

Africa's vulnerable go unseen: President Zuma

Without civil registration, people will continue to be born and die without leaving a trace in any legal record. Irene Naidoo reports

African's most vulnerable people are unseen and unaccounted for because there is no record of their existence, said President Jacob Zuma.

Speaking at the 2nd Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Conference in Durban on Thursday, President Zuma expressed the concern over the scandal on invisibility — a situation where people are born and die without ever leaving a trace in any legal record of their existence.

"It has meant that the most vulnerable people in Africa remain unseen and not counted. They practically do not exist," he pointed out.

It was important for the citizens of all of Africa's 54 countries to be registered — a feat that could only be achieved through efficient civil and registration systems.

Once everyone in Africa was registered and accounted for, the continent could plan better for its people and its development, the President added.

"Central to the advancement of Africa's development is the social inclusion agenda, which we cannot successfully accomplish without proper and modern civil registration systems," he stressed.

Civil registration and vital statistics was significant as part of the fulfilment of the dream of the African people to shape their mother land in their own way, following the defeat of colonialism, President Zuma pointed out.

The conference was part of the exercise of Africa conducting its own affairs, as well as undoing the legacy of colonialism which deprived Africans of identity and citizenship.

"Africa cannot fulfil its development agenda unless we know, who we are, where we live, work and play and what we need to better our living conditions on the continent. Births, marriages, divorces or deaths are all vital events that must be recorded in any country," he added.

In the current age of globalisation and greater interdependence among coun-



South African President Jacob Zuma. Photograph: Albert De Gouveia

"Civil registration is a critical tool for the promotion of democracy"

tries, civil registration was much more than about just identifying a person's nationality.

"It is also a pre-requisite for the successful implementation of African regional integration, as it facilitates the smooth movement of people among countries.

Furthermore, the benefits of good vital registration have a far reaching impact on broad developmental programmes such as the planning and monitoring of education, health, social security, unemployment," the President pointed out.

This included countries' abilities to measure health inequalities, priorities, monitor trends, evaluate development programmes including, the Millennium Development Goals, poverty reduction and other developmental efforts.

Civil registration and vital statistics were also important in the implementation

of policies for community planning, monitoring inequalities and future planning and resource allocation, he noted.

"More importantly, civil registration is a critical tool for the promotion of democracy, in the event of the compilation of voters' rolls."

Africans found themselves promoting civil registration in day and age due to the history of the continent and respective countries.

"For example, South Africa, like other countries in Africa, comes from a history of colonial and apartheid regimes where most of the citizens were denied their right to citizenship.

As a result, a largely fragmented and selective civil registration system was used to perpetuate the discrimination and marginalisation of the majority of the population," he said.

The colonial and apartheid regimes successfully used this system to deliberately and systematically prevent the African masses from exercising their right to vote and choose their own governments, President Zuma added.

Since 1994, the South African government has worked hard to ensure that citizens reclaimed their birth right and that their dignity was restored.

The country had recorded many successes with regards to its civil registration system and campaigns, President Zuma noted.

He assured delegates from the rest of the Africa, that Home Affairs Minister Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, who headed South Africa's civil registration campaign in recent years, would invest similar efforts into regional campaigns when she takes up office as the African Union Commission chairperson. — SAnews.gov.za

What you said ...



Guy Henderson
— **China Central Television**

"I had no idea that statistics play such an integral part in the development of Africa since its always viewed as a boring subject."



Honourable Jose Correia — **Cape Verde**

"The expectations that I had coming into the CRVS Conference were fully met because at the moment, Cape Verde is in the process of reviewing the Registration Act through the improvement of our IT Systems."



Honourable Fatim Badjie — **Gambia**

"The CRVS has been good so far and enabled us to appreciate its importance of vital statistics for health through various presentations."



Honourable Samuel Ofori-Ampofo
— **Ghana**

"My expectations have been met largely because here I am exposed to ideas that can strengthen our country through technological development."

'A good foundation has been laid'

By Obakeng Ratlhogo

Thursday, 6 September 2012 marks the fourth day of the Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) conference. The conference started on a high note, with South African President Jacob Zuma and the Minister of Home Affairs who is also Chair of the African Union Commission (AUC), Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma.

Dlamini Zuma welcomed all the delegates who gathered to represent the African continent on such an important subject of CRVS.

The minister touched on the journey of the CRVS conference and how it has certainly been a productive road from Addis Ababa in 2010 to South Africa.

"However, remember that integration of Africa is not just about political and economic integration. The free movement of our people is equally important and crucial for our integration. This cannot be man-



aged effectively carried through, if we do not know who our citizens are".

Dlamini Zuma says it is therefore essential that through this conference,

strategies and plans are put in motion, to raise awareness and inform all the citizens of Africa. Making the citizens aware of the vision, mission and objectives of the

CRVS, is just any important element, if not more important. "This is at the heart of the shared vision of development that informs the agenda of the African Union and our economic regions" said Home Affairs Minister.

The Minister emphasises that "A good foundation has thus far been laid in order to carry out this vision forward. The incorporation of the young people, particularly, young statisticians who are here today, will ensure continuity and drive the programme to improve civil registration in Africa into the future"

In conclusion, Dlamini Zuma encouraged governments to give the children of the Africa a new vision, new possibilities and most importantly a new reality.

"Let us make the dreams of our founders come true, let this current generation, our generation, not be one of wasted opportunities. Let us use our opportunities wisely and to the best advantage for all our people, let us claim this 21st century as our own" said the Minister.



Young statisticians are making their voices heard as they grapple with challenging issues . Photograph: Albert De Gouveia

Young statisticians come of age

A powerful trumpet was sounded today in the voice of President Jacob Zuma as he officially opened the Civil Registration Vital Statistics (CRVS) meeting for the African Ministers who congregated at the International Convention Centre (ICC) in Durban.

In 2009, Statistics South Africa (Stats SA) successfully hosted the 57th Session of the International Statistics Institute (ISI) on behalf of the government and President Zuma, at the time, made reference to the important role ISibalo Legacy Programme would make in Africa and the role the ISibalo Young African Statisticians (IYAS) had to play in the future of statistics.

The ISibalo Legacy was created as a direct response to then Minister of Finance and IYAS patron, Trevor Manuel's

question: "What will South Africa have to show for having hosted the prestigious ISI for the first time since its inception 126 years ago?"

Yesterday, President Zuma acknowledged that role in the form of CRVS outlining the responsibility of the Young African Statisticians as key drivers in the future success of statistical development on the African continent.

In 2010 in Dublin, Ireland at the 58th Session- renamed the International World Congress- , Mr Kodzovi Abalo from Togo who holds a Masters in Statistics and Economics -working for the National Statistics Office and for the Planning and Development Ministry won the "ISI Jan Tinbergen Prize". This accolade is awarded to young statisticians from developing countries for the best presentation at the

International World Congress. Abalo's recognition clearly demonstrated that Africa has young lions learning to roar.

The ISibalo Legacy has come of age in the name of the IYAS - the 'Young African Lions' to go and make their mark.

The World Congress in Beijing, Hong Kong is a year away and this presents a challenge to seize the opportunity and impress the world on new innovations on CRVS because Africa needs 'Olympians' in the field of statistics, knowledge and power.

IYAS should rise with courage to roar and face the difficult challenges in the world to make a difference and stand shoulder to shoulder with their counterparts armed with understanding and knowledge to build a new Africa, as alluded to by the Statistician-General of South Africa, Mr Pali Lehohla.

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'We are hunting for babies'

Many African countries have developed innovative approaches to improving civil registration. Cheryl Taylor reports

Declining birth registrations and lack of universal access to civil registration are some of the challenges facing southern African countries.

A Southern African Development Community (SADC) perspective provided during the 2nd Civil Registration and Vital Statistics conference indicated that poverty and living in remote areas were some of the factors contributing to declining registrations.

Namibia, for example, had a problem of decreasing registration owing to poverty and the great distance people had to travel to access the registration service. In 2000, 70,4% of the population had been issued with birth certificates, this dropped to 60% in 2006.

"We are determined to reverse this decline ... we are hunting for babies in Namibia," said Lydia Kandetu, a deputy director for civil registration, in reference to that country's innovative initiative of partnering with the health department and opening civil registration office across the desert country's hospitals.

It is increasingly becoming clear that civil registration has gained traction and had become a focal point as a primary source of data for development planning.

Countries have identified a number of strategies to include all citizens in their population registers. Progress made in completing population registers by individual countries provides an example of what can be achieved through strategies that are tailored to each country's conditions.

"Decreasing registration was linked to poverty and the long distances people had to travel to get to registration points," said Kandetu. Namibia has a population density of 2,5 people per km².

The country adopted a number of approaches to counteract this negative trend in registration. The ministry of health and social development were approached to collaborate in ensuring every child was registered.

The opening of new sub-regional



Babies should be registered at birth to ensure that they are able to access social services and schooling when they grow older. Photograph: Mbongiseni Mdebele

offices also brought the services closer to the people, thus ensuring accessibility to government services. There was also a joint outreach programme with other relevant government departments. "We took registration to the people so that we could reach the most vulnerable," said Kandetu.

One of the key innovations introduced

was the use of technology, which allowed for video conferencing, training and, importantly, a web-based national registration system that could be accessed via the internet. "Our system is interoperable with the other government departments, which also strengthens governance," explained Kandetu. For example, when

a person dies this information is updated with all relevant departments, thus ghost social beneficiaries are eliminated.

"The passport system is also integrated, meaning we can check the photos to ensure the ID and passport pictures are of the same person," said Kandetu

Some of the challenges, said Kandetu,

were the mainstreaming of registration as part of antenatal and postnatal care. The ideal is to ensure that no baby leaves a hospital without a birth certificate. There were also challenges around achieving interoperability and the amendment of existing laws.

Botswana is a country with similar challenges. It has a population density of 3,5 people per km². "We had a problem in reaching vulnerable groups such as those with low incomes or those who are less educated. At present birth registration stands at 72%," said Neo Corneliah Leping, Director in the Department of Civil and National Registration. "In addition, 22% of all hospital births are not registered."

Some of the interventions include the combining of ID and registration into one system. When a child is born it is issued with a birth certificate and an ID number that remains with her for life. A birth certificate is necessary to be issued with an ID, while foreigners are catered for under a separate system.

The country has made an effort to reach everyone. Hospital-based registration is one such initiative, while in remote areas officials are working with registry committees, led by district commissioners, to verify citizenship of those who were not registered.

In addition, integration with other government databases ensures that when death is reported this information is updated across government.

Demonstrating how technology can aid civil registration, Uganda has introduced a mobile system that feeds into a database and is accessed via cellphone. This information is then validated by a registrar, after which a certificate is immediately issued. Because 43% of births in Uganda occur outside of birth facilities (for example hospitals), this mobile technology makes civil registration accessible to everyone within reach of a cellular signal.

"There are still challenges, such as outdated laws and a lack of integration with health workers," said Eva Kentaro Mugerwa, Director of Civil Registration.

No records of existence for about 50% of African children

There are no records of the existence for about half of all the children on the African continent, writes *Irene Naidoo*. The births of these children were never registered, meaning the state knows nothing of their existence and are making no provisions for them, says Cornelius Williams, Regional Adviser: Child Protection at the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

Williams, from UNICEF's Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office, was one of the delegates at the 2nd Civil Registration and Vital Statics conference in Durban.

"Could you imagine a child not having an identity, not having an existence written down and so you're born, you live your life, you die and you never existed in any document... It's like you were never there. There's no official record of your existence as a human being," he said.

Birth registrations were particularly poor in countries like Somalia, South Sudan and Uganda, Williams added.

Children who were not registered were immediately at a disadvantage because with no record of their existence, planning for their future proved to be difficult.

"Increasingly what we are finding out is that when it comes to planning, government plans don't cover these children, especially if they come from marginalised communities... They don't plan for you and if you are caught breaking the

law, you treated like an adult because you don't have a birth certificate to show that you're not an adult.

"This means the law that protects children will not protect you," he pointed out.

Williams attributed the blame for non-registration to both governments and parents. "Countries do not have proper systems in place. They are still dealing with outdated, colonial relics - laws that have never been modernised, systems that have not been modernised. You have paper based systems.

"There is still a country that uses the typewriters. They have two typewriters in their national office that is used to type birth certificates because that's the law and the law is outdated," Williams said.

The civil registration system of such countries could not be digitalised because there was no money for it.

Another barrier was the cost factor of the documents.

"In one African country, we did a calculation and it cost \$25 for someone in a rural area to travel all the way to a town centre to register their child and get a certificate. It costs \$25 in a poor country where you have majority of people living on less than \$1 a day," he pointed out.

With regards to parents, he said that some, particularly those in rural areas, did not see the need for their children

to have birth certificates as they were not expected to attend school.

Others only showed urgency in registering their children when the child needed to go to school or access services from the state.

"When the child needs something from the state that requires proof of identity then it kicks in. It's the private use that drives the need for registration."

However, the situation was looking up, with Africa finally beginning to acknowledge the importance of civil registration.

"Proof of that is the Africa countries gathered here... They have recognised they can't have a modern state without civil registration... With this conference we are now seeing a movement. There is a movement and growing recognition that Africa must change," he added.

Policy makers and political leaders were finally talking about and tackling the issue, Williams noted.

Fifty-four African Ministers responsible for civil registration and vital statistics are involved in this year's conference, as well as about 500 delegates from African countries including senior civil registration technical experts, development partners, young statisticians and professional associations. — SAnews.co.za

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Addis Ababa 2010, Durban 2012, Cote d'Ivoire 2014. The
road map has been defined for Africa's Leaders and her
Young African Statisticians to measure today in order to
manage and plan a better Tomorrow!*

Resolutions from the experts meeting

A. Introduction

1. An Experts' Group Meeting was held from 3 to 5 September 2012 at the Durban International Convention Centre in Durban, Republic of South Africa to prepare for the Second Conference of African Ministers responsible for Civil Registration, to be held in the same venue on 6 and 7 September 2012. Both the Conference and the preparatory Meeting of Experts are being organized by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), the African Union Commission (AUC), the African Development Bank (AfDB), supported by the Government of the Republic of South Africa, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNHCR,WHO and HMN, on the theme, Improving Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Institutional and Human Infrastructure. The Second Conference is being organized in accordance with the resolution of the First ministerial meeting, which recommended that the Conference be institutionalized as a standing forum to be organized every two years.

B. Attendance

2. The meeting brought together over 230 participants from member States, including Heads of national civil registration authorities, National Statistical Offices (NSOs); ; country experts responsible for Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS); representatives of the CRVS Core Group, namely UNECA, AUC, AfDB, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNHCR WHO, HMN and the ASSD Secretariat; representatives of regional and international organizations, sub-regional and non-governmental organisations, the private sector, statistical training centres and a group of young African statisticians.

C. Opening Session

3. Welcoming remarks were made by the Director-General, Department of Home Affairs of the Republic of South Africa as host of the meeting. Opening remarks were delivered by representatives of the UNECA, AUC, and the AfDB Group. Opening remarks were also made by the Deputy Minister of Home Affairs of the Republic of South Africa, Honourable Ms. Fatima Chohan. The meeting was formally opened by the Premier of the Province of KwaZulu-Natal of the Republic of South Africa, the Honourable Zweli Mkhize.

4. The opening session of the meeting observed a moment of silence in honour of the late Prime Minister of Ethiopia, Ato Meles Zenawi, who passed away recently.

5. The meeting was conducted in 5 plenary and 3 breakout sessions, focusing on the following major topics: Role of CRVS in the Africa's development agenda; proposals for operationalizing the regional CRVS initiative – the Africa Programme on Accelerated Improvement of CRVS (APAI-CRVS); progress report on CRVS interventions by regional organizations and United Nations agencies; and country case studies in selected sectors. Presentations were made in the following areas followed by general discussions: CRVS and African Integration; Children's and Women's Rights; Refugees Issues and Related Challenges; Public Health Service and Management; Monitoring of development Indicators; Strategy for the Harmonization of Statistics in Africa (SHaSA); APAI-CRVS; Progress Report on the Regional CRVS Initiative; CRVS and the Health Sector; CRVS and National ID; CRVS and Application of IT; Monitoring of CRVS Operations; Service Delivery and CRVS; CRVS in Post Conflict Situations; Registering Death, Assigning and Certifying Cause of Death and Compiling Death Statistics under APAI-CRVS; Strategic Action Points for Improving CRVS Institutional and Human Infrastructure; Strategic Role of the Statistics Sector in Promoting the Implementation of APAI-CRVS; Perspectives of the Isibalo Young African Statisticians on CRVS; Inter-American Development Bank Experience on CRVS; Role of Private Sector in Improving CRVS in Africa; Financial Partners Perspective.

D. Preamble

6. We, the representatives of Civil Registration Authorities and National Statistical Offices of African States, and other development partners, gathered in Durban, the Republic of South Africa from 3 to 5 September 2012 during the preparatory Meeting of Experts of the Second Conference of African Ministers responsible for Civil Registration, under the theme, Improving Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Institutional and Human Infrastructure.

7. Appreciate the hospitality of the Government and people of the Republic of South Africa for hosting the

meeting;

8. Welcome with appreciation the decision of the sixth Session of the African Symposium on Statistical Development (ASSD) to prioritize CRVS as the thematic focus of symposia for the next five years beginning in 2011;

9. Note with appreciation the active participation of the Isibalo Young African Statisticians (YAS) in the deliberations of the Experts' Meeting;

10. Also appreciate the participation and contribution of non-governmental organizations, including the role of the private sector in the future development of CRVS systems in Africa;

11. Take note of the decision No Assembly/AU/DEC.424 of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union endorsing the recommendation of the First Conference of African Ministers responsible for Civil Registration on the institutionalisation of the bi-annual meeting of the African ministers responsible for civil registration within the framework of a relevant specialised technical committee of the African Union.

12. Take note of the commitment and efforts of African Ministers responsible for Civil Registration to continue to give priority to mobilize the continent to improve CRVS systems;

13. Recognize the crucial role of CRVS in promoting and realizing the African integration agenda and its contribution to the priorities of NEPAD;

- Recognising;
- a. the central role that CRVS play in governance and economic development
- b. The role of CRVS in improving access to basic services at all levels, including meeting the MDGs.
- c. their strategic role in the use and application of technology
- d. the strategic input to privacy laws and respect for citizens dignity
- e. the pervasive way in which CRVS impact on individuals in their daily social, political and economic lives

14. Acknowledge the progress made by member States since the First Conference of African Ministers responsible for Civil Registration in August 2010 in improving civil registration and vital statistics systems, including the contribution of African regional organizations, various UN organizations and other development partners, and take note of the continuing challenges being faced by African countries in this regard;

15. Appreciate the current efforts of the CRVS Secretariat at UNECA in coordinating international and regional interventions by creating regional platforms such as the CRVS regional Core Group and stakeholders forum;

16. Aware of the challenges that Civil Registration Authorities and NSOs continue to face in the development of CRVS systems;

17. Also aware of the lack of appropriate records and evidence of vital events to identify the civil status of individuals in the majority of African countries, which is an impediment in the application and monitoring of the implementation of international and regional human rights instruments and provisions, especially on children, women and vulnerable population groups, including refugees, returnees, and internally displaced persons;

18. Noting with concern that the findings of the regional assessment study show huge disparities among countries in the development of CRVS systems in Africa, with almost all countries not publishing vital statistics due to the incomplete nature of civil registration systems;

19. Recalling the declarations of the first ministerial Conference on the measures for improving CRVS in Africa and the need to continue efforts in their implementation;

E. Conclusions and Recommendations

20. The Meeting proposed several actionable recommendations towards advancing the CRVS agenda in Africa for consideration by the Second Conference of African Ministers responsible for Civil Registration. The main conclusions and recommendations are presented below:

E.1. Implementation of the Africa Programme on Accelerated Improvement of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (APAI-CRVS)

The meeting adopted the proposed APAI-CRVS and requested ministers to consider it for endorsement.

African countries:

21. Support the implementation of the APAI-CRVS and the related regional Medium-term CRVS plan and ensure

alignment to SHaSA and the African Charter on Statistics;

22. Assist in the creation of a pool of experts on CRVS at regional level for the implementation of APAI-CRVS across the continent.

23. Ensure that an adequate pool of resources primarily from governments is allocated in order to fully achieve the objectives of the continent-wide programmes;

E.2. Capacity building and technical assistance

24. Governments assisted by ECA, AUC and AfDB should establish a curriculum for capacity building of officials working on CRVS to ensure creation of skills-set as a critical success factor in improving CRVS systems.

25. AUC, AfDB and UN Agencies to make available resources to support implementation of the Isibalo Young African Statisticians association capacity development programme of work

26. Civil registration authorities and NSOs to commit to involve young African Statisticians in research, program activities on CRVS and in country assessments that are due to be conducted in member States

African Union Commission should:

27. Embed training of civil registration professionals' from African countries as a key component of the African statistical training programmes.

28. Include civil registration as part of regional priorities and provide support to countries emerging from conflict to revitalize their CRVS systems.

29. Establish a charter which enforces all African countries to register all events on civil registration

UNECA, AfDB and other regional and international development partners should:

30. Develop regional operational guidelines in line with international standards on CRVS which should be regularly updated to reflect the evolving needs of African countries.

31. Facilitate South-South learning opportunities between African countries.

32. Create a forum for African civil registration stakeholders as part of the APAI-CRVS regional programme;

33. Maintain and disseminate a catalogue of innovative good practices and champions replicable experiences in CRVS and linkages with different sectors

34. Develop and disseminate technical standards and policies to be used and implemented by African governments;

35. Working group on CRVS should be established or where they exist strengthened with multi-stakeholder involvement (Government agencies, UN partners, civil society and local communities) in order to support national CRVS initiatives.

36. AfDB to support countries for CRVS IT solutions to link with data portal solutions being offered to countries

E.3. Strengthening Planning, Budgeting, Monitoring and Evaluation of CRVS

African Countries should:

37. With the assistance of the APAI-CRVS Secretariat and partners conduct comprehensive country assessments of the CRVS systems to enable a holistic understanding and improvement of national CRVS systems in Africa. The assessments will identify the stage of development of the CRVS system of each country, identify bottlenecks and challenges faced by countries, and the form of assistance that each country will need in order to arrive at complete registration;

38. Formulate country-owned concrete and time-bound national action plans for the improvement of CRVS systems. These action plans must be included in national development plans so as to feed into national budgets;

39. Allocate adequate resources as part of their recurrent national budget to ensure the credibility and sustainability of their CRVS systems;

40. Strengthen stakeholder participation, particularly the participation of relevant ministries according to the theme of the Conference

41. Ensure that there is a well designed monitoring and evaluation framework, including regular reporting on progress as an integral part of the CRVS system to ensure continuity and completeness of registration;

42. Pay particular attention to birth and death registration and causes of death to monitor development indicators including MDGs

43. Strengthen the institutional and human infrastructure

of the CRVS systems;

Regional and international development partners should:

44. Assist countries to implement their costed, time bound CRVS plans,

45. In accordance with PARIS declaration on Aid Effectiveness align their support in the area of CRVS to country-owned national action plans using country systems and processes ;

46. Coordinate their support to countries to reduce administrative and transaction costs imposed on countries;

E.4. Reforming and improving CRVS systems and legal framework

African Countries should:

47. Enact new civil registration laws if absent and update existing civil registration laws that meet the evolving civil registration and vital statistics needs of the countries to ensure continuity, permanence, universality and coverage of the collection, management and reporting of CRVS systems. This process of promulgating new laws and amending existing ones should reflect the specificities of particular countries, and involve the participation of all relevant stakeholders, be based on international and regional principles and standards.

48. Enact new legislation on data protection and privacy for the protection and control related to keeping, releasing and processing of personal and national data.

49. Take advantage of the recent advancement in information technology to improve and simplify the administration of civil registration laws and regulations. The modernization of CRVS systems should ultimately include the use of biometric registration for better identification of individuals and to improve the quality of the information collected through CRVS systems.

50. Enact new legislation on electronic signatures to facilitate online signing of documents and authentication of electronic transactions and registers relating to CRVS.

51. Establish a convention that protects civil registration installations from destruction by acts of war and natural causes

E.5. Establishing effective coordination mechanisms

The meeting underscored the need for better coordination between the different ministries that deal with civil registration functions.

African Countries should:

52. Establish or, where they exist, strengthen mechanisms to coordinate the different civil registration functions at the national and the sub-national levels for the timely collection, analysis and dissemination of relevant CRVS data to allow for an efficient mechanism of registration, and for planning, control and decision-making purposes;

53. Ensure that the Ministry responsible for Civil Registration take the lead in the management of CRVS activities in each country, and work closely with other departments

54. Institutionalize through legal provisions linkages between civil registration authorities and NSOs including health, education and other ministries, and ensure that the legal and regulatory frameworks specify the coordination arrangements between civil registration and NSOs and their respective roles and responsibilities.

E 6. Improving service delivery and access

African Countries should:

55. Continue in their endeavours to put in place civil registration systems to register all vital events that occur within their territory regardless of nationality or legal status and that appropriate certificates and documents are issued free of charge;

56. Ensure that access to registration services which include the actual registration itself should be made available to the whole population by keeping the cost of access, including both direct and indirect costs, as low as possible and ensuring that the cost of accessing services does not vary significantly within and between geographical areas.

57. Decentralise civil registration through the establishment of civil registration offices and service centres in districts, townships, villages, refugees camps and other special population groups, so as to ensure complete coverage of population and enable rural and marginalised populations to access civil registration systems, including through the establishment of mobile registration teams;

58. Utilise local structures that exist such as traditional authorities, schools and faith based organizations to

improve service delivery to hard-to-reach segments of the population;

59. Physical addresses of dwellings are central for the well functioning CRVS systems. In this regard countries are encouraged to take advantage of geographic information systems and remote sensing technologies and introduce unique physical addresses for dwellings.

E 7. Addressing the needs of marginalised population groups

African countries should:

60. Promote the registration of the most vulnerable children such as street children, those at risk and children in institutions to whom a birth certificate would provide much needed protection.

61. Enact, update and/or implement laws and policies on registration of vital events so as to ensure the timely and compulsory registration for all refugee children, including returnees and internally displaced persons, within the national territory.

62. African countries to include nationality and origin, in reference to the registration of vital events of refugees.

E.8. Promoting awareness and advocacy

African Countries should:

63. Continue to strengthen awareness campaigns on CRVS systems at the national, sub-national levels using all forms of media including the use of health and education systems in rural areas, and in all local languages in the country.

64. Sensitize parliamentarians, members of the judiciary and executive on the importance of civil registration, and where necessary, establish Select Parliamentary Committees on CRVS for monitoring civil registration activities and ensuring adequate budget allocation;

E.9. Registering Deaths, Assigning and Certifying Cause of Death and Compiling Death Statistics under APAI-CRVS

African countries should:

65. Include the causes of deaths in the legislative framework for death registration;

66. Include death and causes of death registration in the Health Management Information System;

67. Undertake capacity building activities through training and workshops on registration of death and causes of death targeted at government officials, and health professionals;

68. Intensify public education to reduce stigmatization especially in cases where the cause of death is HIV/ AIDS, so that all deaths could be registered.

69. Develop an effective system for death registration in countries affected by war;

70. Request the secretariat to establish a regional CRVS knowledge hub that deals with study and research requirements

E 10 Economic Development opportunities from CRVS

African countries and regional and international organisations should;

71. Explore research and innovation opportunities of the CRVS be explored for an African narrative on development

72. Investigate the economic and investment opportunities that CRVS systems offer under the NEPAD Infrastructure programme in order to accelerate Africa's economic development.

73. Also explore the immense possibilities that CRVS systems offer in the realization of political, economic, social and cultural integration.

E. Closing of the meeting

74. South Africa as the host country and chair of the meeting thanked all the vice chairs, Cote d'Ivoire, Kenya and Egypt for chairing the sessions. He also thanked all the delegates for their active participation during the deliberations of the meeting. Specifically, he pointed out that Africa can stand-up and solves its own problems. He also mentioned that these recommendations show that the experts are taking advantage of the political will shown by their respective countries.

75. He finally stated that the recommendations which will be presented to the ministers are concrete in achieving the goals and objectives set in the regional programme. He thanked all the delegates again and declared the meeting duly closed.

More than simply an admin tool

Death registration provides government with important socio-economic data.
Thabo Mokgola reports

A technical team of experts on Tuesday called for death registration processes to be beefed up so that countries adopt a systematic approach to dealing with the matter in a holistic manner.

Presenting deliberations based on the subject: *Registering death, assigning and certifying cause of death and compiling death statistics under APAI-CRVS*, experts called on the development of workstreams and work processes dealing with birth, death, marriage and divorce.

They called for a new approach in the form of regional initiatives. Prior to the Africa Programme on Accelerated Improvement of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (APAI-CRVS), the group noted the lack of regional policy, directives as well as focal points whereas studies and research programmes within the continent were primarily spearheaded by international institutions.

“Death registration is more than an administrative and statistical operation ... Therefore there is a need for a regional CRVS knowledge hub as well as the alignment by financial and technical development partners of their study and research intervention to that

hub,” they said.

Furthermore, they called on relevant United Nations agencies to provide necessary technical support to the hub.

They experts noted that death registration is a complex issue in the continent particularly where deaths occurred outside health institutions.

“Even in deaths occurring within these health institutions, it is not very clear whether medical doctors are well-prepared to use international classification of diseases to determine causes of death,” they observed.

In their Inception Paper, the experts explained that the APAI-CRVS provides a policy and implementation framework for CRVS systems in the region.

“Considering the different levels of development of CRVS systems in the continent, APAI-CRVS proposes a phase-based implementation approach, which is expected to be applied across all workstreams of CRVS as a part of its reform process,” they said.

In relation to governments’ need for establishing death registration, it was noted that this is necessitated by interest in systematically managing economic and social transactions between citizens and state machineries through written and legally accredited



Recording the correct cause of death on death certificates allows authorities to respond to the needs of the population.

Photograph Mbongiseni Mdebele

documentations.

“The socio-economic information obtained from death registration is required at various administrative levels for formulating, monitoring and evaluating policies, programmes and plans in the different sectors,” the paper stipulates.

Interestingly, it is the UN definition as “the permanent disappearance of all evidence of life at any time after live birth has taken place”, that has come under scrutiny.

“The approach followed at the international level in defining death and the other vital elements fell short of addressing legal, administrative and statistical purposes in a holistic manner,” states the paper.

It proposes the following definition for

death registration: “Death registration is defined as the legal and administrative recording of an event of death of a person so as to acknowledge his/her death irrespective of his/her age, sex and citizenship/nationality, in a defined territory through a defined legal, administrative and statistical processes and procedure.

“In the definition, the legal, administrative and statistics processes and procedures are included to underscore the rationale for a country to acknowledge a person’s death from legal, administrative and statistics perspectives,” the group explains.

It is these interventions with which these experts hope to assist ministers in their deliberations with a view to emerging with a common policy position on the death registration matter.

Making use of social media

In her address to the media on Wednesday, Home Affairs Minister, Dr Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma highlighted the need to sensitise African communities about the importance of civil registration systems. Social media platforms have emerged as one the preferred modes of information sharing by organisations and individuals alike. **Sivuyile Mangxamba** spoke to Knowledge Network Facilitator at UNECA, Hermella Ayalew about plans to utilise this channel to create awareness on the importance of CRVS

Civil registration institutions prefer face to face communication platforms such as roadshows, what are you looking to achieve from this channel of communication?

Face-to-face interactions at conferences like this one are important to solving problems but continuing the discussions beyond the conference and sharing our knowledge among ourselves even after the conference is crucial to ensure the recommendations are best positioned for implementation. UNECA facilitates the coordination and management of knowledge exchange on CRVS. A community of practice and a knowledge sharing platform (<http://crvs.africa-devnet.org>) has been established to foster an ongoing dynamic online interaction between conference participants and civil registration experts to continue sharing knowledge and best practices during and after the conference.

How viable is this channel for tackling civil registration?

Through this platform, experts and ministers responsible for CRVS will continue to generate knowledge in collaboration; follow up on implementation of recommendations as well as share lessons learned; conference materials; and best practices of member states on civil registration and vital statistics during and after the conference. It is available online at all times with a very reliable repository of CRVS related materials and resources generated by African member states.

How different is this new form of communication channel from traditional ways of lobbying?

This knowledge-sharing channel is already established, it can be accessed at <http://crvs.africa-devnet.org>. It provides a mechanism to provide experts and ministers responsible for civil registration in Africa the appropriate knowledge and most importantly country specific best practices of civil registration. Member states no longer have to wait two years for this conference to share among themselves best practices on CRVS and learn from each other. They can now raise key issues and engage in discussions well in advance. In this process member states can collaborate for practical implementation actions in their respective countries. At the national level we hope these actions will influence policy making around effective registration of citizens.



Hermella Ayalew

Africa must address mother and child mortality

While Africans make up only 10% of the global population, more than 50% of mothers and children who die are from this continent, reports **Mathando Sharon Lukoto**.

This was according to Prof. Miriam Were from Kenya, who was speaking at the 2nd Ministerial Civil Registration and vital statistics conference.

Quoting from a United Nations review on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), Prof. Were said 75 countries in the world were still experiencing serious problems with regard to MDG four and five, which are about reducing child births and maternal deaths.

It was especially worrying that 47 of the 75 countries in the report were from Africa.

The United Nations conducted a review on all the eight MDGs in order to help the countries that were lagging behind in implementing these goals.

“We cannot have strong families when the mothers and children are dying”

In May 2010 the United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon established a commission to recommend ways of helping these countries.

Vital statistics, health indicators and innovation on the use of ICT in health information systems were identified as one of the UN recommendations.

Prof Were said the Ministry of Health and civil registration authorities, as well as vital statistics can all help in bringing about the change that is needed, because through CRVS a country can know the causes of death. She said that it is an important task to make sure we change the high rate of death among women and children.

She said: “In Africa we like to have strong families, we cannot have strong families when the mothers and children are dying. Both men and women of Africa are called upon to address this problem.”

