



**Fifth Conference of African Ministers Responsible
for Civil Registration**
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Issues paper

The state of civil registration and vital statistics and national identity in sub-Saharan Africa

(Development initiatives, July 2019)

Conference theme

*Innovative Civil Registration and Vital Statistics systems:
Foundation for Legal Identity Management*



APAI-CRVS
Everyone visible in Africa

**Decade for Repositioning
of Civil Registration and
Vital Statistics in Africa
2017-2026**

I. Introduction

1. Informed decisions about the allocation of finance and resources contribute towards an end to poverty, increase the resilience of the world's most vulnerable people, and ensure that no one is left behind. These decisions need to be underpinned by good quality, transparent data and evidence on poverty and resources, and lead to increased accountability and sustainable long-term outcomes. In this context, the integration of digital birth registration with national identity is critical, both to ensure that no one is left behind and to streamline access to services for those most disadvantaged.

2. The present paper on the state of civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) and national identity in sub-Saharan Africa will argue that for CRVS to be robust and sustainable it needs to be digital. And for CRVS to make a substantial difference to people's lives, it needs to be linked to a national identity system.

3. Comparing progress on resource mobilization and programme implementation across Africa in a coherent, standard format should promote best practice and highlight common challenges.

4. This paper will:

- Propose a standard monitoring methodology
- Provide initial data from a number of countries applying this methodology
- Include country case studies for Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria and Uganda

II. Current monitoring limitations

5. From currently available birth statistics, it is difficult to ascertain how many births are actually registered through the issuance of a certificate and the entry of these details into a central authoritative register. Furthermore, current global monitoring systems do not make a distinction between analogue and digital processes (for example, see the United Nations Statistics Division questionnaire on vital statistics below).

United Nations Statistics Division Questionnaire on Vital Statistics¹

| United Nations Statistics Division - Demographic Statistics Section | | | | | | Country-Name |
|---|-------------|--------|---------------|--------------------|-----------|----------------------|
| Questionnaire on Vital Statistics | | | | | | Reporting Year: 2018 |
| Quality of vital statistics obtained from civil registration | | | | | | |
| I. Basis of tabulation | Live births | Deaths | Infant deaths | Late foetal deaths | Marriages | Divorces |
| Present basis of tabulation: | | | | | | |
| - date of occurrence | | | | | | |
| - date of registration | | | | | | |
| How long has the present basis of tabulation been used? | | | | | | |
| II. Estimated completeness of registration | Live births | Deaths | Infant deaths | Late foetal deaths | Marriages | Divorces |
| 100 per cent | | | | | | |
| 90 - 99 per cent | | | | | | |
| 80 - 89 per cent | | | | | | |
| 70 - 79 per cent | | | | | | |
| 60 - 69 per cent | | | | | | |
| 50 - 59 per cent | | | | | | |
| Under 50 per cent | | | | | | |
| Please specify: | | | | | | |
| (a) Year(s) to which completeness estimate refers | | | | | | |
| (b) Basis of completeness estimate | | | | | | |
| -Demographic analysis | | | | | | |
| -Dual record check | | | | | | |
| -Questions in population census | | | | | | |
| -Questions in sample surveys | | | | | | |
| -Other (specify) | | | | | | |
| -No evaluation | | | | | | |

6. A number of monitoring methodologies are in existence, including:
- From the World Bank: *State of Identification Systems in Africa*²
 - From the World Health Organization: *Improving the quality and use of birth, death and cause-of-death information: guidance for a standards-based review of country practices*³
 - From the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF): *country profiles*⁴
 - From a survey developed by a group of academics led by the United States Center for Disease Control as part of a study on national health information systems for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals⁵
 - From UNICEF: *Status of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in South Asia Countries 2018*⁶

¹ See <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic-social/crvs/>.

² See <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/298651503551191964/pdf/119065-WP-ID4D-country-profiles-report-final-PUBLIC.pdf>.

³ See <https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/44274>.

⁴ See <https://data.unicef.org/resources/crvs/angola/>.

⁵ See <https://bmjopen.bmj.com/content/9/5/e027689.long>.

⁶ See <https://data.unicef.org/resources/resource-type/country-profiles/>.

7. These methodologies tend either to be overly detailed (for sustainable data collection) or subtopic specific. None of them make a clear distinction between digital and analogue processes or deal with the interrelationship between CRVS and digital identity. They do, however, reflect a wealth of experience that a streamlined yet comprehensive methodology can draw upon.

III. Proposed methodology

8. The methodology developed in this paper will be guided by a number of principles and considerations:

- Consistency with pan-African governance and instruments, including the African Charter on Statistics,⁷ the Strategy for the Harmonization of Statistics in Africa,⁸ the Nouakchott Declaration,⁹ the Africa Programme on Accelerated Improvement of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics¹⁰ and the new Partnership for Digital Identity.¹¹
- A fair and level playing field for all countries to be assessed, regardless of size or available resources.
- Breadth of scope without unnecessary depth of detail, and a balance between comprehensiveness coverage and realistic demands on data collectors.

9. The methodology developed will cover both birth registration and national identity. The key elements are shown below.

⁷ See <https://au.int/en/treaties/african-charter-statistics>.

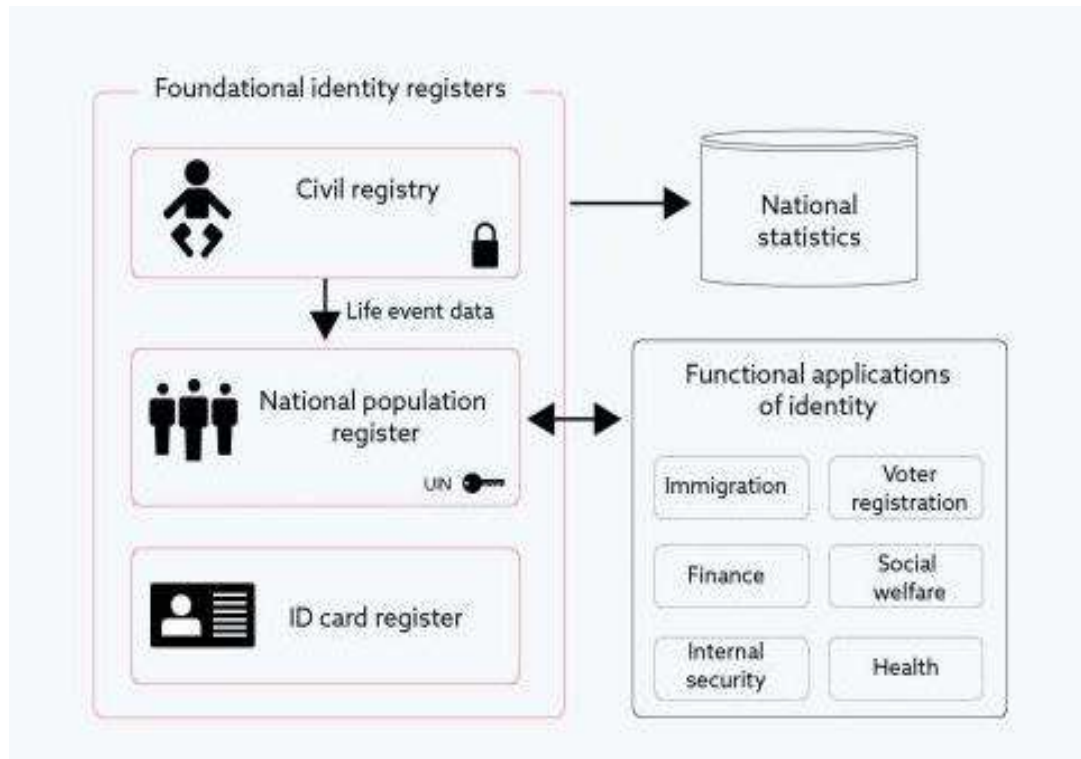
⁸ See <https://au.int/en/ea/statistics/shasa>.

⁹ See <http://apai-crvs.org/sites/default/files/public/Nouakchott%20Declaration%20-%20Dec2017-English.pdf>.

¹⁰ See www.apai-crvs.org/.

¹¹ See <https://au.int/en/pressreleases/20181118/partnership-digital-identity-launched>.

Key elements in an integrated civil registration and vital statistics and national identity ecosystem¹²



- Legal frameworks governing the rights and responsibilities of citizens and Governments.
- Administrative infrastructures responsible for managing and implementing systems.
- Existing and planned analogue processes and metrics.
- Digital processes and metrics.
- Information and communications technology infrastructure and software requirements. Architectures and processes for the integration of systems.
- Past, current and planned investments from both international and domestic sources.
- The use of identity to improve access to services. The use of birth and death registration data in the production of vital statistics.

¹² See <https://crvsgateway.info/CRVS-and-identity-management-systems-664>.

IV. Data collection

10. As much data as possible will be collected from all countries, from both public sources and research contacts.

11. In-depth research will be conducted in four countries: Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria and Uganda. This will allow for the monitoring methodology to be thoroughly tested and for key stakeholders to engage in a review of both the methodology and data prior to the meeting in Lusaka.

V. Issues for discussion

12. As the aim of this paper is to develop a pragmatic and sustainable framework for monitoring progress on an ongoing basis, discussion – led by stakeholders from Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria and Uganda - should be focused on the credibility and feasibility of these proposals:

- Is it helpful for the actual progress made by countries in implementing digital CRVS and national identity systems to be tracked in a consistent, transparent manner?
- Can a standard monitoring framework be used to highlight best practices and make the case for sustainable investments?
- How should such a framework be governed?

VI. About Development Initiatives

13. Development Initiatives¹³ is an independent international development organization with offices in Uganda and Kenya that is focusing on the use of data to drive poverty eradication and sustainable development. Its work includes assessments of national data ecosystems and making the case for long-term investments in sustainable data infrastructures.¹⁴ Development Initiatives is currently undertaking a research study for the United Kingdom Department for International Development on “National Census and Civil Registration in South Asia”.¹⁵ As part of its commitment to the Inclusive Data Charter¹⁶ and its P20 Initiative,¹⁷ it is also developing a new global database on the “State of CRVS”.

¹³ See <http://devinit.org/about/>.

¹⁴ See <http://devinit.org/post/long-term-investments-in-a-short-term-world-arguments-for-sustainable-data/>.

¹⁵ See www.getinthepicture.org/resource/dfid-invitation-tender-study-national-census-and-civil-registration-south-asia.

¹⁶ See <http://www.data4sdgs.org/initiatives/inclusive-data-charter>.

¹⁷ See <http://devinit.org/p20i/>.