



Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Civil registration and vital statistics

Findings from the UNLIA survey at: <https://unstats.un.org/legal-identity-agenda/COVID-19/>

Global CRVS Group

UN Legal Identity Agenda Task Force

Pacific Community



Civil registration

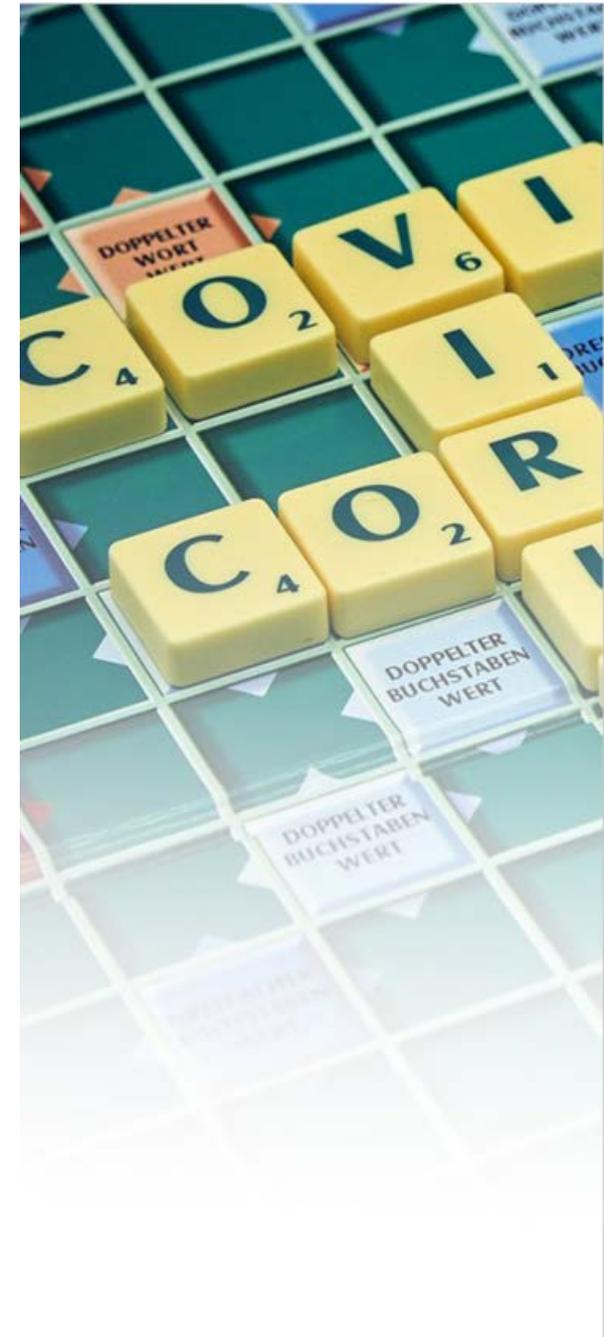
The continuous, permanent, compulsory and universal recording of the occurrence and characteristics of vital events pertaining to the population, as provided through decree or regulation in accordance with the legal requirements.

A vital event is the occurrence of a live birth, death, foetal death, marriage, divorce, annulment, judicial separation, adoption, legitimation, or recognition of parenthood



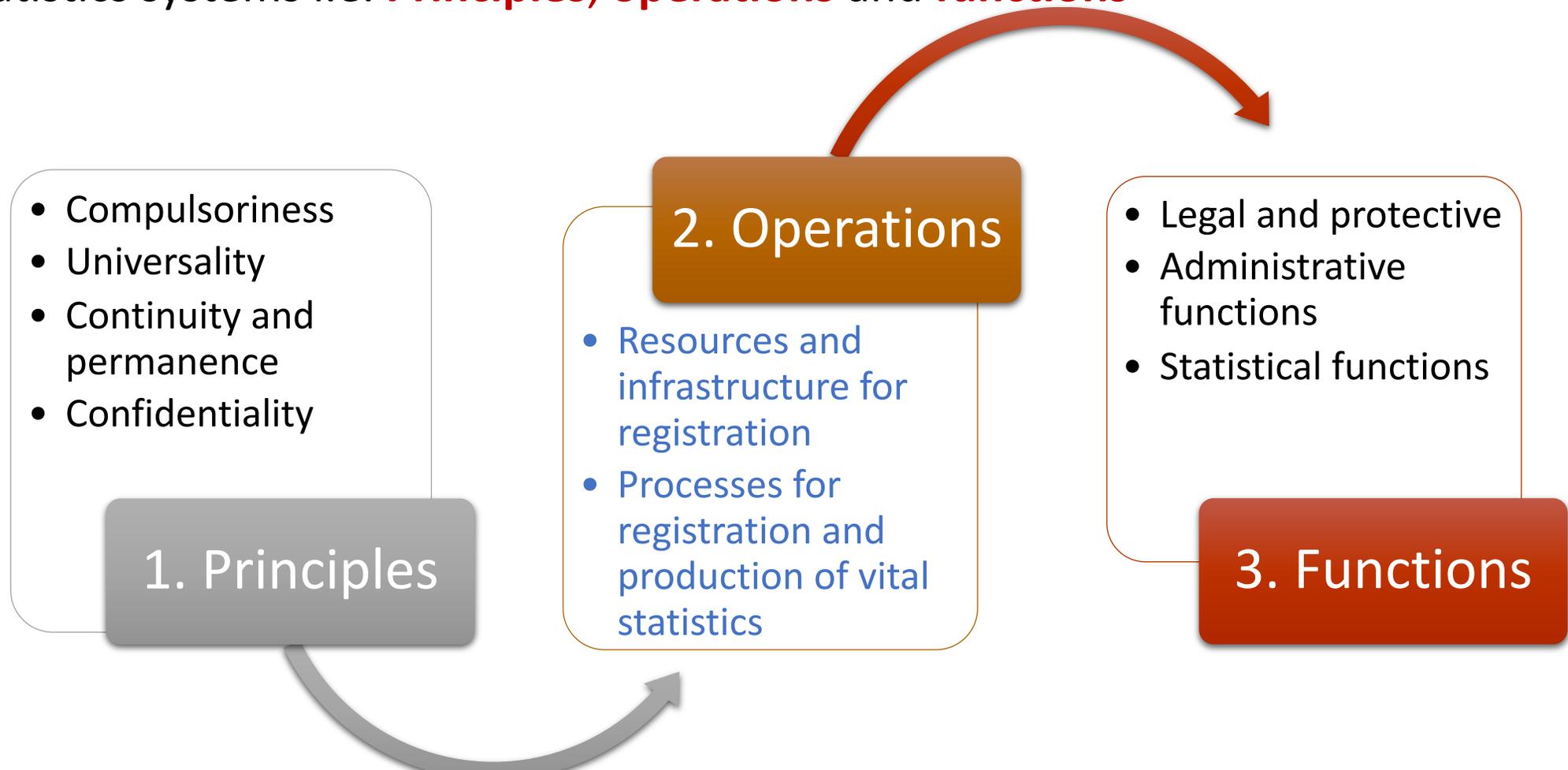
Why do we care about the Impact of COVID 19 on Civil registration and vital Statistics systems?

1. Legal identity remains of crucial importance during public health emergencies; individuals need to prove who they are to access public services.
2. Children who are not registered are particularly vulnerable and may be at heightened risk of violence, trafficking etc during such times.
3. A complete CRVS system is the gold standard for measurement of mortality in a population which is crucial during this time.
4. Emergencies and disasters have potential long term impact on the development and performance of CRVS systems.



Conceptual Impact of disasters and emergencies on Civil registration and Vital Statistics systems

- Disasters and emergencies affect three key aspects of civil registration and vital statistics systems i.e. **Principles**, **operations** and **functions**



The UNLIA Survey

The UN Legal Identity Task Force, launched a global survey to assess the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the functioning of civil registration. Questions asked:

1. Is civil registration considered an essential service in your country?
2. What are the impacts of COVID-19 on the registration of vital events and the functionality of the civil registration authority, in general?
3. What are the working arrangements being implemented or planned to be implemented during the current or possible upcoming COVID-19 containment period to ensure continuity?
4. How is your office addressing the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the registration of vital events? What are the recommendations to the civil registration offices to ensure that all births, deaths, marriages and other vital events are registered during this time?





Findings

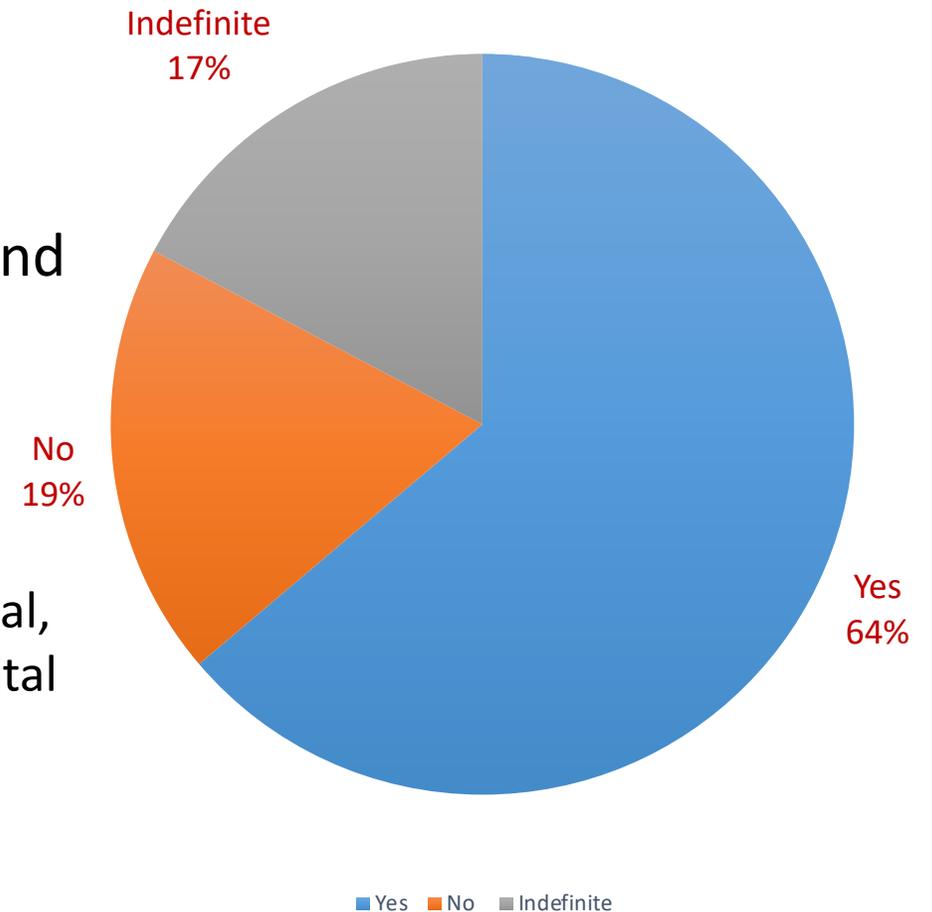
Is civil registration considered an essential service in your country?

56 Countries and four States of Australia participated in the Survey including.

Regions represented: Africa(30), North America (1), South America(4), Asia (13) and Oceania (8)

Legend

- Yes includes countries for which though essential, civil registration services are limited to some vital events.
- Indefinite: No clear indication whether civil registration is considered an essential service or not



1. Impact for COVID 19 on the principles of civil registration

- Civil registration should be **continuous, permanent, compulsory, universal** and **confidential**

Impact on Principles

- Suspension of registration of some vital events e.g. births and marriages in Argentina
- Closure of all civil registration offices e.g. In Uganda
- Reduction in operating hours of some civil registration offices e.g. Samoa 9am-5pm to 9am-3pm
- Significant reduction in number of declarations by members of the public,
- Considerations of use of civil registration data for tracing of infected individuals and the related ethical considerations.



2. Impact for COVID 19 on the operations of civil registration

Resources, infrastructure and processes

- Budget shortages and related monetary impact. In Ecuador, most of the income of the CR agency is generated from issuance of cards and passports which cant be done virtually, reprogramming of funding support by donors in Sierra Leone
- Refocussing of civil registration budgets by governments to cover COVID 19 response measures
- Difficulties in distribution/supply of registration materials to subnational offices
- Delays in transmission of registration returns e.g. In Kenya
- Changes in registration processes e.g. simplification of procedures, omission of some processes e.g. foot printing in Colombia
- Delegation of civil registration services to other authorised institutions e.g. In Colombia
- Disruption/Slowdown of critical departments that support civil registration services such as IT services

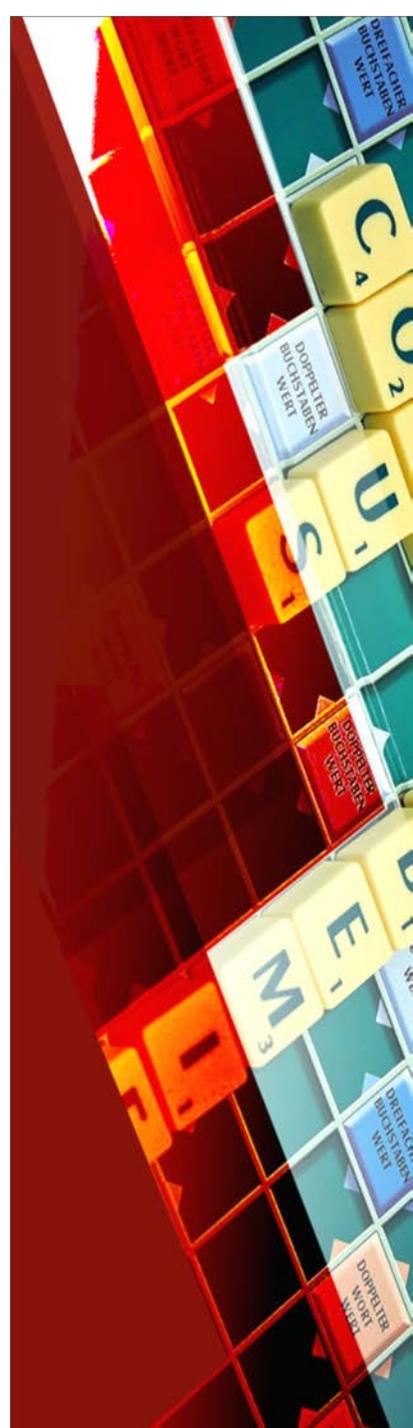
Other Adjustments in working arrangements

1. Staff rotations, flexible and/or reduced working, engagement of a minimum number of staff e.g. Afghanistan, Staff working from home
2. Re-assignment of civil registration staff to COVID 19 duties
3. Scaling down of other services provided by civil registration offices e.g. In China application for search and certified copies is suspended
4. Increased use of electronic platforms for registration and communication with clients e.g. in Australia, NZ, special provisions allowing for electronic filing of registration information enacted in Cook Islands
5. Close collaborative work arrangements established with other critical government departments such as the police, MoH, revenue office for the disbursements of financial grants in the cases of death



Anticipated longer term impact

1. Build up of backlog of un registered events
2. High likelihood of under-registration of events that occur at this time
3. Incompleteness, delay and inaccuracy of vital statistics due to delayed reporting
4. Suspension of initiatives planned for improvement of the CRVS system e.g. digitisation of the CRVS system of RMI, outreach programs in Uganda, halting of CRVS stakeholder coordination meetings and Sierra Leone
5. Strain on staff due to high volume of work in future when normal registration services resume





Recommendations

1. Provide proper IT support to foster “work from home arrangements for employees.
2. Increase investments in online-based platforms for registration.
3. Strengthen collaboration with key stakeholders like the Ministry of Health to ensure registration of events as they occur.
4. Develop a robust disaster management/ business continuity plans to guide response during such times.



Recommendations for civil registration authorities to ensure operational continuity during COVID-19 and allow for the continued production of comprehensive vital statistics .

These recommendations are issued by the United Nations Legal Identity Agenda Task Force with the support of, and contributions by, UNECA, UNESCAP and SPC.
Available at: <http://purl.org/spc/digilib/doc/qb7ys>



Assessing the impact of the pandemic

- ❑ The UN LIA Task Force issued a set of guidelines for maintaining civil registration during the COVID-19 pandemic available at: <https://unstats.un.org/legal-identity-agenda/COVID-19/>
- ❑ Developing a guidance note
 - ❑ The note should provide clear and unambiguous guidance for ensuring the availability of civil registration services in times of COVID-19 pandemic
- ❑ Modifying operational arrangements
 - ❑ Expand the list and eligibility of informers, particularly for vital events occurring outside the health system institutions
 - ❑ Establish process/waivers for missing documents
 - ❑ Balancing access to the registration of vital events and the robustness of trustworthiness of vital records and certificates
 - ❑ Suspend fees



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- ❑ The UN LIA Task Force issued a set of guidelines for maintaining civil registration during the COVID-19 pandemic available at: <https://unstats.un.org/legal-identity-agenda/COVID-19/>
- ❑ Planning for handling the expected backlog – peaks are to be expected especially for death registration during the pandemic; however, significant backlog in birth and marriage registration also needs to be addressed
- ❑ Online provision of services, where applicable and tested, should be expanded; coping with the COVID-19 pandemic represents also an opportunity to jump start the discussion of introducing and dispatching online services once the pandemic is over
- ❑ Waiving late registration fees
- ❑ Public outreach
- ❑ Protection of staff
- ❑ Interaction with other government institutions – primarily Statistical Office



