

# Civil Registration in Asia and the Pacific- Ensuring Rights for Women and Girls



Presented by,

Kristen Wenz, MSW  
UNICEF, EAPRO

© UNICEF/NYHQ2011-2384/Giacomo Pirozzi

This is not an ADB material. The views expressed in this document are the views of the author/s and/or their organizations and do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Asian Development Bank, or its Board of Governors, or the governments they represent. ADB does not guarantee the accuracy and/or completeness of the material's contents, and accepts no responsibility for any direct or indirect consequence of their use or reliance, whether wholly or partially. Please feel free to contact the authors directly should you have queries.

# Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS):

- CRVS systems acknowledge the person's legal existence, tracks major events of an individual's life such as; birth, adoption, marriage, divorce and death
- Is essential for policy development, effective planning and measuring progress in development.
- Civil registration can also be a **means of empowerment** and is strongly linked with **equity and inclusive development**.

# Birth Registration



© UNICEF/NYHQ1993-0407/Roger LeMoyne

**There are about 230,000,000 children globally who do not have their birth registered.....**

# We do not know how many children are not registered in Asia and the Pacific....



Source: Universal Civil Registration and Reliable Vital Statistics Getting the Basics Right for Development, 2013



So what's gender  
got to do with it?

# There is no difference in birth registration rates as a result of a child's sex.

- However, being **socially disadvantaged** does play a role most often unregistered children come from the poorest households, live in remote and rural areas, and have mothers with little formal education.
- The **education level of a mother** has a positive correlation with birth registration rates. For example in **India, only 24% of children whose mothers have no education were registered compared with 67% of children from mothers with a secondary education.**
- According to UN office of Statistics *“Female births may be more severely underreported than male births, in countries where women have a lower status”*

# Birth Registration

- Lack of formal recognition by the State usually means that a child is unable to obtain a birth certificate.
- As a result, he or she may be **denied health care or education**. Later in life, the lack of official identification documents can mean that a child **may be forced to enter into marriage before the legal age**
- **Without documentation** women may be **more vulnerable to human trafficking**.
- In adulthood, birth certificates may be required to obtain social assistance or prove the **right to inherit property**, to vote and to obtain a passport.
- Registering children at birth is the first step in safeguarding their rights, and ensuring that any violation of these rights does not go unnoticed.

# Marriage and Divorce Registration

- Informal unions such as co-habitation, or polygynous unions, are not usually recorded in the civil registration system. Women in **informal unions** may be **denied financial commitments**, or even **rights to their children or property** in cases of separation.
- **Illegal unions, such as underage marriage**, can have negative impacts on the lives of women and girls, including **negative reproductive health outcomes** and **reduced educational attainment**. Registering a child at birth helps protect against early marriage by determining if they are of legal age to marry.
- The proportion of divorced or separated women has increased, as men are more likely to remarry than women, leaving women more vulnerable.

# Indonesia- PEKKA Access and Equity study examples

- 1/3 of female head of households interviewed who lived below the poverty line could not access cash transfer schemes or free medical treatment.
- 3/10 of the women surveyed were married under the age of 16 ( legal age of marriage)
- Less than 50% of the women interviewed had a legal marriage
- 90% of the women surveyed who wished to file for divorce, could not access the civil courts due to high-costs and lack of transportation
- Between 56-87% of the women surveyed (varied by district) had at least one child who did not have a birth certificate.

*Note: PEKKA NGO has a network of over 12,000 female heads of households in Indonesia*

# Death and Cause of Death Reporting- Maternal Mortality

- Measuring the MDG 5 target of reducing the maternal mortality ratio remains a challenge.
- In countries where there is a high risk of maternal death, there is also an elevated likelihood of girls dying even before reaching reproductive age.
- **Less than 40% of countries** have a complete civil registration system with good attribution of cause of death, which **is necessary for the accurate measurement of maternal mortality.**
- Although knowledge on the number of women dying and the reasons behind their deaths is improving, in many low-income countries, **maternal deaths go uncounted** and frequently the cause of death is unknown or not recorded correctly, particularly when women die at home.

# Death and Cause of Death Reporting- Maternal Mortality Cont.

- Mothers and children belonging to disadvantaged groups are less likely to receive essential preventive and curative interventions, and as a result show higher morbidity and mortality.
- There were an estimated **287,000 maternal deaths in 2010, one every two minutes.**
- For every maternal death, 20 other women suffer injury, infection, or disability.
- Coverage for proven interventions **remains too low-** representing missed opportunities for reaching women and newborns with essential care.
- The median coverage levels for skilled attendant at birth and postnatal care for mothers are below 60%, a red flag for action given that **most maternal deaths occur during or within 48 hours of childbirth.**

# A Decade for CRVS 2015-2024 in Asia and the Pacific

- Call for a target of ‘universal civil registration and high quality vital statistics’ in the Post 2015 agenda
- The way forward for developing a monitoring and accountability framework -the Regional Action Framework
- Call for high level commitment for the 2014 ministerial meeting on CRVS
- Call for increased funding for CRVS on a regional and national level
- Innovative solutions for scaling up CRVS

# Thank you!

## Sources:

1. Every Child's Right: inequities and trends in birth registration, UNICEF 2013
2. <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/genderstatmanual/Demographic-composition-of-population.ashx>
3. Trends in Maternal Mortality: 1990 to 2013. Estimates by WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA, The World Bank and the United Nations Population Division, 2013
4. Plan International, Universal Birth Registration- A Universal Responsibility, 2005
5. Access to Justice: Empowering female heads of household in Indonesia, PEEKA 2010
6. The Significance of Legal Identity in Situations of Poverty and Social Exclusion: Link between Gender, Ethnicity and Legal Identity, Mia Harbitz and Maria del Carmen Tamargo. IADB