

## Summary assessment

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### **Ministerial Conference on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific**

24-28 November 2014

Bangkok, Thailand

#### **I. Introduction**

The Ministerial Conference on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific was held in Bangkok, Thailand, from 24-28 November 2014.

A questionnaire assessing the relevance, effectiveness and quality of the Conference was distributed to each delegation of ESCAP members and associate members. The total number of submitted questionnaires came from 34 of the 43 members and associate members in attendance at the session. The overall response rate is therefore 79% (N=34/43). The present assessment was prepared on the basis of these questionnaire responses.

In line with the secretariat's efforts to move towards paper smart meetings, an online version of the questionnaire was offered alongside the paper version.

The main purpose of this assessment is to support the secretariat's ongoing efforts to improve its servicing of the Conference.

#### **II. Attendance**

The Conference was attended by 412 participants. Of that total, 249 were from the 43 participating ESCAP members and associate members, while 163 participants were from ESCAP and partner organizations. 69% (N=43/62) of all ESCAP members and associate members participated in this Conference.

A majority of delegations were headed by officials from the respective Capital (79%, N=34/43) – eighteen of which (53%) at ministerial level – whereas the remaining 21% (N=9/43) were represented through their embassies in Bangkok.

### III. Methodology

For each statement below, an index between 100 and 0 is given, whereby, at a value of 100 all respondents strongly agree with the statement, and, at a value of 0, all respondents strongly disagree. The formula<sup>1</sup> used is based on the same principles as the United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) Human Development Index<sup>2</sup> (HDI). This allows the calculation of a unit-free index between 0 and 1 from all received responses for each statement, and enables indices to be added together as well as compared among each other.

### IV. Relevance of the Conference

Respondents overwhelmingly felt that the Conference was relevant to the needs of the region. As presented with the aggregate ratings in Table 1, there was high agreement among respondents that the topics of the Conference were relevant to current development trends/issues of the Asian and Pacific region (89), and that the topics reflected the development needs and priorities of their country/territory (87).

**Table 1**

EVALUATED STATEMENT	SCORE (0-100)
The topics of the Conference were relevant to current development trends/issues of the Asian and Pacific region.	89
The topics of the Conference reflected the development needs and priorities of my country/territory.	87

Comments on how to improve the relevance of the Conference to the development needs and priorities of the Asia and Pacific region included (verbatim):

- Since this was the first meeting, the issues covered were, in my view, adequate to start with.
- The conference really helps in a way where we need to improve our CRVS system.
- CRVS it will be a much needed basis for adopting development policy on a country level.
- It helps us to streamline the activities we have already started.
- It will improve our strategic action plan
- More ministerial conferences maybe needed.
- We will prioritize on activities more carefully with the learning of experience.
- It helped us to draw attention of coordination and cooperation between the existing institutions of civil registration, health facilities and central bureau of statistics to

<sup>1</sup> Index = actual value of all aggregated responses - minimum value of all aggregated responses / maximum value of all aggregated responses - minimum value of all aggregated responses

<sup>2</sup> More can be found at [http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/hdr\\_2013\\_en\\_technotes.pdf](http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/hdr_2013_en_technotes.pdf)

make the CRVS system efficient, smart and functional for each and every individual and policy makers. Further, it also helped us to understand the need of working together with development partners and other countries.

- This has been improved through development partners assistance through, technical support, finance etc. It is also a commitment we take in country. We have shown that we can make it.
- Jointly effort has been made to improve, assess and review CRVS to achieve the agreed goals.
- Since my country is in unstable situation it would have been more useful for us if CRVS in conflict situation was also considered. The session on CRVS in emergency did not satisfy our needs and expectations. It would have been better if we had planned a well-focused roundtable on CRVS in war zones or conflict situation within the CRVS in emergency
- By including more discussions and country experiences on use of CRVS for extending social protection and social development programs.
- The conference sessions were selected and paced appropriately. If I were asked for another session, though, I would consider of interest Lessons from other regions, particularly the ones with well-developed CRVS
- Perhaps special consideration of CRVS specific needs and issues of Small Islands States could better address the situation of SISs of the AP region.
- Increased capacity and capability of staff to implement action work plan in line ministries (?). Increasing capacity and capability of staff on ICT related with CRVS services with training or workshop.
- Pacific island member states may be small but their CRVS stories must be accommodated in A/P region stories if all its members should be in the CRVS picture. The Pacific has always been left out of all Asia Pacific stories (and everybody knows this, it's just that no one is talking about it).

## V. Effectiveness of the Conference

Overall, as can be seen from Table 2, respondents found the Conference to have been very effective in facilitating the achievement of an agreement on priorities for improving CRVS in Asia and Pacific (86).

The respondents also found the Conference to be have been effective in strengthening commitment to accelerate and focus the efforts of governments and development partners to achieve universal and responsive CRVS systems in all Asian and Pacific countries by 2014; in promoting dialogue on regional and sub-regional approaches to improving CRVS (83); and in covering sectorial issues related to civil registration and vital statistics (81). The Conference documents were found to be of high quality, concise, and stating the issues clearly (81).

The Conference was also rated positively in its effectiveness to address gender, youth, and vulnerable population issues, but slightly less so (78).

**Table 2**

EVALUATED STATEMENT	SCORE (0-100)
The Conference effectively facilitated the achievement of an agreement on priorities for improving CRVS in Asia and the Pacific.	86
The Conference resulted in strengthened commitment to accelerate and focus the efforts of governments and development partners to achieve universal and responsive CRVS systems in all Asian and Pacific countries by 2024.	83
The Conference effectively promoted dialogue on regional and sub-regional approaches to improving CRVS.	83
The Conference covered effectively sectorial issues related to civil registration and vital statistics, e.g. development planning, health and statistics.	81
The Conference effectively addressed gender, youth, and vulnerable population issues, as they relate to CRVS.	78
The Conference documents were of high quality, concise and they clearly stated the issues.	81

Comments on how to improve the Conference’s effectiveness in achieving an agreement on priorities for CRVS development in Asia and the Pacific and the commitment from governments and development partners included (verbatim):

- Inviting all stakeholders and addressing CRVS system at higher level.
- On-the-ground support for information to our political leaders.
- We achieved what we could in this first meeting.
- It can be momentum to build strong coordination between several ministries in our country.
- By allowing more time for discussion.
- Improvement of working together in each specialist of development partner can be effectiveness and achieving an agreement on priorities for CRVS development in Timor-Leste government and then region of Asia and the Pacific.
- Since after hold this ministerial conference, more leaders know about what CRVS is and realized the useful of CRVS.
- The conference was handled excellently by the secretariat and the session chairs. The country delegations were most open to interventions and agreements.
- Implementation strategies are very well delivered and agreed by the participating countries together with development partners in the same platform. It surely shows the improvement.

- It is a stepping and milestone to wideness this very CRVS Ministerial Conference which will eventually impact on political support and have a way forward to effectively and implementation path.
- The declaration will always be broad. The task at hand is to domesticate it within respective regions. This is where a separation of the Asia Pacific is important, particularly for the purpose of implementing CRVS priorities in respective to different (sub-regional; bilateral) regional contexts. Eg. Pacific islands region needs an implementing, evaluative and monitoring framework that takes account of current status, and connect donor support to respective countries needs/gaps for CRVS realization. In the absence of such, it remains a challenge for respective countries to practically locate themselves in the current CRVS declarations.
- The promotion of CRVS development issues on the agenda of smaller and relevant regional organizations such as the Pacific Islands Forum Leaders' Meetings, Pacific Health and FEMM meetings would strengthen governments and development partners commitments to CRVS issues.
- In culturally sensitive societies, community involvement and contributions are highly important. The conference could have focused on this a bit more. The issue of gender, youth and vulnerable population including minorities were considered in a stable situation and minorities were neglected. In politically tensed and culturally sensitive societies, especially, where government statistics are also not reliable minorities sometimes can confuse CRVS with census and as such as a threat for them.
- At least each and every country has shown their commitment with their current practice to newer plan.
- Through various consultations organized by UNESCAP, Governments have considered improving CRVS as an important step towards citizen rights.

## **VI. Efficiency of the organization of the Conference**

The efficiency of the organization of the Conference was rated very positively, as shown in Table 3. In particular, respondents felt that the secretariat's servicing of the Conference was efficient and effective (89), and that the organization of work prior and in between sessions enabled the Conference to proceed effectively (88). Respondents also indicated that the pre-Conference documents were issued in a timely manner (83), and that the time available for discussion during the Conference was adequate (82).

**Table 3**

EVALUATED STATEMENT	SCORE (0-100)
The pre-Conference documents such as the “draft Regional Action Framework on CRVS in Asia and the Pacific” and the “State of CRVS in Asia and the Pacific and overview of supporting initiatives” were issued in a timely manner.	83
The time available for discussion during the Conference was adequate.	82
The servicing by the secretariat was efficient and effective.	89
The organization of work prior to and in between sessions enabled the Conference to proceed effectively.	88

Comments on how to improve the efficiency of the organization of the Conference included (verbatim):

- Share PP presentation in the conference website in advance.
- Excellent!
- I found the organizational and servicing aspects already very efficient.
- It was a good and nicely organized Conference.
- It would have been better if the document were circulated for comments earlier.
- No good translation in Russian
- No specific comments! Every proceedings of the Conference aptly organized.
- Organization was excellent. Secretariat did a marvelous job.
- So far they are doing very well.
- It could be if all ministry came to the conference. It could be effective if each country organizes a similar internal conference.
- Providing hard copy sources, thumb drive, free wifi, allocating liaison officers for country group.
- The conference, while providing forum to NGOs or civil society, shall make sure that the contents or the way of delivery shall not hurt the image of any country.
- There was a lot of 'down time' due to interpreter availability. The event could have been a day shorter if the long lunch breaks were shortened. Maybe hire a second team of interpreters?
- This is the first time attending and could not comment. However, I congratulate the organization for the support and arrangements.
- Thank you to the hosts of CRVS conference, which ran effectively and efficiently.

## VII. Substantive outcome of the Conference

The substantive outcome of the Conference was also rated positively, as shown in **Table 4**. Overall, the respondents found that the deliberations of the substantive agenda items met the expected outcomes, in particular agenda item 8 on adoption of the Ministerial Declaration to “Get every one in the picture” in Asia and the Pacific, and agenda item 9 on the adoption of the report of the Conference (87).

**Table 4**

EVALUATED STATEMENT	SCORE (0-100)
<p>a. Item 2: Key issues and perspectives for CRVS in Asia and the Pacific <i>Expected outcome: This session provides an introduction to CRVS and sets the tone for the Conference by offering an opportunity for delegates to identify key issues and share perspectives on CRVS.</i></p>	85
<p>b. Item 3: Consideration of the draft ministerial declaration <i>Expected outcome: Government delegations review the text of the draft ministerial declaration paragraph -by- paragraph and then consider endorsing the revised draft for possible adoption by the Conference during the ministerial segment.</i></p>	82
<p>c. Item 4: Implementation of the regional action framework on CRVS in Asia and the Pacific <i>Expected outcome: This session offers an opportunity for delegations to share national and regional perspectives and priorities for the implementation of the regional action framework, including on related governance arrangements.</i></p>	82
<p>d. Item 6: Policy priorities for improving CRVS in Asia and the Pacific <i>Expected outcome: Delegations highlight their policy priorities for the “Asian and Pacific CRVS Decade” of 2015-2024, announces national targets to be achieved by the conclusion of the Decade in 2024 and share challenges and achievements on CRVS. Joint statements by civil society organizations and international organizations, respectively, outline their supporting role and recommendations on the way forward.</i></p>	82
<p>e. Item 8: Adoption of the Ministerial Declaration to “Get every one in the picture” in Asia and the Pacific <i>Expected outcome: The Conference considers for adoption the draft ministerial declaration to “Get every one in the picture” in Asia and the Pacific, including the regional action framework on civil registration and vital statistics in Asia and the Pacific.</i></p>	87
<p>f. Item 9: Adoption of the report of the Conference <i>Expected outcome: The Conference considers the draft report of the Conference for adoption.</i></p>	87

## VIII. Special sessions

The questionnaire provided space for respondents to comment on the relevance of the special sessions of the Conference.

Most of the responded delegations expressed that all special sessions were relevant to their delegations and important to the outcome of the conference. The special sessions which were rated the most relevant (87) were those on “strengthening vital statistics systems: Strategies to improve knowledge about causes of death in Asia and the Pacific” and on “modernizing the role of the health sector in improving CRVS”.

**Table 5**

EVALUATED STATEMENT	SCORE (0-100)
a. Innovations for CRVS (Monday, 13:00-14:00)	82
b. Civil registration in the context of emergencies, displacement and to prevent statelessness (Monday, 14:00-15:00)	73
c. Leave no data behind: CRVS and the data revolution (Tuesday, 13:00-14:00)	82
d. The role of CRVS in preventing child marriage in the Asia-Pacific Region (Tuesday, 15.45 -17:00)	75
e. Youth voices matter: Get us in the picture! (Wednesday, 09:00 -10:30)	72
f. Strengthening vital statistics systems: Strategies to improve knowledge about causes of death in Asia and the Pacific (Wednesday, 13:00-14:00)	87
g. Regional consultation on the Global Financing Facility for every woman and child (Wednesday, 17:00-18:30)	80
h. Ministerial roundtable on CRVS and the post-2015 development agenda (Thursday, 10:30-12:00)	80
i. Modernizing the role of the health sector in improving CRVS (Friday, 10:45-12:00)	87
j. Pacific Vital Statistics Action Plan: Experiences and lessons for the Asia-Pacific region (Friday, 12:00-13:00)	81
k. Moving forward: civil registration and identification systems as smart investments (Friday, 14:00-15:15)	84



## **IX. Conclusion**

Overall, in conclusion, responding delegations felt that the Ministerial Conference on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific was highly successful.

To summarize the main trends highlighted above, the Conference was overwhelmingly seen as relevant to the needs of the region, and very effective in facilitating the achievement of an agreement on priorities for improving CRVS in Asia and Pacific. The substantive outcome of the Conference was also rated positively, particularly the adoptions of the report of the Conference, and the Ministerial Declaration to “Get every one in the picture” in Asia and the Pacific. Among the special sessions, the ones which received the highest relevance ratings were those on “strengthening vital statistics systems: Strategies to improve knowledge about causes of death in Asia and the Pacific” and on “modernizing the role of the health sector in improving CRVS”. The efficiency of the Conference also received very positive ratings, in particular the work prior to and in between sessions, and the servicing of the session by the secretariat.