



**Preparatory Meeting of Experts for the Fourth Conference  
of African Ministers responsible for Civil Registration**  
Nouakchott  
4-6 December 2017

AUC/CRMC4/EXP/2017/Add.1

## Annotated agenda



**APAI-CRVS**  
Everyone visible in Africa

**Decade for Repositioning  
of Civil Registration and  
Vital Statistics in Africa  
2017-2026**





## **1. Registration**

Participants should register and collect their passes before gaining access to the meeting room. While registration will be possible at the venue before the Meeting and throughout the first day, all participants are encouraged to preregister online through the Conference website to reduce the waiting time.

## **2. Session I: Opening session**

### **(a) Opening of the Meeting**

A representative of the host country Government will open the Meeting. The Chair of the secretariat of Africa Programme on Accelerated Improvement of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems (APAI-CRVS) will deliver an opening statement.

### **(b) Election of the Bureau**

The African Union Commission, following consultations with the heads of delegations, will announce the composition of the Bureau. The Bureau will comprise five members, namely, one Chair, three Vice-Chairs and one Rapporteur, elected on the basis of equitable geographic representation.

### **(c) Adoption of the agenda and programme of work**

Participants will be invited to consider and adopt the draft agenda and programme of work and any proposed amendments as deemed necessary.

### **(d) Objectives of the Meeting**

The African Union Commission will deliver a short presentation highlighting the main objectives and expected outcomes of the Meeting.

## **3. Session II: Civil registration and vital statistics: an imperative for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063**

Well-functioning civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) are crucial for creating inclusive societies and ensuring the proper delivery of public services, while also realizing and protecting the basic human rights of all individuals. The session will consist of two presentations highlighting the importance of functional CRVS systems for the implementation of global and regional development agendas and will be followed by a discussion in plenary.

### **(a) Civil registration and vital statistics and the demographic dividend**

The presentation delivered by the African Union Commission will cover the importance of data from CRVS for Africa to reap its demographic dividend effectively. The issues paper will provide background information on the significance of CRVS in monitoring population trends and fostering social inclusion to ensure that all citizens have access to their human and constitutional rights and benefit from the positive development of nations. It is expected that the session will contribute to the implementation of the 2017 Assembly of the African Union

theme, “Harnessing the demographic dividend through investment in youth”, by promoting timely and quality data for planning and decision-making.

**(b) Civil registration and vital statistics for monitoring the progress made in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063**

CRVS, given its universal and inclusive nature, leaves no one behind. As a building block of an identity ecosystem, it helps to improve the delivery of public services to all people and, if linked to national identification systems, ensures their reliability, sustainability and robustness. Through the provision of legal documents of vital events to each individual, it helps to protect and realize human rights, such as the most basic right of every child, that is, the right to a name and legal identity. It also provides vital statistics and population data at a lower level of disaggregation, which is indispensable for evidence-based policymaking and the monitoring of policy effects on subnational levels. The presentation will offer a look into how a functional CRVS system will help to fulfil the promises of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063, rooted in universal rights and driven by the key principle of “leaving no one behind”, and will promote discussion of the importance of data from a CRVS system for the monitoring of both Agendas.

**4. Session III: Civil registration and vital statistics as a foundational system for good governance**

The session will consist of panel discussions on the contribution of functional CRVS systems to good governance as a foundation of a robust national identity system, and the discussions will tackle issues relating to refugees, internally displaced persons and stateless persons. The discussions will be followed by a general discussion in plenary.

**(a) Civil registration and vital statistics and national identification**

Linking CRVS and identity management systems has benefits in multiple sectors. A number of African countries are considering linking the two systems, but need some clarity on how best to do so. This panel session will provide the opportunity to share experiences from selected countries, such as Mauritania, Sao Tome and Principe and Zambia (or Lesotho). The panel will highlight civil registration as a foundation for identity management and feature a discussion of approaches for assigning a unique identification number at birth and integrating this number into the civil registry and on the physical birth certificate.

**(b) Civil registration and vital statistics and population movement (migration, refugees, internally displaced persons, statelessness)**

In recognition of the significantly low levels of birth registration (and having little access to CRVS registration in general), the paper presented in this session centres on forcibly displaced persons who often do not have access to civil registration and who are not included in CRVS national systems. The paper outlines the significant barriers often faced by many refugees, internally displaced persons and persons who are at the risk of statelessness.

The paper also outlines the range of legal and policy frameworks on CRVS, birth registration and documentation, the right to a nationality, and statelessness and migration at the international, regional and national levels. In addition, it contains a summary of how CRVS enhances the opportunity for populations affected by forced displacement to have access to services, including those that are at risk of statelessness, as an important protection tool in

situations of displacement. This also applies at the basic level to establishing a child's identity and its importance as a key form of proof of whether a person has acquired nationality by birth on territory or descent, including its critical importance for States and other stakeholders.

The paper contains a comparative analysis of lessons learned and best practices in a sample of African countries: Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Kenya, the Niger and Uganda. In addition, it presents conclusions on the current situations and major challenges, including the legislative environment, and contains recommendations covering the need to build the institutional capacity of the CRVS system and to domesticate relevant international conventions into national laws.

## **5. Session IV: Reviewing progress, implementation challenges and the strategic plan of the Africa Programme on Accelerated Improvement of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems**

The session will consist of two presentations on the progress made in the improvement of CRVS in Africa. The first will be a detailed review of the status of the implementation of commitments made at the previous three Conferences and the second one will cover the actual state of the systems in the countries based on the questionnaires submitted by the countries to the APAI-CRVS secretariat. A discussion in plenary will follow the presentations.

### **(a) Review of the progress against the ministerial declarations**

The objective of the session is to review the progress made by the regional CRVS programme since its inception in 2010. The session will provide an overview of the ministerial declarations made at the previous three Conferences and the status of their implementation, including the overview of the country assessments and plans, key achievements, challenges and lessons learned from the past six years.

### **(b) Report on the status of civil registration and vital statistics in Africa: outcome of the Africa Programme on Accelerated Improvement of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems monitoring**

The session will present the review of the status of CRVS systems in African countries based on the results of the monitoring exercise conducted by the APAI-CRVS secretariat preceding the Conference. The monitoring is intended to measure the progress made by each country on various aspects of the improvement of its CRVS systems, including the CRVS legal framework; the organization and functioning of the CRVS system; data access, dissemination and use; and the completeness of registration and accessibility of registration centres. The results of the monitoring exercise will be also available in the form of a report circulated during the Meeting and available on the Conference and APAI-CRVS websites.

### **(c) Implementation challenges: regional perspective and the Africa Programme on Accelerated Improvement of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems strategic plan**

With regard to political commitments, the secretariat has achieved a great deal since the first Conference of African Ministers responsible for Civil Registration, held in 2010, but more needs to be done to achieve solutions that last. Several activities planned under the medium-term plan during the period 2010–2015 remain outstanding, owing mainly to not strengthening

the APAI-CRVS secretariat so that it can cope with the activities laid out in the plan. Other weaknesses observed in recent years require a concentrated effort to tackle them in order to bring all African countries to a minimum desired CRVS systems operational level. In this regard, the regional CRVS Core Group has developed a five-year strategic plan for the first half of the CRVS Decade (2017–2021). In this session, there will be a discussion on mechanisms for resourcing the APAI-CRVS initiative for the first half of the decade (as laid out in the strategic plan) and strengthening the secretariat as top priority. The strategic plan document is available on the Conference website.

**6. Session V: Towards the accelerated improvement of civil registration and vital statistics systems in African countries: challenges in their implementation (parallel sessions)**

Now that as many as 28 countries have assessed their CRVS system and 25 of them have developed strategic improvement plans, it is crucial to move to the implementation of the plans and ensure that it leads to real and sustainable change. This session will be dedicated to thorough discussions on the challenges faced by the countries in this crucial phase. The challenges are in the following six areas: moving from plan to implementation; the role of the health sector in improving mortality statistics and cause of death recording and its linkages to CRVS systems; innovation and CRVS digitization; sustainable capacity-building; producing vital statistics from civil registration records; and civil registration in the context of conflict and emergencies. The discussions will take place in parallel groups and will be structured around concerns and challenges raised in the issues paper prepared by lead agencies assigned to each topic and further elaborated by panel discussants. The open discussion among all the participants of each parallel session should culminate in the recommendations for the experts' report, which will be presented to the ministers.

**(a) Moving from plan to implementation**

The topic of this parallel session paper is linked to the theme of the fourth Ministerial Conference of African Ministers that deals with moving from plan to implementation of the planned reforms.

Accordingly, this paper raises issues for discussion covering the Sustainable Development Goals (contained in the 2030 Agenda) and the CRVS data required to measure the Goals' indicators; the importance of ensuring that all children are counted; the various steps that countries have taken towards achieving that right for all children; the measures taken since the last Conference to improve the CRVS system, using the case of Ethiopia and Mozambique; and reviewing the challenges, lessons learned and the way forward.

**(b) Role of the health sector in improving registration coverage**

The parallel session will discuss recent experiences and progress made in 10 African countries in the context of the resolutions of previous Conferences. The issues paper will provide the background and contain pertinent questions that will lead to proposals and recommendations on the ways forward.

**(c) Innovation and civil registration and vital statistics digitization**

This parallel session will present the potential of information and communications technology to provide transformative improvements in CRVS systems and the risks and challenges of applying such technology to CRVS systems throughout Africa that are well designed, scalable and sustainable. It will also host discussions of the various resources that are available at present to support countries in realizing the benefits of digitized CRVS systems. The parallel session and issue paper also highlight the OpenCRVS software, a CRVS system developed by Plan International and Jembi Health Systems in support of APAI-CRVS.

Lastly, the session and paper will raise issues for discussion pertaining to the systematic approaches and capacity-building that are required for planning, designing and implementing digitized CRVS systems.

**(d) Sustainable capacity-building**

The main purpose of this parallel session and issue paper will be to outline the support given, or to be given, to African countries for strengthening their CRVS systems through technical assistance and financing from the Global Financing Facility Trust Fund and the International Development Association (IDA), approved during the fiscal years 2015/2016 and 2016/2017.

This parallel session and paper will specifically feature discussions of the importance of CRVS for reproductive, maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health and nutrition; the status of CRVS in African countries supported by the Global Financing Facility in support of Every Woman, Every Child; the status of investment cases and priorities relating to CRVS; and, most important, on IDA and the Global Financing Facility Trust Fund-financed projects for strengthening CRVS systems in seven countries: Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Kenya, Liberia, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania.

Lastly, the parallel session will have concluding remarks covering the need to formulate innovative ways to accelerate birth, death and marriage registration and the critical importance of establishing and maintaining collaboration among government departments, the private sector and development partners to increase financing aimed at strengthening CRVS systems.

**(e) Vital statistics from civil registration**

This parallel session will highlight the importance of generating regular vital statistics on the basis of civil registration data, even in countries with an incomplete status in terms of coverage. The countries will be encouraged to begin the compilation of civil registration-based vital statistics and prepare annual reports on the basis of the guidance document prepared by the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and other partners on this topic.

**(f) Civil registration in the context of conflict and emergencies**

This parallel session will bring forward the recommendation of the third Conference of African Ministers to “support development of guidelines and recommendations for maintaining and managing civil registration in conflict and emergency situations as well as special circumstances by making use of experiences from countries having gone through such situations”.

The session will bring together lessons drawn from the experiences of countries in situations of conflict and fragility, supplemented with relevant research findings and expert opinions. The issues paper for this session also presents a set of questions expected to trigger discussions that will highlight challenges that some African countries and other non-African countries in fragile settings face and, at the same time, highlight or identify ideas on how to deal with these challenges. The proceedings of the session will also be relevant to other countries. It is expected that the session will result in recommendations to the plenary and contribute to improved preparations, including identifying key risk mitigation strategies to avoid similar problems in the future.

## **7. Session VI: Commission of Registrars General**

ECA organized a task force meeting to deliberate on the merit of establishing a regional commission of registrars general entrusted with the management and improvement of civil registration in their countries and in the region, and the purpose of such a commission. The meeting on the establishment of a commission of African registrars general was held in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe, from 17 to 20 October 2017 and was hosted by the Registrar General of Zimbabwe.

The major outcomes of that meeting included two documents, entitled “Commission of African Registrars General: the rationale and terms of reference” and “Rules of procedures” or “Draft rules of procedures for the Commission of African Registrars General”, prepared by the Task Force on the Establishment of the Commission of African Registrars General and the APAI-CRV secretariat.

This session will feature discussions of the documents in the Meeting and provide input to be presented at the ministerial meeting.

## **8. Session VII: Leveraging partnerships in civil registration and vital statistics systems improvement initiatives**

CRVS, given its multifaceted nature, requires technical support in various areas that cannot come from a single type of technical assistance. With CRVS gaining momentum in Africa, various donors and development partners began to show renewed interest and provided funds with strings attached to various technical aspects of CRVS. While these interventions have sometimes helped the cause of APAI-CRVS, they have also sometimes proved to be counterproductive by diverting the attention of the countries from a holistic CRVS improvement process. Countries that have shown leadership could converge these individual interests of donors into a more integrated approach in sourcing the already current CRVS plan. This session will attempt to provide guidance to countries on the kinds of support available from various partners and on how to leverage these opportunities for the benefit of countries’ CRVS systems improvement initiatives.

## **9. Session VIII: Conclusions and recommendations**

The participants will discuss the report of the experts meeting and the draft resolutions and statement for the ministers.



**10. Closure of the Meeting**

The Chair will highlight the main outcomes of the Meeting and declare it closed.

**11. Country delegates from the expert group meeting brief their ministers**

Country experts are expected to brief their ministers on the outcomes of the Meeting, specifically on the proposed draft conclusions and recommendations.