



MEETING OF THE CIVIL REGISTRARS OF SOUTH ASIA (CR8)

Concept Note

1. Background

CURRENT SITUATION

Civil registration is a priority on the policy agenda of countries across South Asia. Committed to the realisation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including the realisation of complete birth registration and 80% death registration (SDG 16.9 and 17.19), the governments in the region also declared 2015-2025 as the decade for civil registration. To improve civil registration over this time period,¹ all countries are developing plans and targets to enhance the registration of vital events, in line with a Regional Action Plan "Get in the Picture". With these commitments to obtain and maintain complete registration of all types of events, comes challenges.

In South Asia there are operational civil registration offices in all countries. The structure varies with Sri Lanka and Bhutan, for example, having a more centralised system distinct from India and Pakistan where some responsibilities are devolved to provincial or state levels. With cross border movement between countries in the region, such as between Afghanistan and Pakistan, communication between civil registries is sometimes required to confirm events. Many countries in the region are introducing e-governance policies, like in Nepal and Bangladesh, which raises questions on how civil registration is placed within these policies and how it is linked with identification documentation and ID-management. The context in which the civil registry is operating affects how it is able to realise the country's commitments.

2. Objectives

ESCAP and UNICEF ROSA, will co-host a 2 day meeting with civil registrars in South Asia to discuss 3 priority areas (see details in the section on draft agenda) that are (i) of common concern to the civil registrars; (ii) where there is mutual benefit to collaborate across borders; and (iii) as a forum to share innovative practices.

It is expected that the outputs of the meeting will (a) provide input into the design of the mid-term review of the Regional Action Framework on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific and (b) create an informal professional network of the eight South Asian civil registrars (CR8).

3. Implementation methods

The meeting will be a discussion forum. A draft working paper will be prepared for each of the topics by a recognised expert, as a beginning point for deliberation amongst all participants. The planned outcomes of the meeting are:

¹ http://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/Regional.Action.Framework.English.final_.pdf (accessed 27 November 2017).

- i) A compendium of working papers delivered at the meeting.
- ii) A short workshop report which summarizes the discussions and includes any conclusions and recommendations
- iii) A proposed direction to facilitate ongoing communication between CR8 members.

The meeting will be structured to encourage mutual sharing of concerns and solutions, to support practical reforms in countries. If possible a field visit in the host country will be included in the agenda.

4. Partners:

ESCAP and UNICEF ROSA will co-host the meeting. Inputs from civil registrars from the participating countries will be solicited in conceptualizing and designing the meeting.

5. Rationale for selection of countries:

The countries included are those who are members of the South Asia Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC).

6. Draft agenda:

The meeting will be 2 days with 3 'topic' areas and one specific session on an informal professional network. Moderators and rapporteurs will support the discussion.

Possible topics for discussion include:

- Relationship of civil registration to civil identification systems
 - What is the contribution of civil registration to any ID-M developments; what is its unique attributes?
 - What is the use of civil identification for civil registration
 - How can civil registration aid civil identification
 - What are the different structures for linking civil registration and civil identification
 - What adjustments may be considered in the relationship between civil registration and civil identification when one system has more complete registration than the other
 - What are the implications for the legal and policy framework in a country with both civil registration and civil identification
 - How is the validity of the civil registration certificate achieved? What are the different uses of the civil registration certificate and the civil identity card?
- Coordination Mechanisms
 - What are the different modalities for policy coordination
 - How do countries manage the vertical coordination within a country
 - Is there any guidance for the engagement of the private (profit and non-profit) sector in coordination mechanisms
- Cross-border collaboration
 - What types of cross border movement is happening in South Asia; does this impact on the registration of vital events?
 - What are the challenges for the civil registrar in registering events

- Are there currently modalities for collaboration between countries in South Asia, or between a South Asian country and one in another region
 - Would a professional civil registration network be useful to practically address cross-border coordination concerns as they affect civil registration
- Civil Registration Network for South Asia (CR8)
- Is there a benefit to having an informal professional network across South Asia
 - What would be the objectives of such a group
 - How would such a group be organized

7. Participants:

The meeting is expected to include 30-40 people. Participants will include:

- 2-3 people from the civil registry entity in each country
- Resource people from ESCAP and UNICEF country, regional and global offices.
- Regional and global resource experts from UNDESA, UNHCR, World Bank, etc.