Enhancing Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment through Inequality Assessments of Civil Registration in Asia and the Pacific

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Asia Pacific CRVS decade: 2015-2024

Shared vision (2014):

 "...by 2024, all people in Asia and the Pacific will benefit from universal and responsive CRVS systems that facilitate the realization of their rights and support good governance, health and development"

Regional Action Framework (RAF): regional ambition for the Decade

Goal 1: **Universal registration** of births, deaths & other vital events
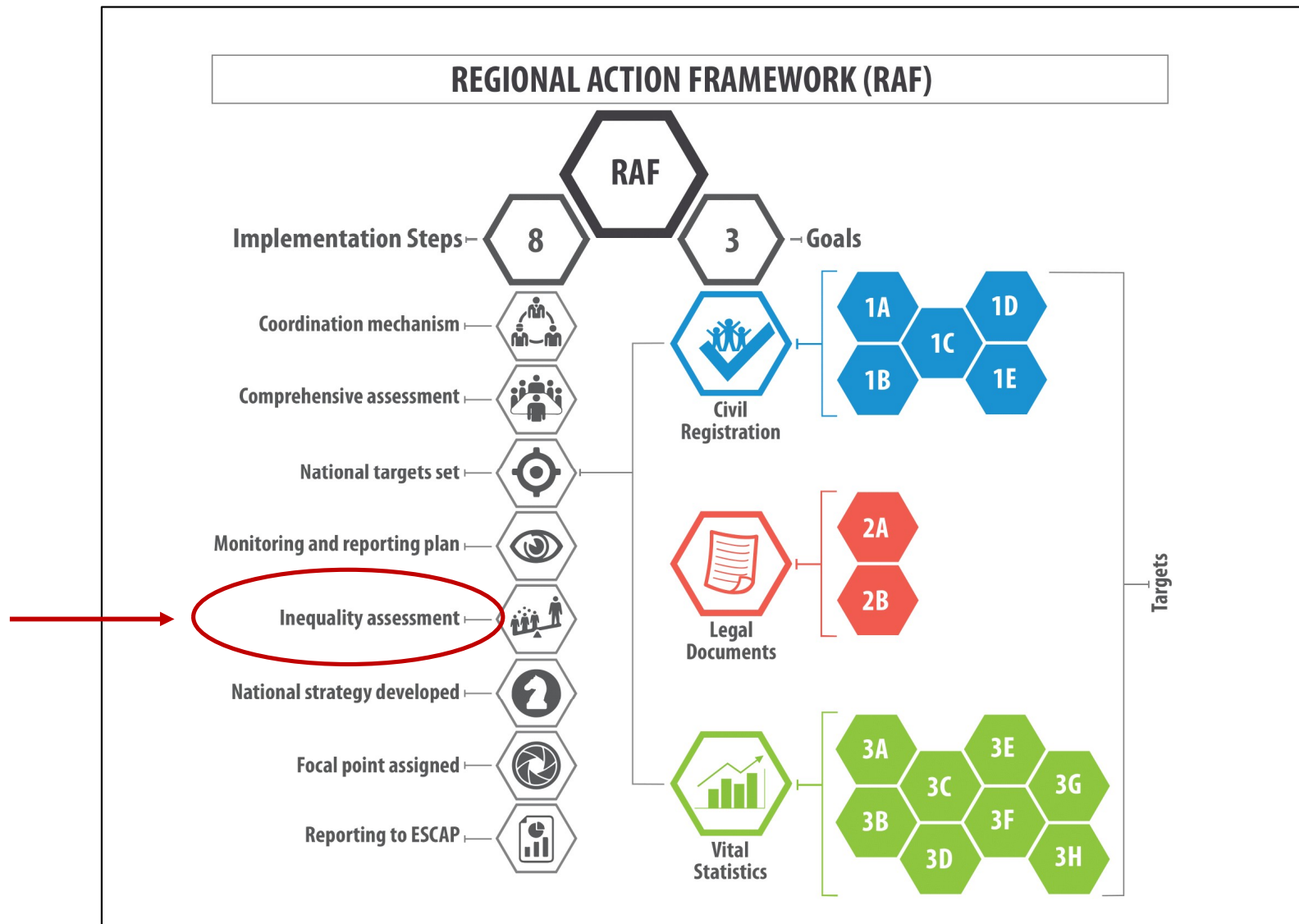
Goal 2: All individuals are provided with **legal documentation** of civil registration of births, deaths and other vital events, as necessary, to claim identity, civil status and ensuing rights

Goal 3: **Accurate, complete and timely vital statistics** (including on causes of death) are produced based on registration records and are disseminated

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RAF: gender relevance

REGIONAL ACTION FRAMEWORK (RAF)

RAF

Implementation Steps — 8 · 3 — Goals

- Coordination mechanism
- Comprehensive assessment
- National targets set
- Monitoring and reporting plan
- Inequality assessment
- National strategy developed
- Focal point assigned
- Reporting to ESCAP

Civil Registration — 1A, 1B, 1C, 1D, 1E

Legal Documents — 2A, 2B

Vital Statistics — 3A, 3B, 3C, 3D, 3E, 3F, 3G, 3H

Targets

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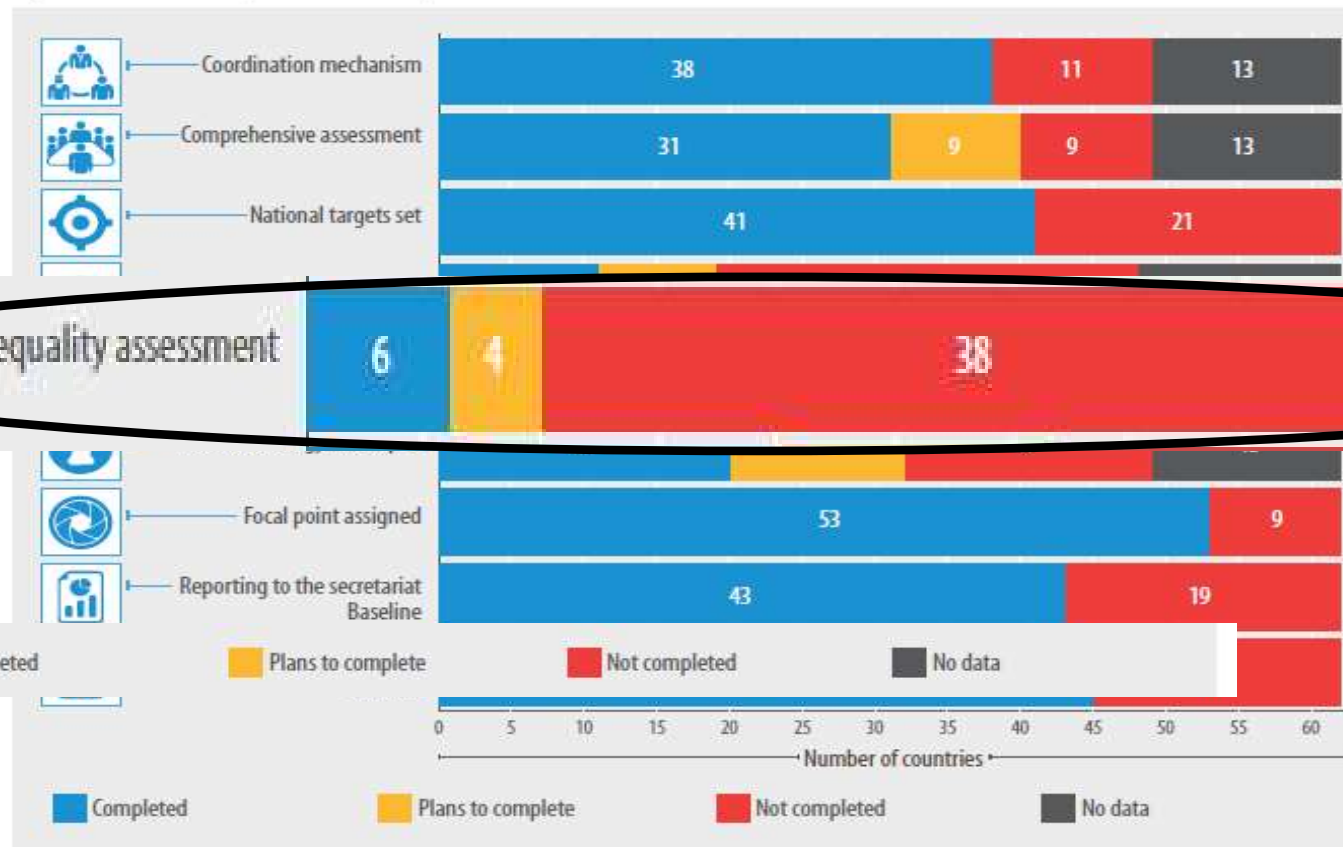Economic and Social Commission
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Inequality assessments

❖ Disparities exist in completeness of birth and death registration among marginalized populations

❖ Magnitude often unknown

❖ Little/ no disaggregated data -> who is being left out and to what extent

❖ Means to investigate disparities /inequalities experienced by "subgroups" of the population -> full inclusion and access to CR system for all population groups

❖ Inform policy makers about differentials in registration -> hindering access to rights, protection and entitlements of the State

❖ Serving as a building block towards gender-inclusive CR systems

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Midterm review of progress against the RAF in Asia-Pacific (2021): gender gaps

Figure XIV: Status of implementation steps

Implementation step	Completed	Plans to complete	Not completed	No data
Coordination mechanism	38		11	13
Comprehensive assessment	31	9	9	13
National targets set	41		21	
Inequality assessment	6	4	38	14
Focal point assigned	53		9	
Reporting to the secretariat Baseline	43		19	

Number of countries

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Inequality assessments: challenges and gaps

❖ Few countries have conducted (quantitative) inequality assessments

❖ Lack of specific templates, guidelines or standardized methods

❖ Difficult to measure not only completeness but also coverage ("who" is being left out)

❖ Universal means 100%, not 99%

❖ Not just for countries with less developed CR systems

❖ Impact of exclusion can increase as coverage and completeness increase

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Who is likely to be left out of CR systems?

❖ **Factors affecting CR:**
- Gender
- Geographic location
- Religion
- Ethnicity
- Education level
- Income
- Place of birth or death (hospital/community)
- Distance to registration center
- Cost of registration

❖ **Hard-to-reach and marginalized population groups:**
- People living in rural, remote, isolated or border areas
- Minorities
- Indigenous people
- Migrants
- Non-citizens
- Asylum seekers
- Refugees
- Stateless people
- Persons with disabilities

Leaving out women and girls in the CR system…

Legal identity (for women and girls)

❖ Proof of identity, age, family relationships

❖ **Visibility, voice & agency**

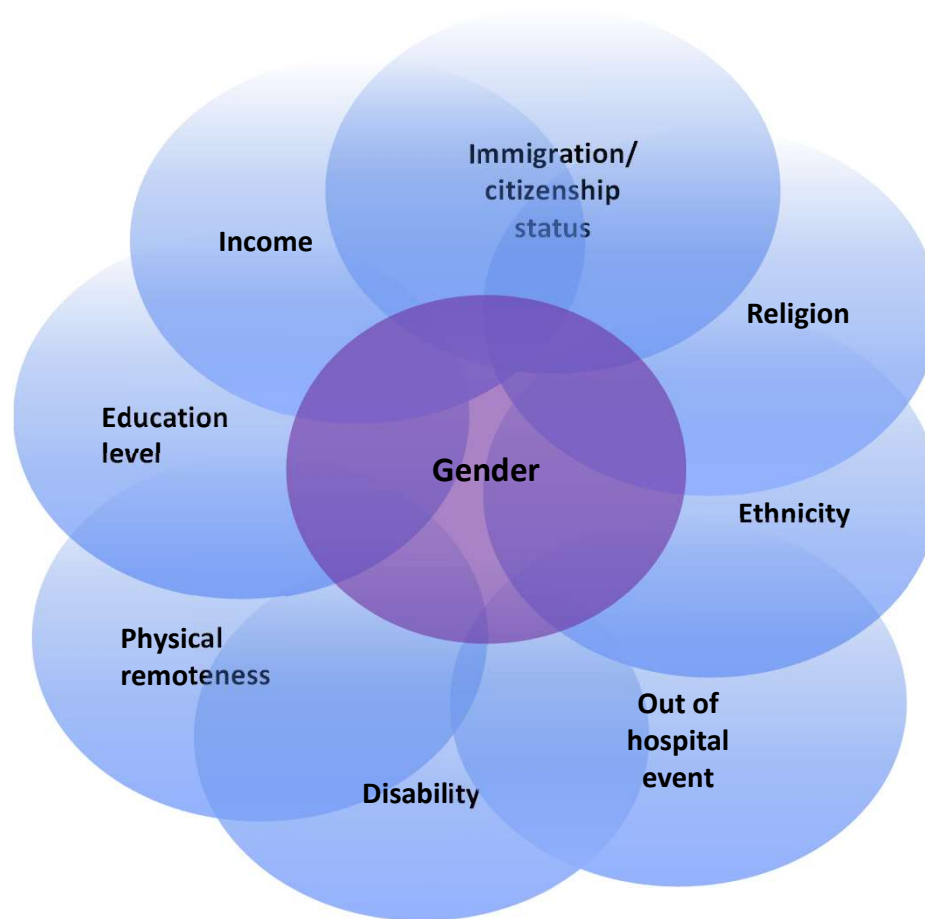❖ **Equitable access to services**, unlocking other SDGs

Inclusion (of women and girls) in statistics

❖ Indicators directly measurable through CRVS & disaggregation of population-based indicators

❖ **Gender-relevant vital statistics**

Intersectionalities...

❖ Factors affecting CR are not mutually exclusive

❖ Vulnerabilities and marginalization intersect

❖ Compounded to intensify disadvantage & exclusion

❖ Magnify risks for women and girls in particular

Income

Immigration/ citizenship status

Religion

Education level

Gender

Ethnicity

Physical remoteness

Out of hospital event

Disability

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Current ESCAP project on Inequality Assessments: 2021-23

❖ Supporting implementation of inequality assessments of CR systems **using secondary data sources**

❖ Differentials examined by sex/ age / ethnicity/ marital status of mothers

❖ Build country capacity to undertake inequality assessments in the future & refine guidance for use by other countries

❖ Two countries finalized (Fiji & Lao PDR), two countries in progress (Bangladesh & Samoa), one country in inception phase (Philippines)

❖ Key agencies: NSO, Civil Registration Office, MoH

❖ Stakeholder mapping & data mapping critical first steps

❖ https://www.unescap.org/projects/inequality-assessments

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Estimating completeness of civil registration

$$\text{Completeness (\%)} = \frac{\text{Number of events registered}}{\text{Total number of events expected/observed}} \times 100$$

Numerator
Registered births/deaths from the Civil Register

Denominator
- Births/deaths recorded by MoH
  - Census data
  - Sample surveys
- Administrative data (e.g. school enrolment, vaccination data)
- E.g. Indirect estimation of deaths; Reverse-survival approaches applied to census data for number of births
  - UNWPP estimates

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Some gender-relevant findings…

❖ No strong evidence suggesting **differentials in birth registration by sex**

❖ Preference to register **male deaths compared to female deaths** exists

❖ Death registration low for children <5 years and those >70 years, esp for women and girls

❖ Lower rates of birth registration for children of **teenage mothers and mothers in older age groups**

❖ **Dual stigma faced by young and unmarried mothers** preventing timely birth registration

❖ Differential in birth registration by **ethnicity** among children of mothers in all age groups, with **greater impact on birth registration than marital status** of the mother

❖ Mother's in the **lowest wealth quintile** had the lowest registration for children <5 years

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Towards gender-sensitive CR systems and policy...

Gender-relevant policy implications for birth/death reg

- ❖ **Economic incentives/parental assistance programs**: single/low income mothers, specific ethnic groups, children <1 year
- ❖ **Mobile registration facilities**: low-income mothers, remote location, single mothers
- ❖ **Inclusive/stigma-free registration environment:** young/unmarried mothers
- ❖ **Advocacy and outreach campaigns:** raise awareness regarding registration of vital events among specific ethnic groups

Gender-oriented policy research

- ❖ Does **poverty have a greater impact** on registration as compared to cultural practices?
- ❖ What is the **effect of geography** on registration as compared to ethnicity/cultural practices
- ❖ How/why for specific groups, **registration rates differ** across different regions within the country?
- ❖ Why mother's in **lowest wealth quintile have lower registration**?
- ❖ Reasons for **delayed birth reg** or **low death reg** for young children, esp. girls?

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Taking the findings a step further: ESCAP evidence to action initiative 2023-24

❖ Improve relevant policies/programmes and ensure they are gender-sensitive based on CRVS-related evidence

❖ Support the use of existing data and evidence generated through the inequality assessments or otherwise

❖ Analyze, interpret and synthesize data in user-friendly formats responding to decision-making needs

❖ Dissemination products conducive to gender policy use

❖ Implementation in 3 countries: Fiji, Bangladesh, Lao PDR (TBC)

❖ Topics for analysis e.g. Teenage/adolescent motherhood, child marriage, targeting groups for delayed registration

❖ https://www.unescap.org/projects/crvs-E2A-for-gender-policy

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Inequality assessments: applying a gender lens

❖ Differences in civil registration by sex

❖ Other gender-related intersecting barriers to registration and legal identity for sub-groups

❖ Unlocking a range of gender relevant SDGs and targets (women's education, access to healthcare, VAW, unpaid work....)

❖ System strengthening: gender inclusive CR systems by identifying population groups left out

❖ Evidence base for gender-sensitive policies and programmes

❖ Iterative process, refined over time, continually monitored and reassessed - context and situations

❖ Whole-of-government approach -> also critical for improving gender data and statistics

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Thank you

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