

Terms of Reference for a Senior Advisor to Support African Member States in Undertaking Assessments of Civil Registration & Vital Statistics Systems and Development of National Strategic and Action Plans

1. Background

Despite many years of existence, civil registration systems have not been functioning properly in most African countries. As a result, most Africans are born and die without leaving trace of their existence and/or their characteristics on any legal or statistical record. The later has been referred to by the Working group on Monitoring of Vital Events (MOVE) as the ‘scandal of invisibility’. Most Africans die of causes that are not known, making it almost impossible to monitor and manage morbidity and mortality on the continent. The consequences of lack of properly functioning CRVS systems further extend to the lack of adequate data for monitoring of development goals and targets such as those of the Millennium Development Goals, lack of adequate population data for disaggregated national planning, inability to establish secure systems of identity of persons, lack of reliable vital records to validate electoral rolls in countries and ultimately to poor systems of governance.

In a bid to reverse the poor state of the functioning of CRVS systems on the continent, a regional workshop was convened in Dar-es-Salaam Tanzania in June 2009 by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) and the African Development Bank (AfDB) and to discuss the challenges facing the systems and to strategise on modalities for improvement. The workshop was a key milestone for the region as it brought together for the first time ever key players/stakeholders who are crucial to the functioning of CRVS system at country level. The workshop made key recommendations calling for urgent measures to revamp the systems, among them being the need to secure political commitment for the improvement process at both country and regional level. The workshop also proposed the need for a regional assessment to take stock of the state of the systems and the need to establish a regional CRVS Secretariat at the UNECA to provide leadership of the regional CRVS improvement initiative.

In accordance to the recommendations of the workshop, a regional CRVS Secretariat was established at the UNECA. The Secretariat provides leadership to the implementation of the Africa Programme on Accelerated Improvement of Civil registration and Vital Statistics (APAI-CRVS), and is supported (both technically and financially) by a regional CRVS Core group¹. Political commitment for the accelerated improvement of CRVS systems in the region has been secured through the Conference of African Ministers responsible for Civil Registration which is now a standing regional forum that will meet every two years beginning 2014. The ministerial platform provides the policy directives for the APAI-CRVS and is also a monitoring arm of the programme. African Ministers responsible for Civil Registration have now met on two

¹ The Regional Core Group consists of ECA, AUC, AfDB, UNICEF, UNFPA, UNHCR, WHO, Plan-International and Statistics South Africa.

occasions, in Addis Ababa Ethiopia in August 2010 and in Durban South Africa in September 2012.

The second conference of African Ministers responsible for Civil Registration held 2012 deliberated at length on various challenges that impede the functioning of CRVS systems in countries and discussed strategies for their accelerated improvement. The ministers unequivocally acknowledged that the first step to reforming the CRVS systems would be to take stock of the current status of the systems in their respective countries through comprehensive assessments and development of concrete strategies and time-bound action plans. The ministers further called upon the regional CRVS Core Group and international organizations to provide technical and financial support to countries in this effort. One of the key strategies agreed upon by the Core Group and country experts was the development of a pool of African CRVS experts who would assist the countries in CRVS assessment and planning.

In accordance with the ministerial declaration, the regional CRVS Core Group embarked on rigorous preparatory arrangements to facilitate the country support process. Among these included the identification and training of a regional pool of experts to assist countries in conducting assessments and in the development of national strategic and action plans. The Core Group, led by the regional CRVS Secretariat, organized a training programme to develop a regional pool of experts on CRVS. Two categories of experts were trained i.e. Senior Advisors and Advisors. A few Young African Experts of the ISIBalo capacity building programme were also trained, with an objective of building capacity in the subject for the region. The training programme was held for eleven days in Gaborone, Botswana in May 2013. The workshop provided the participants with a rounded understanding of the operations of a CRVS system and also equipped them with the assessment tools as well as methodologies and guidelines required to support countries in the assessment and planning processes.

As per the regional guidelines, the next phase of the programme will entail dispatching the Regional Technical Support Team to countries to provide the required support. The team will be led by a Senior Advisor with the support of the Advisor and the Young African Expert. The country CRVS systems assessment and planning processes are expected to start from July 2013. It is pertinent to note that the process of assessment and planning is designed to be led and owned by the country. The Regional Technical Support Team will only provide technical assistance and guidance when called up by the countries to do so.

2. Country CRVS assessment and plan development

The Secretariat has increasingly been receiving request from countries for technical support for conducting the CRVS country assessment and development of plan. The country CRVS comprehensive assessment will entail a holistic review of a country's CRVS system focusing on fundamental components of the system and on the primary vital events namely births, deaths, marriage and divorces. The assessment will adopt a multi-sectoral approach and will thus seek to engage all key CRVS stakeholders of a country in the assessment and planning processes. The

goal of the assessment will be for countries to gain substantial insight and knowledge about their system in order to evolve an effective strategy to overcome the past challenges. The comprehensive assessment will inform the development of a strategic plan, with well-costed programme of activities. The Senior Advisor with the assistance of the Advisor and the Young African Expert, are therefore expected to technically support the national team to successfully conduct a comprehensive assessment, develop a strategic plan based on the assessment results. The process which, essentially will be country led will also include development of the capacity of a team of focal points in the country through training, supervision and mentoring. The activities of the Regional Technical Support Team will be guided by regional tools and guidelines prepared on the different aspects of CRVS systems that will be provided by the secretariat. The Regional Technical Support Team is expected to establish and maintain a dialogue with the main contacts in the countries to ensure that the task of generating a costed plan for CRVS is completed. The Young Statistician should be identified from within the country.

The success of the assessment process hinges to a great extent on the state of readiness of the country. This will include establishing coordination mechanisms including UN coordination, securing budget, identifying the Advisers and experts and developing a clear plan of action for assessment. This will require a seven-day pre-assessment mission by the Regional Technical Support Team to the country. During this mission, the team will be engaged in preparatory work, which will mainly entail working with the country focal points to:

- a) Review available documentations, including previously conducted assessments, if available, administrative reports and study the governance and infrastructure of the CRVS systems in the country; that will provide enough information for developing the country CRVS assessment roadmap
- b) Develop a comprehensive roadmap with clear timelines on how the assessment will be conducted;
- c) Estimate the costs of the assessment and planning processes and develop a budget for the same;
- d) Mobilise resources for the project by consulting relevant institutions including the government as well as donor agencies;
- e) Establish a Steering Group to oversee the entire assessment and planning process and implementation of reform action plan;
- f) Constitute a Country Technical Support Team with all key stakeholders;
- g) Identify members and form the relevant task teams that will be engaged in the assessment and planning processes;
- h) Conduct relevant bilateral meetings with focal points in government institutions/ ministries;
- i) Ensure coordination of various United Nations agencies;
- j) Identify the Planning facilitator

After the preparatory work is completed the advisers will leave the country and allow time for the country to put in place the required resources to kick-start the process. While the duration may vary by country, it is expected that a country may require an average of one month to embark on the actual assessment process. During this time the Senior Advisor with the support of the Advisor and the Young African Expert are expected to work on technical issues, specifically adopting the different regional CRVS assessment and planning documents to the national context and share with the country focal persons for review and further improvement. Through such processes the team will continue familiarizing themselves with the processes and functioning of the systems in the country. The team is also expected to maintain constant communication with the country focal points and to provide guidance to the preparatory work where required.

The actual assessment mission will follow on a country's indication of readiness. The assessment will mainly entail: Taking stock of what has been done i.e. the results of previous assessments and how they have been used to improve the system, an analysis of the information generated from the system, to determine any biases and limitations, stakeholder consultations and joint assessment of the system and field visits to assess institutional arrangements and actual functioning of the system. Finally, based on the results of the assessment the Regional Technical Support Team is expected to support the country in developing the strategic and action plans for the reform process.

3. Duties of the Senior Advisor

The main duties of a Senior Advisor will be to assist the country in the following:

- (a) Pre-assessment preparatory activities (See section 2)
- (b) Provide guidance for the comprehensive assessments, including
 - i) Adapting available tools to national specificities
 - ii) Identifying areas that require special attention in-depth assessment
 - iii) Identifying potential contributors to the assessment
 - iv) Identifying success stories and case studies from the country
 - v) Advising on analysis of available data to determine coverage issues in registration
- (c) Acquaint himself/herself with the existing CRVS system through field visits and meetings with key stakeholders
- (d) Launch meeting to signal the start of the CRVS system assessment process
- (e) Orientation training to the task team members on complete understanding of the CRVS;
- (f) Hold special meetings with the Task Teams to take them through the process of assessment and provide guidance in their respective areas of work and finalizing the work plan
- (g) Accompany Task Team on field visits to selected registration sites and communities and provide insights on the investigations to be conducted

- (h) Guide the task teams and national consultant in the preparation of the assessment report
- (i) Conduct debriefing session to agree on the way forward
- (j) Support the planning facilitator in planning processes
- (k) Provide technical support and guidance during the preparation of the planning document
- (l) Support teams in organizing and facilitating meeting to disseminate the assessment results as well as the strategy and action plan

4. Deliverables

The Senior Advisor will be expected to deliver on the following:

1. A comprehensive assessment roadmap with a back ground document of the review process
2. Progress reports of the assessment process
3. Draft comprehensive assessment report and action plan
4. Draft strategic plan document

5. Timeline

The Senior Advisor will be hired for duration of two months with a possibility of extension.

6. Payments and costs

The Senior Advisor will be paid a monthly fee of USD and a Daily Subsistence allowance amounting to for four weeks. Travel costs (three travels)

7. Qualifications

1. The Senior Advisor will have been nominated and participated in the regional training programme for the development of a pool of experts on CRVS, held in Gaborone Botswana on 20-31 May 2013.
2. A current/ former employee of the agency responsible for civil registration or National Statistics Office or any non-governmental/ international organization that deals with civil registration, vital statistics or related matters.
3. Have extensive experience (At least 10 years) and be well knowledgeable in the management and operations of civil registration and/or vital statistics systems;
4. Having knowledge/expertise in either of the following areas in their relevance and application to CRVS systems, is desirable
 - Civil Law
 - Public health
 - Statistics (Demography and Social Statistics)
 - Public Administration

5. Be fluent in the language of the country for which he is nominated as advisor. However language will be limited to Arabic, English, French, or Portuguese
6. Be flexible to travel to different countries to support the assessment process and development of country CRVS plans when called upon

8. Key Competencies

The candidate should have proven competencies in the following areas:

1. Communication
2. Team work
3. Leadership
4. Planning and Organizing
5. Technological Awareness