFPA.</p> <p>UNFPA is interested in contributing to the Regional Strategic Plan, particularly through supporting activities at regional level, where technical expertise in statistics and demography is available. Financial resources for activities at country level (assessments) can also possibly be mobilized from the budget of UNFPA Country Programmes, providing these activities are aligned with the priority areas of these Programmes.</p>

Partner	Mandate and contribution for the Regional Strategic Plan
University of Queensland: Health Information System Knowledge Hub (HISHub)	<p>HISHub works to increase the critical, conceptual and strategic analysis of key Health Information System (HIS) issues relevant to the Asia Pacific region with the aim to inform policy thinking and practical application at the national, regional and international levels. To carry out this mandate HISHub conducts research in most areas of health information system development, develops tools and resources that can assist countries improving their systems, teaches short courses on Health Information Systems and Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS). HISHub also undertakes Technical assistance to countries in the areas of Vital Statistics improvement and conducts CRVS assessments in a holistic manner, including causes of death analysis, death certification and ICD training, medical records reviews, death distribution and verbal autopsy methods. HISHub knowledge resources and publications are widely disseminated and used by partner agencies and countries to influence practice and thinking at national, regional and international levels.</p> <p>HISHub aims at supporting the Regional Strategic Plan as an academic partner and as a source of technical advice for strengthening health information and CRVS systems.</p>
World Health Organization (WHO)	<p>WHO is the directing and coordinating authority for health within the UN system. It is responsible for providing leadership on global health matters, shaping the health research agenda, setting norms and standards, articulating evidence-based policy options, providing technical support to countries and monitoring and assessing health trends. With regard to CRVS, WHO's mandate is to provide technical assistance wherever possible and play a coordinating role to bring all stakeholders together, to take action, and to follow up and remain accountable for sustainable progress. WHO provides CRVS technical support for careful, realistic, multi-stakeholder and focused strategic planning and management processes that are country-led with recommendations made and follow up to build on existing infrastructure and steer countries towards meeting international standards in a holistic manner.</p> <p>WHO has been partnering with ESCAP and other agencies to undertake comprehensive CRVS assessments, facilitate training in CRVS, assist countries in developing strategic plans for CRVS improvement and address priority actions identified in the region.</p> <p>WHO has assisted with convening and launching the Asia eHealth Information Network (www.aehin.org) and the Pacific Health Information Network (www.phinnetwork.org) in collaboration with other partners to provide a platform for HIS and CRVS professionals to share, learn, exchange, and provide peer-to-peer technical assistance in strategic areas pertaining to CRVS – including policy and legal frameworks, mechanisms for coordination and governance, implementation of standards, and guidance and training materials. WHO is taking a convening role for countries in the region in order to incorporate and align efforts of all UN agencies for the improvement of CRVS. WHO shall also provide consultative support on key areas requested, such as collection and utilization of essential data elements from CRVS from multiple agencies to create reliable information for decision making across the health sector.</p>