

PREPARATORY MEETING OF EXPERTS OF THE SECOND CONFERENCE OF AFRICAN MINISTERS RESPONSIBLE FOR CIVIL REGISTRATION

Durban International Convention Centre
Durban, South Africa

3-5 September 2012



United Nations



African Union
Commission



African Development Bank



Republic of South Africa

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS



A. Introduction

1. An Experts' Group Meeting was held from 3 to 5 September 2012 at the Durban International Convention Centre in Durban, Republic of South Africa to prepare for the Second Conference of African Ministers responsible for Civil Registration, to be held in the same venue on 6 and 7 September 2012. Both the Conference and the preparatory Meeting of Experts are being organized by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), the African Union Commission (AUC), the African Development Bank (AfDB), supported by the Government of the Republic of South Africa, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNHCR, WHO and HMN, on the theme, *Improving Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Institutional and Human Infrastructure*. The Second Conference is being organized in accordance with the resolution of the First ministerial meeting, which recommended that the Conference be institutionalized as a standing forum to be organized every two years.

B. Attendance

2. The meeting brought together over 230 participants from member States, including Heads of national civil registration authorities, National Statistical Offices (NSOs); ; country experts responsible for Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS); representatives of the CRVS Core Group, namely UNECA, AUC, AfDB, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNHCR WHO, HMN and the ASSD Secretariat; representatives of regional and international organizations, sub-regional and non-governmental organisations, the private sector, statistical training centres and a group of young African statisticians.

C. Opening Session

3. Welcoming remarks were made by the Director-General, Department of Home Affairs of the Republic of South Africa as host of the meeting. Opening remarks were delivered by representatives of the UNECA, AUC, and the AfDB Group. Opening remarks were also made by the Deputy Minister of Home Affairs of the Republic of South Africa, Honourable Ms. Fatima Chohan. The meeting was formally opened by the Premier of the Province of KwaZulu-Natal of the Republic of South Africa, the Honourable Zweli Mkhize.
4. The opening session of the meeting observed a moment of silence in honour of the late Prime Minister of Ethiopia, Ato Meles Zenawi, who passed away recently.
5. The meeting was conducted in 5 plenary and 3 breakout sessions, focusing on the following major topics: Role of CRVS in the Africa's development agenda; proposals for operationalizing the regional CRVS initiative – the Africa Programme on Accelerated Improvement of CRVS (APAI-CRVS); progress report on CRVS interventions by regional organizations and United Nations agencies; and country case studies in selected sectors. Presentations were made in the following areas followed by general discussions: CRVS and African Integration; Children's and Women's Rights; Refugees Issues and Related Challenges; Public Health Service and Management; Monitoring of development Indicators; Strategy for the Harmonization of Statistics in Africa (SHaSA); APAI-CRVS; Progress Report on the Regional CRVS Initiative; CRVS and the Health Sector; CRVS and National ID; CRVS and Application of IT; Monitoring of CRVS Operations; Service Delivery and CRVS; CRVS in Post Conflict Situations; Registering Death, Assigning and Certifying

Cause of Death and Compiling Death Statistics under APAI-CRVS; Strategic Action Points for Improving CRVS Institutional and Human Infrastructure; Strategic Role of the Statistics Sector in Promoting the Implementation of APAI-CRVS; Perspectives of the Isibalo Young African Statisticians on CRVS; Inter-American Development Bank Experience on CRVS; Role of Private Sector in Improving CRVS in Africa; Financial Partners Perspective.

D. Preamble

6. We, the representatives of Civil Registration Authorities and National Statistical Offices of African States, and other development partners, gathered in Durban, the Republic of South Africa from 3 to 5 September 2012 during the preparatory Meeting of Experts of the Second Conference of African Ministers responsible for Civil Registration, under the theme, *Improving Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Institutional and Human Infrastructure*.
7. Appreciate the hospitality of the Government and people of the Republic of South Africa for hosting the meeting;
8. Welcome with appreciation the decision of the sixth Session of the African Symposium on Statistical Development (ASSD) to prioritize CRVS as the thematic focus of symposia for the next five years beginning in 2011;
9. Note with appreciation the active participation of the Isibalo Young African Statisticians (YAS) in the deliberations of the Experts' Meeting;
10. Also appreciate the participation and contribution of non-governmental organizations, including the role of the private sector in the future development of CRVS systems in Africa;
11. Take note of the decision No Assembly/AU/DEC.424 of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union endorsing the recommendation of the First Conference of African Ministers responsible for Civil Registration on the institutionalisation of the bi-annual meeting of the African ministers responsible for civil registration within the framework of a relevant specialised technical committee of the African Union.
12. Take note of the commitment and efforts of African Ministers responsible for Civil Registration to continue to give priority to mobilize the continent to improve CRVS systems;
13. Recognize the crucial role of CRVS in promoting and realizing the African integration agenda and its contribution to the priorities of NEPAD;
 - Recognising;
 - a. the central role that CRVS play in governance and economic development
 - b. The role of CRVS in improving access to basic services at all levels, including meeting the MDGs.
 - c. their strategic role in the use and application of technology
 - d. the strategic input to privacy laws and respect for citizens dignity
 - e. the pervasive way in which CRVS impact on individuals in their daily social, political and economic lives
14. Acknowledge the progress made by member States since the First Conference of African Ministers responsible for Civil Registration in August 2010 in improving civil registration

and vital statistics systems, including the contribution of African regional organizations, various UN organizations and other development partners, and take note of the continuing challenges being faced by African countries in this regard;

15. Appreciate the current efforts of the CRVS Secretariat at UNECA in coordinating international and regional interventions by creating regional platforms such as the CRVS regional Core Group and stakeholders forum;
16. Aware of the challenges that Civil Registration Authorities and NSOs continue to face in the development of CRVS systems;
17. Also aware of the lack of appropriate records and evidence of vital events to identify the civil status of individuals in the majority of African countries, which is an impediment in the application and monitoring of the implementation of international and regional human rights instruments and provisions, especially on children, women and vulnerable population groups, including refugees, returnees, and internally displaced persons;
18. Noting with concern that the findings of the regional assessment study show huge disparities among countries in the development of CRVS systems in Africa, with almost all countries not publishing vital statistics due to the incomplete nature of civil registration systems;
19. Recalling the declarations of the first ministerial Conference on the measures for improving CRVS in Africa and the need to continue efforts in their implementation;

E. Conclusions and Recommendations

20. The Meeting proposed several actionable recommendations towards advancing the CRVS agenda in Africa for consideration by the Second Conference of African Ministers responsible for Civil Registration. The main conclusions and recommendations are presented below:

E.1. Implementation of the Africa Programme on Accelerated Improvement of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (APAI-CRVS)

The meeting adopted the proposed APAI-CRVS and requested ministers to consider it for endorsement.

African countries:

21. Support the implementation of the APAI-CRVS and the related regional Medium-term CRVS plan and ensure alignment to SHaSA and the African Charter on Statistics;
22. Assist in the creation of a pool of experts on CRVS at regional level for the implementation of APAI-CRVS across the continent.

23. Ensure that an adequate pool of resources primarily from governments is allocated in order to fully achieve the objectives of the continent-wide programmes;

E.2. Capacity building and technical assistance

24. Governments assisted by ECA, AUC and AfDB should establish a curriculum for capacity building of officials working on CRVS to ensure creation of skills-set as a critical success factor in improving CRVS systems.
25. AUC, AfDB and UN Agencies to make available resources to support implementation of the Isibalo Young African Statisticians association capacity development programme of work
26. Civil registration authorities and NSOs to commit to involve young African Statisticians in research, program activities on CRVS and in country assessments that are due to be conducted in member States

African Union Commission should:

27. Embed training of civil registration professionals' from African countries as a key component of the African statistical training programmes.
28. Include civil registration as part of regional priorities and provide support to countries emerging from conflict to revitalize their CRVS systems.
29. Establish a charter which enforces all African countries to register all events on civil registration

UNECA, AfDB and other regional and international development partners should:

30. Develop regional operational guidelines in line with international standards on CRVS which should be regularly updated to reflect the evolving needs of African countries.
31. Facilitate South-South learning opportunities between African countries.
32. Create a forum for African civil registration stakeholders as part of the APAI-CRVS regional programme;
33. Maintain and disseminate a catalogue of innovative good practices and champions replicable experiences in CRVS and linkages with different sectors
34. Develop and disseminate technical standards and policies to be used and implemented by African governments;
35. Working group on CRVS should be established or where they exist strengthened with multi-stakeholder involvement (Government agencies, UN partners, civil society and local communities) in order to support national CRVS initiatives.

36. AfDB to support countries for CRVS IT solutions to link with data portal solutions being offered to countries

E.3. Strengthening Planning, Budgeting, Monitoring and Evaluation of CRVS

African Countries should:

37. With the assistance of the APAI-CRVS Secretariat and partners conduct comprehensive country assessments of the CRVS systems to enable a holistic understanding and improvement of national CRVS systems in Africa. The assessments will identify the stage of development of the CRVS system of each country, identify bottlenecks and challenges faced by countries, and the form of assistance that each country will need in order to arrive at complete registration;
38. Formulate country-owned concrete and time-bound national action plans for the improvement of CRVS systems. These action plans must be included in national development plans so as to feed into national budgets;
39. Allocate adequate resources as part of their recurrent national budget to ensure the credibility and sustainability of their CRVS systems;
40. Strengthen stakeholder participation, particularly the participation of relevant ministries according to the theme of the Conference
41. Ensure that there is a well designed monitoring and evaluation framework, including regular reporting on progress as an integral part of the CRVS system to ensure continuity and completeness of registration;
42. Pay particular attention to birth and death registration and causes of death to monitor development indicators including MDGs
43. Strengthen the institutional and human infrastructure of the CRVS systems;

Regional and international development partners should:

44. Assist countries to implement their costed, time bound CRVS plans,
45. In accordance with PARIS declaration on Aid Effectiveness align their support in the area of CRVS to country-owned national action plans using country systems and processes ;
46. Coordinate their support to countries to reduce administrative and transaction costs imposed on countries;

E.4. Reforming and improving CRVS systems and legal framework

African Countries should:

47. Enact new civil registration laws if absent and update existing civil registration laws that meet the evolving civil registration and vital statistics needs of the countries to ensure continuity, permanence, universality and coverage of the collection, management and reporting of CRVS systems. This process of promulgating new laws and amending existing ones should reflect the specificities of particular countries, and involve the participation of all relevant stakeholders, be based on international and regional principles and standards.
48. Enact new legislation on data protection and privacy for the protection and control related to keeping, releasing and processing of personal and national data.
49. Take advantage of the recent advancement in information technology to improve and simplify the administration of civil registration laws and regulations. The modernization of CRVS systems should ultimately include the use of biometric registration for better identification of individuals and to improve the quality of the information collected through CRVS systems.
50. Enact new legislation on electronic signatures to facilitate online signing of documents and authentication of electronic transactions and registers relating to CRVS.
51. Establish a convention that protects civil registration installations from destruction by acts of war and natural causes

E.5. Establishing effective coordination mechanisms

The meeting underscored the need for better coordination between the different ministries that deal with civil registration functions.

African Countries should:

52. Establish or, where they exist, strengthen mechanisms to coordinate the different civil registration functions at the national and the sub-national levels for the timely collection, analysis and dissemination of relevant CRVS data to allow for an efficient mechanism of registration, and for planning, control and decision-making purposes;
53. Ensure that the Ministry responsible for Civil Registration take the lead in the management of CRVS activities in each country, and work closely with other departments
54. Institutionalize through legal provisions linkages between civil registration authorities and NSOs including health, education and other ministries, and ensure that the legal and regulatory frameworks specify the coordination arrangements between civil registration and NSOs and their respective roles and responsibilities.

E 6. Improving service delivery and access

African Countries should:

55. Continue in their endeavours to put in place civil registration systems to register all vital events that occur within their territory regardless of nationality or legal status and that appropriate certificates and documents are issued free of charge;

56. Ensure that access to registration services which include the actual registration itself should be made available to the whole population by keeping the cost of access, including both direct and indirect costs, as low as possible and ensuring that the cost of accessing services does not vary significantly within and between geographical areas.
57. Decentralise civil registration through the establishment of civil registration offices and service centres in districts, townships, villages, refugees camps and other special population groups, so as to ensure complete coverage of population and enable rural and marginalised populations to access civil registration systems, including through the establishment of mobile registration teams;
58. Utilise local structures that exist such as traditional authorities, schools and faith based organizations to improve service delivery to hard-to-reach segments of the population;
59. Physical addresses of dwellings are central for the well functioning CRVS systems. In this regard countries are encouraged to take advantage of geographic information systems and remote sensing technologies and introduce unique physical addresses for dwellings.

E 7. Addressing the needs of marginalized population groups

African countries should:

60. Promote the registration of the most vulnerable children such as street children, those at risk and children in institutions to whom a birth certificate would provide much needed protection.
61. Enact, update and/or implement laws and policies on registration of vital events so as to ensure the timely and compulsory registration for all refugee children, including returnees and internally displaced persons, within the national territory.
62. African countries to include nationality and origin, in reference to the registration of vital events of refugees.

E.8. Promoting awareness and advocacy

African Countries should:

63. Continue to strengthen awareness campaigns on CRVS systems at the national, sub-national levels using all forms of media including the use of health and education systems in rural areas, and in all local languages in the country.
64. Sensitize parliamentarians, members of the judiciary and executive on the importance of civil registration, and where necessary, establish Select Parliamentary Committees on CRVS for monitoring civil registration activities and ensuring adequate budget allocation;

E.9. Registering Deaths, Assigning and Certifying Cause of Death and Compiling Death Statistics under APAI-CRVS

African countries should:

65. Include the causes of deaths in the legislative framework for death registration;
66. Include death and causes of death registration in the Health Management Information System;
67. Undertake capacity building activities through training and workshops on registration of death and causes of death targeted at government officials, and health professionals;
68. Intensify public education to reduce stigmatization especially in cases where the cause of death is HIV/AIDS, so that all deaths could be registered.
69. Develop an effective system for death registration in countries affected by war;
70. Request the secretariat to establish a regional CRVS knowledge hub that deals with study and research requirements

E 10 Economic Development opportunities from CRVS

African countries and regional and international organisations should;

71. Explore research and innovation opportunities of the CRVS be explored for an African narrative on development
72. Investigate the economic and investment opportunities that CRVS systems offer under the NEPAD Infrastructure programme in order to accelerate Africa's economic development.
73. Also explore the immense possibilities that CRVS systems offer in the realization of political, economic, social and cultural integration.

E. Closing of the meeting

74. South Africa as the host country and chair of the meeting thanked all the vice chairs, Cote d'Ivoire, Kenya and Egypt for chairing the sessions. He also thanked all the delegates for their active participation during the deliberations of the meeting. Specifically, he pointed out that Africa can stand-up and solves its own problems. He also mentioned that these recommendations show that the experts are taking advantage of the political will shown by their respective countries.

75. He finally stated that the recommendations which will be presented to the ministers are concrete in achieving the goals and objectives set in the regional programme. He thanked all the delegates again and declared the meeting duly closed.