

## Fourth Meeting of the Global CRVS Group

New York, USA

2 March 2015

**Attendance:** OAS, ECA, ADB, World Bank (phone), OSCE (phone), UNFPA, SPC, Unicef, UN Population Division, IADB, UNSD, ECLAC, ESCAP, Lao PDR LSB, Egypt CAPMAS, Micronesia.

- Agenda:**
1. Processes of indicators development for the post 2015 development agenda: implications for CRVS
  2. Review of existing resources relevant to CRVS
  3. Recent activities undertaken by member organizations
  4. Future activities of the Group
  5. Others

### Summary of the Meeting:

The fourth Meeting of the Global CRVS Group was held in New York, USA, in Conference Room 12, on 2 March, in conjunction with the Statistical Commission. Nineteen participants from sixteen international, regional and national entities attended the meeting, of which two (OSCE, WB) joined through the phone. The WHO and ESCWA representatives, despite their plan to join by phone, could not participate in the meeting due to technical difficulties. The meeting was chaired by Ms. Keiko Osaki-Tomita of UNSD.

Ms. Keiko Osaki-Tomita, UNSD, presented an overview of the on-going two processes for the post-2015 development agenda, both technical and political. Currently, there are 17 goals and 169 targets of SDGs, and Member States seem to be not keen on opening this discussion again. In fact, some Member States have wanted to expedite the indicator formulation, so as to be presented at the UN High Level Forum in September 2015. In the previous week, UNSD circulated a preliminary list of around 300 indicators to National Statistical Offices worldwide, asking them for comments and inputs, the outcome of which will be presented at the inter-governmental negotiation at the end of March.. If accepted by the Statistical Commission, an Interagency and Expert Group on SDGs (IAEG-SDG) will be created to work on indicators. Ms. Osaki-Tomita highlighted the relevance of CRVS to SDG indicators, particularly Target 16.9, which calls for the universal registration of births (from a viewpoint of public administration); under Goal 3 (health), 6 out of 9 targets require VS to monitor the progress; and VS serve as numerator or denominator of many other proposed targets/indicators.

The discussion following the presentations was centred on the difficulties of both the political and technical processes towards the final formulation of SDG indicators, and the tight deadlines. Mr. Gerald Haberkorn from SPC stated that the number of indicators is a problem, but worse is the deadline UNSD has given NSOs to provide comments to the draft list of indicators. Pacific governments are

concerned, and have asked for an extension to provide comments (in April instead of March) because national consultations go beyond the National Statistical Office, which will hit SIDS seriously, as they have small offices.

Mr. Raj Gautam Mitra from ECA noted that indeed one of the proposed SDG targets calls for universal registration of birth, and several targets on health are also related to birth registration. Therefore, the Group needs to discuss which single birth registration indicator would be the most appropriate and push for it to be included in the monitoring framework. According to Mr. Gautam Mitra, currently, the proposed indicator refers to registration of children under five years of age, however it should be focused on children under one year old, for both programmatic and substantive reasons. Furthermore, he expressed his concern that the focus will be births, thus resulting in death registration being undermined or forgotten as a priority.

Ms. Claudia Cappa from Unicef, clarified that the indicator on birth registration of children under five year old allows for disaggregation of children under one year old.

Ms. María Isabel Cobos, UNSD, presented the stock taking exercise carried out to identify existing resources relevant to CRVS. The main gaps found as a result of this exercise are: guidelines and practical tools for the improvement of death registration, and linking registration of vital events with the production of vital statistics; learning and/or training programmes for producers and users of civil registration data and vital statistics; research work on death, marriage and divorce registration; and revision of handbooks that accompany the P&R.

The discussion following the presentations was centred on the way forward in terms of possible outputs from the Group. Mr. Gautam Mitra, ECA, asked whether UNSD is planning on revising the handbooks relevant to CRVS, to which Ms. Osaki-Tomita answered favourably. Mr. Gautam Mitra also asked whether there were any plans to produce a guide to improve death registration, and highlighted the need to have strategy to fill out the identified gaps. He shared that ECA is working on a set of operational guidelines on civil registration. Ms. Osaki-Tomita encouraged all organizations in the room to formulate their programmes of work taking into account these gaps.

Mr. Patrick Gerland from UN Population Division reminded the Group that for over 60 years, the international community has depended on indirect methods, which are a poor substitute of civil registration. Some academic groups are carrying out their efforts, but they are neither systematic nor sufficient. In his view, the UN, and particularly, UNSD should take the lead. He shared that the Population Division will hold an expert group meeting next year on successes at national level of improvement of civil registration, and completeness evaluation of CRVS, but that is different from having a formal guide for improving registration of deaths. Mr. Gautam Mitra agreed, adding that death registration is not included in the mandate of WHO, so it falls under nobody's purview. Moreover, he pointed out that there is no literature, so the guidelines must come from success stories and lessons from the field.

Mr. Gerald Haberkorn from SPC shared that in the Pacific countries, the case for improving death registration stems from the challenge posed by premature deaths due to non-communicable diseases, which comprise as much as 75% of adult deaths in the region. Some governments are providing subsidies for burial as incentive for death registration. The representative of Micronesia concurred, adding that CRVS must be understood as a multi-stakeholder issue, needing buy-in from a

variety of agencies. Ms. Osaki-Tomita acknowledged that the impulse for improvement of CRVS started at the regional level, often taking a multi-stakeholder approach; at the global level, we must learn from that.

Participating members reported briefly, in tour-de-table, on their activities since the last meeting in November and their planned activities for the coming months.

The Group reiterated the formation of a task-team to review the existing information on the coverage of civil registration and the methods of verifying its accuracy, comprised by UNSD, SPC and Population Division. UNSD will initiate communication and share a draft TOR and some initial findings in the coming weeks.

It was also informed that the Measurement and Accountability for Results in Health (MA4Health) Summit will be held on June 9 -11, 2015 at the World Bank Headquarters. There will be a session on CRVS in the context of health.

Finally, it was agreed that ECA will take over the Chair role of the Group starting in April 2015; UNSD will remain in its secretariat role.

The meeting was adjourned.