

**Third Conference of African Ministers responsible for Civil Registration
Yamoussoukro, Cote d'Ivoire**

**PARIS 21 Side Event
CRVS: Data that Count for Africa
11 February 2015, 9h-10h**

Objectives:

1. Clearly identify the role and responsibility of National Statistical Offices (NSOs) in the CRVS system and the capacity building needs to perform them.
2. Propose actions to strengthen the coordination between the NSOs, civil registration offices and the health sector to ensure the generation and use of quality vital statistics from civil registration; including cause-of-death statistics in support of good governance and policymaking.
3. Propose solutions to improve administrative-based statistics, such as CRVS, as the preferred source of population data for monitoring national and global development goals.

Organized by: PARIS21

Format: Launching of the African CRVS video documentary followed by a panel discussion

Background:

The Busan Action Plan on Statistics highlighted in 2011 the importance of civil registration and vital statistics for policy making in the following terms: ***"Statistics are a matter of life and death. In 2009 the births of 50 million children went unrecorded. They entered the world with no proof of age, citizenship, or parentage. That same year 40 million people died unnoted except by family or friends. There are no records of where they died, when they died, and more importantly how they died. In most high-income countries these vital events (births and deaths) are recorded by civil registration systems, which also record marriages and divorces and other complementary events such as adoptions, legitimization etc. But in many developing countries registration systems are largely incomplete. [...] Lacking effective registration systems, countries must rely on infrequent and expensive surveys to estimate the vital statistics needed to support the core functions of government and to plan for the future. More often, key policy decisions are made in the absence of reliable data."*** Moreover, individuals are denied their basic rights to identity and nationality as well as the ability claim these rights from their governments.

Despite improvements over the last years, CRVS systems in Africa remain incomplete and inadequate thus reducing the value of vital statistics that could be used: the percentage of countries over the continent which have CRVS coverage over 90% is only of 22% for birth, and 13% for death¹ ; 55% of children under the age of five are not registered at birth in Sub-Saharan Africa²; and only 6 countries in Africa can provide high, medium or low quality cause of death data³.

The state of CRVS in Africa poses considerable challenge for official data providers particularly in informing policy development, planning and monitoring of country progress against national and

¹http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/CRVS/CR_coverage.htm

²<http://data.unicef.org/child-protection/birth-registration>

³World Health Statistics, 2012.

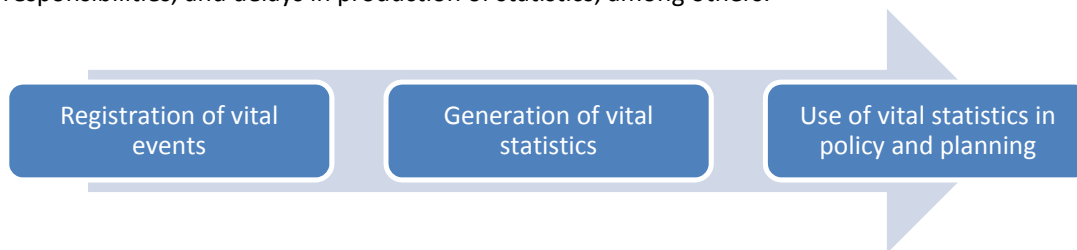
global development goals. Many of the goals and targets in the Post-2015 sustainable development agenda would require reliable population estimates which can be drawn from a complete CRVS system and from which many relevant indicators can be generated.

While recognizing censuses and surveys as useful sources of data, the *“United Nations principles and recommendations for vital statistics systems”* recommend civil registrations as the most reliable sources of vital statistics; meeting the requirements of being comprehensive, regular, and timely in providing information to effectively address national and global issues such as poverty, hunger, migration, trade, safety, schooling, and displacement of people among others.

Administrative-based statistics constitute a sustainable source of data, as opposed to censuses and surveys that are costly over the long term. The initial effort required to install a performing CRVS system will pay back on the long term as it will provide complete and reliable data at a lower cost.

Registers and administrative data are two data sources already at the disposal of national statistical systems (NSS). Some countries are making use of data generated from administrative information systems to inform national decisions and policies. The CRVS system, for instance, is an important source of administrative data on vital statistics, providing information on the entire population that is comparable across time and space and allows for disaggregation by age and sex to the lowest levels of geography. It is the only source of universal and continuous demographic and health data that has the potential to provide information for multiple sectors (both public and private) e.g., health, education, labor, social welfare, banking etc. and help local and national governments to plan the provision of services, design development programs, and assess and monitor whether these have met their intended objectives.

National statistical systems are constrained to deliver quality statistics for policies and decisions in increasing monitored areas. The problem is further compounded by existing challenges at different stages of CRVS that hinder full utilization of vital statistics. These include weaknesses of the legislative framework, individual barriers to registration, management, organizational and infrastructural failures to capture information on vital events, inconsistencies between registration records and compiled statistics, inconsistent data forms, weak coordination, lack of clear roles and responsibilities, and delays in production of statistics, among others.⁴



Stages of vital statistics: from recording to use

While the problem would need to be addressed comprehensively and inter-relatedly, this forum would like to specifically focus on the potential role and responsibility of the NSOs/NSSs to effectively bridge the generation of vital statistics and promote its use in governance, policy and planning. The discussions also aim to elaborate on the challenges and impediments in generating quality vital statistics and actions needed at local, national and regional levels, for improved capacity in the generation, dissemination, and use of vital statistics in development.

⁴WHO. 2013. Strengthening civil registration and vital statistics for births, deaths and causes of death: resource kit. www.who.int

In Africa, some progress has been made over the last years in terms of coordination between NSOs and civil registration offices and in the use of administrative data for policy monitoring. The Africa Programme on Accelerated Improvement of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (APAI-CRVS), is being implemented over the continent since 2009, and the Second Conference of African Ministers responsible for Civil Registration, held in Durban in 2012, recognized the importance of strengthening the coordination between the NSOs and the CRVS systems, in order to ensure the production as well as the use of quality vital statistics that can support better policies, governance and public administration. Ministers resolved in Durban to mainstream CRVS systems into the National Strategies for the Development of Statistics (NSDSs) by strengthening and facilitating coordination between NSOs and Civil Registration Authorities in managing and monitoring the challenges of CRVS systems. They also proposed that each country undertake a comprehensive assessment of their system and to develop a strategic action plan for strengthening of CRVS. The third ministerial conference further lays emphasis on a closer collaboration with the health sector specifically for the improvement of the levels of registration of birth and deaths, the documentation of causes-of death and the production of quality statistics on the same.

Despite the progress however, CRVS data are not yet sufficiently used for policy making in Africa, and, in many countries, the coordination between the NSO and the civil registration office is still weak and NSDSs do not sufficiently include CRVS concerns. In the panel discussion the role and responsibility of NSOs in the CRVS system will be explored, as well as the capacity building necessary to strengthen them; it will also discuss progress since 2012 in Africa in terms of coordination between NSOs and civil registration offices, and propose actions to reinforce it, with the objective to generate quality vital statistics for good governance and policy making. The panel will propose solutions to improve the use of CRVS and other administrative data as reliable sources of data to monitor sustainable development, in the context of the Post 2015 agenda.

Questions for panelists:

1. What are the bottlenecks that NSOs face in their engagement in the delivery of CRVS?
2. How can NSOs work together with line ministries and other stakeholders to improve the quality of vital statistics? How can NSDS be used to strengthen coordination, collaboration and partnerships in the delivery of well functioning CRVS systems?
3. What type of capacity building would be needed to reinforce the role and responsibility of NSOs in the CRVS system?
4. What country cases or examples of usefulness of vital statistics to governance, policy, and planning can be shared? How can sources of administrative data (e.g., CRVS) be fully used as reliable sources of statistics to monitor and measure sustainable development?
5. What can be done to stimulate demand for and thereby promote use of vital statistics? What type of advocacy is needed from a statistical and policy standpoint to get stakeholders actively involved?
6. Are there any innovative approaches to consider in the advancement of CRVS that would target NSOs?

Participants:

Panelists would include national statisticians, ministers in charge of/involvement with CRVS, heads of national civil registration institutions, donors, and partners who can provide institutional and country perspectives in the discussions.

Draft Agenda:

Time	Duration	Title	Speaker
11 February, 9h-10h	1h	CRVS: Data that Count for Africa	Moderator: Dr. El Iza Mohamedou Deputy Secretariat Manager, PARIS21 Panelists (tbc): Representative from Kenya Mr. Aboubacar Sedikh BEYE Directeur Général Agence Nationale de la Statistique et de la Démographie Senegal Ms. Raj Gautam Mitra Chief, Demographic and Social Statistics Section African Centre for Statistics UNECA TBD
