



CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE
for CRVS Systems



Centre of Excellence for Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems

- Engaging researchers
- Supporting decision-makers
- Empowering women and girls
- Protecting human rights



Why CRVS systems matter

An inclusive civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) system ensures that everyone counts and is counted. It protects human rights, empowers individuals, and promotes sustainable development.

Civil registration and civil status certificates give people proof of their legal identity, age, and social relationships. These vital documents enable them to access public services – including healthcare, education, and social protection – and to exercise their rights, such as voting or claiming an inheritance.

Countries need vital statistics to identify what their populations need, and to create informed policies and programs. With access to data disaggregated by sex, geography, and other characteristics, governments can uncover issues faced by vulnerable populations and monitor progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The challenge

More than 100 developing countries currently do not maintain well-functioning CRVS systems.¹ This makes it harder for them to achieve sustainable development and good governance. It also puts individuals living in these countries at risk of poverty, violence, and exploitation.

What is a CRVS system?

A civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) system connects relevant data from the civil registry – such as birth, death, and marriage records – with health information to produce a database of vital statistics. A strong CRVS system enables reliable, real-time recording and reporting.

CRVS systems are essential for measuring progress towards

67 sustainable development indicators,

covering 12 of the 17 SDGs²

The births of 230 million children under five

– 35% of the world's total – are not registered.³ This means they do not officially exist.

¹ The World Bank, 2018. *Global Civil Registration and Vital Statistics*.

² Mills, et al. 2017. *Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) for Monitoring the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)*. The World Bank.

³ UNICEF, 2013. *Every Child's Birth Right: Inequities and Trends in Birth Registration*.

How we're helping

The Centre of Excellence for CRVS Systems was founded in 2015 to help countries scale-up and strengthen their civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) systems. We're a **global resource hub** – sharing knowledge, tools, standards, and good practice, as well as supporting research and offering expertise.

1 in 5 girls



marries before her eighteenth birthday.⁴ Birth registration can help prevent this.

More than half of all deaths have no recorded cause.⁵

The deaths of women and girls are often less likely to be registered than those of men.

Empowering women and girls through civil registration

Rubi, a young girl from Bangladesh, had just taken her secondary school exam when her parents told her they had arranged her marriage. She was 15 – three years below the legal age in her country.

Rubi was determined to prevent the marriage and continue her studies. She spoke to the chairman of a local council about her situation. He checked Rubi's birth certificate and explained the legal implications of child marriage to her parents.

Thankfully, Rubi's parents decided to cancel the wedding. Now aged 19, Rubi is studying Islamic History and plans to become a teacher.⁶



Photo: Dominic Chavez / World Bank

⁴ UNICEF. 2018. *Child Marriage*.

⁵ WHO. 2017. *World Health Statistics*.

⁶ Girls Not Brides. 2014. *How Birth Certificates Help Tackle Child Marriage*.

Who we work with

The Centre of Excellence for CRVS Systems works closely with key stakeholders – including experts, governments, practitioners, and development and humanitarian organizations – to share civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) knowledge at the international, national, regional, and local levels.

We are housed at the International Development Research Centre (IDRC). We have close partnerships with IDRC and Global Affairs Canada, both of which provided seed funding to establish our organization. We also partner with the Global Financing Facility to help specific countries prioritize and plan improvements to their CRVS systems, with a focus on francophone nations in West Africa.

We are members of the Global CRVS Group, the Africa Program on Accelerated Improvement of CRVS (APAI-CRVS) Regional Core Group, and the Technical Advisory Group of the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data (GPSDD).

What we offer

Library and learning

A free online resource centre with more than 200 curated CRVS publications, resources, and tools.

Directory of experts

More than 115 vetted international experts ready to support governments, development practitioners, and others with their CRVS efforts.

Technical assistance

Support offered through the Global Financing Facility for countries working on the CRVS sections of their reproductive, maternal, newborn, child, and adolescent health (RMNCAH) investment cases.

CRVS systems research

New knowledge on current challenges, opportunities, and potential solutions, including country-specific case studies.

CRVS eLearning course

Access to a free CRVS eLearning course available through the World Bank's Open Learning Campus. Includes case studies, self-tests, interactive exercises, and downloadable content.

Capacity building and knowledge exchange

Initiatives, conferences, meetings, and technical consultations at regional and global levels to share knowledge, build capacity, and promote good practice.

Why we're different

Unique

We're the only organization of our type, filling a vital role as the world's civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) systems knowledge hub.

Global convenor

We renew the international focus on CRVS, bring the community of practice together, and provide a truly balanced perspective by taking a systems approach.

Bilingual

We speak English and French – Canada's two official languages. This means we're ideally positioned to support practitioners in francophone countries.

Gender focused

We recognize CRVS systems as essential for achieving gender equality. Gender-disaggregated data enables countries to empower and protect women, girls, and other vulnerable groups.

CRVS experts

Our team members are exceptionally skilled, and we have access to leading specialists across the globe.

⁷ www.globalfinancingfacility.org/sites/gff_new/files/documents/Guinea-Investment-Case_FR.pdf

Supporting decision-makers in Guinea

The Republic of Guinea faces some of the world's greatest challenges in maternal and child health, particularly in remote parts of the country.

Our senior staff spent more than 30 days on missions to Guinea in 2018. We provided technical support to its government to develop the CRVS component of its reproductive, maternal, newborn, child, and adolescent health (RMNCAH) investment case.

Our work helped secure US\$3M to improve CRVS systems. This is part of a \$55M project to improve the health of Guinean women and children.⁷



What we've achieved

The Centre of Excellence for CRVS Systems has seen a lot of success in just a few years. Here are some of our accomplishments:

Convened and co-organized CRVS events

We organized a global conference on innovations in CRVS systems in partnership with UNICEF and WHO in 2018. This brought together more than 120 experts to explore new ways to strengthen CRVS systems. We also convened global and regional events to promote CRVS knowledge – including at the United Nations World Data Forum, and various conferences, commissions, and learning exchanges in Africa.

Developed and contributed to CRVS resources

We've developed, peer reviewed, translated, revised, and contributed to a wide range of CRVS knowledge products. This includes CRVS eLearning course modules, toolkits on birth registration, and a global report on the state of CRVS in 2018 – a novelty in the field, as most CRVS reports are regional. We also developed an online knowledge platform offering access to over 200 curated tools, guidelines, and publications on CRVS systems.



Led the world's first conference on gender and CRVS

We convened and hosted **Making the Invisible Visible** in February 2018. It inspired a global commitment to put gender on the CRVS agenda for the first time. The high-level conference brought together close to 100 policy experts and practitioners from around the globe, including high-level representation from the Government of Canada and the United Nations.

Engaged researchers

We've partnered with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) to support pioneering research into strengthening CRVS systems and producing high-quality vital statistics. The research will pilot a new questionnaire to assess civil registration coverage in more than 120 population censuses between 2019–2024. It will examine links between death registration and the economic empowerment of women. It will also support capacity building for national statistical offices, and train young population data scientists.

Closed knowledge gaps on gender and CRVS

We're publishing a knowledge brief series on gender and CRVS in 2019, consisting of 12 papers authored by experts in the field. The series aims to uncover gender bias and barriers, share case studies and emerging findings, and recommend priorities and solutions.

Generated new research

We're supporting novel research to address the vulnerabilities of unregistered women and children who have fled their homes but remain in their country. We're also building an economic argument for investing in CRVS systems, by demonstrating the long-term value for governments, citizens, and the private sector.

Delivered country-level support

Our team has provided technical support to help Cameroon, Guinea, and Senegal prepare the CRVS sections of their reproductive, maternal, newborn, child, and adolescent health (RMNCAH) investment cases. We've researched CRVS indicators in new Global Financing Facility francophone countries, mapped CRVS systems in Guatemala, and reviewed civil registration policies for the Ministry of Health in Liberia.

Supported regional capacity building

We've partnered with the UN Economic Commission for Africa and the Africa Program on Accelerated Improvement of CRVS (APAI-CRVS) to organize regional 'train-the-trainer' events and support the Conference of African Ministers Responsible for Civil Registration in 2017.



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International Development Research Centre
Centre de recherches pour le développement international



crvssystems.ca

crvs@idrc.ca

