

Out of Sight, Out of Reach: Breaking the Cycle of Invisibility

CRVS and Community Engagement

Legal Identity, CRVS, and Basic Services Policy Brief Series



Civil registration and the provision of legal identity are fundamental services that all humans have the right to expect from their governments. Functional civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) systems¹ also generate population data on fertility, mortality, and cause of death, which are indispensable to good governance and policy-making across sectors. With the fourth largest population in the world, high geographic, cultural, and linguistic diversity, and a decentralizing political system, Indonesia's CRVS systems are fragmentary and uncoordinated. Strengthening the country's CRVS will require

a two-pronged approach that involves not only changes in policy and service delivery but also in community participation. This brief draws on the findings of a study conducted by the Ministry of National Development Planning/BAPPENAS in collaboration with PUSKAPA and *Kolaborasi Masyarakat dan Pelayanan untuk Kesejahteraan* (KOMPAK) between late 2015 and early 2016 to explore approaches for improving national CRVS through investments in community-based engagement. It also recommends ways to maximize community participation in support of CRVS-strengthening efforts.

¹ This brief refers to Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) systems to mean all government mechanisms of recording and/or reporting vital events—including birth, death, marriage, and divorce—and the manners by which those mechanisms relate to certifying vital events; though the research questions focused primarily on birth and death. In Indonesia, there is no single, universal CRVS system, but instead a tangle of mechanisms that intersect or overlap at times, but mostly run in parallel, rarely converging to create a whole.



CRVS in Indonesia

Indonesia currently has no single, consolidated mechanism for collating birth and death statistics across sectors, and mortality estimates are projected from the decennial census. The authority for registering births and deaths lies solely within the Ministry of Home Affairs, but several government bodies are positioned to contribute to registration activities, and many collect, analyze, and use data related to vital events.

Only 56 percent of Indonesian children (under 18 years old) have a birth certificate,¹ and Indonesia is among the countries with the largest number of unregistered children under five.² Death registration is almost non-existent, and data on the causes of death are completely unavailable in many parts of the country.^{3,4} Without comprehensive, timely, and accurate vital statistics, ministries have reported being unable to accurately plan, target, or monitor their services.^{5,6}

Although one or two government bodies are typically responsible for managing a country's CRVS, a weak system can have a domino effect across sectors. Following the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), for example, the World Bank argued that legal identity coverage for all will “fundamentally support the achievement of at least 10 other SDGs,” including strengthening social protections, improving access of the poor to economic resources, ending preventable deaths of newborns, empowering women, and protecting children.⁷ A recent global study found that, even after controlling for factors like income and health systems strength, countries with well-functioning CRVS systems tend to have better health outcomes, including greater healthy life expectancy and lower rates of maternal and child mortality.⁸ Studies in Indonesia have found ownership of legal identities to be associated with the continuation of schooling⁹ and increased use of health services.¹⁰

Recognizing these linkages, the Government has set out to strengthen mechanisms related to CRVS. This figures directly in President Widodo's Medium Term Development Plan, which sets out to improve access to quality basic services, including health, education, social protection, infrastructure, and civil registration as a means of reducing poverty across the country. As part of this plan, the President aims to cover 85 percent of children with birth certificates by 2019. Several regulations have been issued in recent years to simplify birth registration procedures, facilitate outreach to outlying communities, and promote collaborative efforts among ministries for improving death registration. The Ministry of Home Affairs has also made promising investments in modernizing the country's population registry through the Population Administration Information System (SIAK), which is now in its fifth version. Yet these initiatives are often uncoordinated, and in the context of decentralization, standardized implementation across the country's remote areas remains elusive. To date, no national plan has been made public detailing the government's strategy for integrating birth, death, and cause-of-death registration in one comprehensive system with the capability of producing certificates for all vital events while also generating valid, continuous, and timely statistics that can be shared across ministries.

The Ministry of National Development Planning/BAPPENAS is exploring ways in which the various sectors with a stake in CRVS strengthening can be mobilized to work together towards a unified, complete, and reliable system. Aligned with the government's main approach to strengthen the capacities of local government in providing basic services, sub-district and village-level administrations are expected to engage community members actively to identify needs, and develop and execute contextualized programs that tackle the community's pressing issues in accessing basic needs. Village officials and communities are also given greater ownership to inform better planning and utilization of the Village Fund (*Dana Desa*). The newly enacted Village Law No. 6 of 2014 (*Undang-Undang Desa*) and its related Government Regulation No. 43 of 2014, for example, open opportunities for village members to participate in community development through village facilitators (*pendamping desa*), local agencies, such as the Village Community Empowerment Board (*Badan Pemberdayaan Masyarakat Desa*), and specific activities, such as village discussions (*Musyawahar Desa*). In addition, the revision of Local Autonomy Law No. 23 of 2014 (*Pemerintahan Daerah*) revitalizes the sub-district's role in governance and service delivery.

Key Lessons from Other Low- and Middle-Income Countries

From a review of over 500 published reports and studies about CRVS in low- and middle-income countries, we found that awareness-raising activities through community engagement have been conducted in a number of developing countries to increase birth registration.^{12,13} These activities foster communication and information exchange between governments and target populations. They may also encourage necessary changes in attitudes and behaviour, for instance, by promoting uptake of civil registration services. Approaches that engage communities effectively often depend on partnerships with religious figures and other local leaders that are trusted by community members and can navigate social and cultural norms.¹⁴ In Afghanistan, for example, where high proportions of births and deaths occur outside of health facilities, the Ministry of Public Health worked with local mullahs to encourage people to report vital events.

Another approach is to enlist community members as volunteers or to partner with civil society organizations to rapidly expand the workforce for outreach activities. In India, for example, volunteers were sent door-to-door to educate individuals without appropriate civil registration documents about the judicial and administrative benefits of civil registration and to encourage them to register their births and deaths.¹⁵ In Mali, community volunteers (mostly women without a formal education) were trained by community health workers (CHWs) to collect routine under-five mortality data in their communities as part of a Rapid Mortality Monitoring project.¹⁶ Regular supervision from the CHWs and monthly transportation allowances and cellphone credits were key to the program's success. In Ghana, on the other hand, community members who were trained to register births in remote areas were not remunerated and were often left unsupervised. They contributed to massive birth certificate coverage gains; but over time, progress stagnated as many volunteers lost motivation and others began to request unofficial payments from their beneficiaries.^{17,18}

In Indonesia, efforts to strengthen aspects of CRVS have sometimes taken a community engagement approach. In several districts, for example, integrated mobile services campaigns through the “Yandu” model have engaged paralegals from civil society organizations like PEKKA (the Women Heads of Household Organization) to provide guidance to families applying for birth and

marriage certificates.¹⁹ Versions of this model have been used in 17 provinces, and standard operating procedures have been developed to help transfer these successes to other contexts. A smaller-scale model, which involved Family Empowerment Movement (PKK) members identifying civil registration demand and updating the population registry, has also been implemented in Surakarta.²⁰

Research projects have also demonstrated the ability for community members to contribute to monitoring vital events. Notably, the Initiative for Maternal Mortality Programme Assessment trialed a method in Banten province in which neighbourhood leaders (RT) and Posyandu cadres documented and reported all maternal deaths in their communities.²¹ This method proved to be a successful and cost-effective means of estimating maternal deaths in two districts.

Community empowerment through capacity building is an initial step that needs to be taken to ensure a successful community engagement process. Community empowerment can be facilitated by the government, for example by village facilitators (*fasilitator desa*) as outlined in the Village Law. NGOs and CSOs that have strong ties with communities can also interface effectively between the government and community to increase vital-events registration. An NGO in India, for example, was able to establish partnerships and trainings with local government departments related to registering vital events, while also training and supervising community members to conduct awareness-raising and data collection activities.²² The initiative also used locally relevant means of information dissemination, such as engaging the local drummer and placing television advertisements.





Key Findings from the 2016 Formative Research

This study found that civil registration in the three selected sites was far from universal or compulsory.

One in three children had no legal documentation of their birth, and two in five marriages were considered illegitimate by the state. Almost one in five adults could not readily produce an ID or family card with their name on it, and death certificates were almost non-existent. When individuals did own documents, these were often internally inconsistent with one another. More than a third of respondents either had a marriage certificate but were listed as single on their family card, or were listed as married on their family card, but did not own a marriage certificate.

The level of awareness about the value of recording vital events and legal identity ownership is fairly low across research areas, especially with regard to death registration.

Community awareness related to official processes to obtain legal identity documents is also low. Usually community members only apply for birth and death certificates when these documents are required for a specific action, which is rare, especially for death certificates. Families tend to wait for other vital events, such as births or migration, to remove a deceased household member from their family cards, creating a time lag between the death and the closing of an individual's entry in the population database. Approximately 15 percent of

respondents did not know whether it was possible to obtain a birth certificate without a marriage certificate, indicating a lack of awareness about official processes. At the time of data collection, birth certificates could be produced without the parents' marriage certificates, but the birth certificate could only state the mother's name, denying the child's right to a complete identity.ⁱⁱ

In response to this lack of awareness, officials in all three field sites have launched campaigns to sensitize community members to the importance of birth certificates (*sosialisasi*) through sub-district officials, radio announcements, and dissemination of posters.

These efforts tend to publicize the fact that the national application fee for birth certificates has been removed. Disdukcapil Pangkep makes announcements about civil registration on public radio and distributes brochures, while in Pekalongan, PKK cadres have been trained and mobilized to collect data on birth certificate coverage and to disseminate information on the importance of document ownership during data collection. Some district officials in Arongan Lambalek, Aceh, on the other hand, consider this indirect method of dissemination to be ineffective. According to them, it would be more effective to draw on traditional practices and expressions to engage the community. It is important to note that none of the governments in the study areas had launched efforts to increase public awareness about the value of registering deaths.

ⁱⁱ Minister of Home Affairs Regulation No. 9 of 2016 has recently changed this policy, allowing birth certificates to have both parents' names listed as long as they can produce a family card in which they are registered as married. The parents also need to sign statutory declaration letters affirming their marital status and claiming parentage of the child.

All three research areas had an informal system to support community members to obtain legal identity documents.

Community members across the sample received well over half (57 percent of birth certificates) from village officers. It was rare for household members to receive birth certificates directly from the district office, with only 16 percent of birth certificates being acquired this way; most of these were in areas that are closest to the district. But, without support and supervision from the government, they sometimes have to charge high prices to cover their transportation costs.

Across the research areas, villages have started the process of collecting and reporting vital-events data; however, the efforts have not been conducted systematically or continuously. Although the Village Law gives villages planning authority, which requires reliable data systems to develop priorities and targets, village heads and officials do not readily use the data they already have for these purposes.

Disdukcapil in Aceh Barat was the only one in the three districts with a plan to involve the Village Community Empowerment Board (BPMD) to increase legal identity document ownership. Under the Village Law, communities should also be involved in the planning process at the village level through the Multi-Stakeholder Consultation Forum for Development Planning (Musrenbangdes), a platform where community members and village officials can reach agreement on village priorities and funds. At the time of data

collection, however, Musrenbangdes excluded large segments of the community in all study locations. Members of a little less than a third (30 percent) of households surveyed in each sub-district had attended a meeting in the previous year. A similar percentage (28 percent) had never attended the meetings, and a little over a third (35 percent) had never heard of Musrenbangdes.

Recommendations

Engaging communities throughout CRVS strengthening can enhance their ownership over the initiative and increase its sustainability. District, sub-district, and village governments should first coordinate efforts to make communities aware of their right to receive civil registration documents. The value and uses of these documents should be communicated in ways that are accessible and appropriate.

- Registration authorities should share information on registration requirements, processes, and challenges with community members routinely, and should be prepared to answer questions related to registration as part of a minimum service standard. All beneficiaries should have the opportunity to share feedback about the services they receive (or do not receive), and providers should be expected to review and respond to community feedback regularly.



- The principle of evidence-based planning and evaluation needs to be reinforced at every administrative level, and officers with the mandate to plan policies and programs should be trained to recognize quality data, and to utilize these data effectively. This is critical to improving local governance accountability. At the same time, the uses of vital statistics should be communicated with the communities that produce them to improve transparency and buy-in.
- Village governments should promote Musrenbangdes, and similar mechanisms, in their communities actively and take measures to make them more inclusive. Initiatives to engage local officials and community members should be facilitated through BPMD and the continuous engagement of village facilitators. Effective surveillance of vital events depends on the buy-in of communities and their leaders. If conducted properly, planning and budgeting processes at the village level can provide opportunities for village officials to take ownership of registration and data collection and for community members to propose improvements to services.
- Awareness campaigns should be conducted throughout CRVS strengthening programs in order to achieve enduring behaviour change in birth and death registration.



Communities should be consulted on their civil-registration needs and preferences during the planning of CRVS-strengthening programs, and these programs should work within existing administrative and community systems rather than as parallel interventions.

- Cultural practices that complicate registration activities should be recognized and respected. Service providers and policy makers should engage target communities in developing strategies for accommodating better civil registration and vital-events reporting within existing cultural practices.
- Through the implementation of the Village Law, assessments and planning activities that take place in communities must be inclusive and open to all community members and conducted regularly. Community members from all demographics should be invited to participate in these activities.
- Leadership structures and administration divisions should also be incorporated into plans to strengthen CRVS systems. These may include RK, RW, *dasawisma*, and *mukim* (a semi-informal unit between sub-district and village in Aceh), as well as PKK and other informal groups.
- Local CSOs and NGOs that have strong networks within the community should serve as catalysts to strengthen the engagement of governments and communities through advocacy, facilitation of trainings and planning, and support for the implementation of community activities.
- Civil society and volunteer organizations can help to identify and build demand for civil registration, coordinate registration activities, and monitor vital events for increased reporting. If community members volunteer for these activities, they must first receive adequate training.



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Research Sites:

The provinces of Aceh, Central Java, and South Sulawesi were selected purposively by a steering committee comprised of the Ministry of National Development Planning/BAPPENAS and KOMPAK to allow for variation in governance, local laws and regulations, legal identity coverage, cultural practices, and other contextual factors. One sub-district was selected in each province based on buy-in from local leaders, low scores on the Ministry of National Development Planning/BAPPENAS's composite poverty index, and geographic variation (Kecamatan Arongan Lambalek in Kabupaten Aceh Barat, Kecamatan Petungkriyono in Kabupaten Pekalongan, and Kecamatan Liukang Tupabbiring Utara in Kabupaten Pangkajene dan Kepulauan). At sub-districts level, villages and households were systematically randomized.

Methodology:

Three-part systematic desk review, key informant interviews, focus group discussions, a cross-sectional, multi-stage cluster survey at the sub-district level, and national consultations to validate findings.

Sample Size:

Data of 5,552 household members, in which 2,361 were children, were collected from a sample of 1,222 respondents.

This series of policy briefs “Out of Sight, Out of Reach - Breaking the Cycle of Invisibility” is part of a study to institutionalize civil registration and vital statistics in basic services. The main report from this study can be accessed from the KOMPAK and PUSKAPA websites.

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