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## CRVS Insight

### May 2024

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### The tenth meeting of the Regional Steering Group for Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific

The tenth meeting of the Regional Steering Group (RSG) for Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) in Asia and the Pacific was organized in hybrid format from 7 to 9 May 2024 in Bangkok. The Steering Group provided the ESCAP Secretariat and Development Partners with inputs and recommendations for preparations towards the Third Ministerial Conference on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific to be held 24-26 June 2025. The group also held discussions on the 2024 Review of the Asia and Pacific CRVS Decade (2015-2024). ESCAP will be sending the review questionnaires to all national CRVS focal points (NFPs) in June, and countries are requested to submit their completed questionnaire by the end of August. ESCAP and several Partners will offer support throughout the three months including webinars and consultations to help countries complete the questionnaire. Findings from the 2024 Review will provide crucial inputs for the regional review report which will in turn, feed into the decision-making process at the Third Ministerial Conference in 2025 on the future of the Asia and Pacific CRVS Decade.

More information about the event available [here](#). You may find more information on the [2024 Review](#), [2025 Ministerial Conference](#), and [list of NFPs](#) in the hyperlinks.




### Training on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao

As part of ongoing efforts to enhance the CRVS system in the Philippines, the Philippines Statistics Authority (PSA) in Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM), together with the PSA Civil Registration and Central Support Office (CRCSO), with support from the CDC Foundation and Bloomberg Philanthropies Data for Health Initiative (D4H), organised a Training on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS 101) from 15-17 April 2024. The three-day training included participants from the Local Civil Registrars (LCRs) and Shari'ah Circuit Courts (SCC) across provinces of Lanao del Sur, Maguindanao del Sur, Maguindanao del Norte and the Island Provinces of Basilan, Sulu and Tawi-Tawi.

Read more on the story [here](#).

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## INTEROPERABILITY AND DATA SHARING BETWEEN CIVIL REGISTRATION, HEALTH INFORMATION, STATISTICS AND ASSOCIATED SYSTEMS



### 'Sans frontières' births, deaths, marriages: Cross-agency, cross-border data-sharing examined in SPC report

The Pacific Community (SPC) has released a report on the potential to share news of births, deaths and other life events across national agencies and borders. The research, with support from the Australian Government and Plan International, examines the experiences of Pacific countries and territories in detail. It focuses on interoperability and the sharing of data both nationally and regionally, along with the need to share data across borders, as well as providing practical advice to jurisdictions planning to transition to or replace digital registration systems.

For more information, please see the full story [here](#).



### Blog: CRVS and digital public infrastructure - DPI: Why their integration is important for digital transformation

In the age of digital transformation, the integration of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) systems with Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) serves as a foundation for achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

When a civil registration database and a national ID database are not linked, discrepancy in the data recorded can leave individuals with little or no access to critical public and private services, and lead to inaccurate allocation or incorrect denial of public assistance, misallocation of funds, corruption, and incomplete data for evidence-informed policymaking.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) recently called together experts and leaders from both CRVS and DPI communities of practice, to discuss the importance of ensuring CRVS systems function as a foundational layer of DPI and the merits of improving CRVS systems by adopting a DPI approach, resulting in three key takeaways:

1. Embrace the principles of universality and interoperability
2. Accelerate DPI approach-led digitalization with dedicated funding
3. Focus on people and their rights

For more information, please see the full story [here](#).

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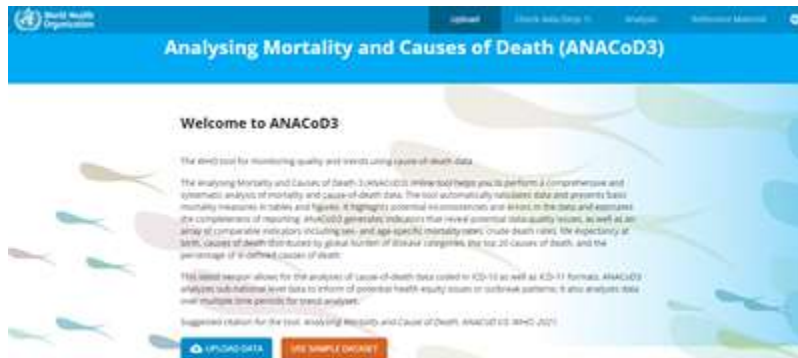
## Central Asian States reaffirm commitment to registering all children at birth

In May 2024, representatives from the Governments of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Republic of Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and the Republic of Uzbekistan participated in the Central Asian Conference on Ensuring Birth Registration to Prevent Statelessness, organised by UNHCR in collaboration with the National Human Rights Centre of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

During the conference, six key topics were explored including: Establishing universal birth registration systems and integrating them with education, health and social services; Leveraging technology for efficient birth registration; Best practices in universal birth registration in the region; and Protecting the rights of stateless children and children of unknown parents.

Please click [here](#) for full story.

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### Off-line (stand-alone) version of the ANACoD3 tool is now available

The 3rd version of the tool “Analyzing Mortality and Causes of Death” (ANACoD3), which was launched by the World Health Organization (WHO) in 2021, has been helping user to perform a comprehensive and systematic analysis of mortality and cause-of-death data. The offline (stand-alone version) is now available for download and installation, as a response to the needs where internet connectivity is an issue.

For more information, please visit the Analyzing Mortality and Causes of Death 3 (ANACoD3) website [here](#).

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### Refugee-led Innovation Fund is open to applications

The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR)’s Innovation Service is currently open to applications for the Refugee-led Innovation Fund from refugee-led organizations in all countries. The Refugee-led Innovation Fund proposes a fundamental shift in programme architecture, focusing on data, digital, and environment and climate action innovation.

For information on the Refugee-led Innovation Fund, please visit the website [here](#).

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### CRVS Champion: Melvin C. Suarez

*Our community newsletter puts a spotlight on people who have gone above and beyond in their efforts to support CRVS programmes in Asia and the Pacific, raise awareness of CRVS issues or lead CRVS improvement efforts in their home country or in the region. This month, we would like to dedicate this issue of Insight to Melvin C. Suarez.*

**What is your current title and role?**

Presently, I am a State Counsel under the Office of the Chief State Counsel, Legal Staff, of the Philippine Department of Justice (DOJ). I am also designated as a Protection Officer, and presently a Team Head of the DOJ-Refugees and Stateless Persons Protection Unit (DOJ-RSPPU).

A State Counsel assists the Secretary of Justice in the performance of his duties as Attorney General of the Government, and as ex-officio legal adviser of government-owned and controlled corporations (GOCCs) or enterprises, among others.

As DOJ-RSPPU Team Head, I initially review draft decisions on asylum and statelessness applications of my Team members. For more than a decade, I actively participated on advocacy, coordination, and monitoring missions, particularly, engagements with refugees, stateless persons, asylum seekers, stateless applicants, and persons at risk of statelessness (PAROS).

**Can you please share with us a particular experience which highlighted the importance of CRVS to you?**

I had this memorable experience involving an unprecedented project in 2014 between Philippines and Indonesia on the Registration and Confirmation of Nationality of Persons of Indonesian Descent (PID) in Southern Philippines, which was funded by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

The PID is a vulnerable and marginalized population composed of fisherfolks, farmers, laborers, and ordinary workers who lived in Mindanao. It is one of the populations identified by the Philippine Government in 2010-2011 to be at-risk of statelessness due to lack of birth registration and birth certificates to prove their nationality or citizenship.

Under the framework of the 2014 Philippine-Indonesia Joint Commission for Bilateral Cooperation (JCBC), the cited project (also known as PID project) was undertaken to address the nationality issues of these PID. The JCBC is the primary dialogue mechanism between the Philippines and Indonesia to review accomplishments on mutual collaboration initiatives, to exchange views on issues of mutual interest, and to consider plans for enhancing cooperation between the two countries.

The PID project resulted in the actual registration of 8,745 PID, and resolved the issue of their nationality whether they are Filipinos, Indonesians or limited dual citizens, as determined and confirmed by the Philippines and Indonesia, respectively. The cited project was hailed as a success and a milestone on statelessness in the Philippine context, and placed the Philippines as a “beacon of light” in the region in terms of resolving and reducing statelessness.

#### **How are you currently involved in CRVS improvements?**

I was proactive in advocating, together with relevant stakeholders, for issuance of birth certificates to foundlings (who are merely issued with a certificate of foundling) with entry of Filipino nationality in the birth certificate, after the Philippine Supreme Court rendered a landmark decision in 2016, holding that foundlings found in Philippine territory are presumed to be natural-born Filipino citizens. The said advocacy resulted in the issuance by the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) of guidelines for providing birth certificates to foundlings, and the subsequent enactment by Congress in 2022 of the Foundling Recognition and Protection Act, which grants Philippine citizenship to foundlings, among others.

Presently, I am engaged in the pilot and continued delayed birth registration initiatives for the Sama Bajaus – an indigenous people whose itinerant lifestyle had resulted in generations of lack of birth registration. Like the PID, and foundlings then, the Sama Bajaus, which are estimated at more or less 120,000, are similarly considered as PAROS by the government.

Also interesting is my involvement in the ongoing initiative to address the nationality issues of Persons of Japanese Descent (PJD), which refer to second generation of legitimate children of Japanese fathers and Filipino mothers born during Second World War. The PJD are also considered as PAROS due to the reported absence of their birth records in the Family Register of Japan showing their Japanese nationality link to their Japanese fathers but also of their failure to exercise their statutory right to elect Philippine citizenship upon reaching their majority age.



Furthermore, I am an alternate representative of the Department in the Inter-Agency Committee on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (IACCRVS).

**Which advice would you give to others trying to improve CRVS systems?**

The legal significance of civil registration, and the ramifications for the lack of it, cannot be overemphasized. Extracting qualitative vital statistics is indeed intertwined with civil registration. Part of my “civil registration work” with the DOJ-RSPPU is actually stressing the importance of birth registration and in the acquisition of a birth certificate to establish the legal identity of a person, particularly, his nationality. Indeed, improving and strengthening the CRVS is aligned with the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) of providing legal identity for all by 2030, and leaving no one behind.

More importantly, not only that birth registration prevents statelessness, including one from being considered at-risk of such status, it also minimizes, if not totally avoid, the risks of one becoming a victim of human trafficking, forced labor, sexual and criminal exploitation, and modern slavery, due to the lack of civil registration, particularly, on birth, which establishes the legal identity of a person.

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**NEW RESOURCES**

- [The Compendium of Good Practices produced by IOM's Legal Identity Unit](#)
- [Putting People at the Center of Digital Public Infrastructure \(DPI\): Annual Report 2023 \(English\)](#)
- [Inclusivity - A theme for the 2024 review and potential extension of the Asia-Pacific Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Decade \(2015-2024\)](#)
- [Resilience - A theme for the 2024 review and potential extension of the Asia-Pacific Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Decade \(2015-2024\)](#)

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**UPCOMING EVENTS**

- [Global calendar of statistical events](#)
- **21-24 May 2024:** [ID4Africa 2024 Annual General Meeting](#)



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If you have a new resource, upcoming event or article you would like highlighted, please send submissions along with an accompanying photo to [escap-crvs@un.org](mailto:escap-crvs@un.org).

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