



## INFORMATION NOTE F

# Means of Verification for the Targets of the Regional Action Framework

### I. Purpose

This is a non-official document, for information only, prepared by the Working group of co-organizers of the Ministerial Conference on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific to be held in Bangkok, 24 November to 28 November 2014. It provides additional background information to delegations attending the Regional Preparatory Meeting for the Ministerial Conference on 28 and 29 August 2014. Published in English only.

### II. Background and relevance to CRVS

The Regional Action Framework sets out three goals for national CRVS systems to achieve: (1) universal civil registration of births and deaths; (2) provision of legal documentation of births and deaths to all individuals; and (3) the production and dissemination of accurate, complete and timely vital statistics based on registration records. Each of the goals has a standard set of targets associated with it, which are to be set by members according to national capacity and ambition. Reports on progress towards achieving these targets are to be submitted by members in the years 2015, 2020 and 2024.<sup>1</sup>

Means of verification are data sources or evidence that members will use to measure progress towards achieving the Regional Action Framework goals. Guidelines on how to set national targets that are feasible and objective are being produced to support member States. They will include recommended means of verification for each target.

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<sup>1</sup> United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). (2014). *Preliminary draft regional action framework on civil registration and vital statistics in Asia and the Pacific* (E/ESCAP/MCCRVS/PREP/WP.2).



### III. Outline of key international conventions, recommendations and/or standards

- *Means of verification* is a concept associated with monitoring and evaluation tools such as the Logical Framework Approach, or 'logframe'.<sup>2</sup> Guidance on the use of logframes and principles for identifying means of verification is available from organizations such as the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID).<sup>3</sup>
- Standards for assuring and assessing the quality of CRVS systems are detailed in the 2014 United Nations *Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System* (3<sup>rd</sup> revision). This, combined with information from rapid and comprehensive assessments of CRVS systems already conducted by member States, will be the basis for recommending the means of verification for setting and monitoring national targets.

### IV. Key considerations

Means of verification must provide accurate, nationally representative information while being cost-effective and practical to obtain. With the assistance of the abovementioned guidelines, members will need to identify appropriate means of verification for each target including: how the information is to be collected and from which sources, the quality of the data produced, who is to collect the information, and periodicity of data collection.<sup>4</sup>

Many of the Regional Action Framework targets – particularly in relation to goal 1 – measure completeness of civil registration, defined as the proportion of total births and deaths that have been officially registered. This requires knowledge of total births and deaths registered in a given year (numerator) and total expected births and deaths in the same year (denominator). The former should be reported by the civil registration authorities. The latter can be calculated by applying crude birth or crude death rates derived from the census or household surveys (e.g. demographic and health surveys (DHS)), to the estimated mid-year population. In the absence of national estimates of crude birth and death rates, it is possible to use estimates developed by the United Nations Population Division. Special studies can also be used to estimate total births and deaths, including by triangulating data from multiple sources such as school enrolments, hospital, baptism, autopsy, burial and police records, and special sample surveys on the coverage and accuracy of civil registration.<sup>5</sup> If such data sources are infrequently available, or are of poor quality, estimates of completeness will be compromised and it may not be possible to verify progress on a regular basis (e.g. annually).

<sup>2</sup> The Logical Framework Approach was developed by USAID in the late 1960s and widely used by the international development community. OECD. (2000). *Results Based Management in the Development Co-operation Agencies: A review of experience – Background Report*.

<http://www.oecd.org/development/evaluation/1886527.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> AusAID. (2005). *AusGuideline 3.3: The Logical Framework Approach*.

<sup>4</sup> AusAID. (2005). *AusGuideline 3.3: The Logical Framework Approach*.

<sup>5</sup> United Nations. (2014). *Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System* (3<sup>rd</sup> revision).

The completeness of civil registration can also be evaluated using demographic techniques. Some methods (“capture–recapture” approaches) are based upon the direct comparison of data from independent sources, while other indirect analytical methods rely upon assumptions made concerning the population–age distribution (for example, the Bennett–Horiuchi method;<sup>6</sup> the Chandrasekaran–Deming technique;<sup>7</sup> and Growth Balance methods.<sup>8</sup> These methods are often used by national statistics offices or academic institutions to estimate the completeness of registration. However, they are complex to conduct and not practical for routine monitoring purposes.

An alternative source of information on completeness of birth registration coverage is household surveys in which respondents are asked whether children under five years of age in the household have had their births registered. In using these data it is essential to be aware that there are differences in definitions compared with the UN standard as well as some limitations of data collection methods. For statistical purposes, the standard definition of birth registration completeness as defined by the United Nations refers to the proportion of live births that were registered within a year or the legal time frame for registration applicable in the country. By contrast, the standard indicator used in household surveys is the percentage of children under age five (0 to 59 months) with a birth certificate or whose birth was reported as registered with civil authorities at the time of the survey. Such self-reports are subject to respondent error. Interviewees may not always be clear on who these authorities are and they may misinterpret notifying a church or village chief of a birth as formal registration resulting in over-reporting of registration coverage. Alternatively, they may not realize that the birth has been registered through the health authorities, leading to under-reporting of coverage. Sampling errors must be considered when interpreting disparities because sample sizes may be too small to generate statistically significant results for specific population groups. Household surveys are not used to develop estimates of death registration coverage.

Household surveys are important sources of information for monitoring progress on goal 2, specifically whether or not the family is in possession of a formal birth or death certificate. With regard to goal 3, routine administrative data from the health sector and from national statistics offices can be used to track progress in relation to the quality, timeliness and dissemination of vital statistics.

The functionality of CRVS systems varies significantly across the Asia-Pacific region.<sup>9</sup> Means of verification will need to be appropriate for members that have weak or dysfunctional

<sup>6</sup> Bennett NG, Horiuchi S (1984). Mortality Estimation from Registered Deaths in Less Developed Countries. *Demography*, 21(2):217–233.

<sup>7</sup> Chandrasekaran C, Deming WE (1949). On a method of estimating birth and death rates and the extent of registration. *Journal of the American Statistical Association*, 44(245):101–115.

<sup>8</sup> Brass W (1975). *Methods for evaluating fertility and mortality from limited and defective data*.

<sup>9</sup> ESCAP. (2012). *Make every life count: Regional strategic plan for the improvement of civil registration and vital statistics in Asia and the Pacific*.

systems, as well as those with more functional ones. Alternative means of verification may emerge or need to be developed as the CRVS systems improve. For example, establishing a dual-records system for direct matching civil registration against an independent survey source has been shown to result in significant improvements in the long-term but can be costly to establish and maintain.<sup>10</sup>

CRVS systems must be universal in their coverage. Monitoring their improvement requires verifying that civil registration is reaching disadvantaged or marginalized groups, as well as geographically isolated populations. Some means of verification are limited to the national level and not suited for estimating coverage of small areas. Furthermore, collecting information on ethnic minorities is a sensitive issue and it may be a challenge to accurately measure civil registration for these groups. Such limitations will impact the extent to which members can assess the coverage of their CRVS system with existing data sources and there may be a need for special surveys to be established.

## V. Relevance to the Regional Action Framework

The means of verification are fundamental to implementation of the Regional Action Framework. Developing standards for verifying achievement of the goals, which can then be consistently applied across the region, will assist members to prepare national strategies and to monitor and report on progress. It will also facilitate work at the regional level to support members in their efforts to improve CRVS systems.

Quality assurance is an integral part of any civil registration system. In addition to providing the basis for reporting against the Regional Action Framework, the means of verification involved in monitoring CRVS systems should be part of standard quality assurance procedures. This requires resources to be directed towards establishing a quality assurance system with standard operating procedures and appropriately skilled analysts.

## VI. Links to further information

Asia eHealth Information Network

<http://www.aehin.org/Resources/CRVS.aspx>

AusAID. (2005). *AusGuideline 3.3: The Logical Framework Approach*.

[http://www.sswm.info/sites/default/files/reference\\_attachments/AUSAID%202005%20The%20Logical%20Framework%20Approach.pdf](http://www.sswm.info/sites/default/files/reference_attachments/AUSAID%202005%20The%20Logical%20Framework%20Approach.pdf)

United Nations. (2013). *Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System* (3rd revision).

[http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/standmeth/principles/unedited\\_M19Rev3en.pdf](http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/standmeth/principles/unedited_M19Rev3en.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> United Nations. 2014. *Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System* (3<sup>rd</sup> revision).

World Health Organization and University of Queensland Health Information Systems Knowledge Hub. (2010). *Rapid Assessment of National Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems*.

[http://www.uq.edu.au/hishub/docs/WP02/WP\\_02.pdf](http://www.uq.edu.au/hishub/docs/WP02/WP_02.pdf)

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