



AUC/CRMC4/2017/3

**Fourth Conference of African Ministers
responsible for Civil Registration**
Nouakchott
4-8 December 2017

Previous Ministerial Declarations on Improving Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Africa



APAI-CRVS
Everyone visible in Africa

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



Introduction

In modern society, the systematic recording of vital events and a fully functioning civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) system is essential for good governance and for the planning of development initiatives. It follows that sound governance and planning come with a demand for fresh data. In that regard, a huge data gap can be observed in the national statistical systems of most African countries. As a result, the competent planning and monitoring of multisectoral development endeavours can be compromised.

African Governments are seeking viable techniques and approaches for improving their CRVS systems. Data drawn from the registration of vital events form the basis of legal documents such as birth certificates, identification cards, passports, death certificates and inheritance claims. Vital statistics generated from civil registration records represent important input for public administration and services, and for planning and monitoring development programmes.

For many decades, initiatives and efforts relating to CRVS in Africa were dominated by isolated project-based and ad hoc exercises. The situation has changed radically following the first Conference of African Ministers Responsible for Civil Registration, held in Addis Ababa on 13 and 14 August 2010. The Conference stimulated a number of responses and actions, including the institutionalization of the Conference of African Ministers as a permanent forum under the auspices of the African Union Commission. The mandate of the Conference of African Ministers is to report every two years to African Heads of States on progress and challenges.

Policy guidance from the Conference of African Ministers and technical support from the Africa Programme for Accelerated Improvement of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (APAI-CRVS) and the regional Core Group, coupled with political commitment at national level have resulted in several achievements relating to CRVS on the continent. There has been significant evidence of a heightened awareness of the importance of CRVS for good governance, human rights and public policy.

The second and third Conferences of African Ministers were convened in September 2012 in Durban, South Africa, and in February 2015 in Yamoussoukro. In each of the last three Conferences of African Ministers, more than 40 African Ministers were brought together to discuss the status, challenges and future actions for reforming and improving CRVS systems. The conferences were held under different themes and have passed a number of resolutions and recommendations critical to strengthening and accelerating regional CRVS improvement initiatives. The resolutions and recommendations from the last three conferences of Ministers are presented below.

I. First Conference of African Ministers responsible for Civil Registration

The First Conference of African Ministers responsible for Civil Registration, was held in Addis Ababa in August 2010, recognized the importance of civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) and identified CRVS as one of the continent's key development imperatives. The theme for this conference was: *“Towards Improved Civil Status Information for Efficient Public Administration and Generation of Vital Statistics for National Development and MDGs Monitoring in Africa”*

Ministerial Statements:

We, the African Ministers responsible for Civil Registration, meeting for the first time in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia from 13 to 14 August 2010 at the instance of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the African Development Bank (AfDB) and the African Union Commission (AUC);

We acknowledge that the theme of our first conference: *“Improved Civil Status Information for Efficient Public Administration and Generation of Vital Statistics for National Development and MDGs Monitoring in Africa”* is both timely and relevant for the achievement of Africa's development and improvement of public service delivery to our people;

We also acknowledge the importance of civil registration for public policy, good governance, human rights, rights of children, and as a basis for reliable vital statistics;

We further acknowledge the importance and contribution of civil registration and vital statistics information for the implementation of the Reference Regional Strategic Framework for Statistical Capacity Building in Africa and the Marrakech Action Plan for Statistics and promoting the African Charter on Statistics;

We however note with concern that despite the importance of civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) systems, the majority of our countries lack adequate and complete systems.

We recognize the need for strong policy responses, including those aimed at improving CRVS systems as part of the ongoing reforms in our countries. In this regard, we take note of the recommendations of the 2009 Tanzania Regional Workshop on Strengthening Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems in Africa, the second session of the Statistical Commission for Africa, and the Addis Ababa Expert Group Meeting on Civil Registration, preceding this conference, to strengthen CRVS systems in Africa.

We note that the challenge before us now is to mobilize and rally sufficient political commitment and leadership for the improvement of CRVS systems in Africa. In this regard, we fully endorse the recommendations of our experts on strategies for strengthening CRVS systems. In the light of these recommendations, we hereby resolve to:

- Take appropriate policy measures that would facilitate the implementation of plans, programmes and initiatives for the reform and improvement of CRVS to achieve universal coverage and completeness, taking into consideration the specific circumstances of our countries. In this regard, we resolve to mainstream CRVS processes into national statistical development strategies and other national plans and programmes, including strengthening coordination of activities among various departments and ministries at the country level;

- Intensify awareness-raising campaigns on the procedures and importance of civil registration, to ensure effective functioning of the systems;
- Adopt laws and policies that ensure timely and compulsory registration of vital events occurring within our countries, with guarantees for equal access to the system for all persons. In this regard, we commit to revise and update our CRVS laws and statistical legislation in line with international and regional guidelines and recommendations, by allocating adequate human and financial resources for this purpose.

We recognize the importance of partnerships and capacity-building to support national efforts to strengthen CRVS. In this regard, we call upon:

- ECA, AfDB and AUC, as well as other development partners, to continue to support our efforts in capacity-building and mobilizing resources;
- ECA, AfDB and AUC to finalize the draft medium-term regional plan and guidelines on CRVS;
- The African Symposium for Statistical Development (ASSD), which has hitherto focused on mobilizing Africa to fully participate in the 2010 round of population and housing census, to give priority to mobilizing Africa to improve CRVS systems;
- ECA to consider establishing a substantive post on civil registration and vital statistics with appropriate support staff at the African Centre for Statistics to ensure the sustainability of ongoing efforts to improve CRVS systems in Africa;
- Universities, national and regional statistical and demographic training institutions to develop appropriate curricula for building capacity and improving CRVS systems in Africa;
- The health sector to align the health system with CRVS systems to improve the sharing of data on births and deaths with assigned causes for all deaths, with national statistical offices and CRVS authorities;
- UNSD, HMN and other development partners to strengthen their support to regional and national CRVS initiatives and programmes, including aligning their assistance accordingly.

Lastly, we endorse this Conference as a standing regional platform for discussion on political and policy issues related to civil registration and vital statistics in Africa.

We thank the Government and people of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia for hosting this successful Conference. We especially thank the Honourable Minister of Justice, His Excellency Mr. Berhan Hailu for his leadership in this endeavour to improve CRVS systems in Africa. We are particularly grateful to ECA, AfDB, AUC, UNSD, UNICEF, UNFPA, HMN, and UNHCR for successfully organizing this important Conference.

Done in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on the 14th day of August 2010.

II. Second Conference of African Ministers responsible for Civil Registration

The Second Conference, held in Durban, South Africa, in September 2012, ministers reiterated the continued importance of CRVS for advancing Africa's development agenda, including accelerating regional integration, achieving the priorities of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (*NEPAD*), creating an African Union strategic framework for pan-African socioeconomic development, and meeting the Millennium Development Goals under the theme: "*Improving Institutional and Human Infrastructure*"

Ministerial Statements:

Preamble:

We, the African Ministers responsible for Civil Registration:

1. Held our Second Conference on 6 and 7 September 2012 in Durban, South Africa, on the theme, *Improving Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Institutional and Human Infrastructure*. The conference was jointly organized by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), the African Union Commission (AUC), the African Development Bank (AfDB) and the Government of the Republic of South Africa, supported by United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), World Health Organisation (WHO) and Health Metrics Network (HMN);

2. Take this opportunity to express our heartfelt condolences to the Government and people of Ethiopia for the death of His Excellency, Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, whose commitment and passion for Africa's development has contributed to placing CRVS on the development agenda of African countries. We also express our condolences to the Government and people of Ghana for the death of His Excellency, Professor John Evans Atta Mills, President of the Republic of Ghana, for his contribution to the development of Africa. We further express our condolences to the Government and people of Malawi for the death of His Excellency, Bingu wa Mutharika, President of the Republic of Malawi.

3. Welcome the Republic of South Sudan as a new member of the Conference;

4. Recall the commitments made at our first conference held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in August 2010 to consider and prioritize civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) as a regional policy agenda, and take steps to reform and improve CRVS systems in our countries. In this regard, we acknowledge that the theme of our second conference is both timely and relevant for achieving viable, sustainable and efficient CRVS systems in Africa;

5. Note with satisfaction the decision of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union (Ref; Assembly/AU/DEC.424) endorsing the recommendation of our first conference on the institutionalisation of the Conference as a standing regional forum of the African Union to deal with matters concerning civil registration;

6. Commend the progress and achievements made by Member States, since the first conference 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;

7. Commend the CRVS Secretariat at UNECA on its current efforts in coordinating international and regional interventions by creating regional platforms such as the CRVS regional Core Group and stakeholders forum;

8. Commend and welcome the contribution of the Young African Statisticians (YAS) in the development of CRVS in Africa, including their participation in this Conference;

9. Welcome the participation and contribution of non-governmental organizations, including the role of the private sector in the future development of CRVS systems in Africa;

10. Recognize that civil registration is a regular government operation with far reaching implications for national security, policy, governance, planning, development monitoring and evaluation;

11. Are aware of the challenges that our countries continue to face in the development of CRVS systems, especially the scandal of invisibility, as highlighted in the report of the comprehensive regional assessment undertaken by the Secretariat and reiterated by His Excellency Jacob Zuma, President of the Republic of South Africa;

12. Recognize the continuing importance of CRVS in advancing Africa's development agenda, including accelerating regional integration, attaining the priorities of NEPAD, and meeting the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs);

13. Take note of the recommendations by the Experts Group Meeting, preceding this conference, to address the challenges of developing CRVS systems in Africa.

14. Note that the challenge before us now is to reaffirm our commitment and scale up efforts to reform and improve CRVS systems in our countries. In this regard, we fully endorse the recommendations of our experts on strategies for improving CRVS as well as the proposed Africa Programme on Accelerated Improvement of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (APAI-CRVS) for improvement of CRVS at national and regional level. In light of the recommendations.

15. We hereby resolve to:

(a) Continue our efforts to develop appropriate policies and strategies to reform and improve our CRVS systems, and to mainstream them in national development plans and programmes, taking into consideration the specific circumstances of our countries. In this regard, we commit to urgently develop costed national plans of action on CRVS that reflect individual country priorities based on comprehensive assessments to be undertaken with the support of the Secretariat and partner organizations;

(b) Formulate laws and policies that ensure timely and compulsory registration of all vital events occurring within our countries, with guarantees of equal access to the system for all persons, regardless of nationality or legal status. In this regard, we commit to continue our efforts in revising and updating civil registration and statistical legislation in our respective countries in line with regional and international guidelines and taking into account the evolving needs and innovations;

(c) Adopt appropriate technologies to speed and scale up civil registration, manage civil registration records, and ensure their integrity and security against natural disasters, civil wars, etc.;

(d) Accord high priority to CRVS and ensure allocation of adequate human and financial resources for the day-to-day operations of CRVS in our countries, including implementation of the national action plans in order to ensure sustainability and country ownership;

(e) Call upon our development partners to continue to support our efforts in capacity building and resource mobilization and align their support to the national CRVS plans, consistent with the Paris, Accra and Busan Declarations on Aid and Development Effectiveness;

(f) Invite the independent Expert Review Group on Information and Accountability for Women's and Children's Health to participate in the APAI-CRVS

(g) Establish high-level coordination mechanisms involving all relevant stakeholders for efficient functioning of CRVS systems, taking into account the multi-sectoral and integrated nature of civil registration services;

(h) Ensure the alignment of health information management system and the CRVS systems and that both be mainstreamed into National Strategies for the Development of Statistics (NSDS);

(i) Further strengthen and facilitate coordination between National Statistical Offices and Civil Registration Authorities in managing and monitoring the challenges of CRVS systems;

(j) Develop results-based monitoring and evaluation systems and tools to monitor and report on progress on CRVS;

(k) Continue to take steps to improve the availability and accessibility of civil registration services by devolving services to local levels through existing structures and service networks, in particular the health sector;

(l) Intensify awareness-raising campaigns to educate the public on the importance and procedures of CRVS to ensure their effective functioning;

Way forward

We urge:

16. Member States to undertake in-depth assessment of the state of their national civil registration systems and develop a strategic and action plans for improving CRVS;

17. The Secretariat and other partner organizations to continue to provide technical support to reinforce the capacity of member States in CRVS operations and management through technical advisory services, workshops, training and provision of guidelines. In this regard, we request the Secretariat to establish a regional knowledge hub on CRVS that promotes research to build technical capacity at the national, regional and continental levels. We also request the Secretariat to undertake operational research in the area of death registration and certification of cause of death in Africa;

18. Member States and development partners to reinforce the CRVS Secretariat at UNECA with adequate resources and appropriate staff complement to enable it carry out its mandate as recommended by the first Ministerial conference;

19. Invite African Ministers of Health to join us in view of the important role of the health sector in the delivery of civil registration services to ensure a coordinated and integrated approach in addressing the challenges of improving CRVS systems in Africa;

20. Relevant national universities, regional research and training institutions to respond to the knowledge demand in improving death registration and causes of death certification in countries with the support from development partners;

21. The African Union to allocate the necessary financial and technical resources in support of the CRVS development agenda;

We reaffirm:

22. Our commitment to make the conference a dynamic forum that is used to discuss policy and strategic issues related to improving CRVS systems in Africa;

23. In this regard, we undertake to support the AUC in its implementation processes;

Vote of thanks

We thank His Excellency, President Jacob Zuma and the Government and people of the Republic of South Africa for hosting this Conference and for the excellent arrangements and hospitality accorded to all delegations.

We also thank the Premier of KwaZulu Natal Province and Mayor of the City of Durban for their warm hospitality.

We express our deepest appreciation to His Excellency President Jacob Zuma, for gracing the conference with his presence and his inspiring opening speech.

We also express our sincere appreciation to the Honourable Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, Minister of Home Affairs of South Africa and incoming Chairperson of the African Union Commission for the able manner in which she chaired the Conference.

We congratulate the Minister over her recent election as the Chairperson of the AUC and look forward to working with her to move the CRVS agenda forward in her new capacity.

We thank His Excellency Mr. Birhan Hailu, Minister of Justice of Ethiopia and Chairperson of the Bureau of our Conference as well as all the other members of the Bureau for their leadership over the past two years;

We also thank UNECA, AUC, AfDB, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNHCR, WHO and HMN and other partners for their presentations and the support provided in organizing the conference.

We look forward to our next Conference to be hosted by the Government of Cote d'Ivoire in September 2014.

III. Third Conference of African Ministers responsible for Civil Registration

The Third Conference of African Ministers responsible for Civil Registration was held in Yamoussoukro, Côte d'Ivoire, from 9 to 13 February 2015, under the theme "**Promoting the use of civil registration and vital statistics in support of good governance in Africa**".

Ministerial Statements:

Preamble:

We, African Ministers responsible for Civil Registration, meeting at our Third Conference on 12 and 13 February 2015, in Yamoussoukro, Côte d'Ivoire, on the theme, "Promoting the Use of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) in Support of Good Governance in Africa"

1. **Recalling** the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, being the founding principles of an individual's right to an identity; United Nations General Assembly Resolution 44/25 of 1989, the Convention on the Rights of the Child; Article 7 (1); and the 1990 African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, particularly Article 6 (2) that states "The child shall be registered immediately after birth";

2. **Taking note** of the report of the Commission on Information and Accountability for Women's and Children's Health (COIA) "*Keeping Promises, Measuring Results*", being mindful of its first recommendation which states that "By 2015, all countries should have taken significant steps to establish a system for registration of births, deaths and causes of death, and have well-functioning health information systems that combine data from facilities, administrative sources and surveys;"

3. **Commending** the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC) on the launch of the General Comment No. 2 on Article 6 of the 1990 African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child;

4. **Recognising** that the implementation of Agenda 2063 will require comprehensive, accurate and timely statistics generated from civil registration systems;

5. **Recognising** the participation and voice of African youth in promoting the development of CRVS;

6. **Conscious** of the progress and achievements made by many member states in the implementation of the resolutions of the past two conferences, particularly in conducting their comprehensive assessments as a basis for developing action plans for improvement of their CRVS systems;

7. **Recognising** that the Ebola epidemic and terrorism have shown the need of vital events and real time cause-of-death information, is no longer optional but critical;

8. **Acknowledging** the importance of civil registration and vital statistics in addressing the post 2015 development agenda on inclusive and sustainable development and Agenda 2063 which calls for a united, prosperous and peaceful Africa;

9. **Realising** the centrality of civil registration based vital statistics in providing data to inform health, economic and social policies, for good governance and accountability, and in advancing the data revolution;
10. **Associating** with the Seoul Statement of September 2014 from the First International Identity Management Conference, **underscoring** the centrality of civil registration for establishment of robust identification management systems, **facilitating** citizens access to social services, cross border movement and as key tools in disaster management and response;
11. **Appreciating** the progress made in the implementation of the Africa Programme on Accelerated Improvement of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (APAI-CRVS), and attentive to the fact that this year marks the end of the 2010-2015 medium-term plan;
12. **Recognising** the efforts of the African CRVS Core Group in the provision of both technical and operational support in the comprehensive assessment activities and the development of improvement plans;
13. **Taking into account** the guidelines and tools for CRVS assessment and planning developed by the APAI-CRVS core group, the newly revised United Nations Principles and Recommendations for vital statistics, as well as the focus given by the African Symposium for Statistical Development (ASSD) to advance the African CRVS agenda;
14. **Taking note** of the innovative management and leadership approaches employed in the running of the CRVS through the core group mechanism but also note the impending capacity risks;
15. **Recognising** that CRVS has the potential to provide information on people, places and movements and development options, and hence the necessity to embed location and addresses in CRVS systems;
16. **Acknowledging** the contribution of continental organizations, international development partners as well as the role of the private sector and Non-Government Organizations in improving civil registration and vital statistics;
17. **Aware** of the importance of the Global Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) *Scaling Up Investment Plan 2015 -2024*, with the goal of universal registration of births, deaths, marriages, divorces, and other vital events, including reporting cause of death;
18. **Appreciating** the increased and continuing involvement of the African Ministers of Health in improving registration of births and deaths, including the collection of information on cause-of-death;
19. **Underscoring** the important role of the health sector in the delivery of civil registration services to ensure a coordinated and integrated approach in addressing the challenges of improving CRVS systems in Africa;
20. **Cognisant** that a number of African countries are in or emerging out of conflict situations, or have special circumstances and would need technical support;
21. **Recognising** the pervasive nature of information technology in CRVS applications and its strategic implications for the economy of Africa, and the role of young people in the modernisation and improvement of CRVS;

22. **Recognising** that a complete and well-functioning civil registration system is a fundamental necessity for the sovereignty of nations

23. **Building** on the resolutions of the first and second conferences of African Ministers responsible for civil registration and noting Africa's contribution in the development of the global agenda on CRVS.

24. Hereby resolve to:

A. Capacity building

(a) Implement a clear strategy on sustainable capacity development on CRVS in the continent, including through intra-Africa cooperation arrangements;

(b) Forge purposeful partnerships with technical institutions of higher learning in order to appropriate substantive and technological benefits nationally and continentally;

(c) Call upon WHO, in collaboration with Pan African Organizations and other partners, to intensify their efforts in developing real time death registration and causes of death information at systems at country level;

B. Rights

(d) Pursue actively the ideal of "leaving no country behind" and "leaving no one out" especially the vulnerable including the refugees, Internally Displaced Person (IDP) and stateless people as well as implement the General Comment on Article 6 of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child;

(e) Support the development of guidelines and recommendations for maintaining and managing CRVS in conflict and emergency situations as well as special circumstances by making use of experiences from countries having gone through these situations;

(f) Request the Secretariat to develop guidelines to support countries in mainstreaming gender issues in CRVS systems;

C. Financing

(g) Commit that we will take up the responsibility for financing and sustaining our national CRVS plans and, when necessary, mobilize resources to cover the financing gap;

(h) Call on Pan African organizations (AUC, ECA, AfDB) to set-up a financing mechanism for APAI-CRVS;

(i) Call for partners, to support the implementation of the APAI-CRVS strategy in line with Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness;

(j) Endorse the renewal of the five-year medium term plan to the 2016-2020;

D. Technology

(k) Adopt a sustainable development stance for civil registration and interrelated systems by using appropriate information and communication technology that meet the legal, administrative and statistical functions of civil registration;

E. Service delivery

(l) Establish strong working arrangements with health and other relevant sectors to improve registration service delivery at the most appropriate administrative level;

(m) Establish solid linkages between civil registration and national identity systems in efforts to manage one legal identity and to improve governance and service delivery;

F. Implement evidence-based policies

(n) Analyse and disseminate statistics from civil registration regardless of the level of completeness as a means to establish the state of the system and its development;

(o) Establish appropriate national residential address infrastructure in order to optimise the utility of CRVS systems;

G. Positioning Africa's contribution to the global agenda

(p) Share the APAI-CRVS experience globally, in international fora, to influence innovation;

H. Strengthening coordination capabilities

(q) Fast track strengthening of the capacity of the Secretariat as a matter of economic and political necessity, ensuring that the required human and financial resources are made available to enable it to carry out its routine functions in implementation of APAI-CRVS and meet the ever increasing demand for technical support from the countries;

I. Advocacy for Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS)

(r) Recommend that the Heads of State and Government declare 2015-2024 as the decade for repositioning CRVS in Africa's continental, regional and national development agenda and urge governments to respond with appropriate action.

(s) Recommend the establishment of one day of a year to be a Civil registration day

J. CRVS, Post 2015 development agenda and Data Revolution

(t) Invite the Secretary General of the United Nations to address the 46th session of the United Nations Statistics Commission to share on the developments of CRVS in the African region in the context of the post 2015 development agenda generally and data revolution specifically

We express our profound gratitude to the Government of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania for accepting to host the 4th Conference of African Ministers responsible for Civil Registration in 2016.

Done in Yamoussoukro
On 13/02/2015
