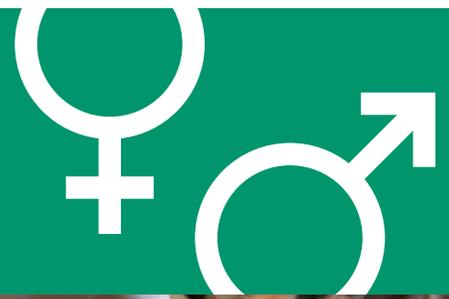




# Knowledge Briefs on **Gender** and **CRVS**



Brief 2, Paper 2

## Gender Equity in Guinea: How Social Norms Affect the Civil Registration of Women and Girls in West Africa

Photo: Dominic Chavez / World Bank

### KEY MESSAGES

- **High quality data from civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) systems is crucial for women.** CRVS data helps identify and address inequities that prevent women and girls from accessing services and benefiting from civil rights.
- **Inefficient CRVS systems deprive many women of their civil and political rights.** Because civil registration systems do not operate efficiently in Guinea, many women cannot register a birth, marriage, divorce, or the death of their husband. Without this validation, they are unable to provide the proof the government needs to establish their identity, age, or marital status. As a result, they are not eligible for civil and political rights.
- **Inherited traditions and perceptions affect a family's decision-making, including a woman's access to civil registration.** In Guinea's patriarchal society, men have traditionally been responsible for communicating with authorities, ensuring any legal or official proceedings, and preserving documentation for all family members. This is perceived as a means of control in a family. Although women are not legally prohibited from registering vital events, this traditional perception robs women of the power to do so.
- **Women face major logistical and cultural obstacles to registering vital events.** In Guinea, many women must travel great distances to register vital events. Yet they often lack the means to travel and cannot leave their neighbourhood without their husband's permission or consent.
- **Gender equity in Guinea requires strategic changes to influence social norms.** The process of identifying target groups should pay attention to equity and gender issues. This may require a separate analysis to reflect the needs of underserved and most deprived groups.

## INTRODUCTION

Registration of births, marriages, divorces, and deaths in West Africa is a key concern on the international agenda. Despite significant efforts and investments made by regional and national authorities and international partners, the civil registration of girls and women remains a challenge.

### Guinea's economic reality

Located in West Africa, Guinea is classified by the United Nations as one of the Least Developed Countries, despite its great economic potential.

Guinea's population was over 11 million in 2016, with a natural growth rate estimated at 2.8%. On average, women have 4.8 children. Although the legal minimum age for marriage is 18 for women and 25 for men, 21% of women are already married by the age of 15, while only about 5% of men are married by the age of 18 ([National Institute of Statistics 2016](#)).

One of Guinea's greatest challenges is persistent poverty. Data from 2010 indicates that 55.2% of the population lives below the poverty line ([World Bank 2017](#)). This particularly affects basic social sectors and makes it difficult for the state to provide adequate, efficient health and civil registration services.

This paper outlines the gaps in Guinea's civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) systems and the sociocultural barriers that women must overcome to access their civil and political rights. To research existing social norms and identify deterrents to civil registration, focus groups were organized in four Guinean communities, including two rural (Mambia and Friguiagbe) and two urban (Kindia and Dixinn). In-depth interviews were also conducted with various stakeholders. The data collected were based on responses from the focus groups and interviews, rather than gathered from a CRVS database.

These responses serve as the basis for this paper.

## THE STATUS OF CRVS SYSTEMS IN GUINEA

Guinea appears to have made considerable progress in the area of birth registration. In 2012, 58% of children under 5 were registered at birth ([National Institute of Statistics 2012](#)). This rate rose to 74.6% in 2016, although only 35% were able to show a birth certificate. No distinction was made between boys' and girls' birth registration ([National Institute of Statistics 2016](#)).

Although birth registration rates appear to be higher at the national level, this is not the case in the communities that were surveyed, where birth, marriage, and death registration rates were consistently very low.

Overall, marriage registration has recently seen an important increase, which can be attributed to the fact that although many young people have migrated to urban areas and are more educated, they prefer to celebrate their marriage in their home communities.

In the village of Mambia, 27 marriages were celebrated in the civil registration centre over a one-year period, while in Kindia, the number was much higher, with 110 marriages celebrated over the course of 2 months. In the commune of Dixinn (Conakry), 87 marriages were officially registered, which represents a great improvement.

The registration of deaths remains problematic. In the communities visited, the registration of deaths is almost at level 0.

There is currently one source of death registration estimates, which reported that only 0.1% to 0.5% of deaths were recorded in 2017 ([National Institute of Statistics 2017](#)). For example, of the 15,169 expected deaths in Kindia in 2016, only 44, or 0.3%, were registered. Further, men's

deaths are more likely to be registered than women's, with 86% of recorded deaths in Kindia in 2015 being men, of which 80% were married, and mostly civil servants.

## THE IMPACT OF CIVIL REGISTRATION ON GENDER EQUITY

Inefficient CRVS systems and conflicting legal norms can result in discrimination against girls starting at birth. Later, this can impede access to education, official identification, travel, employment, health, or inheritance, and prevent them from exercising their civil and political rights.

Because Guinea's civil registration system does not operate efficiently, many women are deprived of the right to prove their birth, marriage, divorce, or the death of their husband. This leaves them lacking the proof required by authorities to establish their name, age, and marital status, which affects their eligibility for civil and political rights.

### Safeguarding the right to civil registration protects human rights

Quality CRVS data can identify and address inequities in accessing services and benefitting from civil rights. Maintaining an effective CRVS system can have positive benefits for women and girls, allowing them to exercise their rights. For example:

- A legal document can help women retain their share of assets and other protections in the event of divorce.
- A marriage certificate can provide legal backup for a widowed woman to exercise inheritance rights.
- Birth and marriage registration can reveal early and forced marriages and allow women to seek legal recourse.

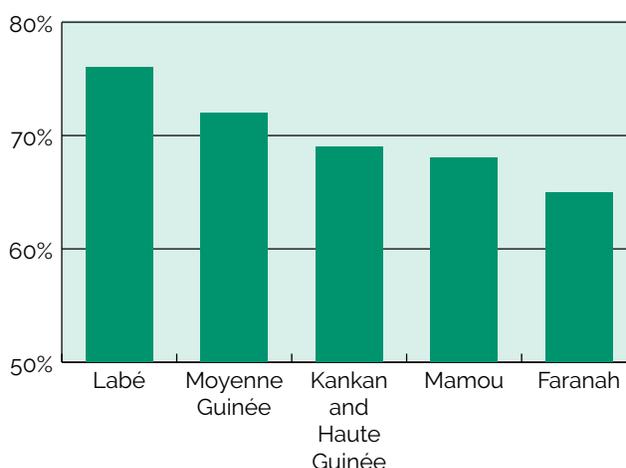
## Preventing child marriage

Birth registration, birth certificates, and their link to identification help ensure children's access to education and healthcare, such as immunizations. Birth registration can also help protect against early marriage, a risk that uniquely impacts girls (Bransky, Enoch and Long 2017).

Civil registration of vital events throughout the life cycle is particularly problematic for women and girls in Guinea, which has the 8<sup>th</sup> highest prevalence rate of child marriage in the world, according to UNICEF.

Although the legal age for marriage is 18, the incidence of child marriage is still shockingly high. Over half of all girls in Guinea are married before their 18th birthday and 19% are married before the age of 15 (Girls Not Brides 2018). The following table illustrates the prevalence of child marriage by region.

### Prevalence of child marriage in women before the age of 18 in Guinea



At a national level, gender inequalities in birth registration are small, and girls have made substantial strides in closing gender gaps in health and schooling. However, given the link between birth registration and child marriage, the lack of birth registration for girls has long-term detrimental consequences for women and their children.

There are currently no official statistics showing birth registration rates among girls and women, and the national averages do not show the full picture. Some pilot regions of Guinea have shown great progress in civil registration, while other regions still face big challenges in building a viable civil registration system. A study of 106 countries, including countries where child marriage is prohibited by law, shows a strong correlation between lower incidence of child marriage and higher birth registration rates ([Hanmer and Elefante 2016](#)).

## BARRIERS TO CIVIL REGISTRATION

Guinean women and girls face a large number of socio-cultural barriers to registering vital events. These range from the physical location of registration centres to traditional roles and responsibilities.

### Legal inconsistencies

The Guinean CRVS system currently suffers from infrastructure problems, difficulties in organizing and managing registrations, and resource constraints.

Civil registration in Guinea is based on several laws that govern the organization and functioning of the civil registration system, including the *Civil Code*, the *Code of Local Communities*, and the *Children's Code*:

- **Civil Code** defines the conditions for births, marriage, divorce and death registration ([République de Guinée 2016](#)).
- **Code of Local Communities** defines the powers of local authorities and recognizes the civil registration as a prerogative of the community. It also specifies the conditions for exercising the function of civil registrar ([République de Guinée 2006](#)).

- **Children's Code** acknowledges the importance of birth registration as a fundamental right of the child ([République de Guinée 2008](#)).

These overlapping legal provisions can result in inconsistencies and misunderstandings among stakeholders ([UNICEF 2019](#)).

## Logistical challenges

### Complex processes

Focus group participants described the complex marriage registration process. Marriage registration requires:

- Birth certificates for both partners;
- Certificate of residence;
- Parental consent;
- Photos of each partner; and
- Handwritten request to the town halls to announce the wedding day.

These documents must be provided at least 10 days in advance. The marriage announcement must be posted in a public space within the community for at least 10 days to allow anyone to oppose the marriage. A marriage can only be officially celebrated if no objection has been received.

Given Guinea's low literacy rate of 32% ([World Bank 2014](#)), this practice of posting an advertisement publicly for the entire community excludes a large part of the population.

The registration of deaths is also a very difficult process. Respondents did not have a clear sense of where or how to report a death. Even registrars lacked clear information on exactly what to do when a person dies to ensure proper death registration.

### ***Difficult access to services and information***

Distance is a major barrier to registering vital events, especially for registration of births and deaths, which are linked to strong cultural practices. According to authorities, there are currently 342 primary and 6 secondary civil registration centres in Guinea. This limits geographical access to people who live near these centres.

Focus group respondents complained of a significant distance to reach the civil registration centre. Although there is currently a plan to create secondary civil registration centres, the extension of secondary centres has not been fully implemented. Average distances to civil registration centres vary by community, as illustrated in the table below.

Community	Distance to civil registration centre
Mambia	40 km
Kindia	7 km
Dixinn	5 km

Distance limits access for many women who do not have a means of transportation and who cannot leave their neighbourhood without permission or consent from their husband.

The process is further complicated by the fact that obtaining a certificate of registration requires two visits to the civil registration centres: a first visit to bring all the necessary documents, and a second to retrieve the certificate within a maximum of 3 days. This process makes women dependent on their husbands or other men, particularly for birth registrations, as it is difficult for women to travel to civil registration offices after delivery and with a newborn. In addition, women are charged with a large number of household and childcare responsibilities, which limits their time, and makes civil registration fall to the end of their list of priorities.



Photo: Dominic Chavez / World Bank

Other logistical challenges to civil registration include difficult physical access to civil registration centres during rainy seasons, and unequal and inequitable distribution of household and childcare work, which means women often have lower literacy levels and little ability to implement change.

### **Lack of awareness**

There is currently no public pressure on people to officially register their vital events, and there is little understanding about why registration matters among community members, health workers, and even registrars. Several registrars confirmed that they had not registered their own marriages or the death of their parents because they did not see the importance of registering.

- **In the commune of Mambia in the region of Kindia**, only 51 births were registered in April 2018. However, health centre records show that 630 births took place in the centre and a few hundred more occurred in health posts, although the exact number is unconfirmed. The community's registration rate is therefore less than 10%.

- **For the urban district of Kindia**, with 171,000 inhabitants, only 144 births were recorded during the first 2 months of 2019, with a total of 10,000 births per year in health facilities (about 2,000 during the reference period of 2 months). In this case, the registration rate is even less than 10%.
- **In the municipality of Friguiaigbe** from 2017 to 2019, only 103 births were recorded, with a total of about 3,000 children born in health facilities during the same period.
- **In the urban municipality of Dixinn**, birth registration rates are higher, with 269 births registered between January 1 and February 14, 2019. The total number of planned births per year in Dixinn is about 6,200, which translates to about 550 registered births per month.

Focus group discussions and interviews identified the following information gaps:

- **Registration centre workers**—People working in civil registration centres (often volunteers or community agents) lack basic information about how to operate, which legal provisions relate to their duties, and how to raise awareness.
- **Local leaders**—Mayors lack information about the importance of birth, death, and marriage registration and do not have clear written instructions on their role in registering vital events.
- **Community partners**—Health workers, educators, informal community leaders, and religious leaders lack basic information and communication skills to encourage the registration of vital events. These partners also share misconceptions and stereotypes about the registration of vital events, particularly with respect to which family members should be involved in the process.

- **Public**—The general population does not receive any information on the need to register vital events. When parents receive a birth notification, health workers rarely explain what to do with it.
- **Focus group participants**—There is little to no awareness about the need to register deaths and marriages. Focus group participants unanimously confirmed that they were not aware that a death or marriage certificate was required, especially because religious ceremonies had already taken place.

In general, women showed a greater awareness about birth registration than men, as they receive information during immunization campaigns and other health-related activities in the community. However, they are unconvinced of the need for birth registration.

Men, on the other hand, are largely uninformed about the registration process. Further, men do not trust information women bring home, preferring instead to receive confirmation from another man in the community.

Providing information to community members could help ensure access to civil registration services. For birth registrations, it was generally perceived that a birth notification received by the health centres replaced the birth certificate issued by the registrar. Health workers do not inform the mothers and fathers of the procedure to follow once they have received a birth notification. For deaths, respondents reported that they did not realize they had to record deaths and did not know where or how to do it.

## Social and cultural norms

Registration of vital events is usually influenced by social norms and constructs related to many issues: births, deaths, marriages, power relations within the family, importance of state documents, role of official and religious authorities, expectations, and beliefs.

Although governments and international partners have invested financial resources to modernize CRVS systems in Guinea, social and cultural norms and generalized behaviours are still very prevalent. Inherited social norms position Guinean women on a lower social level, which encourages disparities in civil registration rates between men and women.

Social norms, perceptions, and the personal beliefs of government officials, local authorities, civil registration employees, and the general public are among the key barriers to advancing civil registration and to decreasing inequalities between men and women. However, this statement is not supported by evidence, as research in the field of social norms and drivers of behaviour related to civil registration was never conducted in Guinea. This should be further explored to better shape the interventions.

As Guinea has a large Muslim population, religious considerations are very strong. All vital events have specific ceremonies held in mosques.

The generalized perceptions and social norms in Guinea are:

- Religious ceremonies of birth, death, and marriage prevail over all civil proceedings.
- Registration of deaths or marriages are done by wealthier people and civil servants, particularly as they relate to inheritance.

- After the death of a loved one, people should mourn and not run for documents.
- Children need a birth certificate to go to school, but there will be time to register the birth later.
- Because everyone receives a birth notification at the health facility, other documentation is unnecessary.
- Only men can record vital events.

Although inefficient civil registration affects both men and women, not being registered puts women at a greater disadvantage. For women, no marriage registration means no right to inheritance and no rights after a separation. Without a death registration for her husband, the wife must remain dependent on her husband's family with no inheritance rights.

**Social norms** are behavioural rules that individuals prefer to follow conditionally based on the belief that:

- Others follow the rule (also called *empirical expectations*), and/or
- Others expect the individual to follow the rule (known as *normative expectations*).

Social norms exist when both types of expectations are satisfied.

(Bicchieri 2006; Bicchieri 2016).

### ***Position of power within the family***

Guinea has a number of inherited patriarchal traditions that influence civil registration rates. Traditionally, men have been responsible for communicating with authorities, ensuring any legal or official proceedings, and keeping the documents of all family members. This is perceived as a method of control within the family, as the person who keeps the documents maintains full control over all potential official proceedings. All links and relationships with authorities are strictly ensured by men. This is because most authorities are men (Terriennes, Vallerey, and Braibant 2018) and women have very low literacy rates compared to men (UNESCO Institute for Statistics 2014).

Legally, women are permitted to approach registration centres to register vital events. However, due to traditional perceptions, they are not empowered to do so. Although they bring pocket money to the family that can be used to pay for registration documents, women lack confidence and awareness about the process.

Registrars in all four civil registration centres confirmed that men are responsible for registering vital events. Not one could remember a single case of registration by a woman.

### ***The process of birth registration***

After giving birth, women generally stay in a health facility for about 6 hours and are accompanied home by an older female relative. Although the birth notification must be offered in the health facility at the time of birth, a mother does not know the name of her child before baptism, as the father is responsible for choosing the name. If the father is not present, this decision is passed on to a male relative or a friend of the father.

When a woman returns from the hospital, she gives her husband the birth notification she received at the health centre. For 7 days following the birth, the child has no name and the mother is not allowed to leave the house. On the 7th day, the child is baptized and given a name, and the mother is free to go out. Children who do not survive the first week of life are buried anonymously, often without a birth or death registration.

Usually, the birth is celebrated at the baptism during a religious ceremony. Guests bring a small financial contribution as a gift for the newborn. If properly advocated, some of this money could be used toward civil registration.

### ***Marriage registration***

In general, men initiate the civil registration of marriage. Unfortunately, uneducated men and women are unfamiliar with marriage registration and do not see the need for it. Many men resist official marriage registration, as it is perceived as giving too many rights to the woman. Men fear that registration will make the wife more confident about her position in her family and her marriage. As one interviewee explained, this would make her "too sure her husband will not leave her, and she will not make additional efforts to please her husband."



Photo: Dominic Chavez / World Bank

Men also resist marriage registration because they fear their wife will inherit their assets in the event of a separation. In addition, an official certificate represents a very strong commitment between husband and wife, making it "impossible for the man to have relationships with other women."

Traditionally, marriages are celebrated religiously, and usually the imam offers a marriage confirmation. As a result, people do not see the need to officially register the marriage. Even after a religious ceremony, a couple must have a civil ceremony and complete the marriage registration, which involves additional fees.

### ***Death registration***

Death registration rates are very low. In Kindia, no deaths were recorded in 2019, while in Dixinn, only 3 deaths were recorded. In Mambia, only 100 deaths were recorded for a period of 8 years. It is important to note that citizens must register a death within 3 days. After this period, all deaths must be declared in court.

Death registration is complicated, as it is linked to a large number of practices and cultural beliefs. As burials are meant to take place between two prayers, people are usually buried within a few hours of their death. During this time, family members are grieving and do not have time to obtain a confirmation of death and comply with the official deadline for registering a death.

Death registration is subject to the following beliefs and practices:

- You never speak of the deceased after their death. You let them rest in peace.
- If a child dies, he will be an intermediary between the parents and God and may ask favours for his family. Parents and relatives should not cry or suffer.

- Applying for a death certificate is a painful process for relatives of the deceased.
- There is no need for such a document, except in the case of inheritance or property issues.
- A cemetery burial costs about 100,000 francs (US\$10). As a result, many people tend to be buried around their home.
- There is no obligation to bury in specific places and no documents are required, even for burial in cemeteries.
- Death registration is not mandatory.

### **Perceived value and importance of registration**

#### ***Registration is unnecessary***

The general perception of civil registration is that it does not matter to citizens but is rather a state requirement. Focus group respondents confirmed that, aside from the birth certificate, which can be used to register a child in school and obtain identification, government-issued documents are considered to be totally useless.

It is important to note that in general, Guineans religiously celebrate births and marriages, and organize religious funerals. For Muslims, religious traditions related to birth, death, or marriage are much more important than civil registration. Further, mosques keep records of all vital events and some offer documentation, which hold a higher emotional value than government-issued certificates.

Some focus group participants felt that issuing birth certificates in large numbers during an ad-hoc campaign did not increase the value of registration and perpetuated the generalized idea that the State and international projects need it. In general, citizens do not understand the need to record their vital events.

The official registration of marriage is considered unnecessary. Most focus group respondents did not see the value of the official ceremony after the religious ceremony. In civil registration centres, marriage is perceived as a ceremony in itself, and it is impossible to declare the marriage without a ceremony.

The registration of deaths is considered a useless process.

### ***Registration is costly***

Currently, registration of vital events is a paid service, although some campaigns offer free birth registration. Focus groups in rural areas confirmed that parents usually wait for registration campaigns to register the birth of their children because they are unwilling to pay. This means that many parents exceed the birth registration deadline and would need to declare a birth in court.

For a long time, the Guinean government imposed a per capita tax. Although this tax has now been canceled, citizens fear that registering all their children will mean additional payments to the state.

In Guinea, costs for civil registration services can vary greatly, as fees are established by the council of each community. Rural communities have higher prices for registration services, with birth registration ranging between 3,000 francs (US\$0.30) and 10,000 francs (US\$1.10).

In urban areas, such as Kindia and Dixinn (Conakry), prices range between 3,000 francs (US\$0.30) and 5,000 francs (US\$0.50). In rural communities (Mambia and Friguiagbe), birth registration costs 10,000 francs (US\$1.10).

The registration of deaths costs even more, ranging between 5,000 (US\$0.50) and 20,000 francs (US\$2.20). Additional costs are related to obtaining confirmation of death from a health

facility or health worker. If you invite someone to confirm the death, additional costs can reach 60,000 francs (US\$6.50).

Marriage registration is the most expensive, ranging between 30,000 (US\$3) and 50,000 (US\$5) in urban areas, and up to 100,000 francs (US\$11) in rural areas.

It should be mentioned that religious ceremonies are considered more important than civil ceremonies and that people spend at least 50,000 francs (US\$5) for ceremonies held in mosques, such as baptisms, marriages, and funerals. Civil registration fees are an additional burden for families, as they will not replace religious ceremonies with civil ceremonies.

Most focus group respondents said a trip to the registration office costs at least 10,000 francs (US\$1), and that at least two trips are required to complete the civil registration process.

### ***Other considerations***

The cost of registration is quite high, considering that much of the country is poor. Any additional expense must be carefully planned and prioritized. Although some families obtain a birth certificate for all children, time and circumstances may mean that they may record the birth of some children, but not others.

Boys are usually privileged in this sense, as a birth certificate is more of a priority for boys than for girls. Although there is no big difference in birth registration rates for boys and girls, there is a greater chance that a girl will be registered later during the 6-month official registration period. It is not uncommon that in the same family, a boy will have a birth certificate, while his sister will not. This is due to the perception that education and other rights are not important for girls, who are destined to become wives and mothers.

## CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

Women in Guinea are well-placed to communicate important social messages to their families and relatives. The next step in promoting birth, marriage, and death registration is to empower women, explain their role, and offer the tools they need to take action and be the key drivers for change.

Efforts are being made to make civil registration free of charge for all in Guinea and to employ officials who are properly trained and able to provide services effectively.

This would allow centres to provide information to women and their spouses. A joint strategy for social change, where each concerned stakeholder has a role and specific areas of intervention, would help change the perceptions of the population in general, but also of those directly or indirectly involved in the delivery of services (civil registrars, health workers, educators, mayors, village chiefs, district leaders, religious leaders, NGOs).

The Intersectoral Coordination Commission for Civil Registration Reform and Modernization has been created as a coordination mechanism that meets quarterly. This group has the authority to endorse policies related to civil registration and present proposals or joint approaches.

With the Strategy of Reform and Modernization of Civil Registration validated by all stakeholders, the National Directorate of Civil Registration plans to convene the committee more often and develop similar mechanisms at the regional level. Although this will ensure a better coordination, at this stage, no women's organizations are represented.

The Strategy is the result of this process of consultation with all the stakeholders at the central level as well as at the decentralized (regional, prefectural, communal, and community), public and non-state level as well as the development partners. In this context, it should be emphasized that this strategy constitutes the framework of reference for all interventions in the field of civil status in Guinea over the next five years.

Photo: Dominic Chavez / World Bank



## KEY SUCCESS FACTORS

The following actions are required to address obstacles to vital event registrations and promote gender equity in Guinea:

**RESEARCH** —In-depth research on current social norms, practices, and beliefs to identify and address bottlenecks in the CRVS process. This will require formative research.

**STRATEGY** —A strategy to influence social norms in Guinea. This means identifying target groups that consider equity and gender issues. To this end, groups that are underserved and most deprived may require a separate analysis. For instance, communication with a minority religious group will most probably count on their local and national leaders, while religious factors may not have a significant influence for the rest of the population. A gender empowerment program may provide an excellent gateway to reach women with information and counseling on marriage and divorce registration.

**WOMEN'S INVOLVEMENT** —Active participation by women and women associations in strategy development, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. Women's associations should be included in all consultation groups and coordination mechanisms to boost civil registration in the country.

**INCLUSION OF WOMEN'S ASSOCIATIONS** —The involvement of women's associations to decrease registration gaps and empower women to take action in civil registration is important. Particular attention should be focused on members of groups and organizations where the bulk of the active membership is made up of women, such as home and school associations (or their equivalents).

**PROPER PLANNING** —An operational plan that clearly identifies participants for each specific region. This is critical, at least in priority areas where grassroots level approaches will be implemented to reflect the landscape of individual local settings. Research and consultations may uncover other influential priority groups, like traditional massagers for pregnant women, community health committees, or strong community-based groups concerned by broader development issues that may have a link with registration.

**DIALOGUE** —The inclusion of civil registration as an important element in discussions about health, human rights, women's rights, child protection, governance, etc.

**GROUP MEETINGS** —Community meetings held throughout the country separately with men and women that have been hard to reach, such as cultural or traditional ethnic groups and the rural poor. These should take place before developing measures to counteract conditions that serve as deterrents to registration. This work should involve research to identify cultural beliefs and other conditions that deter registration. It is important to ensure that the people who attend these meetings are truly representative. Women should be fully included, with their concerns and opinions noted.

**COMMUNICATIONS APPROACH** —The use of social and behavioural change communication should be employed to:

- Stimulate community dialogue and raise awareness about the problem among women;
- Increase knowledge, for example, about the importance civil registration both among women and men;



- Promote attitude change, for example, about the need for marriage registration and about who in the family can interact with authorities to ensure civil registration;
- Reduce stigma;
- Create demand for information and services;
- Advocate with policymakers and opinion leaders for effective approaches to increase civil registration rates;
- Promote services for registration of all vital events; and,
- Improve skills and feelings of self-efficacy, for example, by teaching women why they should register divorces.

**TARGET RURAL COMMUNITIES** —It is important to include rural areas in any campaign that aims to inform, educate, and communicate about civil registration to women. A national Registration Month, Week, or Day should be considered, with information booths in local markets to reach rural women. Often, market day is their only contact with the outside world. For this initiative, local radio stations should broadcast messages about the requirements and benefits of registration. They should also announce where and when information booths will be set up. If possible, the local registrar should attend, so recent births can be registered on the spot. While this process may be intensive, it can be extremely effective in reaching rural women and women in poor urban areas who previously did not register vital and civil events in their families.

**MEDIA OUTREACH** —Another valuable approach is to air information and educational programs on community radio at key times during the day – ideally, when women can listen to them while doing housework, or while working in the fields or outdoors.

It is important to obtain the involvement and commitment of tribal chiefs, village elders, religious and spiritual leaders, traditional birth attendants, community leaders and opinion makers, women's groups, politicians at all levels, persons who perform marriages, educational institutions, and others to help ensure the success of the Registration Improvement Programme, particularly at the community level.

A strong focus should be made on empowering women to take action in civil registration.




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*This paper was authored by Dorina Andreev, a consultant for the Centre of Excellence for Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) Systems. It is part of the Knowledge Brief Series on Gender and CRVS developed by the Centre of Excellence for CRVS Systems, in partnership with Open Data Watch.*

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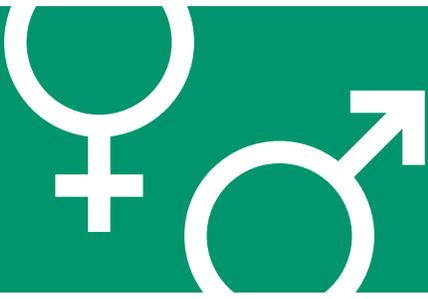
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