

## Country Statement

Ministerial Segment of the Second Ministerial Conference on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific (Bangkok, 19 November 2021)

**Mr. Md. Tazul Islam, MP, Honorable Minister**

Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development & Co-operatives, Government of Bangladesh

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Respected Chair, Esteemed Colleagues, Distinguished Delegates, Your Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen!

Very good morning to you all!

It is my immense pleasure and honor to be part of this great occasion – the Second Ministerial Conference on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific. On behalf of the Bangladesh delegation, I would like to express my heartiest thanks and gratitude to ESCAP and partner agencies for organizing such an excellent event. This is the best forum for sharing our experiences in achievements of the CRVS Decade (2015-2024). This will provide us with guidance for the best utilization of CRVS for fulfilling the theme of Sustainable Development Goals “Leave no one behind”.

The theme of the CRVS decade is ‘Get everyone in the picture’. We are proud to note that this theme exactly aligns with the principles of our Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman who strongly urged upon the world communities for establishing social justice and equity. He had a dream of creating Golden Bengal with inclusive and equitable development. At this auspicious gathering today, I would like to pay my profound homage to his departed soul. However, we are fortunate that his beloved daughter and worthiest successor, Hon’ble Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina carried forward the vision of Bangabandhu. Accordingly, inclusiveness and social empowerment have been the guiding principle of our development agenda as stipulated in our 8<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan, Vision 2031, and Vision 2041.

In Bangladesh, the CRVS implementation mission has started way back in 2014. We are heading towards the implementation of CRVS with the shared vision of the Regional Action Framework (RAF) by 2024. Moreover, we are also working with our development partners like Vital Strategies, UNICEF, and WHO along with the associates ESCAP to ensure the set visionary goal “get everyone in the picture” and target of SDG “legal

identity for all including birth registration by 2030". The recently published Sustainable Development Report 2021 appreciated our achievement in SDG targets. Subsequently, Hon'ble Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina most deservedly received the 'SDG Progress Reward'.

**Mr. Chair,**

The developed countries have a long tradition of institutionalized civil registration systems, which is uncommon in the developing world. However, we are proud to have inherited a civil registration system based on the Birth and Death Registration Act of 1873 that has been repealed by the Birth and Death Registration Act, 2004. We introduced the Birth and Death Registration Information System (BRIS) in 2009 which enhanced our institutional capacity. We established the Office of the Registrar General (ORG) for Birth and Death by further amending the relevant law in 2013. We formulated an associated rule for birth and death registration in 2018 making birth and death certificates conditional for various government services. This rule was instrumental in dramatically increasing the issuance of birth-death certificates. Bangladesh has a high-level political commitment and strong coordination mechanism for setting up an inclusive and effective CRVS system. There is a CRVS related steering committee consisting of 25 members headed by the Cabinet Secretary including 19 secretaries of ministries for policy support. Moreover, we have a CRVS Implementation committee, CRVS Technical Committee, and CRVS Legal Review committee as a part of the coordination mechanism to implement the effective CRVS in Bangladesh.

**Mr. Chair,**

Our government has taken the necessary steps to attain the CRVS goals as set out in the 'Regional Action Framework'. The Office of the Registrar General (ORG) is working hard with support from government agencies and development partners for achieving the targets. Since the 'First Ministerial Conference on CRVS, 2014' we have made **considerable progress** as follows:

- The Office of the Registrar General commenced a web-based Birth and Death Registration Information System (BDRIS) in 2020 to achieve the universal birth and death registration targets by 2024.

- We introduced unique ID (UID) to identify each person separately. The Office of the Registrar General (ORG) is using that unique ID(UID) during the birth registration.
- Community registrars are providing congratulatory letters for birth and condolence messages for deaths to encourage registrations.
- We linked birth and death registration activities as indicators of the Annual Performance Agreement (APA) of district and sub-district level offices. Bangladesh is using the APA as a prescribed tool to evaluate the government offices' annual performance which is aligned with our vision and development agenda. At the end of the year, the achievements of the indicators are reflected in their overall performance. Therefore, the APA tool significantly influenced the enhancement of implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of birth and death registration activities.
- A legal review on CRVS related laws was conducted to remove the legal constraints in smooth functioning of the system.
- Bangladesh initiated an integrative model of engaging community-based frontline health workers in a formal notification process of birth and death registration in collaboration with the Extended Programme of Immunization (EPI). This is a successful initiative known as the Kaliganj Model is being rolled out nationally. We have around 100% vaccine coverage for immunization of infants and children under EPI implemented by community-based frontline health workers. Therefore, the involvement of community-based frontline health workers was felt essential for the completeness of birth and death registration. The Kaliganj model implemented in a few districts across the country led by the ORG under the overall guidance and coordination of the Cabinet Division. This model led to a dramatic increase in the completeness of birth and death registration in pilot districts. Strong political commitment and active engagement of local leaders were the keys to the Kaliganj model's success.
- Real-time monitoring system is in place for tracking the progress of birth and death registration.
- To uphold the citizen's rights and entitlement of identity, all individuals are provided with birth and death certificates immediately after the registration is completed.
- Government has decided to conduct the inequality assessment in civil registration with support from ESCAP.

- Bangladesh using the birth registration number of below 18 children for having COVID-19 vaccine registration.
- Bangladesh developed as is Business Process Mapping (BPM) for birth and death registration.
- Local Government Division enforced online death registration to get succession or inheritance certificates from concerned local government organizations.

**Mr. Chair,**

In spite of these achievements, we still have some challenges. We are still struggling to integrate the fragmented sources of registration. The Birth & Death database and National ID (NID) database along with other databases will be integrated into a complete civil registry. Here, we have some **specific challenges:**

- Establishing interoperability and synchronization of data among the systems and selection of appropriate technological solutions in creating CRVS structure.
- Deduplication of birth registration data, which were migrated into the new BDRIS system from old systems.
- Low demand of birth registration within 45 days because it is not mandatory to get any basic services before the primary school enrolment at the age of five. Moreover, we saw low demand for death registration, especially for women and children.
- Limited human resources at ORG for the overall management of the system and lack of skilled personnel for coding of diseases at health facilities.
- Multiplicity of agencies and systems as well as infrastructure.
- Varied legal and administrative frameworks often with disconcerted focus and priority for CRVS system.
- Unavailability of the appropriate data field and technical difficulties in producing vital statistics from the civil registration system.

**Mr. Chair,**

Implementing Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) receive special attention in Bangladesh. For us, it is an opportunity to streamline and synchronize the civil registration processes being administered by the Office of the Registrar General. We adopted a whole-of-government approach, and the Cabinet Division is given the responsibility to lead the effort. Moreover, the government of Bangladesh has a vision of establishing digital Bangladesh where all government services will be reached at the

doorstep of people. Therefore, several **initiatives are being taken** to formulate an inclusive CRVS system linked to an integrated service delivery platform.

- Based on Unique ID (UID) Birth and Death Registration and Information System (BDRIS) is being linked with District Health Information Software (DHIS2), National Identification (NID) system, primary education system, secondary and higher secondary system, and family planning system to increase the scope of birth and death registration.
- The ORG is going to amend the birth and death registration rules, 2018 to further increase the demand for birth and death registration.
- ORG is taking steps for raising community awareness.
- ORG is taking further steps to improve cause of death information from facilities in death registration.
- Health Service Division will scale up the Medical Certificate of Cause of Death (MCCOD) in half of the total government and private hospitals in the district and subdistrict level by 2023 and Plan for Verbal Autopsy (VA) scale-up to a nationally representative sample of 56 sub-districts by 2024.
- Law and Justice Division is taking an initiative to introduce online marriage and divorce registration system that will be integrated with birth registration data to identify the legal age for wedding couples thereby reducing child marriage.

**Mr. Chair,**

The shared vision, the goals, and targets of the Regional Action Framework (RAF) are somehow ambitious. Bangladesh still has a long way to travel before catching up with the developed countries. Therefore, international, and regional support and collaboration will play a significant role in establishing our integrated CRVS system. Technical assistance, experiences as well as technology transfer are needed to attain the SDG and CRVS decade vision. Additional donor funding and regional cooperation is required in developing robust CRVS strategic plans, integrating the system, data deduplication, and ensuring data quality following the regional best practices.

Finally, I would like to conclude my speech reiterating our strong commitment to fulfill the declaration of the CRVS decade (2015-2-24) agenda “Get Everyone in the picture” by 2024.

Excellencies, ladies, and gentlemen, thank you very much for your patient hearing.