



Scoping mission on improvement of civil registration system based vital statistics

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Thimphu, Bhutan

Concept Note

Background

There is increasing recognition that vital statistics and dynamic population data obtained from civil registration records are imperative for the effective planning and service delivery in the various sectors ranging from health, education, and social protection at the lowest level of geography. A civil registration system when complete and timely, can be the most reliable data source to track progress on the achievements for a large number of targets of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Many countries in the Asia-Pacific region have incomplete registration stemming from underdeveloped and underperforming civil registration systems. This lack of completeness and reliability (both perceived and real) of civil registration data over the longer term has led to the dis-engagement of the national statistical office from supporting the compilation of vital statistics from civil registration system. These countries often derive their vital statistics from population censuses, regular or ad-hoc household sample surveys and in some rare instances from surveillance systems.

The recent efforts of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and its partners under the guidance of the member States has generated a momentum to accelerate the improvement of the civil registration and vital statistics systems (CRVS) in the Asia and Pacific region. With increased focus and vigor, countries are strengthening their national CRVS systems through improving the legal framework, operations and management, and coordination of the civil registration systems to 'get every one in the picture'. While noteworthy progress is being made in improving registration and documentation, many countries have yet work on the compilation of vital statistics from the civil registration system. An often-cited reason for this lack of initiative has been the issues with civil registration data mentioned above, namely lack of completeness and reliability. This creates a so-called vicious cycle where civil registration data is not used because it is unreliable and in turn, not using the data deprives the CRVS system opportunities to assess and improve civil registration data.

To break this vicious cycle and create a virtuous cycle, the Regional Steering Group on CRVS and the broader partnership are actively promoting the compilation and dissemination of vital statistics from civil registration even when data is incomplete. Compiling vital statistics from civil registration regardless of the state of the data provides:

- A critical opportunity to examine the data, discover any gaps or short comings, and ultimately help accelerate improvements in civil registration;
- Specifically, the exercise will help in identifying non-performing areas in the countries as well as specific issues in these areas;

- On the other hand, well-performing areas where the civil registration is complete or close to complete (e.g. major cities) can serve as a pilot cases that demonstrates and promotes the use of civil registration data for compiling vital statistics;
- The information provides key messages and focus areas for advocating to policy makers for their increased support and political commitment to strengthening CRVS systems;
- An opportunity to explore how even incomplete data can lead to meaningful and valuable analysis.

Scope of work

ESCAP proposes to undertake a mission in Bhutan with the following the objectives:

1. Diagnose the current status of vital statistics production in Bhutan, with particular focus on vital statistics based on civil registration data. The diagnosis will include an assessment of the current registration levels and will contain an assessment of existing processes and other capability issues that affect the production of quality and timely production of vital statistics, such as legal framework, organization and management and human resources;
2. Support the development of a strategy and roadmap for the production of vital statistics based on civil registration will also be also be proposed.

Methodology

The following methodology will be followed

1. Before the mission
 - Literature review and research based on documents including those available on the website of ESCAP and countries as well as documents obtained from countries.
2. During the mission
 - Meeting with relevant officials at senior level /policy makers to advocate for the need to compile vital statistics from civil registration;
 - Meetings with the National Statistics Bureau of Bhutan, the Department of Civil Registration and Census, the Ministry of Health and also with other institutions including academic dealing with demographic, population, and social sector statistics;
 - Meeting with the relevant UN agencies in the countries such as UNICEF, UNFPA and WHO;
 - A half-day workshop with the relevant stakeholder and existing groups/committee in the country;
 - Detailed discussion with relevant staff in national statistics team on details of proposed strategy and roadmap;
3. After the mission
 - Draft a national report containing an overview of current levels of registration, existing processes and capabilities with regard to the production of vital statistics, the issues and challenges faced, and a draft strategy and roadmap for Bhutan based on the findings collected during the scoping mission.