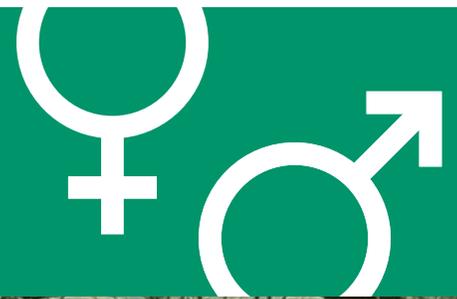




Knowledge Briefs on Gender and CRVS



Introducing Knowledge Brief 2: Strengthening CRVS systems, overcoming barriers, and empowering women and children

Photo: Curt Carnemark / World Bank

The Centre of Excellence for Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) Systems at the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) has set out to inspire global commitment to integrating gender analysis across activities that strengthen CRVS systems. It aims to do this by discussing the status of the field, evaluating opportunities and challenges, and identifying priority areas of research and action to improve vital event registration for women and children. As part of this effort, the Centre of Excellence launched a Knowledge Brief Series on CRVS and Gender – a collection of three briefs throughout 2019 each consisting of four papers. Created in partnership with Open Data Watch, the series synthesizes and disseminates key messages, innovative case studies, and emerging findings across a multitude of CRVS dimensions, including birth, marriage/divorce, and death registration. It also addresses issues such as capacity, innovation, and resource mobilization. We are proud to share the details of Brief 2 below.

Civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) systems are critical for protecting the fundamental rights and freedoms of women and children. In addition to enabling the provision and protection of rights, CRVS systems can equip countries with evidence to design and implement policies that address the unique needs of women, girls, boys, and other underserved and vulnerable groups. These systems can also provide real-time, complete, disaggregated data for measuring

progress towards gender equality and inclusive development. Yet despite the importance of CRVS systems for women and children, many countries lack capacity to record vital events such as births, marriages, and death. Moreover, gendered barriers and inequalities in CRVS systems persist and are often overlooked.

Overlooking gender norms and inequalities in the design and monitoring of CRVS systems results in poor service design and

delivery, which ultimately affects everyone. The Knowledge Brief Series on Gender and CRVS from the Centre of Excellence for CRVS Systems aims to inspire effective action to address the gender-based inequalities that permeate civil registration systems. It also strives to tackle restrictive gender norms and gender inequalities that intersect with other social inequalities—including those related to age, race, ethnicity, religion, and socioeconomic status—undermining health and development.

In February 2019 the Centre of Excellence launched the first knowledge brief on gender and CRVS. The brief covered topics such as

why CRVS systems matter for women, the role of CRVS systems in measuring and monitoring the SDGs, knowledge and research gaps, and the case for financial investments in CRVS systems. Overall the briefs aim to showcase the link between strong CRVS systems and increased rights for women and children; share information on links between CRVS and gender-related SDGs and why this matters for gender equality and the broader SDG agenda; discuss barriers, challenges, and potential solutions for building gender-sensitive CRVS systems; and increase knowledge and awareness about the gender dimensions of CRVS systems and promote calls-to-action.

INTRODUCING KNOWLEDGE BRIEF 2

The first knowledge brief in the series, *Why CRVS Systems Matter for Women and Girls*, highlighted the importance of addressing gender dimensions within CRVS systems. The papers in the subsequent briefs dive deeper into issues of action and implementation. Knowledge Brief 2 includes the following papers:

The Life-Course Approach to Civil Registration and Vital Statistics: A crucial tool to advance gender equality and women's empowerment

Inclusive CRVS systems are a crucial tool in advancing gender equality and empowering women and girls. Yet, women face structural, legal, and sociocultural barriers in securing their legal identity and those of their next of kin. This is despite how women bear substantial responsibility in registering vital events in many societies. In this paper, through three case studies in China, Syria, and Morocco, the authors highlight the need for a life-course approach – from birth to death, including marriage and divorce – to assessing and improving the inclusiveness of civil registration systems. They selected these case studies to highlight the complex interplay of law, policy, individual-family-community dynamics, and population data systems in three diverse settings and across the life-course. Each of

these case studies show how population perspectives and demographic evidence are critical to assessing and improving the gender inclusiveness of civil registration and identity management systems. Additionally, examples from the case studies show how localized behavioral responses cause delays in registering female births. These gender disparities can be clustered in geographic areas and local communities. This suggests the need for targeted subnational studies and interventions to address social-gendered barriers to civil registration and legal identity. Improved access to and inclusion in civil registration for women and girls are crucial in both achieving the 2030 development agenda as well as monitoring progress towards it.



Gender consequences of CRVS exclusion



Excluding women and girls from CRVS systems has significant impacts on the visibility and legal rights of women around the world.

Photo: Mounir Al-Arief/World Bank

A life-course approach to **Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS)** systems encompasses birth and death registration and the often-neglected areas of marriage and divorce registration. Examples of the disproportionate impact of non-registration on women and girls exist all over the world.



Sex-selective delays in birth registration in China pose social protection risks for women and girls.



Under-registration of marriage of Syrian refugees can impact registration of future vital events.



Low registration of female deaths misinforms public health interventions to improve women's health.



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Gender Equity in Guinea: How Perceptions, Behaviors, and Social Norms Affect the Civil Registration of Women and Girls in West Africa

Weak CRVS systems and conflicting legal norms can result in discrimination against girls starting at birth. Later, this can impede access to education, official identification, travel, employment, health, or inheritance and prevent them from exercising their civil and political rights. This paper outlines the gaps in Guinea's CRVS systems and the sociocultural barriers that women must overcome to access their civil and political rights. To study existing social norms and identify deterrents to civil registration, focus groups were organized in four Guinean communities, including two rural (Mambia and Friguiagbe) and two urban (Kindia and Dixinn). In-depth interviews were

also conducted with various stakeholders. The data collected were based on responses from the focus groups and interviews, rather than gathered from a CRVS database. These responses serve as the basis for this paper and provide unique insights into the social norms and dimensions that affect civil registration of women and girls such as naming practices, religious ceremonies, and positions of power within the family. The paper recommends that the next step in promoting birth, marriage, and death registration is to empower women, explain their role, and offer the tools they need to take action and be key drivers for change.

Gender barriers to CRVS in Guinea



Social norms and insufficient systems create gender barriers that impede access to civil registration of women and girls in Guinea.

Photo: Dominic Chavez/World Bank

Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) systems are crucial to identify and address gender inequalities in accessing services and exercising civil rights, but many barriers exist in Guinea.

SOCIAL NORMS

- Religious records take precedent
- Patriarchal resistance to registration
- Low empowerment of women

INSUFFICIENT SYSTEMS

- Limited geographic access
- Complex and expensive processes
- Lack of incentives to register



Photo: Dominic Chavez/World Bank



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Linking National ID and CRVS Systems: An Imperative for Inclusive Development

Legal identification is a critical factor for gender equality and the empowerment of women. In low-income countries, poor women are less likely to have ID documents, which deprives them of the ability to claim their political, social, and economic rights. Linking national ID registers with data from CRVS systems can help create a universal, inclusive ID system. This paper highlights some of the main challenges in linking these systems. Although recent and ongoing global and regional initiatives are yielding improvements to both systems, there is still much to do. To develop robust national ID systems that are based on modern, complete, and efficient CRVS systems, governments and key stakeholders must showcase the

benefits of establishing organic links between these systems and the importance of doing so for inclusive development and gender equality. Practical research based on case studies must be provided on the gender implications of building and implementing an inclusive, integrated national ID system. More operational guidance is also urgently needed for implementing an integrated national ID system. The paper concludes with a call to develop a set of appropriate indicators for monitoring an integrated national ID system, develop guidelines on producing statistics from integrated national ID systems, and encourage countries to make the necessary legal provisions.

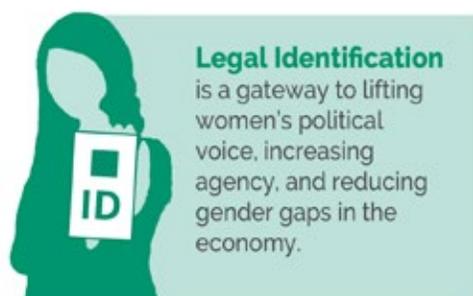
Linking ID and CRVS systems for women



An ID system, when linked to the CRVS system, unlocks and improves access to basic services, from which women and the poor face greater exclusion.

Photo: Dominic Chavez/World Bank

A **Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS)** system includes data on birth, death, marriage, and divorce events of individuals. A well-functioning CRVS system can make a national ID system more inclusive.



Legal Identification

is a gateway to lifting women's political voice, increasing agency, and reducing gender gaps in the economy.

Updating mechanisms of a National Identity System (NIS)



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Empowering Women and Girls through Civil Registration Systems

Women and children, particularly girls, face a vicious cycle of exclusion from civil registration. Although many sectors and institutions are involved in strengthening CRVS systems, the authors focus on the gendered nature of interactions between CRVS systems and the health sector. Particular attention is paid to gender disparities in registration of death and cause of death, an aspect of CRVS that remains poorly understood and researched. Even when a woman's death is registered, the cause of death may not be determined according to international standards. Only 23% of deaths reported to WHO

have precise and meaningful information on their cause (**World Health Organization 2017**). Moreover, deaths of men are more likely to have reliable information on cause of death than deaths of women (**World Health Organization 2017**). In this paper, the authors describe the barriers women face and suggest ways in which they can be overcome. For example, uncovering the dimensions and location of gender differentials in birth and death registration requires greater attention to disaggregating all civil registration data by sex and other relevant dimensions at the global, regional, and country levels.

Making CRVS systems work for women



Barriers to registration are particularly problematic for women who lack access to resources and have limited autonomy.

Photo: John Isaac/World Bank

A **Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS)** system provides legal documentation of identity, civil status, and family relations. Solutions are needed to overcome gender-based barriers to registration.

- Delegate responsibilities to the local level, close to where women live and work.
- Draw on the health services that women and girls use to facilitate civil registration.
- Make registration and the issuance of certificates free of charge.
- Remove legal, regulatory and customary barriers that inhibit civil registration for women and girls.



Photo: Simone D. McCourbe/World Bank



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FROM PAPER TO PRACTICE: MOVING THE CRVS AGENDA FORWARD

Improving CRVS systems for women and girls will take more than just documenting the benefits and publishing research or policy papers. It will require sustained investment, commitment, and alignment of stakeholder agendas, as well as broader institutional and systemic change. The Centre of Excellence hopes that these papers serve to drive the conversation forward and raise awareness of the importance of strengthening CRVS systems with a gender lens, as well as contributing to advocacy for increased national budgetary allocation for CRVS Systems, allowing improved coverage and improved protection and realization of rights for vulnerable and underserved populations, the vast majority of whom are women and children. This

brief aims to build on ongoing efforts and initiatives to strengthen and ensure gender-responsiveness in global CRVS systems. It builds on the outcomes of several CRVS and gender convenings, including **Making the Invisible Visible: CRVS as a Basis to Meeting the 2030 Gender Agenda** (Ottawa, February 2018); **Civil Registration as a Tool for Women's Empowerment** (Dubai, UN World Data Forum, October 2018); and **From Cradle to Grave: How Civil Registration and Gender Data Impact the Rights of Women and Girls** (Vancouver, Canada, June 2019).

The third and final brief of the series will be published in Fall 2019.

About the Centre of Excellence for Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems

Housed at the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), the Centre of Excellence is a global resource hub that actively supports national efforts to develop, strengthen, and scale up sustainable civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) systems that work for all. Funded by Global Affairs Canada and IDRC, its role is to facilitate access to technical assistance, global standards and tools, evidence, and good practice, with a strong commitment to gender equality. Learn more at: www.CRVSystems.ca.

About Open Data Watch

Open Data Watch is an international non-profit organization of data experts working to bring change to organizations that produce and manage official statistical data. Open Data Watch supports the efforts of national statistical offices (NSOs), particularly those in low- and middle-income countries, to improve their data systems and harness the advancements of the data revolution. Through policy advice, data support, and monitoring work, Open Data Watch influences and supports NSOs and other organizations to meet the goals of their national plans and the sustainable development goals (SDGs). Learn more at: www.opendatawatch.com.