

Asia-Pacific Civil Registrars



Facilitating collaboration to strengthen national civil registration and vital statistics systems

CHALLENGE

In the Asia-Pacific region, approximately 65 million children under the age of five are unregistered. This lack of identity denies children an existence before the law. As they grow older, it prevents them from accessing social, educational, health and financial services, as well as employment markets. They do not benefit from the legal protections necessary to increase their quality of life. In promoting universal civil registration and a legal identity for all, a State may therefore strengthen its ability to achieve a number of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and targets.

While civil registrars in Asia-Pacific face unique national challenges in achieving universal registration, they must also address practical registration issues, as well as cross-border issues such as migration caused by conflict, natural disasters and climate change. As such, civil registrars must strengthen information and communications technology and adopt innovative approaches to meet these challenges. They must network in an environment that is conducive to sharing ideas, learning from one another and finding common solutions through South-South cooperation.

TOWARDS A SOLUTION

Recognizing that universal civil registration is critical for sustainable and inclusive development, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and its development partners hosted a meeting of Asia-Pacific civil registrars in 2014. This meeting focused on improving the impact of civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) systems on providing legal identity (SDG target 16.9), achieving universal health coverage (target 3.8) and early childhood education (target 4.2), eliminating child marriages (target 5.3), promoting entry into formal employment (target 8.7) and ensuring that women are not denied inheritance rights or financial services because of a lack of identification (target 5.a). It also



NOMINATED BY

United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)

COUNTRIES/REGIONS/TERRITORIES

Pacific Civil Registrars Network: American Samoa, Cook Islands, Fiji, French Polynesia, Guam, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Nauru, New Caledonia, Niue, Northern Mariana Islands, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu Civil Registration Professionals of South Asia: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS TARGET(S)

16.9, 3.8, 4.2, 5.3, 5.a, 8.7, 17.19

RELEVANT PRIORITY AREA(S) OF THE SAMOA PATHWAY

Means of implementation, including partnerships (Capacity-building)

SUPPORTED BY

ESCAP, United Nations Children's Fund, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, World Health Organization and Plan International

IMPLEMENTING ENTITIES

Asian and Pacific Civil Registration Professionals

PROJECT STATUS

Ongoing

PROJECT PERIOD

2014 – Ongoing

URL OF THE PRACTICE

<https://bit.ly/3aWWz7g>

contributed to SAMOA Pathway priority area on Means of implementation, including partnership with a focus on capacity-building. Participants agreed to create subregional networks in Asia and the Pacific to collaborate on cross-border issues in CRVS and share knowledge, ideas, good practices and lessons learned.

Two subregional networks have since been established, with assistance from ESCAP, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Pacific Community and other development partners. In addition to the Pacific Civil Registrars Network and the Civil Registration Professionals of South Asia (CR8), a third subregional network for countries in North and Central Asia is currently underway. The networks have strengthened coordination and prioritized shared technological approaches to collaborate on common, transboundary challenges. For example, the Pacific Civil Registrars Network assist members in building resilience to natural disasters by adopting best practices for archiving data and use vital statistics to inform post-disaster services.

The subregional networks promote South-South cooperation by sharing innovative methods for improving CRVS systems among developing countries. They also promote the development of common data-sharing approaches and good practices to improve systems so that no one is left behind. These networks allow stakeholders to regularly communicate with one another and develop collective approaches to the storage and retrieval of civil registration data.

The 2015–2026 strategic plan for the Pacific Civil Registrars Network includes a communication and information-sharing strategy. Through collaborative efforts, States in the Pacific subregion have witnessed an increase in birth registrations and donor support. Papua New Guinea recently registered births for over 1 million unregistered adults as part of a national programme to issue 8 million identification cards prior to the April 2021 elections. Between 2013 and 2019, Kiribati achieved a 14.2 percent increase in territorial births registered within one year (SDG target 16.9).

These innovative subregional networks are the first of their kind in Asia-Pacific to prioritize the needs of national civil registration authorities while seeking common solutions to transboundary challenges. The networks have facilitated the increased use of innovative, technological solutions, such as cloud-based servers for data storage and retrieval. Each network addresses common issues while remaining flexible to local needs. They also support the achievement of the shared Asia-Pacific vision to see all people benefit from universal and responsive CVRS systems that facilitate the enjoyment of their rights and support good governance, health and development by 2024.

By emphasizing South-South cooperation while placing the needs of national registration authorities at the heart of their mandates, the existing subregional networks are self-sustained and driven by the participating countries themselves. This sustainability is further supported by subregional agreements. For example, under the Pacific Civil Registrars Network data-sharing agreement, national stakeholders are streamlining the process to recognize public documents from other members to facilitate data-sharing across borders and improve the daily work of



registrars. The Pacific Civil Registrars Network quickly recognized the need to improve procedures for sharing civil registration data. Because Pacific Islanders frequently travel overseas for medical treatment, the lack of data-sharing prevented countries from collecting accurate information on vital events, including births and deaths.

Learning from the success of the Pacific Civil Registrars Network, the CR8 identified a group of experts dedicated to addressing issues common to their own subregion. Each meeting has led to the release of a compendium showcasing common challenges and the solutions to address them.

Finally, replicability in additional subregions relies upon political commitments to improve CRVS systems and an openness to sharing information. Civil registrars across Asia and the Pacific will continue working together to expand registration coverage and meet the related SDGs by guaranteeing a legal identity for all. Thus, these networks promote South-South cooperation at the national and subregional levels.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Ms Gemma Van Halderen
Director, Statistics Division
Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)
gemma.vanhalderen@un.org