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Second Conference of African Ministers
Responsible for Civil Registration

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**Progress against Declaration made by the Ministers responsible for Civil
Registration in the First Conference on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics
(CRVS)**



African Union Commission



African Development Bank

Introduction

The Ministers responsible for Civil Registration in the first conference on CRVS held in August 2010 in Addis Ababa recognized the need to provide a major impetus to strengthening of the CRVS systems in African countries. The two day intense deliberations in the conference led to the Ministers making a declaration in which they pledged support and commitment in taking CRVS to an accelerated growth trajectory and to providing policy and programme directions to the regional organizations and other partners as also to the countries. The Ministers also endorsed a regional Medium Term Plan (MTP) that was presented to them by experts. The historic conference set into motion systematic and coordinated actions at the regional level from the pan-African institutions and other UN partners to prepare grounds for supporting the member states in their endeavour to improve CRVS.

This paper seeks to provide an account of the progress made by the regional institutions and their partners in advancing the CRVS programme in Africa. Annex 1 attempts to briefly provide the action taken or initiated against each of the declaration points and also draws the attention of the Ministers on the issues involved.

Key achievements and progress

1. The total initiative on CRVS in Africa is now conceptualized into a programmatic framework called the Africa Programme on Accelerated Improvement of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (APAI-CRVS). The APAI-CRVS emerged from the necessity of bringing together various CRVS initiatives on the continent into a common and consolidated policy and advocacy framework. The programme has been developed based on international standards, principles and recommendations on CRVS and following the political commitment and policy directives of the ministers in charge of civil registration that urged for a holistic and integrated approach to reforming and improving CRVS systems in the continent. The overall objective of APAI-CRVS is to provide management and programmatic guidance to the regional agenda of reforming and improving CRVS systems. Specifically, the regional programme will provide guidance on the institutional and operational linkages, workflows and results management mechanisms in a more comprehensive and holistic manner encompassing the inter-disciplinary and inter-sectoral interfaces of CRVS systems. The Medium Term Plan (MTP) endorsed by the Ministers is now subsumed into the APAI-CRVS and will serve as a vehicle for implementing the programme.
2. One of the most significant steps after the first conference of the Ministers was the expansion of partnership beyond the three pan-African institutions and formalizing it through a mechanism of a Core Group. The group now includes UNICEF, UNFPA, UNHCR, WHO, Health Metrics Network (HMN), Statistics South Africa (as the Secretariat of the African Symposium on Statistical Development - ASSD), the INDPETH Network. This partnership has helped in mobilizing resources for various activities including the funding of major meetings such the 7th ASSD and 2nd Ministerial Conference. The partnership is proving to be valuable in terms of concrete support to the implementation of the activities in the Medium Term Plan (MTP). Several donors and partners are expressing their interest to join the group to support the APAI-CRVS.
3. The Ministers had directed the UNECA, AfDB and AUC to conduct a regional assessment of CRVS systems covering all countries. The assessment has been completed and is being presented to the Ministers in the second conference. This assessment has been supplemented by assessments in a few other countries on specific aspects.

4. Specific measures have been taken to revive and firmly establish the linkages between civil registration systems and vital statistics systems, which in many countries are either non-existent or weak. The 6th ASSD that was held in Cairo, Egypt in 2010 adopted a resolution that shifted its focus area from Population and Housing Censuses to CRVS systems for the next five symposia beginning 2012. Accordingly, the 7th ASSD held in January 2012 was the first in a series of the five symposia to be convened focusing on CRVS. It was the first time that the civil registration offices and national statistics offices of countries gathered under one roof at the continental level to discuss issues around CR and VS. A number of recommendations were made in the meeting, some of which related to issues of coordination and roles and responsibilities of the two players in the operational aspects of CRVS at country level. The Statistical Commission for Africa in its third session that was held immediately following the 7th ASSD, discussed CRVS as an emerging topic and also made specific recommendations with regard to the role of NSO's in improvement of CR based vital statistics.

5. The Ministers requested the AUC to consider institutionalizing the Conference of African Ministers Responsible for Civil Registration as a standing regional platform to meet biannually. The proposal for instituting the conference of Ministers as a standing platform was approved by the Ministers of Planning and Finance and endorsed by the heads of states during the 19th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union, held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, from 15 to 16 July 2012 .

6. Two operational guidelines have been developed, one on civil registration system and the other on vital statistics system. The main objective of these operational guidelines is to support countries in developing their own guidelines on these two systems for systematic, integrated and efficient operations and management of CR and VS systems.

7. The regional action now needs to be translated into country level initiatives. The first step being proposed under the programme is to support countries in undertaking comprehensive assessments of CRVS systems in their respective countries. A strategy paper has been developed for rolling out the assessments in a systematic and coordinated manner.

8. The details of progress are reported against each of the declaration points in the Annex.

Challenges

9. The first major challenge was the absence of a systematic funding for implementing the activities included in the MTP. The funding support from partners was inadequate and ad-hoc in nature and this unpredictability of funding did affect the smooth implementation of the programme. Maintaining a steady support of human resources at the secretariat was another challenge that impeded the implementation of the programme.

Way forward

10. The declaration made by the Ministers in their first conference sets out clear policy and programme directives which guide the APAI-CRVS. The regional organizations and partners commit to strive harder to ensure that the programme is implemented in its true letter and spirit at the regional and national levels. There is however, a need for a systematic and predictable pool of resources from the partners and from the governments in order to fully achieve the objectives of this continent wide programme.

Annex:

Point number	Ministers declaration	Key action points	Progress made so far	Remarks
1	We, African Ministers responsible for Civil Registration, meeting for the first time in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia from 13 to 14 August 2010 at the instance of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the African Development Bank (AfDB) and the African Union Commission (AUC);	Prepare a proper documentation of the event	The report of the conference is available	
2	Acknowledge that the theme of our first conference: <i>“Improved Civil Status Information for Efficient Public Administration and Generation of Vital Statistics for National Development and MDGs Monitoring in Africa”</i> is both timely and relevant for the achievement of Africa’s development and improvement of public service delivery to our people	Prepare a consolidated document clearly bringing out the importance of CRVS in ensuring good governance and specifically in efficient public policy and administration, securing human rights, generating vital statistics and monitoring development	a) The CRVS initiative in Africa has now been conceptualized into a programme called the Africa Programme on Accelerated Improvement of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (APAI-CRVS) and a document to this effect has been prepared. This document clearly articulates the multi-sectoral linkages of CRVS systems and also benefits that accrue to individuals and organizations.	The APAI-CRVS is presented to the Ministers for their endorsement. The synopsis of the first drafts are presented to the Expert Group
3	Convinced of the importance of civil registration for public policy, good governance, human rights, rights of children, and as a basis for reliable vital statistics;		b) Two Operational Guidelines, one on Civil Registration and the other on Vital Statistics have been developed. These guidelines will also provide the importance of CR and VS systems.	
4	Further acknowledge the importance and contribution of civil registration and vital statistics information for the implementation of the Reference Regional Strategic Framework for Statistical Capacity Building in Africa and the Marrakech Action Plan for Statistics and promoting the African Charter on Statistics;	Mainstreaming CRVS in regional statistical policy documents	The Statistical Commission for Africa in its third session held in January 2012 had recommended that the NSOs should work with all stakeholders to integrate vital statistics derived from civil registration into their national strategies for development of statistics. The CRVS system has also been integrated into the Strategy on Harmonization of Statistics in Africa (SHaSA), which	

			addresses the need for reliable and harmonized statistics in all areas of African integration namely socio-economic, cultural and political.	
5	However note with concern that despite the importance of civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) systems and ongoing efforts, the majority of our countries still lack adequate, viable and complete systems.	<p>a) Conduct a regional assessment on the status of CRVS in member states</p> <p>b) Countries conduct comprehensive assessments of CRVS systems</p>	<p>a) The regional assessment on the status of CRVS in all countries has been conducted. The assessment clearly brings out the inadequacy in all areas of CR and VS systems in the countries.</p> <p>b) A strategy paper has been developed for supporting the countries in conducting the comprehensive assessments that will be led by countries . The assessment will also have to lead to a detailed costed national plan.</p>	The assessment is presented to the Ministers. This would help the Ministers to provide further policy directives for accelerated improvement of the CRVS systems in the countries
6	Affirm the need for strong policy responses, including those aimed at improving CRVS systems as part of the ongoing reforms in our countries.	Develop regional policy and technical paper on integration of CRVS in the ongoing reforms in the countries.	A technical paper on this is yet to be developed. However, the policy document on APAI-CRVS clearly establishes the linkages of the CRVS system with various aspects of administrative services such as identity services, election services, delivery of education and health services. The pivotal role that a complete and efficient CRVS system can play in these systems need to be clearly understood for undertaking a reform process.	
7	Take note of the recommendations of the 2009 Tanzania Regional Workshop on Strengthening Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems in Africa, the second session of the Statistical Commission for Africa, and the Addis Ababa Expert Group Meeting on Civil Registration, preceding this conference, to strengthen CRVS systems in Africa.	<p>a) Assess the implementation status of the recommendations of the 2009 Tanzania Regional Workshop</p> <p>b) Prepare a report and submit to the Statistical Commission for Africa</p>	<p>c) A large part of recommendations of the 2009 Tanzania workshop has now been integrated into the medium term plan, which was developed following this workshop and was endorsed by the Ministers.</p> <p>d) A report on the Progress of CRVS in Africa was submitted to the 3rd Session of the Statistical Commission, Africa</p>	

8	We note that the challenge before us now is to continue mobilizing and rallying political commitment and leadership for the improvement of CRVS systems in Africa. In this regard, we fully endorse the recommendations of our experts on strategies for strengthening CRVS systems.	Develop a framework for implementation of the strategies for strengthening CRVS systems	The APAI-CRVS is proposed to be implemented through a well-defined implementation framework. (Please see Chart 5 of the Policy document on APAI-CRVS). The regional and international institutions have already advocated through various fora for increased political commitment for strengthening CRVS systems in the countries. This effort will be further strengthened and sustained. These institutions with the support of other partners and donors continue to play a supportive role in improving CRVS systems in the countries through the mechanism as described in the policy document	
8.1	In the light of these recommendations, we hereby resolve to: Take appropriate policy measures to facilitate the implementation of plans, programmes and initiatives for the reform and improvement of CRVS systems to achieve universal coverage and completeness, taking into consideration the specific circumstances of our countries. In this regard, we resolve to mainstream CRVS processes into national statistical development strategies and other national plans and programmes, including strengthening coordination of activities among various departments and ministries at national, sub-regional and regional levels;	Countries need to adopt the following key strategies for universal coverage and completeness a) Establish a high level coordination committee in the countries b) Undertake a comprehensive assessment of CRVS system c) Develop a comprehensive plan based on assessment, which is well costed and has an appropriate governance mechanism d) Mainstream CRVS into national statistical development strategies or programmes e) Reflect CRVS in national and sectoral policies and programmes aimed at children, women and disadvantaged population groups f) Reflect CRVS in national development plans	a) The progress achieved by the member states in strengthening the CRVS systems in their respective countries have been submitted through a report by the countries which will be analyzed and presented later. b) The first and the most crucial step in any effort to revamp and strengthen CRVS systems are for the countries to undertake a comprehensive and in-depth assessment of their systems. These country-led assessments should lead to development of plans for accelerated improvement of CRVS in the countries. Technical resources and tools will be available at the regional level to support the countries to facilitate these processes.	
8.2	Intensify awareness-raising campaigns on the procedures and importance of CRVS systems, to ensure effective functioning of the systems.	a) Prepare regional CRVS communication guidelines b) Prepare national CRVS communication plan with implementation guidelines	These activities are yet to be implemented.	

9	We recognize the importance of partnerships and capacity-building to support national efforts to strengthen CRVS.	Actions are indicated in the sub-headings below		
9.1	ECA, AfDB and AUC, as well as other development partners, to continue to support our efforts in capacity-building and mobilizing resources;	Mobilize and allocate adequate resources for the implementation of the medium-term regional CRVS plan	<p>One of the most significant steps after the first conference of the Ministers was the expansion of partnership beyond the three pan-African institutions and formalizing it through a mechanism of a Core Group. The group now includes UNICEF, UNFPA, UNHCR, WHO, Health Metrics Network (HMN), Statistics South Africa (as the Secretariat of the African Symposium on Statistical Development - ASSD), and the INDEPTH Network. This partnership has helped in mobilizing resources for various activities including the funding of major meetings such the 7th ASSD and 2nd Ministerial Conference. The partnership is proving useful in supporting the implementation of the activities in the Medium Term Plan (MTP), which includes a number of activities related to capacity building. One of the first steps that will be taken is to create a pool of experts on CRVS drawn from the experienced persons across Africa. These experts will be made available to countries to facilitate the process of comprehensive assessment and development of plan and also to create experts within the countries</p> <p>The Core Group is also making efforts to rally partners and donors to mobilize resources in support of countries in their effort towards accelerated improvement of CRVS systems. The donors will be encouraged to jointly support the implementation of national plans on CRVS systems.</p>	The implementation of APAI-CRVS requires mobilization of resources both at the regional level and country levels. This requires a more systematic effort that needs to be deliberated upon by the Ministers

9.2	ECA, AfDB and AUC to undertake an evaluation of national CRVS systems and finalize the draft medium-term regional plan and guidelines and report to the next session of the Conference of Ministers;	<p>a) Undertake assessment study of national CRVS systems in member states</p> <p>b) Revisit and update the medium-term plan</p> <p>c) Report to the second session of the Conference of Ministers</p>	<p>a) The regional assessment study has been completed and the report presented. The regional assessment is supported by comprehensive assessments of a few countries on specific aspects of CRVS systems.</p> <p>b) The MTP that was endorsed by the Ministers in their first conference was revisited by the experts in light of the regional assessment that was undertaken in 2011-2012. The MTP has now been reviewed on the basis of the findings of this assessment. It will be seen that the nature of challenges identified at the time of the preparation of the plan in 2010 remains unchanged and therefore, no substantial changes have been made in the MTP.</p>	<p>The Ministers will be requested to endorse the continuity of the MTP and request the Core Group for speedier implementation</p> <p>The Ministers may suggest setting up of a monitoring and evaluation framework</p>
9.3	The African Symposium on Statistical Development (ASSD), which has hitherto focused on mobilizing Africa to fully participate in the 2010 round of population and housing census, to give priority to mobilizing Africa to improve CRVS systems;	The 6th ASSD to give priority to CRVS in the next five symposia and the decision be implemented	The 6th ASSD that was held in Cairo, Egypt from 31 October to 2 November 2010 adopted a resolution that shifted its focus area from Population and Housing Censuses to CRVS systems for the next five symposia beginning 2012. Accordingly, the 7th ASSD held in 2012 was the first in a series of the five symposia to be convened focusing on CRVS. The theme of the ASSD was <i>“Improving Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Institutional and Human Infrastructure”</i> .	
9.4	ECA to consider establishing a substantive post on civil registration and vital statistics with appropriate support staff at the African Centre for Statistics to ensure the sustainability of the ongoing efforts to improve CRVS systems in Africa;	Institutionalize the CRVS secretariat at the African Centre for Statistics with the necessary complement of staff	This is yet to be implemented. In past two years partners have been supporting a couple of staff, which has been largely ad hoc and short term in nature. The partners are working towards a more permanent structure and till such time the same is achieved, partners are making efforts in providing support for a relatively longer period of time.	Ministers may like to issue directives for creation of a secretariat in ACS through a mechanism of Trust Fund to be funded by multiple donors. There is need to organize a donors meeting to initiate the process
9.5	Universities, national and regional statistical and	a) Develop appropriate curricula on	The Africa Group on Statistical Training and	

	demographic training institutions to enhance or develop appropriate curricula for building capacity and improving CRVS systems in Africa;	<p>CRVS in academic institutions and for in-service training centres</p> <p>b) Prepare appropriate training manuals and toolkits</p> <p>c) Conduct training on regular basis</p>	Human Resource (AGROST) has been tasked with the responsibility of development of curricula. The group is in the process of selection of statistical training centres that will take the lead in development of the curricula. The development of training manuals and tools are however yet to be initiated due to lack of resources	
9.6	The health sector to align the health system with CRVS systems to improve coordination and sharing of data on births and deaths with assigned causes for all deaths, with national statistical offices and CRVS authorities;	<p>a) Develop background notes to advocate with health sector on the need to align the health system with the CRVS system for improvement of coverage of birth and death registration</p> <p>b) Prepare a conceptual paper on improving cause of deaths statistics in Africa</p>	<p>a) The CRVS operational framework that the APAI-CRVS proposes for every country to ideally develop clearly delineates the responsibility of the health sector in facilitating the process of birth and death registration. The document also identifies the health sector as one of the key users of the statistics generated from the CRVS system and a potential user of registration records for improving service delivery on health. The concept note for the second Ministerial meeting also highlights the fact that the regional initiative on CRVS is clearly linked to the objectives and recommendations the United Nations Commission on Information and Accountability for Women's and Children's Health that was established on the request of the Secretary-General of the United Nations to coordinate a process to determine the most effective international institutional arrangements for global reporting, oversight and accountability on women's and children's health. The Commission prioritized 10 recommendations, the first of which is related to civil registration: "Vital events: By 2015, all countries have taken significant steps to establish a system for registration of births, deaths and causes of death, and have</p>	The Ministers may like to re-iterate this in light of the new initiative emanating from the Information and Accountability Commission

			<p>well functioning health information systems that combine data from facilities, administrative sources and surveys". This conference very consciously and strongly brings out linkages between CRVS system and health sector and advocated the presence of Health Ministers from selected countries. This also fits well with the theme of the conference on institutional and human infrastructure.</p> <p>b) An inception note has been prepared and presented to the Ministers. The paper proposes a clear set of approaches and processes in improving death registration and recording and compiling causes of death statistics</p>	The Ministers may want to agree in principle the proposed approach suggested in the inception paper on causes of death
9.7	The United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD), the Health Metrics Network (HMN) and other development partners to strengthen their support to regional and national CRVS initiatives and programmes, including aligning their assistance accordingly.	<p>a) Prepare CRVS regional policy framework on collaboration and integration of interventions</p> <p>b) UNSD strengthens its global work on CRVS and lends support to the African initiative</p> <p>c) HMN and other development partners join forces and with the regional initiative through an institutionalized mechanism</p>	<p>a) The APAI-CRVS clearly defines the mechanism of collaboration and integration of interventions. The Core Group provides the guidance on technical matters</p> <p>b) UNSD is now revising the Principles and Recommendations for Vital Statistics System and is going to reiterate that civil registration is considered to be the most referred source of vital statistics. The ECA is advocating with UNSD to revise the earlier five manuals on various aspects of civil registration.</p> <p>c) The Core Group mechanism is not only helping in integrating and aligning the various interests to the regional initiative but also their assistance. The same approach is expected to be followed in member states</p>	

10	<p>Lastly, we request the AUC to consider institutionalizing the Conference of African Ministers Responsible for Civil Registration and Vital Statistics as a standing regional platform to meet biannually, for discussion and evaluation of political and policy issues related to civil registration and vital statistics in Africa.</p>	<p>AUC take necessary action as per the procedures in institutionalizing the conference as a standing regional platform</p>	<p>The AUC has already begun the process. The proposal has been approved by the Ministers of Planning and Finance and endorsed by the heads of states during the 19th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union, held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, from 15 to 16 July 2012 .</p>	
11	<p>We thank the Government and people of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia for hosting this successful Conference. We especially thank the Honourable Minister of Justice, His Excellency Mr. Berhan Hailu for his leadership in this endeavour to improve CRVS systems in Africa. We are particularly grateful to ECA, AfDB, AUC, the Central Statistics Agency of Ethiopia (CSA), UNSD, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), HMN, and the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) for successfully organizing this important Conference.</p>	<p>No particular action required</p>		