



# CRVS best-practice and advocacy

## Summary: SDG achievement depends on CRVS systems

This *CRVS summary* is edited from, 'Why the Sustainable Development Goal agenda needs strong civil registration and vital statistics systems', a CRVS development series paper available at [crvsgateway.info/Library~23](http://crvsgateway.info/Library~23)

### Robust CRVS systems are critical for achieving the SDG agenda

Well-functioning civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) systems will play an important role in assisting countries and regions to measure, monitor and meet their Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) targets. Strengthening of CRVS systems is an SDG outcome in and of itself; therefore, to fully achieve the SDG agenda, CRVS systems must be robust with near-complete registration of births and deaths.

Additionally, CRVS systems are the only source of data to monitor many of the SDG targets and associated indicators, especially for Goal 3 (Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages).

CRVS systems provide legal documentation for proof of identity, providing protection and facilitating inclusion and access to social services, which is needed to achieve many of the SDG targets. Further, CRVS systems are critical for effective disaster preparedness and response; an added focus of the SDG agenda.

The SDG agenda presents an opportunity to advance health information systems world-wide, including through CRVS system-strengthening efforts. The link between CRVS systems and the SDG agenda is further outlined below.

### Strengthening of CRVS systems is an SDG outcome

CRVS systems – notably for birth and death registration – are defined as SDG outcomes in and of themselves because of their contribution to reliable administrative and statistical systems and to the realisation of human rights. SDG **Target 16.9** is that by 2030 countries will provide 'legal identity for all, including birth registration'.

SDG **Target 17.19** calls on the international community to support 'effective and targeted capacity building in developing countries' and is monitored by 'the proportion of countries that have achieved 100 per cent birth registration, and 80 per cent death registration'.

In line with this, **Target 17.18** calls for 'capacity-building support to developing countries...to increase significantly the availability of high-quality, timely and reliable data disaggregated by income, gender, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts'. This cannot be achieved without CRVS data. Furthermore, **Indicator 17.18.1**, 'the proportion of sustainable development indicators produced at the national level with full disaggregation' will be significantly lower if quality data from CRVS systems are unavailable.

### Data from CRVS systems are needed to directly measure many targets

A robust CRVS system, with medical certification of cause of death (COD) and verbal autopsy (VA), where required, is the **best source of the cause-specific mortality data** needed to monitor relevant SDG indicators, especially at the sub-national level. Seven of the 17 SDGs, and 17 of their corresponding indicators, require cause-specific mortality data generated by a functioning CRVS system. More broadly, 16 targets and 24 indicators require birth, death, or marriage data that are best generated from a CRVS system (see **Table 1**).

Almost half of all SDG indicators are population based, and will thus benefit from the up-to-date and disaggregated birth and death data generated from CRVS systems, particularly in the form of disaggregated population projections. Indicators derived from household surveys can benefit from these population projections by using them to ensure their sampling frame is inclusive of vulnerable or sub-national populations of interest. Additionally, the increased interest in linking administrative databases to monitor indicators will require robust data from CRVS systems.



**Table 1: SDG targets and indicators that can best be monitored from data generated from CRVS systems**

<b>SDG target</b>	<b>SDG indicator to measure target</b>
<b>1.5</b> By 2030, build the resilience of the poor and those in vulnerable situations and reduce their exposure and vulnerability to climate-related extreme events and other economic, social and environmental shocks and disasters	1.5.1 Number of deaths, missing persons and directly affected persons attributed to disaster per 100 000 population
<b>3.1</b> By 2030, reduce the global maternal mortality ratio to less than 70 per 100 000 live births	3.1.1 Maternal mortality ratio
	3.1.2 Proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel
<b>3.2</b> By 2030, end preventable deaths of newborns and children under 5 years of age, with all countries aiming to reduce neonatal mortality to at least as low as 12 per 1000 live births or less, and under-5 mortality to 25 per 1000 live births or less	3.2.1 Under-five mortality rate
	3.2.2 Neonatal mortality rate
<b>3.4</b> By 2030, reduce by one-third premature mortality from non-communicable diseases through prevention and treatment and promote mental health and well-being	3.4.1 Mortality rate attributed to cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes or chronic respiratory disease
	3.4.2 Suicide mortality rate
<b>3.6</b> By 2020, halve the number of global deaths and injuries from road traffic accidents	3.6.1 Death rate due to road traffic injuries
<b>3.7</b> By 2030, ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive healthcare services, including for family planning, information and education, and the integration of reproductive health into national strategies and programs	3.7.2 Adolescent birth rate (aged 10–14 years; aged 15-19) per 1000 women in that age group
<b>3.9</b> By 2030, substantially reduce the number of deaths and illnesses from hazardous chemicals and air, water and soil pollution and contamination	3.9.1 Mortality rate attributed to household and ambient air pollution
	3.9.2 Mortality rate attributed to unsafe water, unsafe sanitation and lack of hygiene (exposure to unsafe Water, Sanitation and Hygiene for All (WASH) services)
	3.9.3 Mortality rate attributed to unintentional poisoning
<b>5.3</b> Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation	5.3.1 Proportion of women aged 20-24 years who were married or in a union before age 15 and before age 18
<b>8.8</b> Protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers, including migrant workers, in particular women migrants, and those in precarious employment	8.8.1 Frequency rates of fatal and nonfatal occupational injuries, by sex and migrant status
<b>11.5</b> By 2030, significantly reduce the number of deaths and the number of people affected and substantially decrease the direct economic losses relative to global gross domestic product caused by disasters, including water-related disasters, with a focus on protecting the poor and people in vulnerable situations	11.5.1 Number of deaths, missing persons and directly affected persons attributed to disasters per 100 000 population
<b>13.1</b> Strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards and natural disasters in all countries	13.1.1 Number of deaths, missing persons and persons affected by disaster per 100,000 people

<p><b>16.1</b> Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere</p>	<p>16.1.1 Number of victims of intentional homicide per 100 000 population, by sex and age</p> <p>16.1.2 Conflict-related deaths per 100 000 population, by sex, age and cause</p>
<p><b>16.9</b> By 2030, provide legal identity for all, including birth registration</p>	<p>16.9.1 Proportion of children under 5 years of age whose births have been registered with a civil authority, by age</p>
<p><b>16.10</b> Ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements</p>	<p>16.10.1 Number of verified cases of killing, kidnapping, enforced disappearance, arbitrary detention and torture of journalists, associated media personnel, trade unionists and human rights advocates in the previous 12 months</p>
<p><b>17.18</b> By 2020, enhance capacity-building support to developing countries, including for least developed countries and small island developing States, to increase significantly the availability of high-quality, timely and reliable data disaggregated by income, gender, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts</p>	<p>17.18.1 Proportion of sustainable development indicators produced at the national level with full disaggregation when relevant to the target, in accordance with the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics</p> <p>17.18.2 Number of countries that have national statistical legislation that complies with the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics</p> <p>17.18.3 Number of countries with a national statistical plan that is fully funded and under implementation, by source of funding</p>
<p><b>17.19</b> By 2030, build on existing initiatives to develop measurements of progress on sustainable development that complement gross domestic product, and support statistical capacity-building in developing countries</p>	<p>17.19.2 Proportion of countries that :</p> <p>(a) have conducted at least one population and housing census in the last 10 years; and</p> <p>(b) have achieved 100 per cent birth registration and 80 per cent death registration</p>



## **CRVS systems provide legal documentation for proof of identity**

Achieving the targets related to almost half of all SDG indicators greatly depends on people having access to birth, death and marriage certificates – a critical service that only CRVS systems can provide. The legal documentation of identity, civil status and family relationships through CRVS systems facilitates social, economic and political inclusion, and access to employment and civil, economic, health and education services.

For example, birth certificates are often needed to register for school, and thus are necessary for the achievement of SDG 4, achieving ‘inclusive and equitable quality education’. Additionally, birth certificates are often needed to gain employment, open a bank account, apply for a loan and register a business. Therefore, they are critical for the achievement of SDG 8, ‘Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all’.

## **CRVS systems are critical for effective disaster preparedness and response**

Strong CRVS systems can build resilience to disasters, and help to identify the number and sociodemographic make-up of populations at-risk. CRVS systems provide people with a legal identity, which facilitates access to social protection systems and to services such as property insurance. This, in turn, helps to build resilience against disasters.<sup>1</sup> When countries respond to catastrophic disasters and crises, birth registration can allow legal documentation of identity to be reissued and replaced quickly, as per SDG 13. The timely issuance of death documentation in disaster settings can be critical to enable next of kin to access insurance payments, social protection systems and welfare services. It also helps with access to inheritance, business, property, nationality, and other rights and entitlements. Therefore, it is critical that, even in protracted emergency situations, births and deaths continue to be registered, and lost birth and death certificates are quickly and easily replaced.<sup>2</sup>

Additionally, the COD data generated by CRVS systems will be essential for monitoring the impact of disasters on mortality. The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 calls for ‘a mechanism of case registry and a database of mortality caused by disaster in order to improve the prevention of morbidity and mortality’. CRVS systems strengthening will be critical for achieving this goal.<sup>2</sup>

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1 Pacific Civil Registrars Network. Report of the Pacific Civil Registrars Network Disaster Preparation and Response Workshop, Suva, Fiji, 2–4 October 2017.

2 United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction. *Sendai framework for disaster risk reduction 2015–2030*. Geneva, Switzerland: UNISDR; 2015.

## Sustainable Development Goals and CRVS systems

The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were unanimously agreed on by United Nations (UN) Member States at the UN Sustainable Development Summit in New York in September 2015. They represent the direction of global development efforts between 2015 and 2030. The SDGs considerably expand the scope and ambition of their precursor, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) of 2001.

CRVS systems support achieving the SDG framework in four ways:

- Strengthening of CRVS systems is an SDG outcome in and of itself.
- CRVS systems are the best source of data to monitor many of the SDG targets and associated indicators, especially for Goal 3 (Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages).
- CRVS systems provide legal documentation for proof of identity, providing protection and facilitating inclusion and access to social services, which is needed to achieve many of the SDG targets.
- CRVS systems are critical for effective disaster preparedness and response; an added focus of the SDG agenda.

Accurate and reliable data from well-functioning CRVS systems will play an important role in assisting countries and regions to measure, monitor and meet their SDG targets, as the SDGs require:

- Timely and continuing data series to enable comparisons over time
- Data at national and sub-national administrative levels
- Data disaggregated by key stratifiers, such as indigenous status and gender, as part of the 'Leaving no one behind' strategy.

The SDG agenda presents an enormous opportunity to advance health information systems world-wide, including through CRVS systems strengthening efforts, because:

- 7 of the 17 SDGs, and 17 of their corresponding indicators, require cause-specific mortality data that only a functioning CRVS system can generate
- 16 targets and 24 indicators require data that are best generated from a CRVS system
- 106 of the 232 indicators are population based and will thus benefit from the up-to-date and disaggregated birth and death data generated from CRVS systems
- Achieving the targets related to 102 of the indicators greatly depends on people having access to birth, death and marriage certificates – a critical service that only CRVS systems can provide.

## Strengthening CRVS systems for the SDGs

Key interventions that countries can implement to strengthen their CRVS systems, which the Data for Health (D4H) Initiative supports, include:

- Using process mapping to describe, analyse, compare and visualise the organisation, processes, workflows and functionality of a CRVS system
- Strengthening the registration of vital events by, for example, establishing national CRVS stakeholder committees, reviewing CRVS legislation and implementing standard operating procedures
- Improving the medical certification of COD
- Implementing or strengthening mortality coding
- Implementing automated verbal autopsy to determine the most likely COD for community deaths
- Building analytical capacity in producing and disseminating vital statistics.



## Summary

The importance of CRVS system strengthening is recognized in the SDGs with a Target of ‘legal identity for all, including birth registration’ and a final indicator monitoring the achievement of near-complete registration of births and deaths. Additionally, 17 SDG indicators will require COD data that is best generated from well-functioning CRVS systems.

CRVS systems further support the achievement of the SDG agenda by providing legal documentation for proof of identity, providing protection and facilitating inclusion and access to social services, which is needed to achieve many of the SDG targets. Finally, CRVS systems are critical for effective disaster preparedness and response; an added focus of the SDG agenda. Therefore, to fully achieve the SDG agenda, CRVS systems must be robust with near-complete registration of births and deaths including COD.

The program partners on this initiative include: The University of Melbourne, Australia; CDC Foundation, USA; Vital Strategies, USA; Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, USA; World Health Organization, Switzerland.

Civil Registration and Vital Statistics partners:



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