Philippine Country Statement
Health Sector’s Vital Role to Catalyze CRVS Improvements

Agenda item 3. The potential of the health sector to catalyze accelerated improvement in civil registration and vital statistics systems and the role of civil registration and vital statistics in the response to and recovery from the coronavirus disease pandemic

Birth and mortality statistics begin and end in the health sector. In the Philippines, health facilities play a critical role in recording and certifying the occurrence of these vital events, which is then registered at the civil registrar offices and validated by the statistics authority. Nationally and globally, the validated civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) data serve as the cornerstone of effective health program planning, resource allocation, and policy development.

The double-digit improvement in death registration coverage since 2010 was attributed to the tireless campaign in the health sector to have all deaths registered. The current focus now is to ensure the improvement in the quality of the certification of deaths.

The World Health Organization provided guidance on how to certify COVID-19 death. This proved to be a big help especially during the first months of the pandemic when testing was still very limited. The COVID-19 Pandemic has underscored the importance of having near real-time vital statistics data to inform public health decision makers in implementing measures to mitigate the spread of the pandemic. Because of the guidance, we were able to improve the quality of COVID-19 death certification that now includes probable and confirmed COVID-19 deaths. Data on COVID-19 deaths allowed the Department of Health (DOH) to determine risk classifications of affected areas for community quarantine, identify support that build upon health care capacity and even improve COVID-19 vaccine uptake.

Prior to the Pandemic, the DOH has worked closely with key stakeholders on (1) capacitating health professionals and medical students for proper medical certification on the cause of death (MCCOD); (2) formulating CRVS-related policies to improve death registration; and (3) harnessing digital technologies that are essential to prevent disruption of these services.

Capacitate Health Professionals and Medical Students
The DOH has been offering face-to-face and eLearning opportunities to practicing and future doctors to capacitate them on the principles and practice of MCCOD. As another layer of data quality assurance, the DOH is training the medical records officers and public health nurses on reviewing death certificates before registration.
**Formulate CRVS-related Policies**

Policies were issued to standardize the procedures in certifying deaths, including medico-legal death investigation, based on assessments from legal and regulatory reviews that were conducted in 2017.

**Harness Digital Technologies**

The health and the civil registration sectors can exploit and explore the benefits and potential of digital technology and innovation to improve business processes and analytics.