



ECA



Preparatory Meeting of Experts for the Fifth Conference of African
Ministers Responsible for Civil Registration
Lusaka, Zambia
14-16 October 2019

Parallel session

**Good practices in linking civil registration and
vital statistics and identity management systems:
case studies from around the world**

Conference Theme:

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



APAI-CRVS
Everyone visible in Africa



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

Background and Context

The conference theme is rooted on the fact that CRVS systems are a foundation for legal identity. Its concept recalls that the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* and *Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want* are rooted in universal rights and inclusive development and driven by the key principle of “leaving no one behind”. The absence of legal identity is the root cause of invisibility, rendering individuals and populations unseen by governments, thus uncounted and excluded. Target 16.9 of the SDGs recognizes this, calling on governments to **provide legal identity for all, including birth registration by 2030**.

The momentum to close the identity gap in Africa and make progress toward target 16.9 of the SDGs presents an opportunity for governments to strengthen their CRVS systems. But this requires investing in sustainable CRVS systems that are integrated with health and national identity management. The fundamental principle is that civil registration systems should serve as the basis for lifetime identification, and that they provide continuous, reliable and disaggregated data at any geographical or administrative level.

An integrated and holistic approach is indispensable for granting legal identity to all, and offering the evidence needed to plan and deliver services and monitor the SDG’s at national, regional, and global levels. Ultimately it delivers a life of dignity for all.

As the global momentum converges towards the importance of holistic identity management systems – or identity (eco)system – important, practical questions are raised: *How can countries integrate their civil registration, identity management, health information, and vital statistics systems when they were designed and currently operate as separate systems? How can a paper-based civil registration system serve as the foundation of an identity management system when the latter is digitized? What are the preconditions for an integrated system when the different parts are implemented under different ministries? What have other countries done to overcome these and other practical challenges?*

Lessons Learned from the Case Studies

The Centre of Excellence for CRVS Systems and the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data (GPSDD) hope to shed light on these questions at the COM5. The conference presents a unique and timely opportunity to officially launch a *Compendium of Good Practice in Linking CRVS and ID Management Systems*.

This event will allow for a deep-dive into the experiences of six countries – Armenia, Ecuador, Kyrgyzstan, Namibia, the Netherlands, and Peru – that have pursued a holistic approach. The mix of countries reflects diverse experiences in building identity ecosystems in different parts of the world with different constitutional and legal systems, administrative traditions, and institutional arrangements. The session will draw out the good practices employed by the different countries and highlight how their very different starting points were not an obstacle to building their identity system around a holistic approach. In fact, the session will highlight that there are many ways to do this, all of which can achieve positive outcomes for people in terms of rights and benefits.

The session will draw on the grounded experiences of these countries to:

- Provide evidence of the benefits of the holistic approach to CRVS and identity management, where civil registration and identity management systems work together to ensure the credibility and integrity of both systems.
- Speak to the critical importance of Civil Registration as the provider of legally valid evidence of identity - and changes in identity data between birth and death.
- Present opportunities for advancing civil registration systems and increasing registration coverage that comes because of tighter cooperation or integration with identity management systems.

The compendium includes a synthesis that brings together the good practices and common learnings from across the case studies. It begins with basic definitions and a discussion of what is meant by the holistic approach to civil registration, vital statistics, and identity management, why it is important, and the role of digitization in advancing the holistic approach. It highlights the different strategies employed by countries to drive integration across civil registration and identity systems, including how the transition from paper to a digital system has varied across countries. Next, it describes the benefits of the holistic approach for vital statistics, how sharing identity information with other functional registers leads to several benefits in terms of governance and cost savings and provides examples from the six countries. Finally, it describes the key elements of a conducive enabling environment for integrating civil registration and identity systems.

Recurring messages that emerged from across all six case studies that will be explored further in the session include:

1. Strong CRVS systems that register all the vital events from birth until death of the entire population is an essential precondition for the implementation of a holistic identity system and ensuring the benefits that come with it. **A strong CRVS system is uniquely positioned to continuously provide inexpensive and up-to-date identity information.**
2. **Issuance of identification credentials** (and other functional government systems) **rely on civil registration records as the only source of up-to-date identity data**, ensuring that the identity information is registered once, and then used across other government systems (if that process is regulated by law).
3. **Digitization of CRVS and identity management systems** (as well as other functional government systems) **enables more efficient ways for processing identity information.** For example, the digitization of civil registers or population registers allowed for more advanced technical integration of CRVS and identity management systems regardless of whether these operated as a single system or several interoperable systems.
4. The **benefits of the holistic approach span several aspects of governance**, including for meeting people's rights, improving service delivery, and reducing corruption. The holistic approach can also help drive better decisions and track progress against the SDGs by strengthening vital statistics and ensuring more accurate population data.

5. There are **four key elements for pursuing a holistic identity system**. Political commitment from key government stakeholders is needed to ensure that all vital events from birth until death of the entire population is registered in a timely manner. Once this essential precondition is achieved, efficient sharing of up-to date identity data requires a legal framework that enables data sharing. As a result, a data privacy and protection framework is also needed. And lastly, technology ownership is needed from the outset to mitigate possible vendor lock-in and ultimately create a system people can trust.

This issue paper intends to lay the groundwork for a rich “deep-dive” discussion and allow more time for conference attendees to ask the questions that matter most to them. A published synthesis paper will be submitted to the conference organizers in both French and English in the weeks leading up to the session (expected by end September 2019). The full compendium – which details the individual experiences of all six countries – will be made available for the first time at the conference and will be published to the Centre of Excellence website in both languages.

Key Questions

Questions to be explored in the session include, but are not limited to:

1. What are the preconditions for implementing an integrated and holistic approach to civil registration, vital statistics, health information and identity management systems?
2. What are the tangible benefits for government to adopting a holistic system? What are the tangible benefits to individuals?
3. What has been done in other countries to retroactively integrate CRVS and identity management systems?
4. How have other countries integrated CRVS and identity management systems that were paper based? And what are the lessons learned and good practices?
