



INFORMATION NOTE D

CRVS and Identity Management

I. Purpose

This is a non-official document, for information only, prepared by the Working group of co-organizers of the Ministerial Conference on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific to be held in Bangkok, 24 November to 28 November 2014. It provides additional background information to delegations attending the Regional Preparatory Meeting for the Ministerial Conference on 28 and 29 August 2014. Published in English only.

II. Background and relevance to CRVS

The identity of a person consists of a unique set of features about a person, such as his or her name, along with additional information to make the identity unique, such as sex, date and place of birth, names of parents, civil status, nationality etc. The ability to formally prove one's identity is increasingly essential for individuals to be able to function in the modern world. Evidence of identity is often required when interacting with public and private entities and for access to basic rights and services, including health, education, formal employment, financial services, voting, and social transfers.

In high-income countries, virtually everyone is registered from birth through civil registration, an administrative system designed to furnish individuals with legal instruments enabling them to prove the veracity of their claims to identity, civil status and family relationships. For example, a birth certificate provides the proof of identity necessary for multiple purposes, including applying for a passport, a driver's license, electoral rolls, and other official documents. Certificates issued through the civil registration system can be used in any eventuality and at any time when there is a need to prove an individual's identity and evolving family relationships from the time of birth to the time of death and, indeed, beyond. In some countries, a computerized birth registration process assigns a unique identification number to each individual at birth, which greatly facilitates locating records for a particular person in a database. The unique identification number also enables information about individuals to be linked across multiple administrative databases in a population register.



By contrast, in many low- and middle-income countries, civil registration systems are still paper-based and coverage is incomplete so that many people do not have the documentation needed to establish individual identity. In recent years a number of initiatives have sprung up with the aim of providing individuals in developing countries with robust official identity, often in the context of the delivery of particular social services. Many such initiatives are based on digital biometric identification technology to distinguish physical features such as fingerprints or iris scans. They target primarily adults because of the difficulties and costs of ensuring stable biometric identification of infants and young children. However, few of these initiatives, which are often developed and managed by multinational corporations, have been systematically evaluated in terms of benefits, limitations, data security and implications for administrative and legal systems for conferring individual identity.

III. Outline of key international conventions, recommendations and/or standards

Civil registration plays a key role in realizing many human rights set out in United Nations declarations, covenants and resolutions, including the right of all individuals to be registered, the right to be given an identity from birth to death, the right of a child to know the names of their parents, the right to nondiscrimination by reason of birth, and the right to claim a nationality. The right of every child to have his or her birth registered and the role of civil registration in the realization of human rights is covered in more detail in the Information Note E on “Civil Registration, Nationality and Human Rights”.

Standards for civil registration and vital statistics are contained in the UN Statistics Division *Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System* (United Nations 2014) and the associated handbooks (United Nations 1998, 1998a, 1998b, and 1998c) on implementation issues. Specifically, the *Handbook on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems: Computerization* (United Nations 1998a) focuses on the computerization of civil registration, including the assignation of unique personal identification numbers. In the light of the significant advances in information technologies since the *Handbook* was produced, there is an urgent need for updating.

A summary of best practices and lessons learnt with regard to population registers in the Nordic countries (United Nations Economic Commission for Europe 2007) provides strategic guidance on administrative and population registers, and the technical and administrative capacities required to produce official statistics.

There are no global standards for the establishment of systems of unique individual national identification systems including those using biometric verification techniques. Further there has been limited systematic analysis of the strengths and limitations of such systems particularly with regard to whether and how they should be linked to civil registration systems and population registers.

IV. Key considerations

There are substantive connections between national identity management and civil registration systems. A fundamental principle is that the civil registration system should serve as the basis for individual identification and for the recording of ‘entry into’ and ‘exit from’ the population registers. The birth certificate is considered the foundational document for all individual identity systems and serves multiple purposes. The death certificate permits the removal of individuals from the register, which is important for updating electoral rolls, pensions and other social security mechanisms for the distribution of goods and services. As countries modernize their civil registration systems and develop national identification systems, a key consideration is that the civil registry should also serve as the starting point for the unique identification of individuals. Other considerations relate to the purpose and functioning of unique ID and biometric identification systems:

- There is diversity in the legal, policy and administrative arrangements under which individual identity systems function. In Pakistan, for example, the Chairman of the National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA), which is responsible for issuance of Computerized National Identity Cards (CNIC), is also the Registrar General of Pakistan working under the Ministry of the Interior. In India, on the other hand, the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) provides unique Identity called AADHAR to every Indian enrolled on a voluntary basis and is not linked to the civil registration system managed by the Registrar General and Census Commissioner. A key consideration is that the concerned agencies should establish close linkages and work in tandem.
- As countries modernize their CRVS systems and introduce computers at various system levels, concerns have been raised about data security, confidentiality and the potential misuse of data, particularly when unique personal identification numbers have been introduced, often coupled with biometric information.
- Identity management systems using biometrics are designed to enable the identification and authentication of individuals when making claims, for example for government benefits. They are not designed to provide essential documents such as birth certificates, which can help to establish legal identity and citizenship (see Information Note E on “Civil Registration, Nationality and Human Rights”).
- Another issue is the extent to which the individual identity management system is linked to the production of vital statistics on the population. Experience shows that unless identity management is closely linked to the civil registration system, the vast quantity of information assembled in unique ID databases does not contribute to improved completeness and quality of vital statistics on the population.

V. Relevance to the Regional Action Framework

The Regional Action Framework (RAF) addresses the issue of individual legal identity within the legal and administrative framework of the civil registration system. Specifically, the RAF Goal 2 addresses the distinction between the registration of a vital event and the possession



of formal proof that it took place, in the form of legal documentation obtained through certificates or certified copies of registration records that prove the occurrence and characteristics of a vital event. This implies that there is a clear description of the method of issuing legal documentation for the first time, for replacements and for corrections, and that measures are in place to eliminate discrimination, deter corruption, fraud and forgery, and protect the privacy of individuals and families. The RAF emphasizes that innovations and technologies are only effective when applied within a sound legal and institutional framework, with appropriate operational procedures and practices in place and consistently applied.

The ESCAP Regional Strategic Plan for CRVS called for the establishment of regional platform aimed at promoting the exchange of expertise, experiences, resources and other information on improving CRVS systems. This could also encourage research and documentation of experiences with unique ID systems, on the use of technologies, including biometrics, and help identify ways of maximizing the potential benefits of linkages between civil registration, population registers and systems for individual identification.

VI. Links to further information

Breckenridge K. and S. Szreter (eds). (2012). *Registration and Recognition: Documenting the Person in World History*.

Gelb A, Clark J. (2013). *Identification for Development: The Biometrics Revolution*. Center for Global Development Working Paper 315.

<http://www.cgdev.org/content/publications/detail/1426862>

World Health Organization and University of Queensland. (2013). *Strengthening civil registration and vital statistics for births, deaths and causes of death: resource kit*.

United Nations. (1998). *Handbook on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems: Preparation of a Legal Framework*. Series F, No. 71.

http://unstats.un.org/unsd/publication/SeriesF/SeriesF_71E.pdf

United Nations. (1998a). *Handbook on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems: Computerization*.

United Nations. (1998b). *Handbook on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems: Management, Operation and Maintenance*.

United Nations. (1998c). *Handbook on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems: Policies and Protocols for the Release and Archiving of Individual Records*.



United Nations. (2014). *UN Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System* (3rd revision).

http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/standmeth/principles/unedited_M19Rev3en.pdf

United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. (2007). *Register-based statistics in the Nordic countries: Review of best practices with focus on population and social statistics*.

Unique Identification Authority of India. (2012). *Role of Biometric Technology in Aadhaar Authentication*.

United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. (2012). *Human Rights Indicators: A guide to measurement and implementation*.

<http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/HRIndicators/AGuideMeasurementImplementationCompleteGuide>

Zelazny, F. (2012). *The Evolution of India's UID Program: Lessons Learned and Implications for Other Developing Countries*. Center for Global Development Policy Paper 008.

<http://www.cgdev.org/content/publications/detail/1426371>

VII. Contacts

Mr. Kaushal Joshi

Senior Statistician, Development Indicators and Policy Research Division of the Economics and Research Department

Asian Development Bank (ADB)

6 ADB Avenue

Mandaluyong City 1550, Metro Manila, Philippines

Telephone: +632 632 5969

Email: kjoshi@adb.org

Mr. Seok Yong Yoon

Senior Public Management Specialist (e-Governance)

Poverty Reduction, Social Development, and Governance Division

Regional and Sustainable Development Department

Asian Development Bank (ADB)

6 ADB Avenue

Mandaluyong City 1550, Metro Manila, Philippines

Telephone: +632 632 1741

Email: syoon@adb.org

