

Statistics for Development Division (SDD)

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SESSION 9: CIVIL REGISTRATION AND VITAL STATISTICS

(Document presented by the secretariat, on behalf of the Brisbane Accord Group,)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The development of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) systems is one of the core priorities of the Ten Year Pacific Statistics Strategy (TYPSS). The overall goal is to ensure that Pacific Islands and Territories (PICTs) have a robust source of vital statistics (including on causes of death), which can facilitate accurate inter-censal and sub-national level planning, and monitoring of development.
2. The need for CRVS systems is universally recognised. Goal 16 of the UN sustainable development agenda calls for universal birth registration as the primary means to realisation of a legal identity for populations. Numerous health targets outlined by the agenda further require data on death and causes of death, which can only be reliably acquired from well-functioning CRVS systems. In a bid to accelerate improvements in CRVS systems, at a Ministerial gathering held in 2015, PICTs along with other countries in the Asia-Pacific region declared 2015-2024 to be the Asia Pacific Decade for CRVS.
3. The development of CRVS systems in the Pacific is guided by the Pacific Vital statistics Action plan (PVSAP), whose implementation is coordinated by SPC, with the support of a group of technical agencies, known as the Brisbane Accord Group (BAG).
4. Significant progress has been realised by PICTs in the development of CRVS systems over the last four years. In line with regional recommendations, most countries have adopted multi-sectoral approaches to the development of systems, and have made commendable efforts towards formalisation of national CRVS coordination frameworks, and plans. Other key achievements include the publication of the first set of vital statistics reports by 5 countries (with 4 reports under review), initiation of review of civil registration legislation in 3 countries, the establishment of the Pacific Civil Registrars Network (PCRN) which has played a crucial role in facilitating peer-peer learning among PICTs, and the high-level political commitments made by PICTs governments towards the Asia-Pacific Decade for CRVS.
5. Key challenges in implementation of the PVSAP and the development of CRVS systems in the region include the inaccessibility of registration services to the public (due to direct and indirect costs associated with the registration of vital events), outdated civil registration legislation, weaknesses in human resource capacity including a high staff turnover in some countries, challenges in adopting appropriate Information Technology (IT) for civil registration, and the adverse impact of disasters on civil registration records and infrastructure.

6. The role of National Statistics Offices as leaders and coordinators of national CRVS improvement efforts cannot be over emphasised. During this meeting, countries are particularly encouraged to monitor the performance of their civil registration systems, through routine estimation of birth and death registration completeness, and to establish a national schedule for the publication of vital statistics from administrative sources. Moreover, countries are requested to take note of the regional template on the development of a vital statistics report available at <http://www.pacific-crvs.org/>