



BACK TO WHAT COUNTS: BIRTH AND DEATH IN INDONESIA

A STUDY TO INSTITUTIONALIZE CIVIL REGISTRATION AND
VITAL STATISTICS IN BASIC SERVICES

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Civil registration is integral to the Indonesian government's current poverty-reduction strategy, both for its ability to confer legal identity to citizens and as the principal source of the country's vital statistics. For families with children, ownership of legal identity documents can also be associated with continuation of schooling and increased use of health services. Legal identity documents are required not only to access basic services, but each usage of basic services throughout an individual's lifecycle also constitutes an opportunity for registration.

Unfortunately, Indonesia is still among the countries with the largest numbers of unregistered children under the age of five. A little over half of Indonesian children (under 18 years old) have a birth certificate, leaving around 40 million births unregistered. Death registration is almost nonexistent and data on the causes of death are poor, and completely unavailable in many parts of the country. Furthermore, Indonesia has no single, consolidated mechanism for collating birth and death statistics across the country, let alone data on other vital events, such as marriage and adoption.

Recognizing the urgency to improve this situation, the Government of Indonesia (Gol) set out to increase national birth certificate ownership for children from its current level of 56% (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2014) to 85% by 2019 (Gol, 2015). In effect, Gol aims to close the child birth certificate coverage gap by 29 percentage points over five years, despite having only reduced this gap by a total of six percentage points since 2011. In addition, Indonesia also participates in regional (Regional Action Framework) and global goals (the Sustainable Development Goal target #16.9) intended to strengthen CRVS systems.

This study sought to provide the Gol with an evidence base of the bottlenecks, gaps, strengths, and opportunities in the existing systems, identify models from comparable countries, and assess relevant contextual variations within Indonesia to inform planning and implementation of an enduring solution. This involved a three-part systematic desk review, key informant interviews, focus group discussions, and a cross-sectional, multi-stage cluster survey at the sub-district level in the provinces of Aceh, Central Java, and South Sulawesi.¹

This study found that civil registration in these three sub-districts is far from universal or compulsory. One in three children had no legal documentation of their birth, two in five marriages were considered illegitimate by the state, almost one in five adults could not readily produce an ID or family card with their name on it, and death certificates were almost non-existent. When individuals did own documents, these were often internally inconsistent with one another. More than a third of respondents either had a marriage certificate but were listed as single on their family card, or were listed as married on their family card, but did not own a marriage certificate.

Service providers responsible for civil registration are difficult to reach, application procedures are overly complicated, and obtaining certificates involves informal fees and late registration fines, reducing the chance for people in poorer households to be registered. As a result, many people's rights are not being met and the best source of vital statistics for those charged

with governing these areas is being fundamentally undermined, reducing the hope for evidence-based planning to statistical projections that many informants admitted they did not understand or have confidence in.

New policies have been passed to remove obstacles to birth certificate applications. By removing the national administration fee for birth certificates and providing outreach services, Law No. 24 of 2013 marked a paradigm shift in Indonesia's civil registration system. Where civil registration had been considered a citizen's duty, it became a protected right, which protection obliged governments to act. Unfortunately, this change in perspective was not equally shared across government bodies, whether horizontally, among sectors, or vertically, among different levels of administrations. Government officials across research sites shared a common sentiment, attributing the lack of coverage to citizen non-compliance with standards, leading some to propose an enforcement and punishment approach to increasing coverage, despite evidence suggesting that—to the extent that it has been instituted—this approach has been ineffective. Considering that the existing complications and costs of applying already discourage applicants, increasing the price punitively can only alienate communities further, especially if the benefits of owning birth certificates are not communicated clearly. National directives have also been issued mandating the sharing of data among sectors, expansion of access to social health insurance, bridging the distance between rural households and government services, and strengthening the ability of local governments to develop systems that work for them. In the context of ongoing decentralization, however, these efforts have often been thwarted by inconsistent, under-resourced, and fragmentary implementation.

Based on the findings and analysis of the current situation, this study recommends:

1. In order to increase access to civil registration, Gol should reform the current legal and regulatory framework to remove discrimination, fees, and penalties, and to permit delegation of responsibilities for civil registration to services closest to the community, at the village and sub-district levels. Removing late registration fees needs to start with waiving these fees for the poor and vulnerable. Gol should create

¹ This study refers to Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) systems to mean all government mechanisms of recording and/or reporting vital events – including birth, death, marriage, and divorce – and the manner by which those mechanisms relate to certifying vital events; though research questions focused primarily on birth and death. In Indonesia, there is no single, universal CRVS system, but instead a tangle of mechanisms that intersect or overlap at times, but mostly run in parallel, rarely converging to create a whole.

clear, simple, consistent, and enforced procedures for obtaining birth certificates and other civil registration documents across the country, in addition to streamlining civil registration verification procedures through full utilization of the Single Identity Number (NIK) and the Population Administration Information System (SIAM). With the passage of Minister of Home Affairs Regulation No. 9 of 2016, efforts should be undertaken to sensitize both local authorities and community members to the removal of the marriage certificate requirement for birth certificates to include both parents' names. This should involve a campaign to raise awareness on all children's rights to an identity that bears their proof of parentage.

2. To increase demand for civil registration, birth and death certificates should be tied directly to accessing basic services. Creating these linkages would need to be done in a consistent and thoughtful manner, so as not to deny people their other fundamental rights. A first step can involve using basic services to identify unregistered individuals. School and social assistance programs (SAP) registration present opportunities to identify the need for birth certificates (and other identity documents). Furthermore, civil registration services should be made part of the benefit package of SAPs. In order not to exhaust an already over-stretched frontline workforce, Gol should work together with frontline service providers,

including civil society actors, and support them with sustained resources, training, and other initiatives. The long-term consequence of making civil registration documents conditional for other services merits further investigation, especially for death certificates. Other positive incentives that take into account the socio-economic characteristics of targeted population should be explored. Future research should explore the specific registration needs of migrant populations and children outside of family care.

3. Civil registration processes should be made more accessible for communities through integrated and mobile services that primarily target health and education primary points of services, especially: birth centres, immunization centres, reproductive health clinics, early childhood development centres, and primary schools. The existing one-stop legal identity service (Yandu)—from courts for legalization of marriage to the Office of Religious Affairs (KUA) or Disdukcapil for birth and marriage registration and—should continue and be expanded whenever relevant. More generally, frontline staff should be mobilized to ensure that their clients are registered. When they identify community members without NIK who are therefore ineligible for certain services, providers should systematically refer them to registration authorities and offer information and support.



4. To improve the quality and accessibility of civil registration services, the ongoing efforts to revitalize sub-district and village governance should include the enhancement of the quality of civil registration human resources, infrastructure, and financial investment. A Technical Implementation Unit or UPT (previously Local Technical Implementation Unit or UPTD) for civil registration should be established in all sub-districts in accordance with Minister of Home Affairs Regulation No. 18 of 2010 which should ideally include the authority to issue all documents related to civil registration, including family cards and national IDs. The efficacy of Minister of Home Affairs Regulation No. 4 of 2010 on PATEN, which would ideally delegate permit-granting and administrative authorities from the district to the sub-district for birth and death registration, should be explored. Information on the importance of legal identity documents, and their respective application procedures, also needs to be made accessible, not only for the targeted populations, but also for service providers and frontline workers that facilitate the processes. Various discussion and problem solving mechanisms at the village level (e.g. the annual Community Discussion for Development and Planning or Musrenbang) and the implementation of the Village Fund should be seized as opportunities for village officials to take greater ownership of registration and data collection, and as means for community members to propose improvements to services.
5. Systems-based innovations, especially on information and communications technology (ICT), should facilitate strong cooperation between relevant bodies, from the Ministry of Home Affairs, to the Ministry of Health, the Central Statistics Agency, and others in the development sector. Innovations should be geared towards strengthening SIAK and its data sharing capabilities. Parallel registration systems and databases should be integrated as much as possible to ensure that all types of identification provide reliable, accurate, and complete data for government planners. NIK as a unique identifier for accessing services should be streamlined and used as the key to promote the interoperability of information management systems relevant to basic services. At the same time, personal data should be made secure. A simpler, more standardized system that simultaneously values capable human resources and has greater accountability through transparency should improve fraud protections and boost confidentiality safeguards.

This work is a product of the staff of the Center on Child Protection Universitas Indonesia (PUSKAPA). The findings, interpretations and conclusions herein are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Kolaborasi Masyarakat dan Pelayanan untuk Kesejahteraan (KOMPAK), the Government of Indonesia, or the Government of Australia.

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Five policy briefs have been developed following the completion of this study. They can be accessed on the KOMPAK and PUSKAPA websites.

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