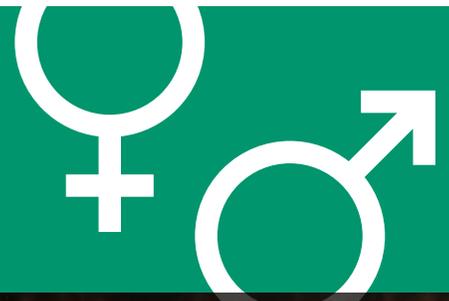




Knowledge Briefs on **Gender** and **CRVS**



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

Brief 2, Paper 3

Photo: Dominic Chavez / World Bank

KEY MESSAGES

- **More than 1 billion people do not have any proof of identity (ID).** Many countries use paper-based, decentralized systems that are often incomplete.
- **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 civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) systems can help create a universal, inclusive ID system.** Most countries have established a CRVS system, which registers vital events occurring in its territory on a continuous and permanent basis.
- **A robust and complete national ID system can be built and sustained only with a modern, efficient CRVS system.** The national ID system must be supported by appropriate legal and institutional frameworks.
- **National ID systems should provide coverage rates disaggregated by gender to help understand the gender differentials in identity registration.** This will provide insights into the use of the national ID system by women compared to men.

INTRODUCTION

More than 1 billion people worldwide do not have an official proof of identity (ID), which means they cannot prove who they are. This creates serious barriers in accessing health, education, and other social services. Providing officially recognizable ID to every resident is fundamental to achieving a number of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and targets. If these goals and targets are to be achieved by 2030, countries need to redouble their efforts to meet the SDG target 16.9 on "legal identity for all, including birth registration."

The importance of legal identity

Although, there is no universally acceptable and applied definition, it is widely recognized that legal identity ([González López et al. 2013](#)):

- is inherently valuable as a human rights instrument;
- helps every person prove her or his legal existence before the law; and
- unlocks access to basic services.

Following the principle of human rights and the right to basic services, legal identity should be provided to all of a country's residents regardless of citizenship status. Several countries provide separate ID documents to distinguish between citizens and non-citizens. Countries must boost their efforts to establish and maintain systems that provide ID to all residents within the context of their respective legal, official, and administrative requirements.

In 2018, 177 out of 198 countries had established some form of identification system ([World Bank Group 2018](#)). These systems provide ID credentials, such as birth certificates and ID cards, and assign unique numbers that residents or citizens can use to access social and financial services.

In countries with no established form of ID system or where systems provide insufficient coverage, documents such as voter cards, passports, and tax identification cards are widely used as alternative ID credentials. For example:

- In Guinea and the Democratic Republic of Congo, which have no nationally established ID system and incomplete CRVS systems, citizens use paper-based voter identification cards as ID documents.
- In Ethiopia, ID cards are issued by local administrative offices (kebele) based on the family registers they maintain. These cards, issued to people 18 and older, include information on residence in a particular kebele and are widely used to prove identity and access basic services across the country.

This type of ID system excludes non-citizens and only covers people over a certain age. Many countries use paper-based, decentralized systems that are often incomplete, which could result in people possessing more than one ID document.

The impact of legal identity on gender equality

A number of countries focus their ID registration on men and people of a specific income, excluding women and the poor. Although the global gender gap in identity coverage is less than 2% (on average) between men and women in low-income countries, the gender gap among unregistered populations is much larger ([World Bank Group 2018](#)). In addition:

- Close to 40% of the eligible population in low-income countries has no ID document.
- 45% of women surveyed in low-income countries do not have an ID document, compared to 30% of men.

- 45% of the poorest 20% lack a proof of identity in these countries, compared to 28% of the richest 20%.

In low-income countries, poor women are less likely to have ID documents, which deprives them of their political, social, and economic rights.

Identification is a critical factor for gender equality and the empowerment of women across multiple policy areas. Having a legal ID helps women access social and economic opportunities, broadens their scope of political participation, affects their decision-making power within the household, and raises their self-esteem.

Linking with CRVS systems can greatly contribute to creating a universal and inclusive ID system. This makes it easier to reach marginalized populations that often do not have ID. Lack of ID can affect women of different ages and social groups in different ways. For example, an older woman with no ID who lives alone could face significant economic hardship without family support. A woman with no ID may not be allowed to open a bank account, depriving her of the child support money she is entitled to receive as a mother.

LINKING ID SYSTEMS TO CRVS

Ideally, a person's identity should begin at birth and end with death. However, the mandatory age to issue national ID is 16 to 18 years in 51 out of 76 low- and middle-income countries. ([World Bank 2018](#)). In the majority of these countries, ID registration begins much later than birth. This not only affects delivery of child-related services, but also increases the risk of identity theft and fraud, particularly in countries with high child mortality and those with vulnerable borders.

Although there is currently no data available on the number of countries that have linked their ID systems to death registration, this is another critical deterrent to identity theft and fraud.

Biographic information is information collected at the time of birth registration that uniquely identifies a child at birth. It includes:

- Name
- Date of birth
- Parents' names, ID numbers, and place of birth

The measure of success for a national ID system is not limited to universal coverage, but also depends on the system's robustness and trustworthiness. This can be achieved by linking national ID systems with CRVS systems, either by integrating the two systems in an organic way, or by creating two functionally distinct but interoperable systems.

Botswana's integrated system

Botswana has successfully integrated its CRVS and national ID systems. Users can simultaneously enter a child's birth in the birth registration record and the national ID register. The number generated from the national ID register is used as a birth registration ID number and is printed on the birth certificate.

Before the age of 16, the birth certificate is used as an ID credential. When children turn 16, they visit the national ID registration centre to provide biometric information and obtain a national ID card. Similarly, a dead person is automatically removed from the national ID register when a death registration has been completed. This is a perfect example of an interoperable system, where the national ID register is automatically updated in real-time.

Creating universal, linked systems

Each country's CRVS system legally provides for the registration of vital events occurring within its territory on a continuous and permanent basis. A CRVS system is therefore universal, as it covers events related to all populations residing in the country. This includes non-citizens, refugees, and other disadvantaged populations. When linked, a CRVS system can greatly contribute to creating a universal and inclusive ID system.

A well-functioning CRVS system also allows for an event to be registered only once. For example, registering a child's information at birth with a birth serial number provides unique, reliable identification. Although this helps ensure security, the approach can be further strengthened by using digitally maintained ID systems to collect children's biometric information once they reach a certain age, such as at adulthood. Death registration information from a CRVS system can also be used to update the ID register when a person dies.

CRVS registers and the documents that are extracted from them, such as birth certificates, have legal sanctity. Therefore, a CRVS system is not only the foundation of an inclusive, robust, and trustworthy national ID system, but is also the first step towards providing people with a legal and secure identity. An individual ID system should be considered a logical extension of a CRVS system, which is the only mechanism that provides registration, identification, and statistical functions for the entire life course ([AbouZahr 2015](#)).

Reducing duplication and multiple identities

Building an ID system as described above can help eliminate multiple functional identities, or credentials issued by different government departments or agencies, for voting, paying

taxes, or accessing social benefits. Further, data on target beneficiaries from a complete and reliable ID register can be shared with select departments or agencies to ensure the efficient and inclusive delivery of social and economic services at different levels of administration.

Finally, a government may choose to update its ID system using a CRVS system, given its continuous and permanent nature and overall cost effectiveness. Once built, a CRVS system is inexpensive to maintain. According to estimates developed by the World Bank for their CRVS Scaling Up Investment Plan, the recurring cost of maintenance was \$0.50 per capita ([World Bank 2014](#)).

Almost all countries have an established CRVS system, although each operates at different levels of maturity. It is therefore difficult for a government to justify building another system to update an ID register when existing CRVS systems already provide the necessary basic information in a continuous, permanent, and inexpensive way.

Conceptual framework for linking national ID and CRVS systems

The linking mechanism between national ID and CRVS systems varies between countries and depends on three main factors ([World Bank 2018](#)):

- **Scope of population coverage**—Some countries cover the entire population (also known as national population registers), while others set a predetermined age threshold (for example, 15 years).
- **Organization**—Some countries maintain and update a single ID register at the national level, while others, like Ethiopia, have a decentralized ID system.

- **Digitization**—77 of the 84 low- and middle-income countries maintain a national ID system, with 68 of them using a digital platform. The mandatory age for national ID for 54 of the 68 digitized systems is 15 years and older.

Various countries have adopted different approaches and business processes to successfully link their CRVS and national ID systems. Figure 1 below offers a visual representation of a national ID system as a water tank with inlet and outlet taps used to update information on births and deaths. In the interest of completeness, national ID systems should also include people migrating in and out of the country.¹

Figure 1: Visual representation of a national ID system with update mechanisms



Source: Author's compilation

Although the diagram depicts two systems that are digitally linked, these flows may be intermittent in countries where the CRVS data is entered offline.

A few countries such as Botswana, Thailand, Kyrgyzstan, and Peru have successfully linked their CRVS registers and national ID registers in an organic way based on interoperable digital platforms. Therefore, the inlet and outlet taps in these countries, as shown in the figure above, are kept permanently open to allow updating of the national ID register in real-time.

In contrast, birth registration is offline and optional in India's Aadhaar system, and there is no mechanism for removing the dead from the database. Therefore, it falls short on 2 out of the 3 tests of robustness – namely security and accuracy. The Aadhaar system is also vulnerable to potential fraudulent use, such as direct cash transfers that are made into the bank accounts of people who have died.

BUILDING AND OPERATING AN INTEGRATED NATIONAL ID SYSTEM

Merely linking an ID system with a CRVS system doesn't guarantee that it will be robust and inclusive in all situations. There are other issues and challenges that need to be recognized and addressed. First, the CRVS system itself has to be complete, accurate, and efficient. Second, the business processes adopted in linking these two systems must be efficiently supported by adequate human resources, digitization and ICT infrastructure, institutional mechanisms, and legal frameworks.

Although an integrated national ID system may seem intuitive, it can be extremely complex to build. Countries seeking to develop this type of system must decide how to take stock of the existing population (filling the tank for the first time), and when to update the register (opening the inlet and outlet taps, as per Figure 1 above).

Although there is no global consensus on these issues, country case studies are more readily available. However, these case studies focus mostly on the status of integrated national ID systems, their completeness, and operating issues and challenges. There is still little information on how these systems were built in the first place.

¹ The discussion on the possible ways to link national ID systems and immigration services, and the related challenges and issues, are beyond the scope of this paper.

BUILDING A NATIONAL ID DATABASE

Countries can use one of two strategies to build their initial national ID register:

- Use existing databases
- Register the eligible population through mass registration

There are pros and cons to each approach, and each has its own complexity.

Extracting data from existing databases

Generally, governments can build their national ID register by using data that already exists in voter ID databases or through a combination of other databases.

The voter ID database holds basic ID data, including biometric information (photograph and fingerprint) for each registered voter. These are also usually required for a national ID register. Bangladesh and Malawi are examples of countries that have used voter ID registers to build their initial national ID register.

There are, however, limitations to using a voter ID database:

- **Lifespan**—Voter ID databases are prepared with the specific purpose of accurately identifying voters during an election. As a result, they have a short lifespan.
- **Representation**—Voter registration is limited to people aged 18 and over (or in some countries, aged 16 and over). If a country decides to use the voter register as a starting point for a national ID register for its entire population, it will have to introduce a one-time registration process to register the remainder of the population (children aged 0 to 17 years) immediately after the election exercise is completed. This information will be combined with data from the existing voter ID register to build the baseline stock of population.
- **Inclusivity**—Voter registration is voluntary and is limited to citizens of a country. Therefore, using a voter ID database to build the initial database will automatically exclude non-citizens. A separate exercise will need to be undertaken to make sure that non-citizens and those left out are included in the integrated national ID database.
- **Eligibility**—Voter registration is allowed only with proof of ID, such as a birth certificate, to prove age and citizenship by birth. This is disadvantageous to women, particularly in countries where the birth registration levels are very low. In Burkina Faso, for example, a woman seeking to obtain a birth certificate needs two witnesses from the village or town where she was born to vouch for her birth in the country. This process involves physical travel and other associated costs. The situation can be even worse in countries that are in conflict, where the movement of people into conflict zones is restricted.



Photo: Simone D. McCourtie / World Bank

Finally, using a voter register to build the initial integrated national ID database can pose practical challenges for countries, given its exclusionary nature and the complex additional undertakings required to create a complete and robust database of the resident population.

Other types of existing databases that countries can use to build their initial national ID register are social service registries, taxpayer registries, or a combination of these.

When social registries are universal, they can act as a launching pad for development of the national ID system. Under a four-year Public Administration Modernization Project, the World Bank is supporting the Government of Djibouti to build and maintain an e-ID system. The initial database is being built through a mass enrolment campaign. They are also leveraging the work and data gathered by the National Social Security Fund and the national social registry of people. By the end of the project, the goal is to enroll half the population in the e-ID system, including women, who are significantly underrepresented.

On the other hand, using a taxpayer database to initialize a national ID register may not be inclusive. This is because taxpayers are predominantly male in low- and middle-income countries, and a significant proportion of women do not have formal employment.

Integrating different databases to produce an unduplicated list of people for a national ID register poses matching challenges, as these databases use different identifiers. In addition, the spelling of names is not uniform across registers.

Building a database through mass registration

Another option is that governments can choose to build their initial national ID register through a one-time enrolment of the resident population. This is usually accomplished through a mass public campaign that encourages people to register at the nearest enrolment centre. There is usually a set timeframe so the exercise can be completed quickly.

Several countries have adopted this approach. For example:

- **Malawi**—Over a six-month period in 2017, 9.2 million Malawians aged 16 years and over were registered in the National Registration and Identification System and received ID cards.
- **India**—The country's Aadhaar system has an open-ended registration system with no closing date. The de-duplication process deployed at the time of registration ensures the uniqueness of data in the database.
- **Philippines**—Philippines is planning to adopt a phased approach to register the population. The registration process will begin by targeting 1 million beneficiaries of the government's Unconditional Cash Transfer (UCT) program. They will be the first ID documentation recipients. After this trial run, a full national ID registration will be rolled out to cover the entire population by 2023.

Despite best efforts, some people may not register for a variety of reasons, including access to registration centres. Countries may have to undertake more than one round of registration to capture people who have been missed.

Regardless of which process is used for the initial registration, there is a significant risk that older citizens may not be registered, as many of them may not have or may not be able to obtain the documents needed for enrolment, such as a birth certificate, marriage certificate, proof of address, or previously issued ID documents. In particular, older women tend to have lower rates of documentation, as they have not needed documents for most of their lives.

The newly enacted law on the Philippines Identity System requires married women who adopt the husband's surname, but present an ID document with their maiden name, to present their marriage certificate as proof. A large number of women may not have registered their marriages, particularly those who are poor, old, or who live in remote areas. Obtaining a certificate for a marriage that was solemnized in the past would be a lot to ask of a woman, and in some cases, may be impossible to obtain.

UPDATING THE NATIONAL ID REGISTER

Once the national ID register has been created, it must be updated through a process of continuous registration to include new entrants and anyone who was missed during the building phase. A few considerations:

- **Real-time registration**—Countries that create their initial ID registers in real-time by deploying a de-duplication process at the time of registration must start updating the register immediately after the cut-off date. For example, Malawi started updating its initial register a day after the cut-off date for its mass registration exercise.
- **Phased-in systems**—Countries adopting a phased approach to creating the initial ID register may need to implement a similar approach when updating the database.

This can pose administrative challenges, particularly when the phases are based on population groups rather than administrative regions.

- **Manual registration**—Countries that are unable to enroll citizens in the initial register in real-time due to poor information technology infrastructure or inadequate registration points must register people manually and follow up with offline data entry. In such cases, they must limit the time between these two exercises to minimize backlog and the possibility of exclusion.

One of the essential features of an integrated national ID system is to use birth and death registration records from the CRVS system. Countries often require that individuals present their birth certificate as proof of basic ID, date of birth, and place of birth to enroll in the national ID register. In most European countries, birth information and records are automatically transferred to update the national ID register in real-time.

Challenges to updating systems

In some cases, registration may be denied to people whose births have not been registered or who are unable to present a birth certificate. Lesotho and Brazil, for example, will only accept a birth certificate for registration in the national ID register. In these situations, people must register their birth and obtain a birth certificate, regardless of their age. This can be an arduous task for women and the elderly, in particular.

Countries with poor or incomplete registration levels may allow people to submit alternative documents if they do not have proof of birth registration. This ensures that individuals are not denied the opportunity to exercise their right to identity when they are unable to obtain a birth certificate.

Retiring identities based on information from death registration records from a CRVS system is an essential step to ensuring the robustness of a national ID system. With the exception of countries where a national ID is organically linked to civil registration and vital statistics at a systems level, national ID registers become inflated, inaccurate, and may even result in fraud.

Countries may depend on families to travel to national ID offices to report a death, which is highly unlikely. In most low- and middle-income countries, levels of death registration are extremely low, and deaths are never flagged for deletion.

Ensuring system success

Currently, the most commonly used indicator to measure the successful implementation of a national ID system is coverage rate. This is defined as the number of residents registered in the national ID register as a percentage of the total resident population of the country.² The coverage rate calculated by countries that do

not have efficient systems to remove residents from national ID registers after their death would invariably have an upward bias. More data is needed to explore the extent of inflated records that have not been retired from the national ID register.

Some countries, such as Rwanda, update their national ID register based on records received directly from civil registration offices, rather than depending on voluntary reporting by families. These records are either transferred through offline electronic media (such as pen drives) or in hard copy, resulting in intermittent updates to the national ID register. In some countries, like Botswana and Sweden, these transfers are automatic and occur in real time.

Figure 2 presents scenarios to demonstrate the method used to integrate national ID systems using country examples. There is very little literature available on how national ID registers are updated using CRVS records. The scenarios are for illustration purposes only.

Figure 2: Scenarios of linkages between CRVS and digitized national ID systems

Country	Digitized national ID register: Population coverage threshold (from birth or later)	CRVS system: Manual or digitized	National ID update method: Digital transfer or manually submit certificate
Botswana, Sweden	Since birth	Digitized	Digital transfer
India	Since birth	Partially digitized	Submit certificate
Malawi (proposed)	Later	Digitized	Submit certificate
Mozambique	Later	Manual	Submit certificate

Source: Author's compilations

² This paper presumes that the national ID register covers all resident populations and is not limited to citizens only.

A COMPLETE AND MODERN CRVS SYSTEM IS FUNDAMENTAL

Even with a perfectly built digital ID register that is updated using CRVS records, countries with paper-based or inefficient digital systems and poor levels of birth and death registration will not be able to successfully build a robust and complete national ID system.

Further, in several countries, updates to the national ID register depend entirely on active reporting by families. This can result in very low reporting rates, particularly death registration. Therefore, the only way to maintain a complete, robust, and trustworthy national ID system is to establish an organic linkage between the CRVS and national ID systems by integrating them or making them interoperable at the individual record level. This is only possible when both CRVS and national ID systems are maintained on digital platforms. In most low- and middle-income countries, CRVS systems are paper-based, whereas national ID systems are electronically maintained using sophisticated technology and high levels of security.

Figure 3 illustrates the uneven pace of modernization of CRVS and national ID systems in most of the African countries used for this study. It is likely to be true for other regions as well.

Figure 3: Use of technology for CRVS and national ID systems in selected African countries

Country	CRVS records	National ID register records
Botswana	Electronic	Electronic
Cameroon	Paper	Electronic
Chad	Paper	Electronic
Cote d'Ivoire	Paper	Electronic
Kenya	Electronic	Electronic
Namibia	Electronic	Electronic
Nigeria	Electronic	Electronic
Madagascar	Paper	Paper
Morocco	Paper	Electronic
Rwanda	Paper	Electronic
Sierra Leone	Paper	Electronic
Tanzania	Paper	Electronic
Zambia	Electronic	Paper

Source: Author's compilations

The need for complete registration of births and deaths

The levels of birth and death registration in several countries are far from complete. In fact, they are highly deficient. In 2017, the percentage of children under age 5 whose births had been registered was as low as 40%. This contrasts with the global average of 70% ([UNICEF 2017](#)). According to the 2018 Global SDG Report, 148 countries or areas worldwide had a 75% or more completion rate on death registration data. In sub-Saharan Africa, this was the case in only nine countries ([United Nations 2018](#)). Further, gender biases in the CRVS system are likely to be reflected in the national ID system, making it less inclusive.



Photo: Sarah Farhat / World Bank

Although there are only few steps involved in completing a registration and issuing a certificate, building a CRVS system is complex. There are several barriers to registration that countries must address and overcome in a more holistic and coordinated way.

Some of the common challenges to maintaining CRVS systems include:

- Lack of political commitment;
- Inappropriate business processes;
- Outdated legal frameworks;
- Lack of coordination and monitoring;
- Inadequate capacity;
- High cost of registration;
- Lack of demand;
- Lack of awareness among people; and
- Resource constraints.

Although this paper does not discuss these challenges detail, it is important to note that improving CRVS systems requires predictable and sustained funding for long- and short-term technical assistance and capacity building programs. This will allow countries to create efficient and complete CRVS systems, which will serve as the true foundation of a robust and comprehensive national ID system.

There is also a need for a more coordinated approach to funding CRVS systems, particularly in African countries. Although massive investments have been made to establish state-of-the-art national ID registers in recent years, there has been no equivalent support for CRVS systems. Countries are claiming success by showcasing their newly built national ID systems and sophisticated credentials. However, these successes will be short-lived unless immediate steps are taken to strengthen their CRVS systems. After all, only a modern and complete CRVS system can sustain a robust and complete national ID system.

Statistics and monitoring

Generating statistics from an integrated national ID system is often overlooked. A national ID register that covers a country's entire resident population can provide continuous data on population and vital statistics, disaggregated by gender, geography, and other criteria. In 2010, 18 countries in Europe had conducted their population census using population registers rather than traditional methods of census-taking ([Valente and Paolo 2010](#)).

Countries that have established mechanisms to update address records of people moving within the country can compile data on internal migration. However, they may require specific legal clauses to use, produce, and publish statistics based on data collected in the national ID register. In implementing rules and regulations of the recently proclaimed *Philippines Identification System Act*, Philippines has made provisions for generating aggregate data or statistical summaries without reference to or identification of any specific individual. This is a good practice worth emulating.

It is important to regularly monitor the performance of an integrated national ID system using data collected by the register itself. For example:

- Gender disaggregated data on coverage rates can help understand the gender differentials in ID registration.
- The percentage of individuals who have obtained ID credentials compared to the number of people who have registered will highlight gaps or inefficiencies.
- Case statistics on authentication services provided by the national ID system can measure its effectiveness.
- A review of data disaggregated by gender will provide insights into women's use of the system compared to men.

Legal and institutional frameworks

Legal and institutional frameworks are key to the efficient functioning of a country's national ID system.

Legal frameworks

Countries need an adequate legal framework to operate and regulate a modern national ID system. Governments must ensure that the process of information sharing respects individual rights and consents regarding the use of personal information.

In most countries, information maintained in CRVS registers is confidential and data sharing may be limited to the provision of government services. Although many countries have

established protocols for sharing information from registration records, not all countries that have built or are planning to build digital ID systems have made adequate legal provisions to deal with the collection and maintenance of electronic records. This exposes them to the risk of legal scrutiny. Any violation of privacy and confidentiality could jeopardize the system's integrity.

Although Botswana has one of the most modern integrated ID systems in Africa, it does not have any laws around the creation and maintenance of electronic records or any legal provisions for sharing data. When linking CRVS and national ID systems, there are a few potential legal scenarios, as outlined in Figure 4 below.

Figure 4: Legal provisions for linking CRVS and national ID systems – country scenarios

Country example ³	Legal structure	Linkage
Bangladesh, India	Separate laws governing CRVS and national ID systems	Birth certificate is required but optional for registration in the national ID register. No provision for retiring identities of the dead from the national ID register.
Philippines	Separate laws governing CRVS and national ID systems	Birth certificate is required but optional for registration in the national ID register. Death certificate is required to retire the ID of the dead from the national ID register.
Brazil, Lesotho	Separate laws governing CRVS and national ID systems	Birth certificate is compulsory for registration in the national ID register.
Ethiopia	Integrated law governing CRVS and national ID systems	Transfer of records from CRVS authorities to national ID authorities. No provision for electronic transfer.
Uganda (from any government database), Kenya (underway)	Integrated law governing CRVS and national ID systems	Auto-update of national ID records based on CRVS records.

Source: Author's compilations

³ The country examples are limited, as legal documents are not easy to find. Sometimes, they are only available in the local language, which limits the scope of research.

The scenarios in the table above represent a range of common practices across countries. An integrated law that provides for automatic updates of the national ID register from CRVS records goes a long way towards ensuring that the national ID system will be complete and robust. Botswana has successfully implemented effective, real-time linkage between its two systems, despite having separate laws with no provisions for linkages between them.

Institutional frameworks

The institutional structures surrounding CRVS and national ID systems and the way they interact can affect the functional efficiency of the linking mechanisms between the two systems. In recent years, there has been an increasing trend to combine the CRVS and ID functions under one agency or within the same ministry. Ethiopia, Kenya, and Uganda are the latest examples of this trend. This reduces and even eliminates the need for coordination, which has proven to be one of the biggest bottlenecks in implementing an integrated ID system.

However, in some countries, the national ID and CRVS offices are housed in different ministries or in different departments within the same ministry. For example, according to the ID4D Global dataset ([World Bank 2018](#)):

- Of the 37 countries where the national ID system is housed in the Ministry of Interior or Home, 29 of those also house the CRVS system. In the other 8 countries, the CRVS system is housed in other ministries, namely the Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Health, and Ministry of Local Administration.
- In Tanzania, the CRVS agency is housed in the Ministry of Justice, while the National Identification Authority is an agency under the Ministry of Interior.

- Kenya's Ministry of Interior and Ethiopia's Ministry of Peace offices are housed in different departments or agencies, but within the same ministry.
- In some countries, the same agency implements both systems. For example, in Botswana, the Department of Civil and National Registration at the Ministry of Labour and Home Affairs is mandated to implement both systems.
- The Philippine Statistics Authority manages both systems and has the additional responsibility of compiling vital statistics based on civil registration data. The actual national ID and CRVS registration takes place in local centres and lower levels of administrations.

In countries where CRVS and national ID systems are housed in different ministries, local registration offices will invariably be separate and often in different areas. This can create significant coordination problems at the national and local levels, particularly when paper-based registration records must be transferred to national ID offices.

Countries that house both systems within the same agency use the same local office to provide both registration services, quite often through different client windows. This facilitates the linkage of records, even with paper-based CRVS systems.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This paper highlights some of the main challenges in linking national ID and CRVS systems. Although recent and ongoing global and regional initiatives are yielding improvements to both systems, there is still much to do. To develop robust and complete national ID systems that are based on modern, complete, and efficient CRVS systems, governments and key stakeholders must:

- **Showcase the benefits**—Craft simple and appropriate messaging that highlights the benefits of establishing organic links between CRVS and national ID systems, as well as the importance of doing so for inclusive development and gender equality. Separate messaging should be crafted for the different types of clients, such as government policymakers, development partners, and the general public.
- **Use case studies**—Promote case study based practical research on the gender implications of building and implementing an inclusive, integrated national ID system.
- **Provide guidance**—Urgently provide more operational guidance for implementing a robust and complete integrated national ID system. This should cover the legal framework, management and operations, and business process for linking CRVS and national ID systems. It should also include provisions for the protection and privacy of data, advocacy, and communication. This guidance can be developed using country-based practices and wider consultations with various stakeholders.

- **Offer expertise, training, and materials**—Provide technical assistance and capacity building support to countries. This can be achieved by building a pool of regional experts to provide long-term technical assistance based on standard tools and operational guidance. This includes developing materials for online and in-person training, as well as train the trainer content. This material could be introduced as part of public administration curricula in academic institutions and in institutions that offer in-service training to civil servants.
- **Establish indicators**—Develop a set of appropriate indicators for monitoring and measuring the quantitative and qualitative aspects an integrated national ID system.
- **Set guidelines for statistics**—Develop guidelines on producing statistics from integrated national ID systems and encourage countries to make the necessary legal provisions.



This paper was authored by Raj Gautam Mitra, an independent consultant on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) Systems. It is part of the Knowledge Brief Series on Gender and CRVS developed by the Centre of Excellence for CRVS Systems, in partnership with Open Data Watch.

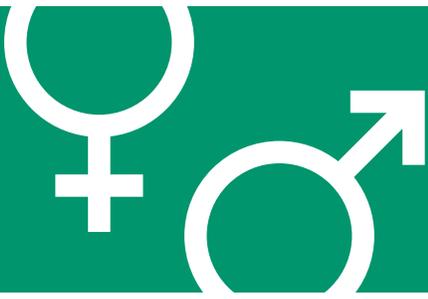
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