



Civil registration operations in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic

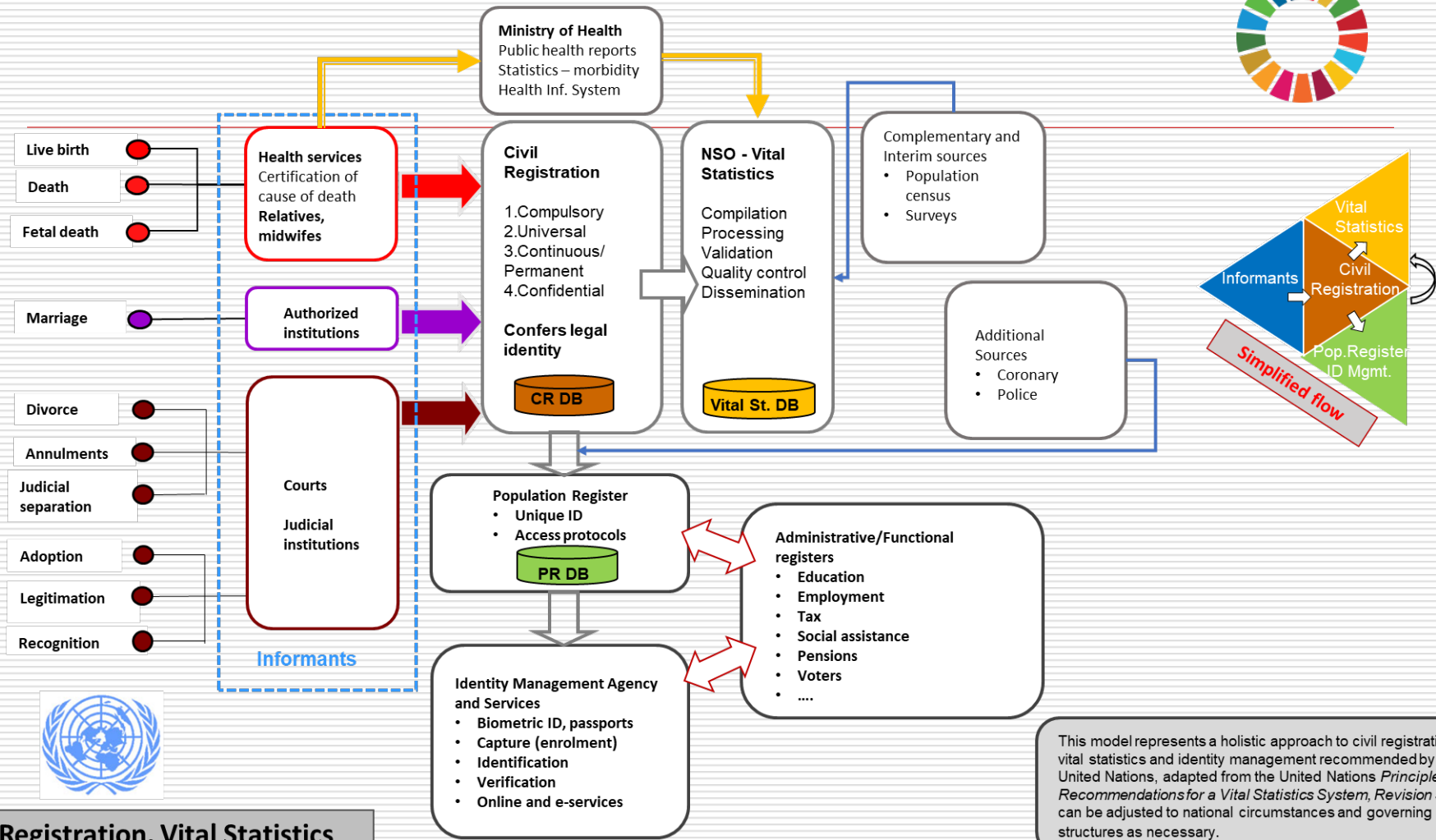
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Webinars on COVID-19 impact on civil registration and vital statistics
CARICOM countries
1 – 4 December 2020



The pandemic

- ❑ Starting in February 2020 the spread of the SARS-CoV-2 virus that causes COVID-19 illness and may result in serious clinical condition and ultimately death triggered a series of measure in most countries of the world
- ❑ Those measures, intended to prevent the spread of the virus among the population, shut down a long list of economic, social and government activities
- ❑ Impact on the functioning of civil registration was also considerable and it was compounded by stretching the capacity of national civil registration systems to register increased number of deaths while at the same time ensuring that registration operations are maintained
- ❑ The focus of this presentation is on post-pandemic functioning of civil registration as one of the major component of the holistic and interoperable national legal identity system – presented on the next slide



This model represents a holistic approach to civil registration, vital statistics and identity management recommended by the United Nations, adapted from the United Nations *Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System, Revision 3*; it can be adjusted to national circumstances and governing structures as necessary.

Civil Registration, Vital Statistics and Identity Management System

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COVID-19 impact on civil registration

- ❑ The UN Legal Identity Agenda Task Force initiated, in May 2020, a series of webinars focusing on the impact that the pandemic has on civil registration and until now (December 2020) conducted them in the Pacific, all of Africa, in Latin American countries and this series in CARICOM countries – all the content, recording and country presentations are available on the UN LIA website
- ❑ To complement these findings UN Statistics Division, which is co-chairing the UN Legal Identity Task Force, deployed a survey (in April 2020) to all national civil registration offices and the results are also available on the UN LIA website

<https://unstats.un.org/legal-identity-agenda>

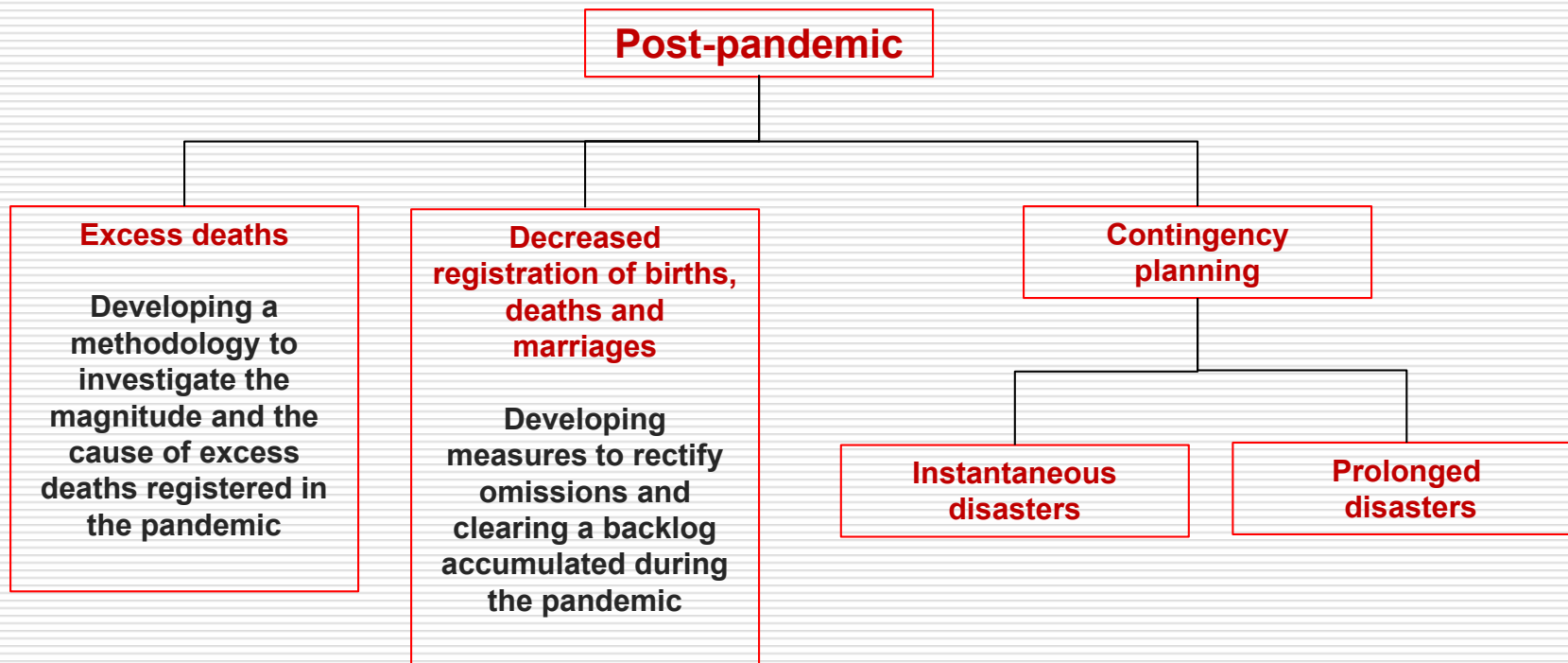


COVID-19 impact on civil registration

- ❑ Pandemic's impact on registration of major vital events – births, deaths and marriages – and on functioning of national civil registration systems varies from country to country – however, condensed, they include the following
 - ❑ Temporary suspension of registration services
 - ❑ Balancing in-office and working from home
 - ❑ Increased population's reluctance to notify the occurrence of vital events and registering them fearing contracting the virus
 - ❑ Introducing protection measures for registrars
 - ❑ Interruption of the links between civil registration and health sector in terms of notification
 - ❑ Considerable impact is expected in terms of production of timely and reliable vital statistics



The way forward





Excess deaths

- ❑ In a number of countries civil registration recorded an increased number of deaths so far in 2020 compared with previous years – not the case in countries participating at this webinar – however, documented in other regions
- ❑ Hence the need to investigate excess deaths in terms of volume and cause of death in an attempt to provide answers concerning COVID-19 mortality and its impact on overall structure of mortality due to delayed treatment of various illnesses
 - ❑ Developing technical mechanisms and procedures and promoting harmonization and common methodological approach in analyzing and interpreting excess deaths
 - ❑ Putting in place and harmonizing data from health institutions, civil registration, funeral homes or similar, religious institutions
 - ❑ Undertaking detailed analysis of mortality statistics time series in terms of assessing the changes caused by the pandemic
- ❑ The UN Statistics Division, the UN Population Division and WHO are establishing a Technical Advisory Group on COVID-10 Mortality Assessment to advise on obtaining accurate estimates of number of deaths attributable to the direct and indirect impacts of the pandemic



Decreased registration of births, deaths and marriages

- ❑ Considerable number of countries reported that the registration of major vital events – as documented in this webinar as well – decreased during the pandemic
- ❑ Rectifying this might involve the following – the list is not meant to be exhaustive
 - ❑ Developing and launching a broad publicity campaign emphasizing the need to register births and deaths that occurred during the pandemic and were not reported nor recorded
 - ❑ Adjust the operations to accommodate the additional reporting and clearing of the backlog (extend working hours, increase the number of staff ...)
 - ❑ Re-establish the links with the health sector and national statistical office to ensure the production of reliable statistics to quantify the cost of the pandemic in terms of population
 - ❑ Eliminate (or decrease) fees for late registration and extend the deadlines for registration of births and deaths, where fees exist



Contingency planning

- ❑ In the post-pandemic time countries need to develop detailed and comprehensive contingency plans in case of disasters, albeit not all disasters are similar, hence the distinction
- ❑ Instantaneous disasters here refer to the occurrence of events that cause instant destruction and harm, such as earthquakes, tsunamis, flooding and similar
- ❑ In the case of these disasters, national civil registration service needs to develop comprehensive instructions to maintain the registration of primarily births and deaths that may include
 - ❑ Guidelines for establishing procedure for abbreviated registration of deaths, featuring, for example
 - ❑ Expanding the list and eligibility of informers
 - ❑ Establishing process/waivers for missing documents
 - ❑ Suspend fees
 - ❑ Similarly, for births
 - ❑ Ensure the immediate deployment of registrars in the affected region to ensure delivery of services



Contingency planning

- ❑ In addition to the measures elaborated for instantaneous disasters, the contingency planning for prolonged disasters, such as COVID-19 pandemic and similar epidemics that are expected to extend over a period of time, might take into consideration
 - ❑ Developing a detailed contingency planning document that would address multitude of topics
 - ❑ Revisit legislative framework for civil registration to assess the need to adjust it in terms of contingency planning
 - ❑ Institute and test various solutions to ensure the functioning of the civil registration services in times of prolonged movement restrictions, for example, and all logistical challenges such as the number of personnel, working hours, protection measures ...
 - ❑ Ensure that the government treats civil registration as an essential service that needs to operate in all circumstances and to provide appropriate resources for contingency planning and implementation



Contingency planning

The most critical, crucial and imperative undertaking in the wake of COVID-19 pandemic in terms of enabling universal registration of all vital events occurring in the country refers to the **digitization of the civil registration system and apparatus** as this has proved to be unique factor to ameliorate the impact of this pandemic and to also ensure that the civil registration is firmly embedded in the legal identity management model the United Nations calls to be implemented in all Member States by 2030



Caribbean context

- ❑ Establishing a Caribbean association of civil registrars, health statisticians, vital statisticians and identity management professionals, in line with the UN LIA model
 - ❑ A similar initiative was started in 2005; needs to be re-visited and strengthened

- ❑ Support from CARICOM



- ❑ Support from CLARCIEV
- ❑ Rotating presidency
- ❑ Regular meetings, conferences
- ❑ Training and exchange of experiences

