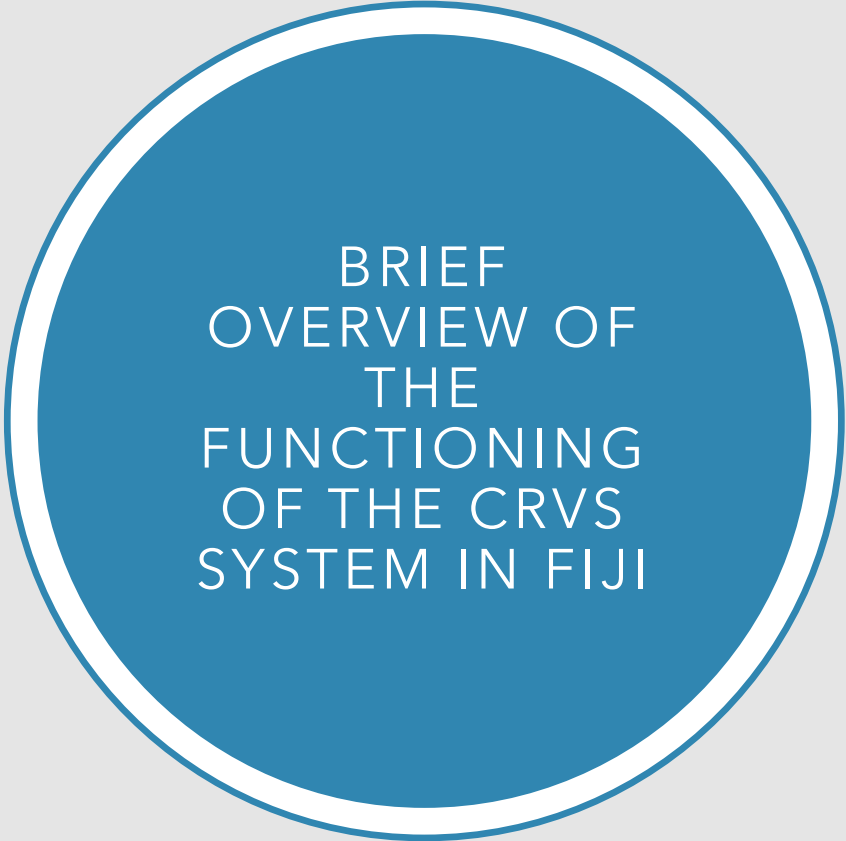


REGIONAL WEBINAR ON
FUNCTIONING OF CRVS SYSTEMS
DURING COVID-19

Births, Deaths and Marriages office
Ministry of Justice
Republic of Fiji



BRIEF
OVERVIEW OF
THE
FUNCTIONING
OF THE CRVS
SYSTEM IN FIJI

- The Ministry of Justice is responsible for overseeing the civil registration of births and deaths. We have 20 BDM offices across Fiji.
- The recording and registration of births and deaths in Fiji is governed by the Births, Deaths and Marriages (“**BDM**”) Registration Act of 1975.
- The Ministry of Health and Medical Services (MoHMS) is responsible for the recording of births and deaths in health facilities and the community.

Current legislation stipulates that births should be registered within 2 months. After this 2 months, registration is considered late, but a late fee is only charged for birth registration after 1 year or more after birth. If there is no notification of birth, issued by the hospital, registrations completed more than one year after the birth have more stringent documentation requirements and verification process with the hospital.

Fiji has a CRVS Committee which is comprised of the Ministry of Justice – Births, Deaths and Marriages Office; the Ministry of Health and Medical Services; Fiji Bureau of Statistics; the Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation; the Ministry of Education; iTaukei Affairs; the Ministry of Communications; and the Police Department. A CRVS Assessment was conducted and a CRVS Action Plan formulated by the committee in 2019-2020, with the assistance of SPC and Brisbane Accord Group (BAG) partners

A birth certificate is required for school enrolment, to obtain a passport the Department of Immigration (requires a 'current' birth certificate, issued from the BDM office in the last 3 months, due to the frequency of name changes and updates to the birth register in Fiji) and few other institutions require a birth certificate. On August 1st, 2018, the Fijian government introduced a Parental Assistance Payment Program (PAPP) to assist low income earners with costs associated with young children born on or after this date. The PAPP was only payable if a child was registered at the Civil Registry within 12 months of birth, and if the combined annual parental income was less than FJD\$30,000. The PAPP has been suspended since 1st August 2020.

<http://www.health.gov.fj/covid-19-updates/>

As of 25 November 2020, Fiji had 38 out of which there are 3 active cases and 33 have recovered and there has been 2 deaths. It has been 251 days since Fiji had the first case.

All cases reported from March 19th to April 18th were international travel associated, or epidemiologically linked to international travel associated cases in the community. There were 0 cases reported from April 19th to July 5th. Cases from July 6th to date were international travel associated - detected while undergoing mandatory 14-day quarantine in government designated international border quarantine facilities in Nadi.

WHAT ARE THE MAIN IMPACTS OF THE PANDEMIC FROM A REGISTRY POINT OF VIEW?

Given the minimum cases in Fiji, there was not a great impact on the BDM office or registration of births, deaths of marriages. But few areas where we saw the impact (registry point of view) and had to make adjustments were as follows:

Accessibility

Civil registrations done by the BDM office is considered an essential service so office has to remain open within the official hours, but we had to rearrange our office to cater for the COVID-19 instructions on social distancing and restricted number of people to be inside a contained space. However all Births, Deaths and Marriages (BDM) offices were open during the official hours of 8am to 4.30pm (Monday to Thursday and 8am to 4pm on Fridays and these offices were accessible even in the lockdown times and areas.

Working arrangement is the same as before and since there are 21 BDM office all over Fiji, staff had the flexibility to work in other offices if any particular area were under lockdown. Given that we are essential services, plans are to continue business as usual and implement precautionary measures to protect frontline staff.

CONTINUATION

Safety of staff/rearrangement

The need to strike a balance between health and safety and continuity of services to the general public

Verification of travel history of walk-in customers

Resources/infrastructure and Budgetary constraints

Impact: reprioritise resources, budget to ensure continuation of services

Creation of new rules of access to the BDM office

WHAT ARE THE INNOVATIONS OR CHANGES
IMPLEMENTED BY THE COUNTRIES IN ORDER TO
CUSHION THE IMPACTS?

Given that we are essential services, plans are to continue business as usual and implement precautionary measures to protect frontline staff. BDM office has not stopped anyone from accessing the BDM office for registrations. All our offices are open with sufficient staff and resources and all these offices and the officers are well equipped to cater for any increased demand for BDM services. As precautionary measures, we have put up notices for the general public to maintain required distance and a BDM officer now and then makes announcements to the waiting public to maintain this rule for everyone's safety. Sufficient markings are made on the floor for people to stand at least one meter away from each other.

There is a mandatory rule / directives for people travelling into Fiji to be in isolation for 14 days as a safety measure and officers had to verify travel history of people walking into the BDM office.

Is it possible to compare the total number of deaths in the first ten months of 2019 with the first ten months of 2020?

Yes, data on the next slide shows minimum change and can assume that there was no impact on death registration in Fiji.

DEATHS		
Months	2019	2020
January	554	492
February	431	461
March	529	448
April	453	431
May	511	486
June	437	477
July	494	521
August	437	500
September	448	471
October	472	458
Total	4766	4745

Is there a possibility to compare the total number of births in the ten months of 2019 with the first ten months of 2020?

Yes, data on the next slide. There is a decrease in the number of birth registration but this could be due reasons other than COVID-19.

BIRTHS		
Months	2019	2020
January	1875	1279
February	1834	1261
March	1788	1427
April	1995	1282
May	2052	1936
June	1906	2026
July	1874	2442
August	1467	529
September	1283	500
October	1276	532
Total	17350	13214

Is there a possibility to compare the total number of marriages in the first ten months of 2019 with the first ten months of 2020?

Yes, data on the next slide. There has been a decrease in the number of marriages.

MARRIAGES		
Months	2019	2020
January	440	286
February	454	307
March	464	313
April	462	205
May	459	295
June	442	351
July	392	407
August	318	367
September	288	333
October	316	360
Total	4035	3224

Is there a possibility to compare the total number of divorces in the first ten months of 2019 with the first ten months of 2020?

Yes, data of the next slide. This is the number of cases that were reported by the general public after a final order was issued by the Judicial Department.

DIVORCE		
Months	2019	2020
January	359	341
February	52	52
March	351	363
April	259	298
May	177	216
June	35	62
July	175	180
August	164	263
September	204	192
October	292	336
Total	2068	2303

Can the civil registry and vital statistics system generate statistics based on both on the date of occurrence and on the date of registration?

The eBDM system used in Fiji to record births, deaths and marriages can generate data on both the date of occurrence and date of registration. Both dates are recorded on the system and this can be further verified by the Ministry of Health and Medical Services.

Are the civil registry and vital statistics system digitized?

Yes, our civil registry and vital statistics system is digitized, and all data is recorded electronically. Fiji has option to register births using a mobile application.

In April 2019, the Government launched a birth registration mobile application called e-Services, under the 'digitalFIJI' application, which enables the public to register births online. This process involves downloading the Birth Registration application, following instructions on the screen, and submission of the registration electronically. Parents still need to present to the BDM Office to collect the birth certificate. The normal fee for a copy of the first birth certificate is waived for any birth registration initiated electronically through this application for a period of two years with effect from 12 April 2019.