

CIVIL REGISTRATION AND VITAL STATISTICS (CRVS) SYSTEMS AS A FOUNDATION FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

An effective **civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS)** system acknowledges the existence of an individual before the law, establishes their family ties and tracks major events that occur in their life from birth to death. Therefore, CRVS systems provide the foundation for the realisation of numerous rights and privileges that an individual is entitled to throughout their life. The vital statistics derived from these systems help governments to plan and deliver services that support these rights.

The right to recognition as a person before the law was first acknowledged in Article 6 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), and the right of a child to be registered immediately after birth was specifically recognised in Article 24 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966). The declaration and covenant are further reinforced by the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (1990), which has been ratified by all Pacific Island Countries and Territories (PICTs).

Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1990

Article 7

1. *The child shall be registered immediately after birth and shall have the same right from birth to a name, the right to acquire a nationality and, as far as possible, the right to know and be cared for by his or her parents.*

2. *States Parties shall ensure the implementation of these rights in accordance with their national law and their obligations under the relevant international instruments in this field, in particular where the child would otherwise be stateless.*

The importance of civil registration for human rights has been recognised in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with specific targets under Goals 16 and 17.

The right to birth registration is closely linked to the realisation of many other rights, and has profound consequences with regard to protection, nationality, access to social and health services, and education. A report from the Human Rights Council that was presented at the United Nation (UN) General Assembly in 2014 noted that exclusion from civil registration was directly linked to:

- exclusion of the poor from access to opportunities and activities
- exclusion of marginalized groups from access to services and entitlements
- increased vulnerability to exploitation, trafficking, statelessness, wrongful conviction

An effective CRVS system is an important foundation to ensuring the protection of children and rights of all human beings. States are encouraged to take all necessary measures to develop a universal, well managed registration system that is accessible to all and free of charge.



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How does civil registration (CR) support human rights?

<p>Access to education</p>  <p>The Committee on the Rights of the Child has, on numerous occasions, expressed concern at cases where children without a birth certificate are refused schooling. Furthermore, in some countries, while children are permitted to attend primary school without evidence of birth registration, a certificate is required to be able to take the final school examinations and thus to receive relevant academic qualifications or to progress to secondary school.</p>	<p>Right to vote and be elected</p>  <p>A legal identity provides the basis to allow individuals to participate in electing their government and standing for election as outlined in Article 25 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966).</p>	<p>Access to services</p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> A birth certificate is often <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> needed to obtain a passport, a <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> marriage certificate or driver's license, to open a bank account, and to apply for and secure formal employment. A certificate may also be necessary in order to access government services such as healthcare, social benefits and pensions.
<p>Right to nationality</p>  <p>CR provides proof of whether a person has acquired nationality by birth or descent, given that a birth certificate indicates place of birth and parentage. Persons without birth registration are significantly more vulnerable to statelessness.</p>	<p>Protection from harm</p>  <p>Formal birth registration reduces the danger of abduction, sale of or trafficking of children, child marriage, or other types of treatment that are incompatible with the rights mentioned in the CRC. Death registration also provides a level of accountability by formally documenting the manner of death within communities.</p>	<p>Right to marry, and protection from child marriage</p>  <p>CR provides evidence of age for marriage, and can also contribute to the elimination and prevention of the practice of child marriage. This is an important element of the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), which has been widely ratified in PICTs.</p>
<p>Right to health</p>		<p>Prevention of child labour and other specific protections for children</p>
 <p>CRVS supports good planning and access to health services, and is therefore central to addressing the universal right to health. Children have a fundamental right to survival and well-being. In addition to the UN conventions, this is enshrined in the principles of the Healthy Islands Framework. It may be harder for health care workers to reach children whose births are not registered. These children can also be overlooked in public health planning. In some countries, they may not have access to immunisation or other health care programmes. This disadvantage may continue across all ages.</p>	 <p>While setting legislation on the minimum age for employment is important, it will have little effect if the means to prove the age of the child are not available. In a similar manner, establishing age is important to ensure appropriate protection of minors in situations such as criminal proceedings, refugee settings, etc.</p>	
<p>Vital statistics for planning and good governance</p>		<p>Ability to inherit property</p>
 <p>Analysis of CR data can provide regular and timely information on populations, which is essential for planning and monitoring. This enables planning by governments to fulfil human rights, identify gaps in rights fulfilment, and to target support programmes towards the most vulnerable and marginalised people. The impact of a reliable CRVS system goes beyond the individual – it is of vital importance for the state, and has a profound effect on governance at the national and international levels, which improves services and ensures accountability.</p>	 <p>Formal birth and death registration procedures are important for securing inheritance and property rights, particularly for women and within families.</p>	



Where can I get more information?

Check out the other fact sheets at: www.pacific-crvs.org and www.getinthepicture.org or contact the **Statistics for Development Division** at SPC at crvs@spc.int.