

CRVS DAY, AUGUST 10, 2018

“Promoting Innovative Universal Civil Registration and Vital Statistics System for Good Governance and Better Lives”

Commemoration of the First Africa Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) Day

The first Conference of African Ministers responsible for Civil Registration held in 2010, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, marked the beginning of a coordinated and an integrated effort towards CRVS improvement in Africa. Since then, successive Conferences of Ministers have been held every two years, signifying the high-level political commitment by African countries. The fourth Conference of Ministers declared August 10 to be African Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Day, and advised African Union member States to observe the day. The AU Executive Council, during their 32nd Ordinary Session, 25-26 January 2018, endorsed the recommendations set out in the Ministerial Declaration. The First CRVS Day will therefore be commemorated in 2018 under the theme, *“Promoting Innovative Universal Civil Registration and Vital Statistics System for Good Governance and Better Lives”*

Why CRVS Day?

Most countries in Africa had a civil registration system for decades, yet the system was not well-functioning due to the fact that it was not compulsory, universal and complete. The use of modern Information Technology (IT) for CRVS system is minimal or non-existent, and where it exists, it is not interoperable with various government functions, such as national statistics, health care, identification management and electoral services. Awareness about the multi-sectoral importance of CRVS system for legal, administrative and statistical purposes is not adequate among the policy makers, service providers and the public at large.

African CRVS day will be celebrated every year on the 10th of August to increase public awareness of the importance of making everyone visible in Africa through a well-functioning civil registration and vital statistics system covering the entire population and all vital events occurring in a country. It is important to have in place appropriate national legal framework, IT infrastructure and innovative business process improvement to make the CRVS system responsive to public demands by improving accessibility and quality of civil registration and related services.

CRVS for good governance and better lives

Civil registration and vital statistics are essential for modern administrative systems, creating an inclusive society, protecting human rights, ensuring proper delivery of public services and tackling discriminations and inequalities among other related issues.

The civil registry provides individuals with essential legal documents required to secure basic human rights to name, identity, nationality and civil rights and access to basic social services. A birth registration certificate, as a legal document with the proof of age, helps to prevent violations of child rights, including child marriage, child labour and trafficking and the use of child soldiers, particularly in emergencies. Civil registration integrated with national ID management system ensures the financial inclusion of citizens, particularly women and the poor, to have access to microfinance and to use modern banking services for transfers and collec-

tion of payments and inheritance cases. These interventions by national governments are tenets of good governance that lead to inclusive development and better lives of the society.

Reliable, timely and disaggregated vital statistics from a well-functioning CR system are instrumental for monitoring the progress on several targets of the Agenda 2030 and the Agenda 2063 that are related to health, food-security, clean water, education, migration and gender. Vital statistics from civil registration system provide up-to-date and accurate population-based data disaggregated by sex, age and geographic location is essential for identifying vulnerable groups at risk of being ‘left behind’ in the development process. Annual vital statistics on births from CR system are crucial for planning and monitoring programs on child immunization, health care, pre-primary and primary school programs. Vital statistics on deaths produced from the civil registration system provide evidence on major causes of deaths for which health interventions are crafted to improve the health and well-being of the people. On the other hand, marriage and divorce statistics are important for better understanding of the family formation and dissolution patterns in a country, for developing programs on family welfare, and protection of rights of women and children.

Promoting innovative solutions to improve CRVS System

The use of technology to deliver quality, effective and efficient CRVS system is critical for the continent that has the lowest civil registration coverage and poor vital statistics system. Investment in innovative, appropriate and affordable IT support has a great potential for efficient coordination and data interoperability, safe data handling, privacy and data quality verification system. Innovation is critical for ensuring universal registration coverage especially in poor settings and hard-to-reach communities. The introduction of an online civil registration system, mobile registration and linking civil registration to other government services improves governance and the lives of the population.

Promoting universal CRVS System

Most African countries have civil registration laws for systematically registering vital events. However, very few countries have maintained a universal registration system that covers all areas and the entire population of the country, and includes all vital events occurring inside the country and to citizens living abroad.

Universal civil registration system is indispensable for effective implementation of inclusive development driven by the key principles of the African Union Agenda 2063 on “Africa We Want” and the Global Agenda 2030 “Leaving No One Behind”.

Without a continuous supply of reliable data on vital events, including causes of death, from a well-functioning and universal civil registration system, national, regional and global development targets cannot be measured and monitored properly.

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