

Intervention for the Ministerial Segment

Agenda Item 10: Towards a shared vision of universal and responsive civil registration and vital statistics systems that facilitate the realization of rights and support good governance, health, and development

As a concrete manifestation of the Philippine government's support to the outcome of the First Ministerial Conference on CRVS in Asia and the Pacific, President Benigno S. Aquino III signed Proclamation No. 1106 on 20 August 2015, which declared the years 2015 to 2024 as Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) Decade and the adoption of the localized theme, "*Get Every Pinoy and Pinay in the Picture*" initiative. The proclamation strengthens the establishment of the national coordinating mechanism for the implementation and monitoring of an effective and efficient CRVS in the country.

Aligned to achieving the initiative, the Interagency Committee on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (IACCRVS) which is composed of 9 national government agencies was created. The committee serves as a venue for the discussion and resolution of issues on CRVS, the review of current techniques/methodologies/strategies, and the recommendation of policies and workable procedures towards the improvement of the civil registration and vital statistics in the country. It asserts that an efficient and effective CRVS supports national and local administrators to deliver services by helping them to identify what services are needed, where the services are needed and by whom.

Every year, the Philippine Statistics Authority spearheads the celebration of the Civil Registration Month during February in consonance with Proclamation No. 682 issued on 28 January 1991 by former President Corazon Cojuangco Aquino. The observance of this celebration serves as a reminder to the citizenry of their duty to register acts and events concerning the status of persons. It also helps enhance nationwide awareness and appreciation of the legal, administrative, and statistical values of civil registry documents and underscores the necessity for the Philippine Congress to provide adequate funds for the enforcement and administration of laws on civil registration.

As part of the mechanism to implement a more robust civil registration and vital statistics in the country, subnational levels of the IACCRVS were established by the PSA through the Regional Directors. As of today, more subnational level IACCRVS in the regions of the country have been created with members coming from different government agencies and local Associations of Civil Registrars.

The modern use of technology has paved the way towards delivering more efficient, customer-centric services in this rapidly changing world. The PSA continues to digitize its civil registration operation systems through a Private-Public Partnership project. The Civil Registry System-Information Technology Project Phase II (CRS-ITP2) is a successor project of the CRS-ITP Phase 1, under a Build-Transfer-Operate (BTO) scheme. The CRS-ITP2 involves the computerization of the civil registration

operations and is designed to collect, access, store, maintain, and manage civil registry documents and the specimen signature of the city/municipal civil registrars using imaging technology.

The PSA collaborated with Vital Strategies and University of Melbourne to improve the timeliness, completeness, and accuracy of vital statistics generated from 2015 to 2019. The project aimed to introduce interventions and trainings available under the Data for Health Initiatives (D4HI) that will support the national CRVS priorities. The project comprised of the systematic review of the CRVS system through the CRVS Enterprise Architecture Analysis, trainings in the Analysis of Causes of National Deaths for Action (ANACONDA), the continuous quality improvement and capacity building focused on estimating completeness of birth and death registration, and the introduction and support for automated coding of causes of death through IRIS.

To provide timely and accurate data for policy and decision-making, the release of birth, death, and marriage statistics were adjusted from quarterly to monthly starting October 2021. The schedule of data dissemination of the vital statistics was modified from two (2) years after the reference year to eleven (11) months after the reference year for marriage statistics; twelve (12) months after the reference year for birth statistics; and thirteen (13) months after the reference year for death statistics.

Based on the latest data, our country still has 5.1 percent of its total population that needs to be registered. Towards increasing birth registration, various initiatives and partnerships with government and non-government organizations have been engaged to register the births and other civil registry documents of Indigenous Peoples, Muslim Filipinos, and other marginalized sectors of the society. Some of the significant projects include:

1. The Special Consular Mission for the registration of more than 10,000 undocumented Filipino workers and their families in the palm plantations in Sabah in partnership with the Department of Foreign Affairs and the Philippine Embassy in Kuala Lumpur.
2. The Birth Registration Project in the Province of Aklan, which is a baseline project aimed to register a total 10,000 unregistered births of Indigenous Peoples (IPs) and the poorest sector of the cities/municipalities in the province of Aklan.
3. The registration of births of 3,000 Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) Decommissioned Combatants and issuance of their Philippine National ID in the province of Sulu in collaboration with the Office of the Presidential Adviser for the Peace Process.
4. The registration of births of 15,000 Mangyans in Oriental Mindoro in partnership with Initiatives for Dialogue through Empowerment and Alternative Legal Services Inc. (IDEALS), a non-government, non-profit organization.
5. The initiative to end statelessness through registration of Persons of Indonesian Descent (PIDs) and Sama Bajaus in Mindanao spearheaded by the Philippine Government through the Department of Justice and UNHCR.

Meanwhile, the target level of 90.0% completeness of death registration for the period 2015 to 2020 has been achieved based on our CRVS Mid-Decade Assessment. However, more work needs to be done to improve the registration of deaths to cover the remaining 10% that include, among others, death registration of Muslims, Indigenous Peoples (IPs), and other marginalized sectors.

Since 2019, the Philippines, just like most countries in the Asia-Pacific Region, continues to be affected by the COVID-19 Pandemic. This served as motivation for the PSA to adopt the theme *“Strengthening Civil Registration and Vital Statistics’ Digital Information: The Ways to Manage the New Normal”* in its activities for the year. Given the new normal, our efforts in improving the delivery of our civil registration services and vital statistics must be geared towards making our processes more convenient and safer for our clients, partners, and stakeholders.

Republic Act No. 11055, or the Philippine Identification System Act, aims to establish a single national identification system for all citizens and resident aliens of the country. The Philippine National Identification System or PhilSys will transform how services are delivered in the Philippines and accelerate our transition into a digital economy. The pandemic has slowed down the registration process for PhilID but different strategies have been implemented to meet the committed targets.

Based on our CRVS Mid-Decade Assessment, while much has been done, the major players and stakeholders of Philippine civil registration and vital statistics have still a lot of work to do before the end of the CRVS Decade 2015-2024.

However, with the generous support and assistance of our local and international partners both from the public and private sector and our united efforts, we are confident that the attainment of our goals and targets for the CRVS is possible. Let us remain committed to *“Get Every Pinoy and Pinay in the Picture”* and make sure that no one is left behind.

Our journey to improve the CRVS in the Philippines is never-ending. We had a good start and have stayed on course. However, the momentum gained must be sustained despite the challenges and the threats of this pandemic. We need to ensure that no Filipino child is born stateless and that every vital event in his/her lifetime is recorded.

It is also our fervent wish that the highs and the hype about CRVS will continue even beyond the year 2024.

Thank you very much!