

United Nations Statistics Division
Expert Group Meeting on Management and Evaluation of Civil Registration and Vital
Statistics Systems
20 - 24 February 2017
UNHQ

Background

The United Nations Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System, Revision 3 were adopted by the Statistical Commission in 2014. As had been done for the previous revisions, UNSD intends to update the accompanying handbooks and manuals that set out more detailed guidelines for countries to fully implement the said Principles and Recommendations. The first activity in this regard is the revision of the Handbook on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems: Management, Operation and Maintenance (hereafter referred to as “the Handbook”). The revision aims to align the Handbook with contemporary civil registration and vital statistics practices and the standards and methods contained in the recently revised Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System.

For this purpose, an Expert Group is being established to undertake the revision of this Handbook. Particularly, the Expert Group will analyse the content vis à vis the latest developments in Civil Registration and Vital Statistics systems and the impact that modern technology has had on them, including population registers and identity management systems.

In addition, over the past years several countries have expressed the need to have more detailed and up-to-date advice on the evaluation of completeness and accuracy of civil registration. Thus, UNSD is proposing to expand this section already contained in the Handbook, and develop it into a full chapter containing a thorough analysis of the available evaluation techniques, and offering useful examples of recent experiences.

Objectives of the meeting

The main objective of the forthcoming Expert Group Meeting is to review the draft of the revised Handbook; to provide further guidance on its content and structure with a view to ensuring that it provides countries with a reference document on the management aspects of civil registration and vital statistics, including evaluation of completeness. The revised Handbook is expected to be submitted to the United Nations Statistical Commission for adoption.

Organisation of the meeting

The meeting will consist of two parts: the first three days will be devoted to reviewing and discussing a draft updated version of the Handbook, while the last 1.5 days will concentrate thematically on evaluation of completeness, discussing direct methods and national experiences (please see below the note on the this second part of the meeting).

In preparation of the meeting, experts will receive a draft text of the Handbook at least 3 weeks before the meeting, in order for them to read carefully and as to be able to prepare meaningful comments for improvement. Furthermore, experts will be requested to prepare a short report on a

recent experience regarding evaluation of completeness of civil registration in their respective country.

Countries to be invited: Chile, Cuba, Ghana, Guatemala, India, Jamaica, Kenya, Nigeria, Philippines, Tunisia, and Uzbekistan, .

Note on the Second part of the EGM (Technical Meeting on Evaluating the Completeness of Vital Events Registration)

As a part of 10th Tranche DA project activities, UN Statistics Division will organize a technical meeting to review the methods for measuring completeness of coverage of civil registration, as part of the Expert Group Meeting on Management and Evaluation of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems (23 and 24 February).

The main objective of the technical meeting is to review existing direct methods of evaluating the completeness of coverage of vital events in detail, discussing strengths and limitations of various methods. Countries in different setting of CRVS systems will be invited to the meeting to share their recent experiences in measuring completeness of coverage of birth and death registration (and other vital events, as available) as a source of producing vital statistics.

It is expected that based on the review at the meeting, a technical paper on the measurement of completeness of coverage will be drafted for the use at regional workshops which are expected to take place in 2017 and 2018 under the DA project. The draft paper will be finalized with further inputs from countries at the regional workshops. The paper is expected to contribute to the better understanding of direct methods of measuring the completeness and facilitate the establishment of regular assessment mechanism in a country.

The outcomes of the meeting will directly feed in the revision of the Handbook on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems: Management, Operation and Maintenance. In fact, synthesis of the technical paper will constitute a chapter in the mentioned handbook, supplemented by the elaboration on indirect methods of assessment to be produced by the UN Population Division.

Worldwide, there has been significant country commitment to the improvements in civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) systems, alongside the strategic action plans often coordinated at the regional¹ and international levels. The past years have also witnessed more action towards the comprehensive reporting systems, with many countries assessing and planning for CRVS improvement.

¹ In Africa, there has been a series of Conference of Ministers responsible for Civil Registration since 2011. Countries in Asia and the Pacific launched "The Asian and Pacific CRVS Decade (2015-2014)", and adopted the Regional Action Framework on CRVS, at the Ministerial Conference in November 2014. The Montevideo Consensus for countries in Latin America also touches upon the importance of civil registration as source of quality vital statistics.

More recently, CRVS is also emerging as an essential underpinning of the 2030 development agenda. Goal 16 of the SDGs explicitly comprises a target of “by 2030 provide legal identity for all, including birth registration”. Furthermore, one of the indicators to monitor the progress in achieving the Goal 17 is tracking the proportion of countries that have achieved 100 per cent of birth registration and 80 per cent death registration by 2030. In addition, nine other goals utilise vital statistics as a direct input, and many other goals and targets demand information on population disaggregated by age and sex, and vulnerable populations in a country, which should be ideally drawn from viable civil registration and vital statistics systems.

The assessments of national CRVS systems by international and regional organizations have brought out the fact that many developing countries still do not have functioning systems that can support efficient registration of vital events and the production of vital statistics. There is considerable variation among countries in the completeness and quality of civil registration systems. There is much unknown about how countries actually produce the coverage estimates and the type of data sources used to derive estimates. In fact many countries do not have any systems to measure completeness of coverage of registration. The methods of assessing the coverage vary from matching of records of vital events with records from an independent source, to the use of questions in sample surveys and censuses². Different methods for assessing the completeness applied by countries imply varying level of reliability of figures, hence challenges for international comparison. Even within the same country, the coverage figures of estimates often vary between sources of information.

To achieve the ultimate goal of universal coverage of civil registration, countries need to establish a regular mechanism for measuring the completeness and quality assessment of CRVS. In addition to this, measuring of completeness of coverage of registration should be a performance indicator that each country should use as a part of their regular monitoring. Hence, countries need to be adequately informed of existing methods of monitoring and evaluation and technological tools available that would support their efforts in measuring completeness in registration.

During these 1.5 days, the EGM will:

- Review in details the existing direct methods of measuring completeness of coverage of registration (measuring completeness against estimates of births and deaths obtained from census and surveys, matching with other administrative and social records, and dual records system).
- Also review the existing technological tools that can assist the evaluation of the completeness of coverage and data quality.
- Document lessons learnt from selected countries that have recent experiences in applying those methods and tools to produce estimates of registration coverage
- Discuss and document the strengths and the limitations of respective method for the production of a technical paper.

² According to the recent analysis by UNSD, demographic analysis followed by dual record check are the most commonly used methods of completeness evaluation for CRVS births and deaths statistics among some 80 countries that reported on the methods in DYB metadata.