



CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE  
for CRVS Systems



# Con✓ERGE

**Connecting Vital Events Registration  
and Gender Equality**

## **Commitments and Solutions for Impact**

**2nd CRVS and Gender Conference  
OUTCOME REPORT**

**25–26 February 2020**

International Development Research Centre  
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## Acknowledgements

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# Conference Overview

On 25–26 February 2020, the Centre of Excellence for Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) Systems partnered with Open Data Watch and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) to co-host the Connecting Vital Events Registration and Gender Equality (ConVERGE) conference at the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) in Ottawa, Canada. The goal was to review and further advance the progress made since the first global meeting, **Making the Invisible Visible: CRVS as a Basis to Meeting the 2030 Agenda**, held in Ottawa in February 2018.

Over the two days, participants evaluated current and future opportunities and challenges to

- ensure that all vital life events are universally registered and certified;
- generate, disseminate, and use vital statistics that are disaggregated to highlight subnational differences and support the advancement of gender empowerment initiatives; and
- harness CRVS systems to contribute to the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.

The conference moved beyond discussions on the importance of CRVS systems for women and children toward securing commitment to find solutions and take action.

This event brought together 200 participants, representing a wide range of stakeholders in the CRVS and gender fields. These included policy and technical experts, government representatives, academics, youth, and donor organizations. Each participant had crucial perspectives to offer as part of the conference panel presentations, session discussions, breakout workshops, and side meetings.

A total of 27 speakers served as formal panelists in 14 sessions. Significantly more voices were heard throughout the conference given the importance paid to Q&A segments and the organization of half-day discussion-based workshops. The conference involved high-level participation from the United Nations, IDRC, and Global Affairs Canada in addition to high-level representation from governments and other entities. A full list of speakers and panelists can be found at the end of this document.

## BY THE NUMBERS



**200**

**total participants** attended the ConVERGE conference.



**98**

**participants** attended in person from **30 countries**.



**102**

**participants** attended via webcast.

## Breakdown by region

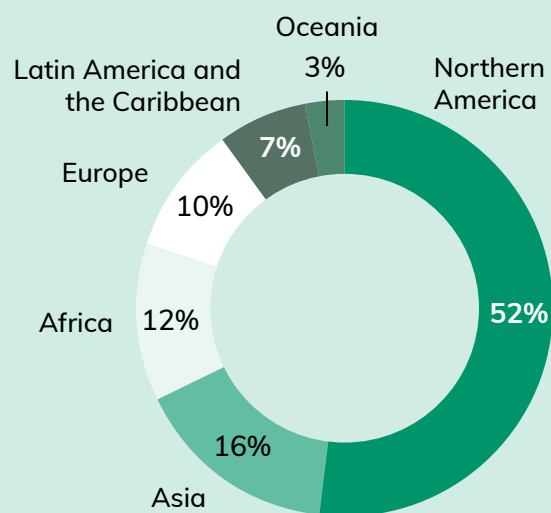
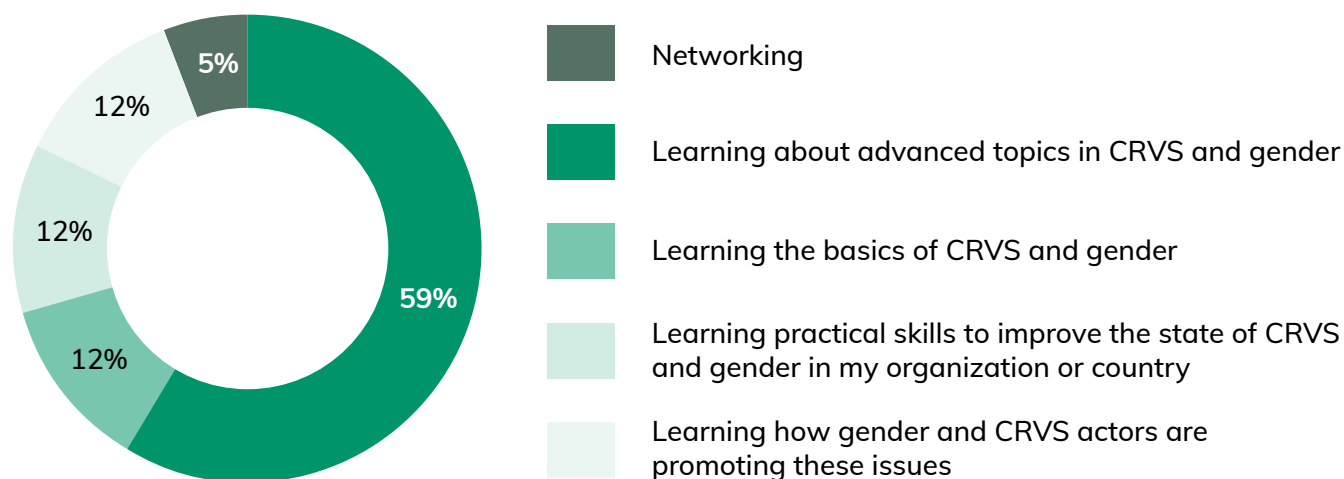


Figure 1: Responses to the post-conference survey question “What was your primary objective for attending the conference?”



This outcome document provides summaries of the individual conference sessions, as well as shares the key action-oriented messages that conference participants agreed are important to make progress in this area.

## ConVERGE Conference Objectives



**Identify and debate how gender sensitive CRVS systems complement other data systems**, such as national identity systems, health information systems, and population censuses, and discuss how they could be better aligned. Country perspectives will be highlighted to better understand real challenges and good practices, with an emphasis on identifying action-oriented solutions.



**Strategize how to increase political support for the CRVS gender agenda** and ensure that domestic resources are allocated to these areas of work while taking stock of funding opportunities and challenges.



**Explore how social norms and political economies affect the functioning of CRVS systems** and how CRVS systems operate in the context of conflict, emergencies, or heavy migration.



**Inspire and encourage action** from event participants and ensure that outcomes are socialized and communicated in strategic forums at all levels after the event ends.



**Identify areas of research needed to increase the knowledge base on CRVS systems and gender**, especially in the context of fragile settings and emergencies.



**Foster links between the global CRVS gender agenda and ongoing gender equality commitments** (such as Beijing 25+) and population and development initiatives (such as ICPD+25).

## ConVERGE Conference Success

The ConVERGE conference noted the following successes:

- **Global gathering** – Convened 200 participants representing policymakers, technical experts, government officials, academics, youth, and donors to develop strategies for increasing support for CRVS and gender data.
- **High-level representation** – The importance of the event meant that high-level representation was secured from a number of organizations such as United Nations, IDRC, and Global Affairs Canada.
- **Knowledge exchange** – Participants represented a variety of geographic regions, ensuring that debates included a range of perspectives from high-income to low-income contexts, as well as considering different political, social, and cultural realities.
- **Ideas sharing** – Facilitated key discussions on how to inspire commitments and concrete action, building on existing commitments such as Beijing 25+ and other initiatives such as ICDP25.
- **Global call to action** – Developed a set of key actions to focus efforts on addressing both opportunities and challenges to ensure that all life events are universally registered.

*“ConVERGE is really the beginning of generating a wealth of knowledge on gender and CRVS. Convening and facilitating meetings and producing communication material is important to reach different people around the world.”*

**Shaida Badiee**, Co-founder and Managing Director, Open Data Watch

*“One key aspect of the ConVERGE initiative ... is our field research around social norms and behavioural aspects, which lead to the under-registration of vital events across the life course. This research is fundamental to understanding why certain people are struggling to access vital event registration systems and how we can start changing the social relations and norms around vital registration. That’s a critical vehicle for ensuring effective scale-up of promising initiatives.”*

**Romesh Silva**, Technical Specialist in Health and Social Inequalities, UNFPA



# Session Summaries

The ConVERGE conference sessions were all well attended, both by in-person participants and those joining via webcast. Video recordings of all sessions (with the exception of the parallel breakout workshop sessions) are available on [IDRC's YouTube channel](#).

The following section summarizes each of the conference sessions.

## Welcoming Remarks and Keynote Address

**Speakers:** Montasser Kamal (IDRC), Dominique Charron (IDRC), Benoit Kalasa (UNFPA), and Joshua Tabah (Global Affairs Canada)

### Online Recording of Session



Benoit Kalasa, Montasser Kamal, and Dominique Charron (left to right) share insights on the role of CRVS in achieving gender equality.

The opening remarks and keynote address revealed a common theme: CRVS systems have a critical role to play in achieving gender equality and providing adequate data to measure and monitor the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The Centre of Excellence for CRVS Systems, together with its partners, has made great progress since the first global meeting of gender equality and CRVS systems, hosted at IDRC in February 2018. The Centre has been a leader in the global movement toward making CRVS systems more gender responsive. Dominique Charron shared a number of tangible achievements since the 2018 gathering, including announcing the launch of the third and final brief from the

**Knowledge Brief Series on Gender and CRVS**, produced in partnership with Open Data Watch. The series, launched in November 2018 as an outcome of the 2018 meeting, uncovers gender bias and barriers, shares case studies and emerging findings, and recommends priority areas and solutions. The series provides crucial support to CRVS stakeholders, helping to inspire action and promote the adoption of good practices.

CRVS systems are essential to achieving 12 of the 17 SDGs, including SDG 5 on gender equality. These systems also contribute to the measuring and monitoring of 67 SDG indicators, as Dominique Charron noted. Beyond just the data, civil registration is a powerful form of protection for women, children, and other vulnerable groups. It provides legal identity, empowering individuals to access education,

*"All countries should be striving to make sure that births are registered where they happen, when they happen, irrespective of the presence of one or the other parent."*

**Dominique Charron**, Vice-President,  
Programs and Partnerships, IDRC



health care, and economic opportunities. Proof of legal identity can afford women and children their rightful claim to inheritance or property, as well as protect them against child marriage. Dominique Charron urged participants to challenge the status quo of current CRVS systems and to identify work within their own organizational mandates to move forward. Such actions can contribute to pushing this issue into the wider public discourse on sustainable development.

*“Challenge the status quo. Challenge ideas. And think beyond your borders and even the borders of this field. How can we get this important issue into a much wider public debate? The recognition of the importance of civil registration and vital statistics as a fundamental platform for achieving the SDGs is part of what we can achieve together. This will allow us to turn knowledge into action and to make a real difference for women and children around the globe.”*

**Dominique Charron**, Vice-President, Programs and Partnerships, IDRC

Now is the time to advocate for stronger CRVS systems, stressed Benoit Kalasa. The year 2019 marked the 25th anniversary of the ICPD **Programme of Action** and 2020 marks the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. CRVS systems are critical for protecting the rights and meeting the needs of women and girls. Without counting all and “making the invisible visible,” gender equality will not be achieved.

*“Millions of people are born, married, and die without leaving a trace of their existence if there are no official records. In many parts of the world civil registration and vital statistics systems are weak and deficient, constrained by impediments that exclude women and girls and all vulnerable populations and sub-populations.”*

**Benoit Kalasa**, Director, Technical Division, UNFPA

The 2020 Census Round is another important reminder of the importance of harnessing the momentum on building stronger CRVS systems. Benoit Kalasa shared how UNFPA is capitalizing on both initiatives and supporting data collection through its 145 (and growing) country programs offered through its country offices. He stressed the complementarity of the census and CRVS, as they offer chances for cross-validation and serve different, but mutually reinforcing, purposes.

In 2018, UNFPA set in motion a strategic effort, based on quality data, to achieve three zeros by 2030:

- Zero unmet needs for contraception;
- Zero preventable maternal deaths; and
- Zero gender-based violence and harmful practices, such as child marriage and female genital mutilation.

To help achieve this, UNFPA is setting up the **Population Data Thematic Fund** to improve population data in scope and quality, share population data while reconciling accessibility and privacy considerations, and expand capacity to use population data for the short- and long-term. The fund will offer financial support to countries so they can modernize their census, build institutional capacity, and improve overall management. In addition to supporting the census, the fund will help to improve the coverage and quality of CRVS systems and household surveys. This integration of foundational

population data systems can already be seen through the ongoing **ConVERGE Initiative**, jointly designed and implemented with IDRC, across West/Central Africa, Arab States, and Latin America.

Strengthening country CRVS systems needs both external and internal champions. Joshua Tabah reminded conference participants of Canada's active role over the last 10 years in supporting countries to build more robust systems. Crucially, the Government of Canada recognizes and advocates for

the importance of functioning CRVS systems for achieving health outcomes, and for improving access to sexual and reproductive health.

Through the Global Financing Facility, 19 countries have prioritized CRVS systems strengthening as part of their efforts to improve reproductive, maternal, newborn, child, and adolescent health outcomes, but more must be done. Women, children, and marginalized groups can gain the most from civil registration, yet they are the most likely to be excluded. They face many barriers to access, such as lack of financial independence, cultural norms, and outdated legislation. Women and children's exclusion from population data makes them invisible, and the lack of

legal identity makes them more vulnerable to poverty, abuse, and exploitation. Joshua Tabah noted that there are ways to overcome these barriers and ensure that everyone benefits:

- Governments at all levels need to be in the driver's seat.
- Donors and countries alike must work to ensure that systems are gender responsive and interoperable with other government systems, such as national identity (ID) and health information management systems. Connecting to the health sector can also improve registration rates, for example, when registration is integrated with programs such as immunizations.
- Coordination across statistical offices, justice and education departments, and health ministries is critical to the success of these initiatives. CRVS is more than just a technical systems issue.
- Advocacy and awareness-raising activities to target vulnerable populations and foster demand for registration services are critical.
- A focus on performance-based approaches can be an incentive to action.

While this opening session reiterated and underscored the importance of CRVS systems worldwide, the sessions that followed moved beyond discussions of the importance of CRVS systems for women and children toward securing commitment to find solutions and take action.

*"Strengthening CRVS is much more than a technical systems issue. Reforms need to be based on gender analysis and the integration of gender considerations to ensure that marginalized regions, communities, and people are consulted, targeted, and then included."*

**Joshua Tabah**, Director General of Health and Nutrition, Global Affairs Canada



Benoit Kalasa presents opening remarks during the first session of the ConVERGE Conference.

Photo credit: Greg Teckles/ Open Data Watch and Centre of Excellence for CRVS Systems

## High-Level Panel: The Current State of CRVS Systems for Gender Equality: Where Are We? And Where Do We Need to Be?

**Moderator:** Montasser Kamal (IDRC)

**Keynote:** Petrider Paul (African Union Youth Ambassador)

**Panelists:** Dominique Charron (IDRC), Cornelius Williams (UNICEF), Benoit Kalasa (UNFPA), and Shaida Badiie (Open Data Watch)

### Online Recording of Session

Setting the stage for the discussions taking place throughout the conference, this high-level panel session touched on the biggest opportunities and challenges for CRVS systems in various contexts. CRVS systems in the context of conflict, heavy migration, and emergency contexts received a great deal of focus. So too did CRVS systems and their interactions with social norms and culture, as well as CRVS as an item on the global agenda for sustainable development data and the SDGs.



Petrider Paul, Montasser Kamal, Dominique Charron, Benoit Kalasa, Shaida Badiie, and Joshua Tabah (left to right). Panelist Cornelius Williams not pictured.

Petrider Paul, African Union Youth Ambassador, traveled from Tanzania to speak on the importance of harnessing the power of youth to further the CRVS and gender agenda. She pointed to the practical effects of barriers to civil registration, the costly impact of these barriers, and the perpetuation of child marriage. As a champion of change in her community, she explained that key stakeholders need to create a seat at the table for young people and build intergenerational dialogue so that policy reforms are inclusive and effective.

*“CRVS systems need to focus on marriage and death registration whereby key stakeholders should partner with young people to further their agenda.”*

**Petrider Paul**, African Union Youth Ambassador

Each speaker emphasized the impacts of barriers faced by mothers and children. Cornelius Williams reminded us that there are children who study their whole lives, only to be barred from sitting the final exam because they do not have a birth certificate. The implications of this are real: if children cannot go to school or, in this case, cannot graduate, they are likely to be trapped in poverty.

In summary, Benoit Kalasa highlighted four key challenges:

- Disruptions created by conflicts that displace people;
- Governance fragmentation that creates inefficiencies and confusion;
- Lack of knowledge or evidence to make CRVS a transformative agenda; and
- Creating a culture of grass-roots community demand for gender-sensitive CRVS systems.

*“We want to see CRVS throughout the life course of an individual, from birth to death. Then registering marriages and movement of people. But with that come challenges.”*

**Benoit Kalasa**, Director, Technical Division, UNFPA

As Cornelius Williams stated, an ideal system would be universal and follow the entire life cycle. To achieve this, legal reforms require more focus. The system should be holistic and twinned with health services so that registration occurs the moment a child comes into contact with the system.

*“An ideal system should be universal, and it should have a life cycle, but if you miss the birth registration, then the other events will not be registered.”*

**Cornelius Williams**, Associate Director, Child Protection, UNICEF

Dominique Charron argued the need for further understanding of structural and institutional barriers. And while technology and digital systems offer many opportunities, there are privacy issues and other downsides. Identity may be a source of civil conflict and war.

Shaïda Badiëe highlighted the opportunities for harnessing country energies through integrating CRVS into national plans to improve national statistical systems for the SDGs. More focus is needed on improving both supply and demand for this data, as the link between the two is not automatic. Communications around the value of CRVS need to be improved, using the language of those stakeholder groups that need to be influenced. Governance, accountability, human rights, and aid effectiveness depend on better CRVS systems.

*“We need to improve the way we converse about the value of CRVS. We need to speak the language of the people that we can influence, whether it’s in governance, accountability, human rights, or aid effectiveness.”*

**Shaïda Badiëe**, Managing Director, Open Data Watch

A call for increased funding underscored the speakers’ messages on these issues. Without sufficient financing, the possibilities for harnessing opportunities will be limited. Badiëe shared financing gap estimates to 2030 of about US\$100 million per year. Based on Open Data Watch’s analysis, aid investment needs to almost double its current amount.



# Technical Session 1: Exploring How CRVS Systems in Conflict, Emergencies, and Heavy Migration Situations Contribute to Protecting Women and Children

**Moderator:** Rachel Snow (UNFPA)

**Speakers:** Elène Bérubé (UNHCR), Rosalinda C. Apura (Philippine Statistics Authority), Martin Clutterbuck (Norwegian Refugee Council, Middle East Region), Allison Petrozziello (Gender and Migration Specialist), and Marwan Khawaja (UN-ESCWA)

## Online Recording of Session

The goal of this session was to highlight the realities, challenges, and emerging solutions for providing CRVS and ID systems in displaced and fragile contexts. Speakers described the issue of statelessness for those in fragile contexts and how this population is still functionally invisible due to a lack of

identification. This lack of access to ID and CRVS documents is further compounded by many of the existing laws and practices around birth registration and marriage registration.

As Elène Bérubé added, the ability to register births in fragile contexts may be especially precarious for various reasons:

- Civil registrars may be low on the priority list;
- Procedures for obtaining birth certificates can be cumbersome in an unstable environment; and
- In the case of migrants, host countries may not register births.



Elène Bérubé (right) discusses challenges of registering births in fragile contexts. Also on the panel (left to right) are Rosalinda C. Apura, Martin Clutterbuck, Allison Petrozziello, and Marwan Khawaja.

In cases of displacement due to natural disasters, to guard against the resulting lack of undercounting and to keep registers as current as possible, countries like the Philippines conduct mass registration of deaths after disasters. This allows them to quickly update vital documents and ensure that no one drops out of the system.

*“There are a number of countries around the world where nationality laws do not discriminate, but where the CRVS laws and practices do include gender discrimination.”*

**Elène Bérubé**, Senior Legal Officer/Head of Protection Unit, UNHCR

In settings that are fragile due to conflict, such mass registrations are harder to conduct: populations often cross borders or are displaced within their country of origin. Speakers focused on the disproportionate burden that falls on women in these contexts: they take on physical risks in fleeing with their children and they bear the legal burden of proving their husband's death or lack of involvement with rebel groups. As research shows, the lack of access to sexual and reproductive health

and rights for migrant women further complicates birth registration. In many contexts, it turns health workers into migration enforcers.

CRVS is often seen as neutral, but in fragile contexts it can become political and may be used to exploit social fault lines and target vulnerable populations. The challenge that several speakers raised was how to balance the linking of

ID management and CRVS systems with the need to protect individuals' privacy and security. As the international community marks 25 years since the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action was passed, speakers stressed that these and other issues, which particularly affect women in conflict-affected areas, should from now on be incorporated into global and national frameworks to ensure universal registration and the protection of legal rights for all.

*"Proving your identity becomes even more important in situations of conflict because you need to move around, you need to have a document to pass the checkpoints."*

**Martin Clutterbuck**, Counselling and Legal Assistance Regional Advisor, Norwegian Refugee Council, Middle East Region

*"Most worrying to me is the gradual rolling back of the human right to a nationality and replacement with these alternative registers and ad hoc biometric ID documents. While these may provide some protection and access to services, they are not a replacement for the durable status of citizenship with all of the protections that affords. Let us continue protecting and using a human rights-based approach."*

**Allison Petrozziello**, Gender and Migration Specialist, Researcher and PhD Candidate

## Technical Session 2: Understanding How Social Norms and Legal Frameworks Impact Women and Children's Registration of Vital Events and CRVS Systems

**Moderator:** Irina Dincu (IDRC)

**Speakers:** Louis Niamba (Researcher, Burkina Faso), Dan Pavel Doghi (OSCE), Claire Brolan (University of Queensland), Sandile Simelane (UNFPA), and Leyla Sharafi (UNFPA)

### Online Recording of Session

This session explored the idea that CRVS systems exist within the social and legal frameworks of their respective societies and shone a light on the speakers' recent research. Speakers covered a range of topics, including:

- Inadequate state of marriage registration databases across the world;
- Disadvantaged groups in Europe, such as the Roma people;
- Dynamics of acquiring birth registrations in Burkina Faso;
- Rights-based death registration practices in Asia-Pacific; and
- Lessons from the experience of changing norms around female genital mutilation.





Photo credit: Greg Teckles/ Open Data Watch and Centre of Excellence for CRVS Systems

Sandile Simelane (right) discusses challenges of assessing coverage of marriage registration.

What emerged was a recognition of the varied experiences of countries, depending on their underlying legal frameworks and contexts. Assessing coverage of marriage registrations continues to be a real challenge. According to Sandile Simelane, only seven countries included questions on the issue in their 2010 census round. Also, these seven countries used different procedures to estimate the prevalence of marriage certification, which limits the ability to compare data across countries. This underscores just how difficult it is to get a global picture of marriage registration. The 2020 census round will likely have more questions on this subject, and the 8th edition of the Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) will have a question on marriage registration, but it will be quite some time until a full picture of marriage registration coverage exists.

*“We reviewed over 100 census questionnaires from the 2010 census, and we found only seven countries included direct questions about marriage registration.”*

**Sandile Simelane**, Technical Specialist, UNFPA

The importance of education around birth registration processes and the value of related documents was highlighted in a discussion about how the public interacts with health centres and other locations where births can be registered. In addition to confusion surrounding the process, several barriers exist, such as:

- Financial cost;
- Time needed to obtain birth certificates;
- Lack of existing documentation by parents; and
- Difficulty accessing registration sites because of distance.

*“The OSCE Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti says very clearly that states have a duty and responsibility to ensure that Roma and Sinti people have all necessary documents, including birth certificates, identity documents, health insurance certificates, and so on.”*

**Dan Pavel Doghi**, Chief of the CPRSI at OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

These seemingly small barriers can actually lead to permanent exclusion from registration systems. As Dan Pavel Doghi explained, the case of the Roma in Europe offers an example of what can happen when populations are systematically excluded over time, with high degrees of distrust on both sides of the registration process. This also perpetuates a vicious cycle of misinformation and barriers to access, leading to low registration. To prevent this exclusion in the Asia-Pacific region, efforts are underway to incorporate a full assessment of a country’s legal and social framework into proposed guidance on how to improve death registration. Community involvement is the core starting point of the effort.

In a further example, Louise Niamba addressed the dynamics of acquiring birth registrations from the perspective of communities and officials in civil registration in Burkina Faso. The 2019 study from the Nouna Health Observatory in Burkina Faso revealed important disparities in the registration of

marriage and death based on birth registrations. Over 97 percent of individuals who were interviewed noted a lack of awareness around mandatory registration of marriages and deaths. This produced important sex differentials in the recording of vital events for women, particularly for death.

Research in the Pacific region on maternal deaths and deaths of women due to assault and intimate partner violence shared by Claire Brolan highlighted a rights-based approach to death registration. With the support of a diverse team of researchers, the project examined laws and policies of one country on strengthening CRVS systems with regard to maternal deaths and deaths of women due to external causes. Claire Brolan stressed the importance of participatory approaches to implementing solutions through the involvement of civil society and recommended the application of the Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights' (OHCHR) six rights-based approaches to data. This framework provides an excellent template to begin examining how to integrate human rights-based approaches to CRVS systems.

*"When we apply these principles to different settings, there's going to be a different set of answers and a different set of questions."*

**Claire Brolan**, Centre for Policy Futures,  
University of Queensland

The experience of changing attitudes surrounding female genital mutilation is an example of cross-sectoral learning. It reveals the long-term horizons required for efforts to increase adoption of systems, such as comprehensive CRVS systems. Social change, while sustainable, takes time and depends on

*"It has to be people led. It has to be people-centered. Have enough of a group that supports CRVS and really try to exploit that with this organized diffusion and social norms approach."*

**Leyla Sharafi**, Senior Gender Advisor, UNFPA

all parts of the community moving together. The examples underscore the importance of understanding social and cultural norms, and of having the technical capacities in place to strengthen and improve CRVS systems.

## The Way Forward: Setting Commitments and Inspiring Action

**Speakers:** Irina Dincu (IDRC), Shaida Badiiee (ODW), Arjan de Haan (IDRC)

### Online Recording of Session

The first day of the conference ended with a session dedicated to reviewing key recommendations drawn from session discussions. The aim was to collectively create a list of action-oriented takeaway messages. The presentation of an initial draft put together by the conference co-organizers generated debate among participants, with each lending their unique expertise and perspective. Arjan de Haan noted that a lot of research is still needed into

- how we should think about solutions for CRVS systems;
- whether more technical solutions or political will is the most important instrument; and
- the relationship between CRVS systems and other sectors, such as women's empowerment.

He also went through the seven actions that were initially proposed and then opened the floor to questions and comments.

*“It is much more than a technical issue. It is much more than political will. It is about the relationship between the state and citizens.”*

**Arjan de Haan**, Director, Inclusive Economies, IDRC

Many of the questions and comments focused on integrating a more rights-based approach and a human rights perspective throughout the seven key actions, and recognizing the power dynamics at play in CRVS systems. Other comments zeroed in on keeping in mind the development outcomes that CRVS systems aim to enable, rather than focusing on good monitoring for its own sake. This connected to comments that wanted more emphasis on the returns offered by CRVS systems, in terms of both outcomes and investments. Finally, comments focused on making explicit references to gender, connecting these actions to the **United Nations Legal Identity Agenda**, including routine cases of vulnerability, and guidance on how stakeholders can implement these actions.

The actions were then revised based on feedback from the in-person discussion and comments received by email after the conference ended. The final list of messages of action on CRVS and gender can be found on page 25.



Photo credit: Greg Teckles/ Open Data Watch and Centre of Excellence for CRVS Systems

Shaida Badiee, Irinia Dincu, and Arjan de Haan (left to right) present a review of key recommendations from session discussions.



Parliamentary Secretary Kamal Khera delivers remarks during the closing session of the first day of the ConVERGE Conference.

## Remarks by Parliamentary Secretary Kamal Khera

**Online recording** of the Parliamentary Secretary's remarks

To end the first day of the conference, Kamal Khera, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development, reiterated the necessity of CRVS systems for the protection of women and girls. She explained that barriers to data collection on the ground can vary from exhausted medical staff, overly cumbersome registration procedures, and simply failing to communicate the importance of registering children at birth. In order to tackle these barriers, the Government of Canada is donating nearly \$120 million to facilitate data collecting and improve CRVS systems around the world.

Kamal Khera presented the case of Tanzania, where birth registration was complicated and expensive, restricting access to many families. Together with UNICEF, the Government of Canada created a mobile app that permitted parents to register their children for free with a text message. This helped increase the registration of children under 5 in targeted regions by 83.3 percent. This is not only a significant improvement for the CRVS system, but also comes with many advantages for human development, rights, and security.

*“CRVS systems are a cornerstone for human development, rights, and security. [...] For people to count, they must first be counted.”*

**Kamal Khera**, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development, Canada

## Three Parallel Breakout Workshop Sessions

Day two of the ConVERGE conference opened with a welcome session, followed by three parallel breakout workshop sessions. Summaries of the workshops are provided below.

### Workshop 1: Advocacy Strategies for Stronger CRVS Systems as a Tool for Improving Gender Equality

Organized by Data2X

This workshop discussed advocacy opportunities for promoting the importance of CRVS systems for gender equality, including how to reach key audiences and strengthen cross-sectoral partnerships. The session helped participants understand the objectives of prominent events and see the opportunity for leveraging these for CRVS systems advocacy.

Participants were asked to identify priority audiences for the action-oriented messages presented in the closing session from the previous day, and how to advocate effectively

for well-functioning CRVS systems with these target audiences. The roundtable discussions highlighted the importance of advocating for strong CRVS systems at every level, from grassroots organizations to high-level government officials, donors, and global organizations. At the national level, possible audiences included executive cabinets, ministries of justice and social affairs, and ministries responsible for overseeing country progress toward the SDGs. At the global level, prioritized audiences included organizations such as the World Bank, regional development banks, regional intergovernmental bodies, and civil society groups.



Participants in this workshop discuss how to advocate for well-functioning CRVS systems.



Given that 2020 marks the 25th anniversary of the Beijing+25/Platform of Action, the conference offered many opportunities for advocacy for stronger and more gender aware CRVS systems. While many of the planned global gender equality events have been postponed indefinitely due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the session focused on methods to harness global commitment to gender equality and leverage these events to convey these messages effectively to non-technical audiences. It also explored the importance of fostering multi-sectoral partnerships.

To conclude, the Data2X team spoke about the power of the Beijing Platform and the opportunity for CRVS stakeholders to promote the importance of CRVS systems strengthening, including improved statistical capacity, for achieving the SDGs and the outcomes put forward under the Beijing Platform of Action. Advocacy messages need to be tailored accordingly.



Photo credit: Greg Teckles/ Open Data Watch and Centre of Excellence for CRVS Systems

This workshop's conversations focus on the opportunities to promote the importance of strengthening CRVS systems.

## **Workshop 2: Ensuring CRVS Data is Disaggregated, Open, Accessible, and Used**

*Organized by UNFPA*

This workshop illustrated how strengthening CRVS systems plays out at the national level and offered case study examples from Jordan and Uruguay. The experiences of these two countries are important because they highlight how CRVS systems can be integrated with health systems to promote and protect reproductive, maternal, newborn, and child health. They highlight the practical importance of aligning CRVS systems with the health priorities of women and girls.

In the case of Uruguay, the discussion focused on the country's 2016 national strategy to reduce high rates of unintended teenage pregnancy. Uruguayan authorities leveraged their civil registration system, in which electronic birth registration is essentially complete, to improve localized monitoring of the adolescent birth rate and guide health and social interventions where assistance was most needed. The timely and effective use of birth registration supported the expansion of social programs for adolescent girls and teenage mothers, including free perinatal care, nutrition, and

immunizations, and facilitated geospatial mapping of the incidence of adolescent fertility to channel assistance to the most affected areas.

The experience in Uruguay shows that complete, timely, and accessible civil registration data are critical to ensuring effective prevention and management of unintended fertility among adolescent girls. Discussions during the workshop also noted that the success of the initiative in Uruguay was, in part, due to a strong partnership around a national priority between multiple government and civil society institutions and international development agencies.

In the case of Jordan, the government has affirmed ending preventable maternal deaths as a national priority. In 2018, Jordan launched its Maternal Mortality Surveillance and Response System (JMMSR). JMMSR was developed to track maternal deaths and their causes, and stimulate responses aimed at preventing them in the future. In order to ensure the greatest number of maternal deaths were captured, the Ministry of Health (MOH) compared its records of deaths among women of reproductive age to civil registry system data.

Workshop participants noted that the triangulation of data between the health system and civil registry to ensure the most complete coverage of deaths of women



Photo credit: Greg Teckles/ Open Data Watch and Centre of Excellence for CRVS Systems

Workshop participants discuss how to ensure CRVS data is disaggregated, open, accessible, and used.

of reproductive age is a good practice that could be replicated in other country contexts, even when death registration is not complete. A key lesson learned from Jordan is the importance of national coordination between the Ministry of Health, civil registration authority, and national statistics office. Workshop participants noted that this initiative extended to Syrian refugees residing in camps and informal settlements – demonstrating the potential of the approach to support maternal health refugees and displaced persons. Further discussions ensued about how these approaches may be extended to death registration systems that are not yet



Photo credit: Greg Teckles/ Open Data Watch and Centre of Excellence for CRVS Systems

Participants engaged listen to explanations of case studies from Jordan and Uruguay.





Photo credit: Greg Teckles/ Open Data Watch and Centre of Excellence for CRVS Systems

Presentations in this workshop demonstrate the potential for CRVS to help ensure the visibility of women and girls.

gender inequalities. Insights from the Uruguay and Jordan case studies demonstrated a strong, high-level commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment, the alignment of national policy priorities with active use of civil registration data, and CRVS systems coordination between government units, civil society, and international partners.

digitized by integrating key stakeholders at the community level, such as community health workers, skilled birth attendants, religious clerics, and local officials.

Overall, the session demonstrated the potential for CRVS systems to increase the visibility of women and girls and enhance reproductive, maternal, newborn, and child health. The session specifically highlighted the universal, permanent, and continuous data CRVS systems provide for a more refined disaggregated analysis to examine health, social, and

### **Workshop 3: Social Norms and Other Barriers Impacting Uptake of Civil Registration Services by the Population** Organized by the Centre of Excellence for CRVS Systems/ IDRC

This workshop presented a scenario in Conakry, Guinea, where CRVS systems are relatively weak. The session addressed the issue of partnering with communities to improve knowledge, attitudes, and practices on civil registration from research to implementation. The working group's objective was to identify barriers to registration at the community level and implement effective social and behaviour change communication to improve the population's knowledge, attitudes, and practices with regards to services.

**Challenge:** How do we identify social norms, cultural practices, and other barriers to registration at the community level, and how do we partner with communities to increase demand for services?

Strengthening CRVS systems is one of the priorities in Guinea's **National Poverty Reduction Strategy**, yet birth registration nationally is at 57 percent. Death registration is under 5 percent, with some regions, including the capital Conakry, as low as 2 percent. Despite limited investment, the situation appears to be stagnant. The country benefits from a **Global Financing Facility (GFF) grant** and International Development Association (IDA) support for CRVS systems strengthening, but these funds have yet to be allocated based on national priorities.



Photo credit: Greg Teckles/ Open Data Watch and Centre of Excellence for CRVS Systems

Participants discuss challenges facing CRVS systems in Conakry, Guinea.

Although Guinea has developed a CRVS strategy that focuses on leveraging health systems for birth registration, it contains little to no measures to improve death registration or produce vital statistics.



Photo credit: Greg Teckles/ Open Data Watch and Centre of Excellence for CRVS Systems

Participants learn about findings from focus group studies in Guinea on social practices around vital events.

Focus group studies in Guinea revealed that social practices around vital events and a lack of awareness about registration delays, benefits, or procedures could significantly affect the population's uptake of services. Guinea's National Institute of Statistics produced and analyzed vital statistics in selected regions that could help determine which populations are registered or not, and determine their profile and wealth quintile. However, this information is not used in national strategic planning. Community partnerships and communications around development are limited to periodic, intensive campaigns to support birth registration.

Given Guinea's **rural population** of 63.9 percent and death registration rate of just over 1 percent, it is important to understand the barriers to civil registration at the community level, and learn from communities.

The group identified research, hands-on capacity building by learning from others, and engaging with communities as important initial activities. The group worked around some key questions:

- **Decision-making** – Who makes decisions in families and communities? Ask those on the margins (youth, women, the poorest).
- **Barriers** – Does the population know that registration exists and what the benefits are? Why do they choose not to register? What are their concerns? What would they want to learn about their community from this data?
- **Promoting registration** – How can we improve partnerships with communities? What steps are needed to produce change on a scale related to vital events? How do we leverage verbal traditions to produce societal change and knowledge about events? How could we quickly improve the legal system and make it more human centered?

At the institutional level, coordination between ministries for improved CRVS coverage and completeness is important for all countries. Coordination between responsible bodies is critical to ensure that vital events are registered. Participants identified main influencers in the community who could contribute to behaviour change, and recommended that communication for social and behaviour change be developed based on evidence, taking into consideration barriers, influencers, means of communication, and most trusted sources of information. Although legislative analysis and legal changes were identified as key, the group agreed that they would be the most difficult to address. However, the group concluded that human-centric and equitable legislative frameworks are needed to ensure universal registration.

The group's discussions led to the conclusion that research in countries represented by the group did not include behavioural indicators, and that in most cases, there was a lack of research on social and behaviour change communication.

This working group underscored the importance of ownership and participation. Participation is a human rights based approach principle - and in trying to determine how best to address the challenge of persistent social norms that pose barriers to CRVS completeness and quality - it is critical to engage those most affected or who continue to be excluded. This includes engaging key interlocutors from civil society and representatives from marginalized groups.

Overall, the session demonstrated that investment in research and social and behaviour change communication, including community partnerships, are critical to produce lasting social and behaviour change that leads to improved knowledge, attitudes, and practices by the population and contributes to increased community participation and use of services.



Photo credit: Greg Teckles/ Open Data Watch and Centre of Excellence for CRVS Systems

Workshop discussions conclude that there is a lack of research on social and behavioural change communication.



# Exploring Gender Dimensions of Health and CRVS Systems

**Moderator:** Benoit Kalasa (UNFPA)

**Speakers:** Carlos Ramirez (UNFPA Colombia), Edna Valle (DANE, Colombia), Montasser Kamal (IDRC), Daniel Cobos Muñoz (Swiss Tropical and Public Health Institute), and Nashaat Taani (Ministry of Health, Jordan)

## Online Recording of Session

Well-functioning CRVS systems provide up-to-date, continuous health data for informed health policies and practices, which play an essential role in improving the health of populations. Properly integrated healthcare and CRVS systems can help maximize the efficiency of resource distribution and promote equality in a population. Even with the established positive effect that CRVS data can have on health policy – including improving specific disease and injury control strategies, disaster recovery, and maternal health, among others – CRVS systems remain underfunded and weak in many low- and middle-income countries.

In this session, four stories were presented to show how information drawn from CRVS systems has reduced gaps in health coverage. Through discussion, it became evident that robust and inclusive CRVS systems are paramount to the population's wellbeing and form the backbone of health data.



Benoit Kalasa, Carlos Ramirez, Edna Valle, Montasser Kamal, Daniel Cobos Muñoz, and Nashaat Taani (left to right).

- **Gender and mortality data** – Daniel Cobos Muñoz presented a case study that looks at mortality statistics using a gender lens and concludes that the healthcare system is not gender neutral. A gender bias exists in diagnoses made by physicians, which can affect the cause-of-death analysis.

*“Understanding these differences [in mortality rates] is essential for designing and implementing policies that aim to reduce gender inequities.”*

**Daniel Cobos Muñoz**, Senior Scientific Collaborator, Swiss Tropical and Public Health Institute, Switzerland

- **Birth registration in Colombia** – Carlos Ramirez and Edna Valle presented Colombia's initiative to increase birth registration coverage. This initiative

*“This exercise gave us information to talk to the government and show coverage and where there is a need.”*

**Carlos Ramirez**, UNFPA Colombia, and Edna Valle, DANE, Colombia

proved to increase both birth registration and immunization coverage, showing the importance of multi-sectoral partnerships in strengthening CRVS systems and the need for health partners to collaborate with various stakeholders and sectors.

- **Monitoring teen health data** – Dr. Montasser Kamal discussed the role of CRVS systems in uncovering the health challenges of adolescents ages 10 to 14, the most understudied age range. He explained that there is no gender data without CRVS systems. Routinely collecting and analyzing sex-disaggregated data at the lowest administrative level plays a critical role in providing continuous health data at all ages.

*“For governments, without knowing how many adolescents they have, where they live, what their status is, how can there be plans to not leave them behind? They will be left behind if nothing is done.”*

**Montasser Kamal**, Program Leader, Maternal and Child Health Program, IDRC

- **Healthcare and CRVS systems in Jordan** – Nashaat Taani presented on the organizational structure of the healthcare system in Jordan and explained how the CRVS system is integrated. He highlighted two initiatives: the Jordan Maternal Mortality Surveillance and Reporting System and a new electronic linkage project between the civil registration database and the public healthcare facilities database.

*“All vital statistics are disaggregated by gender. Birth registration is almost complete at 98 percent. We do have challenges in death registration, especially among women, but we are working on this.”*

**Nashaat Taani**, Director, Director of the non-communicable diseases department, Ministry of Health, Jordan

## Integrating Gender Dimensions into Global/Regional CRVS and Legal Identity Initiatives

**Moderator:** Romesh Silva (UNFPA)

**Speakers:** Niall McCann (UNDP), Srdjan Mrkic (UN Statistics Division), Gemma Van Halderen (UNESCAP), and Tom Orrell (DataReady)

### Online Recording of Session

SDG target 16.9 calls for legal identity for all, including birth registration, by 2030. The panel gave a global overview of progress toward achieving integration between ID management and CRVS systems to meet this target while also considering ethics, governance, and inclusiveness for women and girls. The speakers agreed that when CRVS systems and identity management initiatives are complementary, they have the power to safeguard human rights.

To ensure that CRVS systems are gender responsive, they need to be interoperable and integrated with other government systems. This is what unlocks the true potential of CRVS data to inform program design and service delivery and benefit populations in areas such as financial inclusion, social protection, migration, and even to cope with natural disasters.

*“This is a government service. And the government service has to be delivered. And someone has to be responsible for not delivering the service. So, it has to be government owned. It has to be mandatory on both sides. [Mandatory] on the side of the population registering events, but mandatory on the side of the government to provide the facilities to deliver those services.”*

**Srdjan Mrkić**, Demographic Statistics Section, UN Statistics Division

The conversation also looked at how the international community collaborates to support national and regional efforts. The panel agreed that the United Nations and the World Bank interaction could take many forms, as long as there is consensus and a joint approach in supporting countries with ID management and CRVS systems developments.

*“I would like to think by the end of the year, we will have designed projects with governments and civil society. We can then agree on the funding model with the World Bank and then, where the UN has to come up with its own funds, mobilize funding from major international partners.”*

**Niall McCann**, Policy Advisor and Project Manager, Legal Identity, UNDP



Photo credit: Greg Teckles/ Open Data Watch and Centre of Excellence for CRVS Systems

Tom Orrell (right) discuss opportunities and challenges of new technologies for CRVS systems.

Technological advances present opportunities to improve digital ID management systems. While there are certainly opportunities for integrating CRVS and ID systems, the panel also discussed the potential risks of digital ID systems. They highlighted the importance of safeguarding against legal barriers and discrimination. To empower and generate efficiencies, CRVS and ID management systems need to follow guidance on data protection, privacy, and governance protocols.

*“The development of a new information management system that brings together CRVS and ID through digital means is not a service in and of itself. It’s a means to being able to provide a more efficient service to citizens.”*

**Tom Orrell**, Director, DataReady



## Concluding Remarks: Moving the CRVS Gender Agenda Forward

**Speakers:** Joshua Tabah (Global Affairs Canada), Benoit Kalasa (UNFPA), Shaida Badiie (Open Data Watch), Irina Dincu (IDRC), and Arjan de Haan (IDRC)

### Online Recording of Session

The conference concluded with a number of poignant messages to remind participants of the importance of the “Leave no one behind” theme underpinning the **2030 Sustainable Development Agenda**. Well-functioning and inclusive CRVS systems are critical to achieving this end, as well as for meeting the promises of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) and the expectations of the Beijing+25 review process. CRVS systems are paramount to inclusive development. They can improve citizen participation and increase access to government services, including health care and education. Most importantly, inclusive CRVS systems can make visible the challenges of the most invisible populations.



Photo credit: Greg Teckles/ Open Data Watch and Centre of Excellence for CRVS Systems

Arjan de Haan, Shaida Badiie, Irina Dincu, Joshua Tabah, Benoit Kalasa, and Montasser Kamal (left to right).

*“We discussed a lot about systems strengthening, improving data, but the most important [point] is [that] beyond the systems, beyond the data, there are people. So how do we design CRVS systems that are gender sensitive, that through which we see them as a means of delivering on the promises of the SDGs, the ICPD, or the Beijing Platform?”*

**Benoit Kalasa**, Director, Technical Division, UNFPA

As a follow-up to the initial messages of action presented at the end of the first day, Shaida Badiie and Irina Dincu shared points from the sessions that would be further integrated into these messages. Session speakers highlighted the importance of country-owned and country-led processes and the need to streamline a rights-based and gender-based approach throughout CRVS conversations and initiatives. Emphasis would be added on the issue of how CRVS systems fit into the larger population data

*We heard that we need to increase the emphasis on gender throughout. After all, this is about CRVS with a gender lens. [...] We also heard we need to integrate stronger language in regards to adopting a rights-based approach to improve the CRVS system.”*

**Shaida Badiie**, Managing Director,  
Open Data Watch

*“This has to be a country-driven, country-led process, and how do we mobilize the governments to making this a political priority in their national strategies?”*

**Irinia Dincu**, Senior Program Specialist, Centre of Excellence for CRVS Systems, IDRC

ecosystem, including legal ID systems and censuses, and the benefits of those connections. The speakers also mentioned that in making the case for investing in CRVS, less emphasis will be placed on needs and more focus will be added to showcasing returns on investments.

Joshua Tabah reminded participants to take the key results and messaging beyond conversations with conference participants and CRVS stakeholders. He stressed the importance of bringing information to the Commission on the Status of Women, the UN Statistical Commission, the Generation Equality Forum kickoff in Mexico, and the World Data Forum in Switzerland, among others, as CRVS systems are necessary for inclusive, coherent governance.

*“The challenge is how do we take the knowledge of what we’ve learned that CRVS is not just a technical systems issue – it is about people, it is about understanding barriers – and bringing that outside.”*

**Joshua Tabah**, Director General of Health and Nutrition, Global Affairs Canada

Remarks were made by participants that the CRVS agenda should serve the gender agenda rather than the other way around.

The session closed with a call for all participants to think about what they can do moving forward to ensure that CRVS systems do not leave the most vulnerable populations behind.

*“The efforts are squarely about making sure that women and children are not left invisible, stateless, left out of services. This is therefore about the rights of those women and those left behind.”*

**Arjan de Haan**, Director, Inclusive Economies, IDRC

# ConVERGE Messages of Action on CRVS and Gender

The conference inspired the co-organized to synthesize key points of the discussions into a series of action-oriented messages for the participants and the CRVS and gender equality communities to take forward.

## ConVERGE Conference Key Action Messages

Support country  
ownership of  
CRVS system  
improvements using  
human rights-based  
approach



Disaggregate  
vital statistics  
by all relevant  
disaggregation to  
leave no one behind

Increase  
attention  
on the most  
vulnerable  
populations



Consider political,  
cultural, and legal  
environments to  
improve CRVS  
systems

Use vital  
statistics as  
a tool for  
advancing  
gender equality



Collaborate to  
fill knowledge  
gaps and  
inspire change

Showcase why  
financing should  
be mobilized to  
improve CRVS  
systems



Each of the key actions are detailed below with further explanation. These key actions were presented and discussed as part of the closing session of the ConVERGE conference.



**As the development community works toward the 2030 Agenda during the Decade of Action to deliver the SDGs, the focus for the CRVS community of practice should be to support country ownership of CRVS system improvements using a human rights-based approach.**

To date, 166 million children under age 5 go unregistered, leaving them without their right to a legal identity and without access to health care, education, employment, and more. Strengthening CRVS systems can also support the measuring and monitoring of the SDGs. This is critical to measuring 12 out of 17 SDGs and is a target within the goals themselves (16.9).



**Vital statistics produced from CRVS systems should be disaggregated by sex, geography, ethnic group, education status, and other levels as appropriate, given local legal frameworks to help countries focus plans on who is being left uncounted, while ensuring this information remains safe and does no harm.**

Averages mask people's realities. Sex-disaggregated data can reveal gender inequalities in access to crucial civil documents and explain the resulting lack of access to services, which global and national averages can hide. Further disaggregated data by income, region, or education level can provide insights to help design inclusive policies for those individuals, especially women and girls, who are left farthest behind.



**CRVS and ID systems should not forget the needs of the most vulnerable populations, such as those in conflict and emergencies or in countries at high risk for natural disasters, as well as systemically vulnerable populations, such as women and children, people with disabilities, low literacy populations, and ethnic minorities.**

Today, 250 million people are on the move. Many of them are trapped in conflict situations as migrants, refugees, or asylum seekers. At the same time, the world faces increased challenges due to climate change, such as more frequent and extreme weather patterns and disasters. Increased attention should be given to building and maintaining rights-based, resilient CRVS systems in fragile contexts and vulnerable countries to find solutions for registering vital events for displaced and stateless refugees and migrants. Existing collaborative initiatives such as the UN's Global Compact on Refugees can provide the necessary framework to support the development of CRVS and ID systems of host countries, most of which are developing countries. Also, many vulnerable groups, even in comparatively rich countries, need to be included in data collection and disaggregation efforts and protected by governance frameworks that enshrine the individual's right to their own data.



**To address gender gaps and sex differentials in CRVS systems, efforts to improve CRVS systems should consider the political, cultural and legal environments in which they exist.**

All forms of discrimination against individuals, including gender discrimination, must be eliminated from the act of registering vital events. This must be realized and enshrined in laws governing CRVS systems through a joint effort between civil society advocacy and participation, government stakeholder involvement beyond civil registrars, and actions by the international community to ensure gender-equal access to civil documents. Social norms can also act as barriers that prevent individuals from fully reaping the benefits of CRVS systems. More research in key areas around how social norms, such as birthing and naming practices or funeral and burial ceremonies, interact with registration is critical to achieving universal birth registration and improved death registrations. Programs must keep the long-term horizon of social change in mind – attitudes change slowly but more sustainably than with sudden interventions.



**Data from CRVS systems are a public good. Such data are fundamental to advancing gender equality and sustaining women's empowerment across the life course. Vital statistics are a powerful tool for advancing inclusive, sustainable development policy and practice for all persons across the entire life course.**

The benefits of CRVS systems to improve development policy-making, service provision, and individual empowerment will not be realized if the vital statistics generated from the systems are not analyzed and used to draw insights or to protect individuals' rights to identity in strong partnership with ID systems. This will depend on effective statistical systems that make data accessible and available. It will also depend on systems that strengthen the capacity of data producers and users inside and outside of government, while putting in place strong data governance that ensures data privacy and guards against data misuse.



**The community of practice, with an emphasis on building partnerships, especially with youth, should come together and collaborate to fill knowledge gaps for decision-makers, citizens, researchers, and the global community through sharing of know-how and advocacy to raise the profile of the gender dimensions of CRVS and legal identification.**

Strong CRVS and ID systems require participation from all levels of government, civil society, and the private sector. The complexity of improving these systems worldwide requires empowering a range of stakeholders – including individuals, statisticians, gender experts, civil registrars, and youth advocates – to increase demand and impact policy-making. Since the first meeting of its kind – Making the Invisible Visible: CRVS as a Basis to Meeting the 2030 Gender Agenda (February 2018) – the Centre of Excellence for CRVS Systems has served as a facilitator of partnerships to fill research gaps and inspire change in the field.





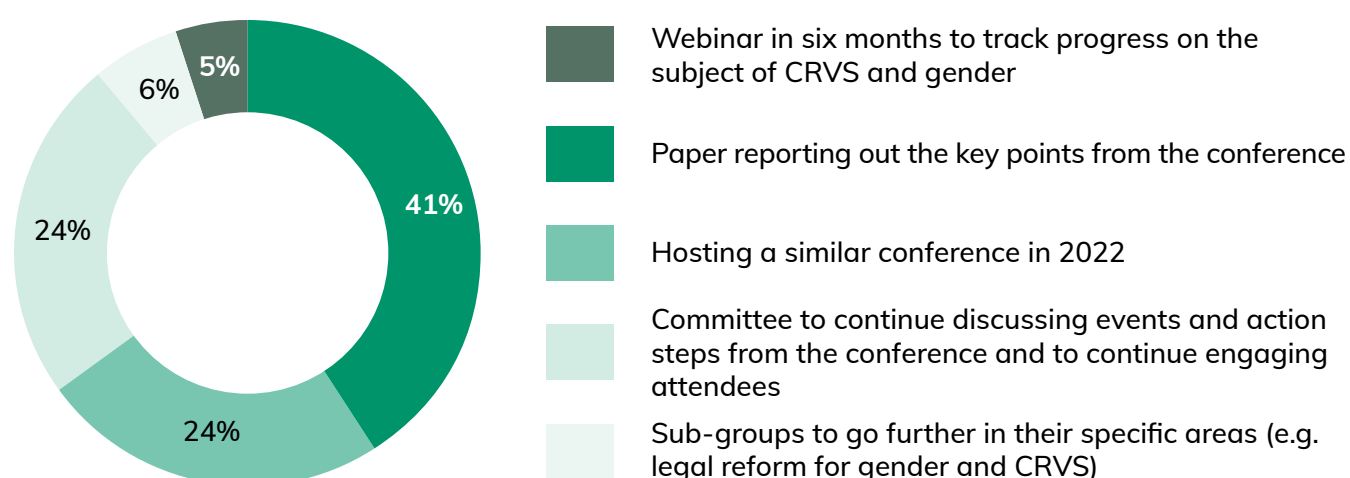
**A continued focus should be placed on case studies that showcase why adequate financing should be mobilized at the international and national levels to improve CRVS systems and sustain the progress already made.**

CRVS systems remain underfunded. This results in weak statistical capacity, which highlights the need to make the case for CRVS to national governments and international organizations, particularly on the return on investment for CRVS. National budget processes, specifically the National Strategy for the Development of Statistics, should account for funding the systems through a gender lens. International financing should mobilize and complement domestic financing while exploring new and innovative instruments to ensure that CRVS systems are fully funded and leave no one behind.

# Next Steps

Concrete action will be needed to carry forward the outcome messages that emerged from this conference. Several participants provided feedback on an initial attempt to articulate these themes, including by sharing ideas for the best way to continue the progress made at the conference (Figure 2). An important first step is to document the key points raised and discussed at the conference, which is the purpose of this publication. There are several important next steps to consider.

**Figure 2: Participant responses to the question “What would be the most helpful to continue building on the progress made by the conference?”**



Continuing conversations on issues of CRVS and gender is critical to facilitate the commitment and coordination that is needed for global action. The United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSD-STATCOM), the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW64/Beijing+25), UN Women’s Generation Equality Forums, and the UN World Data Forum 2020 were all flagged as strategic opportunities to leverage for sustained momentum. Participants also expressed interest in attending a follow-up conference as early as 2022 to track progress and address new challenges.

## Speakers and Panelists

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**Allison Petrozziello**, Gender and Migration Specialist, Researcher, and PhD Candidate

**Arjan de Haan**, Director, Inclusive Economies, IDRC

**Benoît Kalasa**, Director, Technical Division, UNFPA

**Carlos Ramirez**, UNFPA Colombia

**Claire Brolan**, Centre for Policy Futures, University of Queensland

**Cornelius Williams**, Associate Director, Child Protection, UNICEF

**Dan Pavel Doghi**, Chief of the CPRSI at OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

**Daniel Cobos Muñoz**, Senior Scientific Collaborator, Swiss Tropical and Public Health Institute, Switzerland

**Dominique Charron**, Vice-President, Programs and Partnerships, IDRC

**Edna Valle**, National Administrative Department of Statistics (DANE), Colombia

**Elène Bérubé**, Senior Legal Officer/Head of Protection Unit, UNHCR

**Gemma Van Halderen**, Director, Statistics Division, UN-ESCAP

**Irina Dincu**, Senior Program Specialist, Centre of Excellence for CRVS Systems, IDRC

**Johannes Jütting**, Executive Head, PARIS21

**Joshua Tabah**, Director General, Health and Nutrition, Global Affairs Canada

**Kamal Khera**, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development, Canada

**Leyla Sharafi**, Senior Gender Advisor, UNFPA

**Louis Niamba**, Researcher, Burkina Faso

**Martin Clutterbuck**, Counselling and Legal Assistance Regional Advisor, Norwegian Refugee Council, Middle East Region

**Marwan Khawaja**, Chief, Demographic and Social Statistics Section, UN-ESCWA

**Montasser Kamal**, Program Leader, Maternal and Child Health Program, IDRC

**Nashaat Taani**, Director, Non-Communicable Diseases Department, Ministry of Health, Jordan

**Niall McCann**, Policy Advisor and Project Manager, Legal Identity, UNDP

**Petrider Paul**, African Union Youth Ambassador

**Rachel Snow**, Chief, Population and Development, Technical Division, UNFPA

**Romesh Silva**, Technical Specialist in Health and Social Inequalities, UNFPA

**Rosalinda C. Apura**, Regional Director, Philippine Statistics Authority

**Sandile Simelane**, Technical Specialist, UNFPA

**Shaida Badiee**, Co-founder and Managing Director, Open Data Watch

**Srdjan Mrkic**, Demographic Statistics Section, UN Statistics Division

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