

Workshop on strengthening of civil registration based vital statistics

Thimphu, 30 October 2019

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. Indeed, 67 indicators were identified as being potentially measured using data derived from well-functioning Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) systems.¹

Acknowledging the importance for countries to use civil registration records as a data source for producing high-quality vital statistics, the Asia-Pacific Statistical Community has called for a coordinated and systematic regional approach resulting in the 2014 Ministerial Declaration to “Get Every One in the Picture” in Asia and the Pacific (E/ESCAP/71/14), through which member States made a commitment to improve Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) systems, including the accurate, complete and timely production and dissemination of vital statistics based on registration records.

In recognition of the benefits of using civil registration records as a data source for producing high-quality vital statistics, Bhutan developed its first draft vital statistics report in 2017, co-produced by the Ministry of Home and Cultural Affairs, the Ministry of Health and the National Statistics Bureau. The report contained a number of statistics on live births and deaths, thus demonstrating the usefulness of CRVS as a source of data.

However, the report also raised a number of operational and management issues that need to be resolved before regularly producing civil registration based vital statistics. One of them was the lack of agreement or coordination mechanism to share data between the relevant agencies. This agreement or coordination mechanism should include at least the National Statistics Bureau, the Ministry of Home and Cultural Affairs (both the Department of Civil Registration and Census and the Department of Immigration) and the Ministry of Health. Such agreement or coordination mechanism would also help facilitate the integration of cause of death information in the CRVS systems.

Another important issue raised by the report was the legislative framework for civil registration. Although birth registration is mandatory, the legal time period is one year, which hinders the compilations of timely vital statistics. Indeed, it means statistics for year x cannot be compiled before year $x+2$. Moreover, there is no requirement specified for registering deaths in neither the citizenship law nor the immigration law. As a result, the death registration completeness rate (percentage of deaths registered) remains low, preventing the use of the data for detailed mortality statistics.

¹ Mills, Samuel, Carla Abouzahr, Jane Kim, Bahie M. Rassekh, and Deborah Sarpong. 2017. Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) for Monitoring the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/979321495190619598/pdf/115150-WP-CRVS-for-Monitoring-the-SDGs-web-version-May-18-2017-PUBLIC.pdf>

Introduction

Building upon the findings of the draft vital statistics report, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), in collaboration with the National Statistical Bureau (NSB), will undertake a mission in Bhutan to support the institutionalisation of the production of vital statistics based on civil registration. As part of the mission ESCAP will visit the various stakeholders involved in the collection, transmission and compilation of vital statistics to diagnose the current status of vital statistics production, including the assessment of the current registration levels, and of the existing processes and other capability issues that affect the quality and timely production of vital statistics, such as legal framework, organization and management and human resources.

These visits will be followed by a workshop on strengthening of civil registration based vital statistics to take place on Wednesday, 30 October 2019, from 2 to 5 PM at the premises of the Ministry of Health. During the workshop the relevant stakeholders will present on the status of works related to the collection and production of vital statistics, including causes of death and discuss a potential data sharing agreement.

Following the workshop, ESCAP will consolidate the information collected during the workshop and the visits before discussing a draft roadmap for compilation of vital statistics, particularly through strengthening the civil registration data with the officers from NSB, Department of Civil Registration and Census, Department of Immigration and Ministry of Health.

Objectives

The objectives of the workshop are to:

- Facilitate the understanding of the inter-linkages of the relevant departments and of the coordination issues;
- Obtain a good picture of the business processes as it exists and various bottlenecks (legal, organizational, infrastructural) in collection, transmission. and production of vital statistics, including causes of death; and discuss possible re-design ideas;
- Present the global and regional perspective and key international principles and recommendations; and
- Discuss the identified challenges and actions taken or planned for overcoming them; and
- Discuss an agreement to share data between the different agencies collecting and compiling vital statistics.

Participants

Relevant officers and focal points from concerned Ministries, Departments and representatives of UN agencies, as well as relevant Non-Governmental Agencies and Civil Society Organisations and members of academia.

Dates and Location

30 October 2019, 2-5pm, premises of the Ministry of Health.

Tentative agenda

| Time | Topic | Responsible agency/organization |
|-------------------|---|--|
| 2:00 PM - 2:05 PM | Welcome | National Statistics Bureau |
| 2:05 PM – 2:30 PM | Compiling vital statistics based on civil registration – issues and challenges | National Statistics Bureau |
| 2:30 PM – 2:45 PM | Civil Registration Systems – legal provisions and business processes for registration | Department of Immigration |
| 2:45 PM – 3:00 PM | Improving death registration and causes of death information – quality issues | Ministry of Health |
| 3:00 PM – 3:30 PM | Discussion | National Statistics Bureau |
| 3:30 PM – 3:45 PM | Tea/coffee break | |
| 3:45 PM – 4:00 PM | CRVS system – global and regional perspective | ESCAP |
| 4:00 PM – 4:15 PM | CRVS system in Bhutan – good practices and identified challenges | ESCAP |
| 4:15 PM – 5:00 PM | Discussion on important identified challenges and data sharing agreement | ESCAP and National Statistics Bureau |