



CIVIL REGISTRATION AND VITAL STATISTICS (CRVS) LEGAL AND REGULATORY REVIEW

TOOLS AND METHODOLOGY

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This toolkit was developed by Vital Strategies (VS) and the Global Health Advocacy Incubator (GHA) with financial support from Bloomberg Philanthropies and the Centre of Excellence for Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) Systems. Additional technical assistance was provided by Bloomberg Data for Health Initiative (BD4HI) partners — including the University of Melbourne (UoM) Technical Advisory Group and BD4HI Registrar Network — and external partners at the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC), the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD), and the World Bank.

The authors would like to thank the following for their technical contribution and support: Srđan Mrkić (UNSD); Maria-Isabel Cobos (UNSD); Adam Karpati (VS); Ian Riley (UoM); Samuel Mills (World Bank); Karen Carter (SPC); Lynn Sferrazza (GHA); Leslie Zellers (GHA); Elsie Hayford; Daniel Dorado; Sophia San Luis (Imagine Law); and Mary Grace Anne Rosales-Sto Domingo (Imagine Law).

ABOUT THE BLOOMBERG DATA FOR HEALTH INITIATIVE

The World Health Organization estimates that 65% of all deaths worldwide — 35 million each year — go unrecorded, and millions of deaths lack a documented cause. Many records do not provide medically accurate or specific information. Without this information, government officials, public health leaders and funders cannot make informed decisions on priorities, including how and where to direct public health resources.

Funded by Bloomberg Philanthropies and the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the Data for Health Initiative seeks to address this issue and will work to improve public health data so that governments, aid organizations, and public health leaders are equipped with the tools and systems to collect and use data to prioritize health challenges, develop policies, deploy resources, and measure success.

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The Global Health Advocacy Incubator supports civil society organizations in advocating for evidence-based policies to improve public health and decrease death and disease. This mission is accomplished by providing training and technical assistance for existing organizations working on public health policy, identifying new partners where needed, and assisting in the development and implementation of strategic advocacy campaigns to promote the adoption and implementation of public health policies.

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Vital Strategies is a global public health organization working to address the most challenging health issues to improve quality of life for people around the world. An affiliate of the International Union Against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease, Vital Strategies is an implementing partner in the Bloomberg Data for Health Initiative.

THE CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE FOR CIVIL REGISTRATION AND VITAL STATISTICS (CRVS) SYSTEMS

Funded by Global Affairs Canada and the International Development Research Centre, the Centre of Excellence supports efforts to develop, strengthen, and scale-up CRVS systems. It contributes directly to the work of the Global Financing Facility. Opinions expressed herein are those of their authors, and do not necessarily represent the views of the Centre of Excellence or its partners.

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Chapter

Introduction to CRVS Legal Framework Analysis

1. Background and rationale

The United Nations describes civil registration as “the continuous, permanent, compulsory and universal recording of the occurrence and characteristics of vital events pertaining to the population as provided through decree or regulation in accordance with the legal requirements of a country. Civil registration is carried out primarily for the purpose of establishing the legal documents provided by the law. These records are also a main source of vital statistics.”¹ A country’s civil registration system must have complete coverage, accuracy, and timeliness to generate quality vital statistics for informed public policy and planning purposes. The United Nations further defines the responsibilities of a civil registration system as “all institutional, legal, technical settings needed to perform the civil registration functions in a technical, sound, coordinated, and standardized manner throughout the country, taking into account cultural and social circumstances particular to the country.”²

Currently, few low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) achieve adequate levels of coverage, completeness, or quality of vital statistics. Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) responsibilities can be scattered across a range of ministries and agencies that may not coordinate sufficiently or understand the role of other stakeholders in the systems. Among the potential contributing factors to this situation are sub-optimal laws, regulations, standard operating procedures, or other rules that govern the multiple practices that comprise a functioning CRVS system.

A strong legal framework is the foundation from which a well-functioning CRVS system is built, and is a necessary step toward achieving universal, permanent, and continuous coverage. Undertaking a CRVS legal review to ensure compliance with international best practices is a means to catalyze improved efficiency, security and demand for CRVS services. Potential benefits include strengthened governance and coordination amongst stakeholders, as well as better health outcomes and life expectancies for the population. It is critical for country stakeholders to understand the legal and regulatory environment related to the CRVS system given: (1) the multiplicity of stakeholders involved in a typical CRVS system, (2) the complexity of CRVS systems and processes, (3) the legal implications of certified vital event information, and (4) the crucial population and health statistics derived from this data.

A review of the existing legal and regulatory environment is therefore advisable before reforming the CRVS system in order to:

- ▶ improve stakeholder’s understanding of their CRVS system’s design, strengths, and weaknesses;
- ▶ identify possible improvements to CRVS system that can be made under existing regulatory authority; and
- ▶ reform laws and regulations to achieve best practices and align with international standards.

This toolkit provides a guide for analyzing existing CRVS laws to identify legal obstacles and opportunities. Even though CRVS systems should serve the same principal functions, every country has developed somewhat different approaches based on its structure, history, and culture. Countries also differ in their CRVS organization, implementation, processes, scale, partners, and capacities. This toolkit attempts to provide a standardized methodology to capture and evaluate this range of approaches and needs. While the toolkit was designed primarily for analyzing the national laws of LMICs, it can be used to analyze any CRVS system.

This toolkit allows attorneys and policymakers with differing knowledge of and experience with CRVS systems to evaluate these complicated systems in accordance with recommended best practices and international standards.³ The toolkit was designed to balance depth, comprehensiveness, ease-of-use, and time to complete. The toolkit provides concise explanations of 43 best practices and specific guidance on how to evaluate compliance with them. These best practices were distilled from the United Nations, the World Health Organization, and other international bodies, which are cited throughout. The results of a CRVS legal review will allow stakeholders and technical experts to identify strategies for reforming a CRVS system and distinguish those improvements that can be implemented under current authority from those that require adoption of new legislation.

1 United Nations, Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System, Revision 3, New York, 2014. Para. 279.

2 United Nations, Civil Registration Systems. <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/sources/civilreg/>.

3 The toolkit also explores certain areas where there is not yet an international standard or consensus for best practice, such as verbal autopsies, which is described further in Chapter VII of this toolkit.



True reform of a CRVS system requires many phases of work that extend beyond the scope of this toolkit. These additional phases include, at a minimum, drafting new laws or regulations, advocacy to enact new policies, and implementation of these new policies. Guidance on those additional phases is not included within this toolkit; however, this CRVS legal review toolkit anticipates, and serves as a basis for, those additional phases of work. This toolkit can be used for developing or enacting national strategic CRVS plans to pinpoint legislative gaps and opportunities for strengthening CRVS systems.

2. Scope of the legal analysis

This CRVS legal toolkit is intended to guide in a comprehensive evaluation of civil registration as it relates to vital statistics. Therefore, the review focuses on key issues involving registration of births, deaths, and foetal deaths, as well as certifying causes of death. The review also evaluates foundational issues that are crucial to a functioning CRVS system, including laws related to the enabling environment, the structure of the registrar, technology and security issues, and production of vital statistics.

There are several limitations to this review. First, the review does not provide the same level of detailed guidance on all vital events. While registration of births, deaths, and foetal deaths are evaluated in detail because of their important role in vital statistics, other vital events receive less attention, including marriage, divorce, adoption, and legitimation.

Second, the review focuses on the statistical benefits of civil registration rather than on the legal and identification uses of registration. We recognize that civil registration and national identification systems are interrelated, but this review does not contain detailed guidance on the evaluation of identification systems.

Finally, technology and security issues are analyzed at a cursory level. Reviewers interested in highly technical evaluations of technology and security requirements and the corresponding legal issues should seek additional resources.⁴

3. Preliminary steps before conducting the legal analysis

For this legal review of CRVS systems to be most effective, high-level officials from the relevant government agencies should endorse the process. These participating agencies might include the civil registrar, national statistics agency, health agency, and identification agency. At a minimum, these agencies should commit to sharing their policies with the legal reviewers and participating in a discussion of the results of the legal analysis.

The analysis itself should be assigned to a skilled attorney or team of attorneys. These attorneys or legal experts should be policymakers, national law reform commission staff, legal staff from institutions with responsibility for CRVS systems, or outside counsel collaborating with these government bodies. The work should be led by an attorney with strong knowledge of and experience in the constitutional structure, administrative system, and policy-making procedure of the country. Actual experience with the laws at issue is helpful, but not required. The material in the toolkit is designed to be self-taught and self-led, so it requires minimal oversight or previous knowledge of CRVS systems. If necessary, the reviewers can consult with specialists in particular areas of law, such as electronic security, family law, or police and hospital procedures.

The lead attorney(s) should have access to all relevant government agencies and other stakeholders to gather formal rules and informal practices that will be relevant for the review. Agencies should also share previous legal reviews that have been conducted on the CRVS system, as well as any strategy documents, business process maps, or other non-legal materials that might aid the review process.

⁴ Authors' Note: Future editions of this toolkit may contain modules to assist with the evaluation of topics that had to be excluded from this review, including other vital events, identity issues, and technology and security issues.

4. Process and methodology

This section will outline the recommended seven-step process for legal reviewers. Reviews usually take between three to six months, depending on (1) the size of the legal team, their experience, and time they can dedicate to this work, (2) the complexity of the current legal framework, and (3) the ability to find and access all relevant laws. The timeline of working days provided below is an estimate, to assist with time management.

As noted above, we strongly recommend that relevant government agencies formally endorse the review before beginning the process. We also recommend gathering relevant stakeholders together at the conclusion of the review to discuss the results and recommend improvements.

Review Process for Policy Analysis Framework*

Step 1: Read source documents and background information (2-5 days)

Step 2: Learn glossary of key terms (1-3 days)

Step 3: Collect all relevant laws using model research log (5-20 days)

Step 4: Upload all relevant laws to a central folder (1 day)

Step 5: Confirm laws are complete and up-to-date (1-10 days)

Step 6: Review laws against best practices (10-30 days)

Step 7: Draft and revise a final report (5-10 days)

***All time estimates are approximations.**

STEP 1: Read source documents and background information (Approx. 2-5 days)

Reviewers should read this entire toolkit before beginning the legal analysis, which is based on international standards from key source material. It is also recommended that reviewers carefully read all these international sources and other background material. See Chapter I, Section 5 for a bibliography of source documents and background reading material.

STEP 2: Learn glossary of key terms (Approx. 1-3 days)

Users of this toolkit will require working knowledge of these key terms and their internationally standardized definitions for accurate collection and analysis of CRVS legislation. Chapter I, Section 6 contains a glossary of key terms that are relevant for a CRVS legal review. Note that terms currently used in a country might vary greatly from the standard definitions.

STEP 3: Collect all relevant laws using research log (Approx. 5-20 days)

Guided by the background reading, users will collect all laws that are relevant to the CRVS system.

Note on the use of the term “law”: Throughout this toolkit, the term “law” includes any legally-binding measure, including constitutional provisions, legislation, regulations, decree, ministerial orders, official instructions to government agencies, employee manuals, and standard operating procedures for government officials, judicial orders, international treaties, and any other document with the force of law. When referring to only those acts approved by the legislature, the term “legislation” or “act” is used.

It is recommended to use a daily research log to record search strategies throughout each legal research session. Use of this research log will ensure all relevant laws have been collected and organized to improve accuracy and speed of the later review. For reviewers working in teams, sharing this research log regularly (at least once a week) with the other reviewers will assist with sharing progress, avoiding duplication, and highlighting innovative search terms. More guidance on collecting laws is contained in Chapter II.

The following is recommended information to include in the daily research log:

- ▶ **Resource searched:** Write the name of the resource searched, including official websites, academic libraries, government offices, secondary sources, etc. It is important to be specific and provide hyperlinks to websites.
- ▶ **Day researched:** Enter the date the reviewer checked the source to allow the team of reviewers to know the last day the source was reviewed.
- ▶ **Search terms used:** If specific search terms to look for a law are used, these should be documented, even if the search terms were unsuccessful. This will help determine which search terms are the most effective. If no search terms were used, write “N/A.”
- ▶ **Law(s) found:** Write the short title of each law found through the search and include the effective date of the law, if known. This will be important for laws that have undergone multiple amendments.
- ▶ **Relevant provisions of law:** Briefly describe which section(s) of the law are relevant to this work and why. For example, “Law 123 is the primary law on birth and death records.” Or “Chapter 22 references use of birth certificates for school registration.” These descriptions do not need to be especially detailed, but will serve as a reference to know which laws are relevant to which sections of the review. If the laws need to be translated, this will also help determine which provisions to translate.
- ▶ **Related best practice:** Each of the best practices in this toolkit is numbered. When a legal provision is related to a best practice, record the number of the corresponding best practice. This will help quickly identify the relevant provisions later in the review process.

STEP 4: Upload all relevant laws to a central folder (Approx. 1 day)

It is recommended that the reviewers, especially those working in a team, save all the laws and other material in a central electronic folder to permit ease of access. Online tools like DropBox and Google Drive offer inexpensive file sharing for multiple users. A standardized labeling format for saving the laws is recommended, as this will allow easier sorting and organization of the many of laws and amendments that are typically involved in a CRVS system. See Appendix A for a recommended labeling format.

STEP 5: Confirm laws are complete and up-to-date (Approx. 1-10 days)

Once the laws have been collected and uploaded to the shared folder, review the collections for completeness. At this point, the legal experts should choose a closing date for the review. This closing date will serve as the latest date for confirmation that the laws are in force and up-to-date. Reviewers will need to confirm that there have been no subsequent amendments to any of the cited laws as of the closing date.

STEP 6: Review laws against best practices (Approx. 10-30 days)

Once the collection of laws is complete, organized, and up-to-date, reviewers should begin evaluating the laws against the list of best practices. The 43 best practices are grouped into six chapters. Each of these best practices is described in detail, with guidance for reviewers on how to evaluate them, in Chapters III – VIII of this toolkit. For each of the sections of the framework, reviewers will:

- (1) identify and describe any legislation on the topic, providing pincites⁵ to relevant provisions;
- (2) identify and describe any other relevant laws (including decrees, orders, standard operating procedures), providing pincites to relevant provisions;
- (3) evaluate whether the legislation and other laws align with the best practices or whether gaps remain; and
- (4) indicate whether the legal framework achieves the best practice by checking the appropriate box on the top right of each section.

Note: Some sections may contain additional guidance in the form of a worksheet or other evaluation tool.

⁵ A “pincite”, also known as a pinpoint citation, directs readers to the specific portion (e.g. page, article, footnote) of a source that supports the stated proposition.

STEP 7: Draft and revise a final report (Approx. 5-10 days)

Based on the needs of the government and stakeholders, reviewers should draft a narrative report of the findings of the review. The report should be tailored to the circumstances of each country and may not need to include every issue raised in the legal analysis framework. The report should describe the CRVS system and highlight major differences between the country's CRVS legislative framework and international standards, as outlined in this toolkit. The report should explain any legal obstacles to aligning the CRVS system with international standards and present potential opportunities for improving the CRVS system. The report should clearly explain which government agency, if any, has existing authority to make the suggested improvements within the existing CRVS legislative framework. If the improvement can only be made through legislative amendment, the report should note that as well.

Systems Approach

In parallel to this legal review, it is advisable for LMIC countries to undertake a comprehensive “systems analysis” to identify gaps in the CRVS system that contribute to its underperformance, as well as opportunities for resolving identified weaknesses. Systems analysis is the application of specific analytic approaches to achieve a better understanding of the typologies, organization, requirements, processes, and workflows in relation to outputs and purpose. Applied jointly with Enterprise Architecture (EA) and Business Process Mapping/Modeling (BPM)⁶, a review of the existing legal and regulatory framework is advisable for:

- ▶ **System redesign:** A detailed description of the current legal framework is a necessary step toward improving the country's understanding of its CRVS system design and identification of weaknesses to support change management in process re-engineering. It is also essential as a first step (together with EA/BPM) to support change management in process re-engineering, such as IT/digitization and verbal autopsy.
- ▶ **Detecting bottlenecks and identifying solutions:** The analysis of the legal and regulatory framework will expose design flaws and legislative impediments that limit system performance while supporting the identification of possible real-world workarounds to identified gaps in the existing legal framework that do not necessarily require enactment of new legislation.
- ▶ **Planning:** The assessment helps identify legal and regulatory reforms required to address system inefficiencies and to implement adaptations which are aligned with international best practices. Identifying system inefficiencies and developing a legal reform strategy to resolve them will aid in the overall strategic plan and goals of the country.
- ▶ **Guide development of procedures, requirements, and forms:** For existing, amended, or newly enacted laws or regulations, it may be necessary to refine legislative processes that were not prescribed in sufficient detail and thus were not implemented consistently. This is of particular relevance in relation to the introduction of new system functions, notably verbal autopsy (VA) for community deaths. The forms, standard operating procedures, roles, responsibilities, and data flows all need to be carefully designed and integrated within the existing CRVS system if VA is to be incorporated on a sustainable and scalable basis.
- ▶ **Help align stakeholders:** Presenting and analyzing a country's legal and regulatory framework is an opportunity for stakeholders to work together toward a common goal, thereby improving inter-sectorial collaboration.
- ▶ **Understand regional variations:** In highly decentralized countries where lower levels of the system can adapt or modify CRVS processes, legal analysis will give the country a blueprint of the standard process with laws and regulations that support this design.

⁶ The term “enterprise” here refers to the CRVS organizations concerned, regardless of ownership, geographical distribution, or operating model. It includes the CRVS organizations' complete socio-technical systems, including people, information, processes, and technologies. EA is a conceptual blueprint that defines the structure and operation of an enterprise. As part of EA, BPM is an effort to understand the activities, participants, and information flows of the core business processes that enable an organization (or system) achieve its goals or do its work.



5. Sources of international CRVS standards

A) Required reading

- ❖ [United Nations, Handbook on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems Preparation of a Legal Framework, Series F, No 71 \(New York, United Nations, 1998\)](#)
- ❖ [United Nations, Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System, Series M No. 19/Rev.3. \(New York, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2014\)](#)
- ❖ [World Health Organization, WHO Resource Kit: Strengthening civil registration and vital statistics for births, deaths and causes of death \(Luxembourg, World Health Organization, 2010\)](#)
- ❖ [Pacific Community, Legislation for Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in the Pacific: Best Practice Guidelines and Examples \(Noumea, Secretariat of the Pacific Community, 2016\)](#)

B) Additional reading

- ❖ [US Model State Vital Statistics Act and Regulations – 1992 Revision](#)
- ❖ [United Nations, Handbook on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics System: Policies and Protocols for the Release and Archiving of Individual Records \(New York, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 1998\)](#)
- ❖ [United Nations, Handbook of Vital Statistics Systems and Methods: Vol. I Legal, Organization and Technical Aspects, Series F No. 35 \(New York, United Nations, 1991\)](#)
- ❖ [Chowdhury, Anir and Hussain, Ishtiaque, Not just about the stats: CRVS ensures legal identity, services and rights for each human being \(UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific\)](#)
- ❖ [Working Group of Co-organizers of the Ministerial Conference on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific, Information Note E - Civil Registration, nationality and human rights \(United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, 2014\)](#)
- ❖ [United Nations, Ministerial Declaration to “Get every one in the picture” in Asia and the Pacific \(United Nations ESCAP\)](#)
- ❖ [United Nations Children’s Fund, Toward Universal Birth Registration: A Systemic Approach to the Application of ICT, \(UNICEF, 2015\)](#)
- ❖ [United Nations, Regional Guidelines on Preparing Vital Statistics from Civil Registration System \(Addis Ababa, United Nations Economic Commission for Africa\)](#)
- ❖ [United Nations, African Center for Statistics United Nations Economic Commission for Africa: Regional Guidelines on Civil Registration in Africa \(Addis Ababa, United Nations Economic Commission for Africa\)](#)
- ❖ [Commission Internationale de l’Etat Civil](#)

6. Glossary of key CRVS terms⁷

Amendment: A change to a certification item on a vital record after a certification has been issued. (US Model Law)

Attendant at birth: The person who assisted the mother in delivering a live-born infant or a dead foetus.

Birth: See Live Birth. (WHO Resource Kit)

Birth parity: The number of times that a woman has given birth to a foetus with a gestational age of 24 weeks or more, regardless of whether the child was born alive or was stillborn. (WHO Resource Kit)

Born in wedlock: Characterization of a live-born infant or dead foetus whose mother was legally married (through any recognized union by the laws or customs of the country) at the time of delivery.

Born out of wedlock: Characterization of a live-born infant or dead foetus whose mother was not legally married at the time of delivery (through any union recognized by the laws or customs of the country at the time of delivery).

Burial permit: The official document, usually issued only for a legally registered death, authorizing the removal of the dead body (corpse) to the cemetery or for other final disposal.

Causes of Death: All diseases, morbid conditions, or injuries that either resulted in or contributed to death, and the circumstances of the accident or violence that produced any such injuries. For vital statistics purposes, symptoms or modes of dying, such as heart failure and asthenia, are not considered to be causes of death.

Certificate: means the document, paper, or electronic format, issued by the Registrar and containing all or part of the exact information contained on the original vital record, and which, when issued by the Registrar, has the full force and effect of the original vital record. (US Model Law)

Certification: The issuance by the civil registrar of a legal document certifying a birth or death. (WHO Resource Kit)

Certifier of cause of death: The person authorized by law to issue a certificate, in a prescribed format, stating the underlying and contributory causes of death, and other facts related to the event, for submission to the local registrar or other appropriate authority. The certifier is usually the physician who attended the deceased in his or her last illness; or, in the case of deaths of persons who were not attended during the last illness by a physician or who may have died owing to violence or injury, the medical-legal officer (e.g., the coroner or the medical examiner).

Civil registration means the continuous, permanent, compulsory, and universal recording of the occurrence and characteristics of vital events and other civil status events pertaining to the population as provided by decree, law, or regulation, in accordance with the legal requirements of each country. It establishes and provides legal documentation of such events. These records are also the best sources of vital statistics.

Civil registration system: The institutional, legal, and technical settings established by government within which civil registration is conducted in a technically sound, coordinated, and standardized manner throughout a country, taking into account cultural and social circumstances particular to that country.

Complete civil registration: The registration in the civil registration system of every vital event that has occurred to the members of the population of a particular country (or area), within a specified period. Any deviation from complete coverage is measured by “coverage error.”

Confidentiality: A guarantee that information provided by respondents will not be revealed to others. (WHO Resource Kit)

Coroner: The officer of a county, district, municipality, parish, etc., authorized by law to hold an inquest regarding deaths of persons who may have died by violence or injury or under suspicious circumstances to determine if the death was due to non-natural causes, such as accident, suicide, or homicide.

Correction: A change to a non-certification item on a vital record, or a change to a certification item provided no certification, whether paper or electronic, has been issued. (US Model Law)

⁷ Unless otherwise indicated, all definitions are derived from the Glossary of the United Nations Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System, Revision 3, New York, 2014.

Date of birth: The day, month, and year of birth, including hours and minutes, if required, which is used to determine age in completed units of time.

Date of occurrence: The exact date when an event occurred, which should be expressed in terms of the day, month, and year, as well as the hour and minute, if appropriate (for live births, foetal deaths and deaths).

Date of registration: The day, month, and year when an entry of registration of a vital event is made in the civil register.

Death: The permanent disappearance of all evidence of life at any time after live birth has taken place (post-natal cessation of vital functions without capability of resuscitation). This definition excludes foetal death.

Delayed civil registration: The registration of a vital event after the prescribed period determined in existing laws, rules, or regulations (including any grace period, if specified). Late registration is the registration of a vital event after the prescribed time period but within a specified grace period. Since the grace period is usually considered to be one year following the vital event, delayed registration is usually considered to be the registration of a vital event one year or more after the vital event has occurred.

Disclosure: To make available or make known personally identifiable information contained in the vital record, by any means of communication. (US Model Law)

Electronic signature: Any electronic sound, symbol, or process attached to or logically associated with a contract or other record and executed or adopted by a person with the intent to attest to the accuracy of the facts on record. (US Model Law)

Facility (or Institution): Any establishment, public or private, which provides (1) in-patient or out-patient medical, surgical, or diagnostic care or treatment, or (2) nursing, custodial, or domiciliary care, or (3) to which persons are committed by law. (US Model Law)

Foetal death: The death prior to the complete expulsion or extraction from its mother of a product of conception, irrespective of the duration of the period of gestation. Death is indicated by the fact that after such separation, the foetus does not breathe or show any other evidence of life, such as beating of the heart, pulsation of the umbilical cord or definite movement of voluntary muscles.

Gestational period: The interval in completed weeks between the first day of the last menstrual period of the mother and the day, month, and year of delivery, irrespective of whether the product of conception is a live birth or is born showing no evidence of life (foetal death).

Human remains: A dead body, or any part of the dead body of a human being from the condition of which it reasonably can be concluded that death occurred, but does not include human ashes recovered after cremation. (US Model Law)

Infant death: The death of a live-born child under one year of age.

Informant: The individual or institution whose responsibility, designated by law, is to report to the local registrar the fact of the occurrence of a vital event and to provide all the information on and all the characteristics of the event. On the basis of such a report, the event may be legally registered by the local registrar.

International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems, Tenth Revision (ICD-10): A classification systems maintained by WHO for coding diseases, signs, symptoms, and other factors causing morbidity and mortality. Used worldwide for morbidity and mortality statistics and designated to promote international comparability in the collection, processing, classification, and presentation of statistics. (WHO Resource Kit)

Late civil registration: The registration of a vital event after the legally specified time period but within a specified grace period. The grace period is usually considered to be one year following the vital event.

Legitimation: The formal vesting of a person with the same status and rights of a person born in wedlock, according to the laws of the country.

Live birth: The result of the complete expulsion or extraction from its mother of a product of conception, irrespective of the duration of pregnancy, which after such separation breathes or shows any other evidence of life, such as beating of the heart, pulsation of the umbilical cord, or definite movement of voluntary muscles, whether or not the umbilical cord has been cut or the placenta is attached. Each product of such a birth is considered to be live-born.

Marriage: The act, ceremony, or process by which the legal relationship of spouses is constituted. The legality of the union may be established by civil, religious, or other means as recognized by the laws of each country. Countries may wish to expand the definition to cover civil unions if they are registered. In that case, registered partnership usually refers to a legal construct, entailing registration with the public authorities according to the laws of each country that becomes the basis for legal conjugal obligations between two persons.

Maternal death: The death of a woman while pregnant or within 42 days after the termination of pregnancy, irrespective of the duration and site of pregnancy, from any cause related to or aggravated by the pregnancy or its management, but not from an accidental or incidental cause.

Medical Certification of Cause of Death (MCCOD): The completion by a medically trained person of a death certificate including the cause of death (according to ICD certification standards). (WHO Resource Kit)⁸

Neonatal death: The death of a live birth during the first 28 completed days of life.

Notification: The issuance by an appropriate authority (such as a health care worker) of a form confirming a vital event (birth or death). Often this notification form is used by the family to report the event to the civil registration office. It can also be required to obtain a burial permit in the case of a death. This form does not have the legal status of a birth or death certificate. (WHO Resource Kit)

Perinatal period: The period that commences at 22 weeks (154 days) of gestation (the time when birth weight is normally 500 grams) and ends seven completed days after birth.

Population census: The total process of collecting, compiling, evaluating, analyzing, and publishing or otherwise disseminating demographic, economic, and social data pertaining, at a specified time, to all persons in a country or in a well-delimited part of a country.

Population register: An individualized data system, that is, a mechanism of continuous recording, and/or of coordinated linkage, of selected information pertaining to each member of the resident population of a country in such a way as to offer the possibility of deriving up-to-date information concerning the size and characteristics of that population at selected time intervals.

Primary registration area (unit): Part of the territory of a country that is entrusted to a local civil registrar for the recording of the vital events occurring therein. Each primary registration area is therefore the jurisdictional territory of one of the local civil registrars.

Recognition: The legal acknowledgment, either voluntary or compulsory, of the paternity of a child born out of wedlock.

Register or civil register: A loose-leaf file, ledger book, electronic file, or any other official file for the permanent recording, in accordance with established procedures, of each type of vital event and its associated data occurring in the population of a well-defined area (for example, an entire country, county, district, municipality, or parish). (WHO Resource Kit)

Registrar or civil registrar: The official authorized by law with the responsibility for carrying out the civil registration of vital events in a well-defined area (an entire country, or a county, district, municipality, parish, etc.) and for recording and reporting information on those vital events for legal and statistical purposes.

Registrar-General: The head of the civil registration office or department, with jurisdiction usually extending over the entire national territory. (WHO Resource Kit)

Registration: The formal act of reporting a birth or death, and obtaining a birth or death certificate issued by the civil registration authority. At this stage, details of the event are written into the official civil register by the registrar. Registration is the essential step prior to obtaining a certificate. (WHO Resource Kit)

8 It is important to note the difference between the medical certificate of cause of death and the death certificate issued by the civil registration agency. The death certificate issued by the civil registrar after the death is registered provides a legal confirmation of the fact of death and enables the inheritance and settlement of an estate, issuance of burial/cremation permits, and any other entitlements pursuant to the country's legal arrangements. The medical certificate of cause of death is issued by a medical profession or health facility, certifying the fact, manner, and cause of death for the deceased; this is essential for generating vital statistics and for public health policy.

Stillbirth: A baby who shows no signs of life when born. Stillbirths may be due to injuries, illness, infections, or catastrophic events happening to the mother or to the child while in the womb or during birth. To distinguish this from abortion or miscarriage, the verbal autopsy system includes only births that occur after 28 weeks of pregnancy. (WHO Resource Kit)

Timeliness in registration: The quality of a vital event report determined by the difference between the date of the event and the date of its registration when compared with the interval specified by legislation.

Underlying cause of death: The disease or injury that initiated the train of morbid events leading directly to death or the circumstances of the accident or violence that produced the fatal injury. The underlying cause of death is used as the basis for tabulation of mortality statistics.

Unique or personal identifier number: The number or other code used to uniquely identify a person in a population database or any other administrative register. The use of a unique identifier for each person avoids duplication entries and errors in respect to a person's identity. (WHO Resource Kit)

Usual place of residence: The place where a person spends most time and where they are registered for voting in elections. Although no standard definition exists, most countries agree that a person can only have one "usual" or "primary" residence. (WHO Resource Kit)

Verbal autopsy: A structured interview administered to caregivers or family members of households following a death. The VA is used to determine the probable cause(s) of death in settings where most deaths occur outside health facilities and where direct medical certification is rare. (WHO Resource Kit)

Verification: A confirmation of the information on a vital record based on the facts contained in a certification. (US Model Law)

Vital event: The occurrence of a live birth, death, foetal death, marriage, divorce, adoption, legitimation, recognition of parenthood, annulment of marriage, or legal separation.

Vital record: A legal document entered into the civil register that attests to the occurrence and characteristics of a vital event.

Vital statistical record: A document or record containing those items of information concerning an individual vital event that meet the needs of vital statistics compilation.

Vital statistics: The aggregated data derived from the records and reports of live birth, death, and foetal death, induced termination of pregnancy, marriage (divorce, dissolution of marriage, or annulment), and supporting documentation and related reports. (US Model Law)

Vital statistics system: For the purposes of the toolkit, a set of independent or interacting components — in this case, legal registration and statistical reporting of, and collection, compilation, and dissemination of statistics pertaining to, vital events. The vital events of interest are live births, adoptions, legitimations, recognitions, deaths, and foetal deaths, and marriages, divorces, separations, and annulments.

02

Chapter

Legal and Constitutional Foundation of CRVS Systems

Why it is important: A comprehensive understanding of the legal and constitutional foundation of a country's CRVS system is essential for interpreting the roles and responsibilities of CRVS government agencies and non-governmental stakeholders; each institution's processes, administrative architecture, and geographic scope; and multi-sectorial coordination in the CRVS system.

Guidance: While most rules regarding civil registration systems are often contained in a small handful of laws and regulations (often a Birth and Death Registration Act, Statistics Act, and their respective regulations), there are likely to be dozens of other laws that will affect the functioning of civil registration. It is critical to collect and analyze every law before analyzing the system.

Note on the use of the term “law”: Throughout this toolkit, the term “law” includes any legally-binding measure, including constitutional provisions, legislation, regulations, decree, ministerial orders, official instructions to government agencies, employee manuals, and standard operating procedures for government officials, judicial orders, international treaties, and any other document with the force of law. When referring to only those acts approved by the legislature, the term “legislation” or “act” is used.

The checklist below serves as a guide to help ensure all relevant laws have been included in the review. Countries are likely to have different versions of each law. Use the suggested daily research log (**Chapter I, Section 4, Step 3**) to assist in tracking and organizing the following types of laws:

GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION

- ☐ Constitutional Provisions
- ☐ Government Organization
- ☐ Civil Procedure and Civil Code
- ☐ Local Government/Autonomy
- ☐ Administrative Procedures
- ☐ Criminal Procedure and Penal Code
- ☐ Code of Conduct of Government Officials
- ☐ Judicial Enforcement
- ☐ Budget

INITIAL INFORMATION COLLECTION

- ☐ Family, Family Registration, and Paternity
- ☐ Identity Management
- ☐ Nationality, Residence and Immigration
- ☐ Burial, Cremation, and Funeral
- ☐ Education or Student Registration
- ☐ Police Rules for Unnatural/Accidental Deaths
- ☐ Emergency/Disaster Procedures

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT AND PROCESSING

- ☐ Personal Information Protection

- ☐ Electronic Government Rules
- ☐ Telecommunications Act
- ☐ Digital Signature
- ☐ Notary Offices
- ☐ Certificate of Seal Imprint
- ☐ Civil Information Management
- ☐ Public Security

MEDICAL PROCEDURES AND RULES

- ☐ Government/Private Hospital Manuals
- ☐ Medical Board Training Requirements and Procedures Medical School Curriculum
- ☐ Coroner, Autopsy, or Inquest Procedures
- ☐ Hygiene and Disease Prevention
- ☐ Laws on Specific Diseases, such as HIV/AIDS
- ☐ National Health Care/Insurance

USES FOR CRVS INFORMATION

- ☐ Statistics or Censuses
- ☐ Inheritance and Property Rights
- ☐ Access to Education

- ☐ National and Local Tax Collection
- ☐ Military Service
- ☐ Social Security and Pensions
- ☐ Emigration and Immigration
- ☐ Voting and Elections
- ☐ Registration of Real Estate
- ☐ Labor/Employment
- ☐ Access to Banks/Telecom

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- ☐ International Treaties
- ☐ National/Regional Human Rights
- ☐ Religious Freedom
- ☐ Protection of Rights of Children
- ☐ Protection of Rights of Women



A. List and briefly describe the key legislation establishing and governing the registration of vital events and the publication of vital statistics. Indicate any amendments. List and briefly describe major regulations or orders that have been issued under each piece of legislation. Clearly indicate which provisions, if any, have been repealed by subsequent laws. Laws that have been repealed entirely do not need to be included in this list.

B. Indicate whether any constitutional provisions or principles directly or indirectly affect CRVS systems. Common provisions often include rights-based measures, such as right to an identity, education, or health, as well as provisions concerning nationality and citizenship. The constitution may also contain provisions regarding the authority of government agencies at various levels to issue rules.

C. Indicate whether the country is a party to any international, regional, or bilateral agreement that may affect CRVS rules. Several common international treaties are listed below. Add additional rows for other agreements that affect CRVS systems.

Name of agreement	Briefly describe relevant commitments with citations	Indicate ratification status and year	Describe any relevant reservations, implementing legislation (or whether agreement has a direct effect without implementing legislation), or other
Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948	Article 2: prohibits discrimination based on age, identity, civil status, etc.); Article 3 (right of every woman and man) Article 15 (right to nationality); Article 16 (right to marry and found a family); Article 25 (children have same social protection, whether born in or out of wedlock)		
Declaration of the Rights of the Child, 1959	Principle 3 (child entitled from birth to a name and a nationality)		
Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, 1961	Article 1 (states must grant nationality to person born in territory if otherwise stateless); Article 4 (regulates birth on vessels); Article 7 (regulates renunciation of nationality)		

Name of agreement	Briefly describe relevant commitments with citations	Indicate ratification status and year	Describe any relevant reservations, implementing legislation (or whether agreement has a direct effect without implementing legislation), or other
Vienna Convention on Consular Relations, 1963	Article 5.f (consular functions include civil registry)		
Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriages, 1964	Article 2 (minimum age); Article 3 (marriages must be registered)		
International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, 1965	Article 5 (right to equality before law regardless of race, color, or national or ethnic origin, and other rights including nationality, marriage, inheritance, work, health, etc.)		

Name of agreement	Briefly describe relevant commitments with citations	Indicate ratification status and year	Describe any relevant reservations, implementing legislation (or whether agreement has a direct effect without implementing legislation), or other
International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 1966	Article 23 (right to marry at marriageable age); Article 24 (every child shall be registered immediately after birth and have a name; right to acquire nationality)		
Protocol on Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts, 1977	Articles 1, 2, 78 (Procedure to ID victims and evacuees of armed conflict, and civilian personnel.)		
Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, 1979	Article 9 (States Parties shall grant women equal rights with men to acquire, change or retain their nationality; right to pass nationality to children); Article 16.2 (no child marriage, marriages must be registered)		

Name of agreement	Briefly describe relevant commitments with citations	Indicate ratification status and year	Describe any relevant reservations, implementing legislation (or whether agreement has a direct effect without implementing legislation), or other
Declaration on Social and Legal Principles relating to the Protection and Welfare of Children, with Special Reference to Foster Placement and Adoption Nationally and Internationally, 1986	Article 8 (child shall at all times have a name, nationality, and legal representative)		
Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989	Article 2 (prohibits discrimination based on age, identity, etc.); Article 7 (registered immediately after birth, right to name and nationality); Article 8 (right to identity)		
International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, 1990	Article 29 (children of migrants have right to name, registration of birth and nationality)		

Name of agreement	Briefly describe relevant commitments with citations	Indicate ratification status and year	Describe any relevant reservations, implementing legislation (or whether agreement has a direct effect without implementing legislation), or other
Hague Convention on the Protection and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption, 1993	This instrument regulates the international adoption of children. Chapter II establishes the conditions for intercountry adoption; Chapter III, accredited authorities and bodies; Chapter IV, the procedural conditions of intercountry adoption and Chapter V, the recognition and effects of adoption.		
UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, 2004	Principle 20 (right to recognition everywhere as a person before law, government shall facilitate issuance/replacement of new ID documents)		
Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2006	Article 18 (right to obtain, possess, and use documentation of identity regardless of disability; children with disabilities registered immediately after birth)		

Name of agreement	Briefly describe relevant commitments with citations	Indicate ratification status and year	Describe any relevant reservations, implementing legislation (or whether agreement has a direct effect without implementing legislation), or other
Other international agreements			
Other regional or bilateral agreements			

D. Describe any rules that define the relationship between key CRVS legislation and other measures that affect CRVS, including the constitutional, international, and other legal measures above. Where provisions overlap or there are other conflicts of law, describe any law or constitutional principle that defines which provisions take precedence for CRVS purposes.

03

Chapter

Enabling Environment

Why it is important: A country's enabling environment for its CRVS system — including the legal, organizational, and financial foundations — directly affects the capacity of the CRVS system to achieve its basic functions. The key elements of a strong enabling environment described in this chapter must be in place for relevant CRVS stakeholders to effectively perform their complementary roles.

1. Vital statistics derived from civil registration system

Best Practice Achieved? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Best Practice: Vital statistics should be obtained through a civil registration system, which is the ideal source for accurate, complete, timely, and continuous information on vital events.⁹ The United Nations defines the civil registration method as “the procedure employed in gathering the basic information on the incidence and characteristics of vital events that occur in the population of a country (or area) within a specified time period, upon which the preparation of vital records with legal value and the production of vital statistics are based.”¹⁰ Thus, the civil registration system plays two significant roles: it establishes a legally valid record of the occurrence of key events (e.g., births and deaths) and provides information used to produce vital statistics.¹¹

Guidance: Indicate whether there is a requirement to derive vital statistics from civil registration records and whether other data sources are considered valid sources for vital statistics calculation.

	Citation to specific provisions of responsive legislation	In accordance with guidance above, describe legislation and whether it aligns with the best practice	Citation to other regulations and rules	In accordance with guidance above, describe regulations or rules and whether they align with the best practice	Gaps/opportunities for legal or regulatory reform
Civil registration establishes legally valid record of key events					

⁹ As a supplement, countries may use vital statistics from population censuses, household sample surveys, vital records from sample registration and health records, or other demographic estimates. United Nations, Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System, Revision 3, New York, 2014. Paras. 6, 29.

¹⁰ United Nations, Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System, Revision 3, New York, 2014. Para. 280.

¹¹ United Nations, Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System, Revision 3, New York, 2014. Para. 26.

	Citation to specific provisions of responsive legislation	In accordance with guidance above, describe legislation and whether it aligns with the best practice	Citation to other regulations and rules	In accordance with guidance above, describe regulations or rules and whether they align with the best practice	Gaps/opportunities for legal or regulatory reform
Vital statistics derive from civil registration					
Vital statistics supplemented from population censuses, household sample surveys, health records, or other demographic estimates					

2. Vital Events captured and defined

Best Practice Achieved? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Best Practice: Records of vital events are critical sources for the production of vital statistics.¹² Vital events, which may include live births, deaths, foetal deaths, marriages, divorces, annulments, judicial separations, adoptions, legitimations, and/or recognitions, are defined in accordance with the UN definitions below.¹³ In considering CRVS system performance improvements, top priority should be given to live births and deaths, including causes of death, followed closely by foetal deaths.¹⁴

Guidance: Describe which vital events are recorded by the civil registration system. If these vital events are defined, include the language of the definition with a citation and indicate whether the definitions align with the UN definitions provided in the table.¹⁵ If the vital event is defined in multiple places, cite relevant laws and indicate whether the definitions are identical.

Vital event and UN definition	Recorded by registration system?	Definition(s) in law	Citation(s)	Align with UN definition?	Comments
Live birth: “The complete expulsion or extraction from its mother of a product of conception, irrespective of the duration of pregnancy, which, after such separation, breathes or shows any other evidence of life, such as beating of the heart, pulsation of the umbilical cord, or any definite movement of voluntary muscles, whether or not the umbilical cord has been cut or the placenta is attached.”					

¹² United Nations, Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System, Revision 3, New York, 2014. Para. 27.

¹³ United Nations, Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System, Revision 3, New York, 2014. Para. 2.

¹⁴ United Nations, Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System, Revision 3, New York, 2014. Paras. 30, 291.

¹⁵ United Nations, Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System, Revision 3, New York, 2014. Para. 2.

Vital event and UN definition	Recorded by registration system?	Definition(s) in law	Citation(s)	Align with UN definition?	Comments
Death: “The permanent disappearance of all evidence of life at any time after live birth has taken place (post-natal cessation of vital functions without capability of resuscitation).” This definition therefore excludes foetal deaths.					
Foetal death: “Death prior to the complete expulsion or extraction from its mother of a product of conception, irrespective of the duration of the pregnancy. The death is indicated by the fact that after such separation the foetus does not breathe or show any other evidence of life, such as beating of the hear, pulsation of the umbilical cord or definite movement of voluntary muscles.”					

Vital event and UN definition	Recorded by registration system?	Definition(s) in law	Citation(s)	Align with UN definition?	Comments
Marriage: “The act, ceremony or process by which the legal relationship of spouses is constituted. The legality of the union may be established by civil, religious or other means as recognized by the laws of each country. Countries may wish to expand this definition to cover civil unions if they are registered; in that case, registered partnership usually refers to a legal construct, registered with the public authorities according to the laws of each country, that leads to legal conjugal obligations between two persons.”					
Divorce: “The final legal dissolution of a marriage, that is, that separation of spouses which confers on the parties the right to remarriage under civil, religious and/or other provisions, according to the laws of each country. In case a country recognizes registered partnerships, a legal dissolution of a registered partnership refers to the legal final dissolution of such a partnership, according to national laws, conferring on the parties the right to reenter into another partnership or marriage.”					

Vital event and UN definition	Recorded by registration system?	Definition(s) in law	Citation(s)	Align with UN definition?	Comments
Annulment: “The invalidation or voiding of a marriage by a competent authority, according to the laws of each country, which confers on the parties the status of never having been married to each other.”					
Judicial separation: “The disunion of married persons, according to the laws of each country, without conferring on the parties the right to remarry.”					

Vital event and UN definition	Recorded by registration system?	Definition(s) in law	Citation(s)	Align with UN definition?	Comments
Adoption: “The legal and voluntary taking and treating of the child of other parents as one’s own, insofar as provided by the laws of each country.”					
Legitimation: “The formal investing of a person with the status and rights of a person born in wedlock, according to the laws of each country.”					
Recognition: “The legal acknowledgement, either voluntarily or compulsorily, of the paternity of a child born out of wedlock.”					

3. Roles and responsibilities of government stakeholders

Best Practice Achieved? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Best Practice: The legal framework should assign the functions of establishing, operating, and maintaining a national CRVS system to a government agency or agencies, and provide a clear designation of duties and responsibilities to the relevant agencies for key steps of a functioning system, including registration, recording, reporting, collection compilation, analysis, evaluation, presentation, and dissemination of data.¹⁶

Guidance: A functioning CRVS system typically includes at least three key stakeholders — the civil registration authority, the national statistics office, and the health sector. Other agencies may also have a role, such as a national identity management authority. The role of each stakeholder will likely be established and governed by different legislation through a government agency or agencies. List any relevant government agencies according to the categories listed below, with any roles and responsibilities in the CRVS system. Summarize key provisions of applicable establishing legislation that define the role of the agency or agencies with key functions of the CRVS system.

	Citation to specific provisions of responsive legislation	In accordance with guidance above, describe legislation and whether it aligns with the best practice	Citation to other regulations and rules	In accordance with guidance above, describe regulations or rules and whether they align with the best practice	Gaps/opportunities for legal or regulatory reform
Registrar agencies					

¹⁶ United Nations, Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System, Revision 3, New York, 2014. Para. 40(a),(b).

	Citation to specific provisions of responsive legislation	In accordance with guidance above, describe legislation and whether it aligns with the best practice	Citation to other regulations and rules	In accordance with guidance above, describe regulations or rules and whether they align with the best practice	Gaps/opportunities for legal or regulatory reform
Statistics agencies					
Health agencies					

	Citation to specific provisions of responsive legislation	In accordance with guidance above, describe legislation and whether it aligns with the best practice	Citation to other regulations and rules	In accordance with guidance above, describe regulations or rules and whether they align with the best practice	Gaps/opportunities for legal or regulatory reform
Identity agencies					
Other agencies					

4. Rule-making authority

Best Practice Achieved? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Best Practice: CRVS laws should empower a central governmental agency or agencies to be responsible for setting standards through rule-making for the design and conduct of various operations of the CRVS system, including notification, registration, certification of vital events, and the subsequent collection, analysis, and production of vital statistics.¹⁷ In general, it is best to leave sufficient flexibility in rule-making to permit the system to respond to changing processes and needs.

Guidance: Describe any rule-making authority of the central agency or agencies to oversee operation of the CRVS system, including: reorganizing registration offices; preparing/approving official models of notification and registration documents; issuing directives/SOPs to improve operation and efficiency of local registrars; participating in the production of vital statistics in cooperation with the national statistics agency; and any other matters.

	Citation to specific provisions of responsive legislation	In accordance with guidance above, describe legislation and whether it aligns with the best practice	Citation to other regulations and rules	In accordance with guidance above, describe regulations or rules and whether they align with the best practice	Gaps/opportunities for legal or regulatory reform
Registrar agencies					

¹⁷ United Nations, Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System, Revision 3, New York, 2014. Para. 40(e).

	Citation to specific provisions of responsive legislation	In accordance with guidance above, describe legislation and whether it aligns with the best practice	Citation to other regulations and rules	In accordance with guidance above, describe regulations or rules and whether they align with the best practice	Gaps/opportunities for legal or regulatory reform
Statistics agencies					
Health agencies					

	Citation to specific provisions of responsive legislation	In accordance with guidance above, describe legislation and whether it aligns with the best practice	Citation to other regulations and rules	In accordance with guidance above, describe regulations or rules and whether they align with the best practice	Gaps/opportunities for legal or regulatory reform
Identity agencies					
Other agencies					

5. Coordination

Best Practice Achieved? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Best Practice: Because multiple stakeholders are involved in a CRVS system, it is important to have a coordinating mechanism for their activities. Close coordination and collaboration across government agencies aids production of timely and accurate statistics, avoids duplication, errors, or omissions, and ensures concepts, definitions, and classifications are consistent nationally.¹⁸ This should take the form of an interagency committee, comprising staff members of the agencies involved in the CRVS system, which meets at least annually to discuss matters affecting the agencies.¹⁹ Coordination methods may also be included in legislation (for example, empowering a single government agency to coordinate the activities of CRVS stakeholders and obliging stakeholders to collaborate with the coordinating entity). Any coordinating mechanism should be established on a permanent basis, meet regularly, and have legal status.²⁰

There may also be coordination on specific topics. For example, a national mortality working group can play a key role in improving the completeness and quality of mortality data, which is critical to public health decision-making (e.g., efforts to improve completeness, introduction and rollout of an international standard form of the medical certificate of cause of death, use of verbal autopsy (VA), medical certification of cause-of-death training, reduction of ill-defined or garbage codes, introduction of automated coding, etc.). Similarly, a verbal autopsy committee can play a key role in improving the completeness and quality of cause-of-death data.

Guidance: Describe the coordinating mechanisms in the country, whether they are permanent or expiring, and other relevant details related to coordination of the CRVS system. If known, discuss whether the various committees are functioning and how often they meet. If a committee or working group exists, it is likely to have been formed pursuant to an internal directive or interagency agreement (such as a memorandum of understanding), rather than through legislation.

¹⁸ United Nations, Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System, Revision 3, New York, 2014. Paras. 41, 48.

¹⁹ United Nations, Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System, Revision 3, New York, 2014. Paras. 52, 319-22.

²⁰ United Nations, Handbook of Vital Statistics Systems & Methods, Volume 1: Legal, Organizational, and Technical Aspects, New York, 1991. P. 29, para. 270.

	Citation to specific provisions of responsive legislation	In accordance with guidance above, describe legislation and whether it aligns with the best practice	Citation to other regulations and rules	In accordance with guidance above, describe regulations or rules and whether they align with the best practice	Gaps/opportunities for legal or regulatory reform
Single agency leading coordination					
Interagency CRVS committee					

	Citation to specific provisions of responsive legislation	In accordance with guidance above, describe legislation and whether it aligns with the best practice	Citation to other regulations and rules	In accordance with guidance above, describe regulations or rules and whether they align with the best practice	Gaps/opportunities for legal or regulatory reform
Mortality working group or equivalent					
Verbal autopsy committee or equivalent					
Other coordinating mechanisms					

6. Resources

Best Practice Achieved? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Best Practice: Continuous and efficient functioning of the CRVS system requires adequate financial resources and, therefore, the legal framework should include provisions to ensure sustainable funding of the CRVS system (and its key stakeholders) through national or subnational budgets.²¹

Guidance: Describe the legal framework related to committed funding and other resources for CRVS functions of the key stakeholders, including the amount, duration, etc. Pay particular attention to which agencies are responsible for funding various aspects of the work, including staffing and other expenses for local registrar offices.

	Citation to specific provisions of responsive legislation	In accordance with guidance above, describe legislation and whether it aligns with the best practice	Citation to other regulations and rules	In accordance with guidance above, describe regulations or rules and whether they align with the best practice	Gaps/opportunities for legal or regulatory reform
Registrar agencies					

²¹ United Nations, Handbook on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems: Preparation of a Legal Framework, New York, 1998. P. 28, para. 72.

	Citation to specific provisions of responsive legislation	In accordance with guidance above, describe legislation and whether it aligns with the best practice	Citation to other regulations and rules	In accordance with guidance above, describe regulations or rules and whether they align with the best practice	Gaps/opportunities for legal or regulatory reform
Statistics agencies					
Health agencies					

	Citation to specific provisions of responsive legislation	In accordance with guidance above, describe legislation and whether it aligns with the best practice	Citation to other regulations and rules	In accordance with guidance above, describe regulations or rules and whether they align with the best practice	Gaps/opportunities for legal or regulatory reform
Identity agencies					
Other agencies					

04

Chapter

Structure of the Registrar

Why it is important: The organizational structure of the civil registrar's office defines how its key activities — including notification, registration, and certification of vital events — are achieved. Countries with a poorly defined structure are less likely to achieve continuous, permanent, compulsory, and universal recording of the vital events in their populations.

7. Roles and responsibilities of national registrar

Best Practice Achieved? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Best practice: There is tremendous diversity in how countries organize and structure their civil registrar's office. Depending on the judicial, political, and administrative structures of a country, as well as its traditions, the CRVS system may be either centralized (i.e., central agency or agencies with local offices) or decentralized (i.e. agencies created via state, provincial, district law, etc.).²² Whether the systems are centralized or decentralized, there will be a role for national agencies/organizations. In a centralized system, a central agency (often a registrar general) should be responsible and empowered to oversee operation of the CR system and authorized to issue directives/regulations to do so. In either case, there must be an agency at the national level to enforce minimum standards or to work cooperatively with decentralized offices to ensure generally uniform practices and procedures.²³

The national registrar should be responsible for, at a minimum, management and inspection of registration and certification services; participation in drafting of rules and instructions; assessing degree of coverage and establishing boundaries for local offices; hiring, management, and training of personnel; management of physical resources and technology; resolution of incidents and appeals; promoting the registration requirements to the public; exchanging information with other agencies; and safekeeping archives.²⁴

Civil registration functions include: recording vital events; storing, safe-keeping, and retrieval of vital records; issuing certified copies of vital records; reporting information on vital events; and providing information to other government agencies.²⁵ These are the key activities required to perform the legal and statistical functions described above. Ideally, authority/responsibility for these activities should be described broadly enough to permit changes in processes, as required.

The volume of work in most countries will require the national registrar (registrar general, director general, or the equivalent) to delegate powers to others to act on his or her behalf. A strong legal foundation, oversight, and integrity of this role are critical. Care is needed to decide what duties are delegated and ensure there is proper supervision.

Guidance: Describe the activities assigned by the legal framework to the national civil registrar, as well as the powers that can be delegated, whether they have been delegated, and how the delegated functions are overseen. Chapter III, Section 3, on roles and responsibilities of government stakeholders, described the general responsibility of the registrar agency. For this section, focus analysis on the specific responsibilities of the national registrar office.

²² United Nations, Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System, Revision 3, New York, 2014. Paras. 307-311.

²³ United Nations, Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System, Revision 3, New York, 2014. Para. 311.

²⁴ United Nations, Handbook on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems: Preparation of a Legal Framework, New York, 1998. Pp. 35-36, paras. 90-92.

²⁵ United Nations, Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System, Revision 3, New York, 2014. Para. 285.

	Citation to specific provisions of responsive legislation	In accordance with guidance above, describe legislation and whether it aligns with the best practice	Citation to other regulations and rules	In accordance with guidance above, describe regulations or rules and whether they align with the best practice	Gaps/opportunities for legal or regulatory reform
Responsibilities of the national registrar					
Delegable powers of the national registrar					

8. Roles and responsibilities of registrars in a decentralized system

Best Practice Achieved? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A

Note: The following issue is only relevant for decentralized systems. If there is a centralized system, this page can be skipped.

Best Practice: Some countries will have a decentralized system in which states or provinces each have their own civil registration system. Each decentralized system should correspond with major civil divisions, such as states or provinces. In the capital city or town of each major division, a central civil registration office should be established to direct and monitor the civil registration work of the major division.²⁶

Guidance: If applicable, describe the roles and responsibilities of these decentralized registrar authorities and which services can be accessed at each level of the decentralized system.

	Citation to specific provisions of responsive legislation	In accordance with guidance above, describe legislation and whether it aligns with the best practice	Citation to other regulations and rules	In accordance with guidance above, describe regulations or rules and whether they align with the best practice	Gaps/opportunities for legal or regulatory reform
Responsibilities of the decentralized registrars					

²⁶ United Nations, Handbook on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems: Preparation of Legal Framework, New York, 1998. P. 34, para. 87d; p. 35 para. 90; United Nations, Handbook of Vital Statistics Systems and Methods, Volume 1: Legal, Organizational, and Technical Aspects, New York, 1991. Pp. 18-19.

	Citation to specific provisions of responsive legislation	In accordance with guidance above, describe legislation and whether it aligns with the best practice	Citation to other regulations and rules	In accordance with guidance above, describe regulations or rules and whether they align with the best practice	Gaps/opportunities for legal or regulatory reform
Delegable powers of the decentralized registrars					
Locations of decentralized offices corresponds with locations of major civil divisions					

9. Roles and responsibilities of local registrar at primary registration offices

Best Practice Achieved? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Best practice: Whether the system is centralized or decentralized, local civil registrars act as the officials responsible for primary registration.²⁷ These local registrars must be sufficiently empowered to permit universal access to services. Access to registration services is a key factor affecting completeness of registration, but this requires thought regarding which services to delegate, to whom, and how oversight is implemented.²⁸

The local civil registrar should be authorized by law to register vital events. Duties and responsibilities of local civil registrars should include: recording information on vital events according to procedures; ensuring compliance with registration laws; ensuring accuracy and completeness of each record; taking custody of records; completing statistical reports on time; issuing certified copies of vital records upon request; and educating the public about registration.²⁹

Guidance: Describe the legal framework for local offices, including localized services and which government body operates these services. Describe the registration authority of the local registrars and whether they are able to delegate that authority.

²⁷ United Nations, Handbook on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems: Preparation of Legal Framework, New York, 1998. P. 38, para. 95; United Nations, Handbook of Vital Statistics Systems and Methods Vol 1: Legal, Organizational, and Technical Aspects, New York, 1991. Pp. 18-19.

²⁸ United Nations, Handbook on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems: Preparation of Legal Framework, New York, 1998. P. 38, para. 95; p. 40, paras. 98-99; United Nations, Handbook of Vital Statistics Systems and Methods Volume 1: Legal, Organizational, and Technical Aspects, New York, 1991. Pp. 18-19.

²⁹ United Nations, Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System, Revision 3, New York, 2014. Paras. 328-334; United Nations, Handbook, Preparation of a Legal Framework p. 40 para. 99; United Nations, Handbook of Vital Statistics Systems and Methods Volume I: Legal, Organizational, and Technical Aspects, New York, 1991. P. 19, para. 162.

	Citation to specific provisions of responsive legislation	In accordance with guidance above, describe legislation and whether it aligns with the best practice	Citation to other regulations and rules	In accordance with guidance above, describe regulations or rules and whether they align with the best practice	Gaps/opportunities for legal or regulatory reform
Responsibilities of the local registrar offices					
Delegable powers of the local registrar offices					

10. Location of primary registration offices

Best Practice Achieved? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Best Practice: Each primary registration area is the jurisdictional territory of one local civil registrar and should correspond with minor civil divisions of the country, adjusting boundaries if necessary based on population, resources, accessibility, literacy, and simplicity of registration. Each registration area should be managed by one local registrar and easily accessible to the public.³⁰

Secondary registration units may be established at selected locations with high levels of vital events, such as civil registration offices located within health facilities.³¹ Where distance and terrain are factors, local registrars should be allowed to travel through their district regularly to capture vital events that have occurred since the last visit.³² Mobile units should also be allowed.³³

Guidance: Describe the geographic scope of primary registration areas and whether secondary and mobile registration units are permitted. If known, describe whether the primary registration areas are geographically distributed to allow all persons within the country reasonable access.

	Citation to specific provisions of responsive legislation	In accordance with guidance above, describe legislation and whether it aligns with the best practice	Citation to other regulations and rules	In accordance with guidance above, describe regulations or rules and whether they align with the best practice	Gaps/opportunities for legal or regulatory reform
Primary registration areas correspond to minor civil divisions					

³⁰ United Nations, Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System, Revision 3, New York, 2014. Paras. 340-346.

³¹ United Nations, Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System, Revision 3, New York, 2014. Para. 347.

³² United Nations, Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System, Revision 3, New York, 2014. Para. 329.

³³ United Nations, Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System, Revision 3, New York, 2014. Para. 348.

	Citation to specific provisions of responsive legislation	In accordance with guidance above, describe legislation and whether it aligns with the best practice	Citation to other regulations and rules	In accordance with guidance above, describe regulations or rules and whether they align with the best practice	Gaps/opportunities for legal or regulatory reform
Secondary registration units established					
Mobile registration units permitted					
Primary registration areas are reasonably accessible to all persons in the country					

11. National control or uniform/model law

Best Practice Achieved? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Best practice: Countries with a decentralized system for civil registration should adopt uniform legal provisions and procedures for civil registration. In general, countries having decentralized systems should have procedures that outline a model/uniform law and its regulations so that each major civil division may promulgate its own laws and regulations to closely conform to the recommended model.³⁴

Centralized systems will issue instructions to local offices, but may allow a degree of flexibility and discretion for local registrars.³⁵

Guidance: Indicate whether the central civil registration authority has issued model/uniform frameworks or decentralized systems, as well as regulations and any guidance related to adoption of the model framework. For centralized systems, indicate whether the central registrar has issued regulations, standard operating procedures, or training manuals. Describe the extent of instructions to local registrars and the extent of local discretion. For either system, indicate where there is regional variance across the different jurisdictions.

³⁴ United Nations, Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System, Revision 3, New York, 2014. Paras. 49, 317-318.

³⁵ United Nations, Handbook on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems: Preparation of a Legal Framework, New York, 1998. pp. 41-42, paras. 100-102; United Nations, Handbook of Vital Statistics Systems and Methods Volume I: Legal, Organizational, and Technical Aspects, New York, 1991. P. 19.

	Citation to specific provisions of responsive legislation	In accordance with guidance above, describe legislation and whether it aligns with the best practice	Citation to other regulations and rules	In accordance with guidance above, describe regulations or rules and whether they align with the best practice	Gaps/opportunities for legal or regulatory reform
For centralized systems, there should be uniform regulations or standard operating procedures					
For decentralized systems, there should be a national uniform or model law					

12. Fitness of registrars

Best Practice Achieved? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Best Practice: Clear requirements governing registrars' fitness must be clearly outlined because registrars hold significant power in assigning legal identity at birth and closing legal identity upon death. Registrars may also collect fees directly, which make them vulnerable to corruption claims. As such, it is important that there is a strong legal framework that governs the requirements and qualifications for a registrar, the proper conduct of a registrar, and how they are appointed. Registrars should be full-time officials, enjoy civil-service status, and be adequately paid.³⁶ Routine inspections of local registrars by the central office are required.³⁷ There should be explicit penalties for failure to carry out duties, as well as incentives to encourage local registrars to fulfill their duties.³⁸ There should be clear procedures and penalties for instances of deliberate misconduct by registrars, including fraudulent registrations or inappropriate disclosures.³⁹

Guidance: Describe the legal framework related to matters of registrars' qualifications, fitness, and civil status, as well as the procedures specified to monitor, reward, and correct the conduct of registrars.

	Citation to specific provisions of responsive legislation	In accordance with guidance above, describe legislation and whether it aligns with the best practice	Citation to other regulations and rules	In accordance with guidance above, describe regulations or rules and whether they align with the best practice	Gaps/opportunities for legal or regulatory reform
Rules governing proper conduct of registrar					

³⁶ United Nations, Handbook on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems: Preparation of a Legal Framework, New York, 1998. P. 40, para. 98.

³⁷ United Nations, Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System, Revision 3, New York, 2014. Para. 335.

³⁸ United Nations, Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System, Revision 3, New York, 2014. Paras. 338-339.

³⁹ United Nations, Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System, Revision 3, New York, 2014. Para. 326.

	Citation to specific provisions of responsive legislation	In accordance with guidance above, describe legislation and whether it aligns with the best practice	Citation to other regulations and rules	In accordance with guidance above, describe regulations or rules and whether they align with the best practice	Gaps/opportunities for legal or regulatory reform
Qualifications for registrars					
Full-time, adequately paid, civil servant status					

	Citation to specific provisions of responsive legislation	In accordance with guidance above, describe legislation and whether it aligns with the best practice	Citation to other regulations and rules	In accordance with guidance above, describe regulations or rules and whether they align with the best practice	Gaps/opportunities for legal or regulatory reform
Routine inspections by central office					
Penalties for failure to carry out duties					

	Citation to specific provisions of responsive legislation	In accordance with guidance above, describe legislation and whether it aligns with the best practice	Citation to other regulations and rules	In accordance with guidance above, describe regulations or rules and whether they align with the best practice	Gaps/opportunities for legal or regulatory reform
Explicit penalties for deliberate misconduct					
Other incentives for registrars					

13. Process for sharing information between local and national registrar offices

Best Practice Achieved? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Best practice: There must be a clear designation of the definitive register, i.e., the centralized civil register, local registers, and the procedures for transfer of information among them. The legal framework should be clear regarding the definitive source of information regarding vital event, i.e., the centralized register, with enough flexibility to use electronic registers. The framework should also permit the use of local registers to facilitate decentralization and set timeframes for the transfer of information from the local to the centralized register. This framework should cover delivery of copies of registers and/or compilation of reports derived from the register of all vital events occurring in the territory of the reporting official during the reporting period.⁴⁰

Local registrars should be able to issue registration certificates for legal, administrative, and other purposes. Information necessary for certification might be contained in that local register, another local register, or in the central register. Therefore, steps should be taken to speed up processing and information sharing to facilitate direct and official communication between the different registries.⁴¹

Guidance: Describe the legal framework related to centralized and local registers, and the transfer of information between them. Indicate any provisions of the framework that might preclude use of electronic registers.

	Citation to specific provisions of responsive legislation	In accordance with guidance above, describe legislation and whether it aligns with the best practice	Citation to other regulations and rules	In accordance with guidance above, describe regulations or rules and whether they align with the best practice	Gaps/opportunities for legal or regulatory reform
Clear process for transfer of information from local registers to definitive register					

⁴⁰ United Nations, Handbook on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems: Preparation of a Legal Framework, New York, 1998. P. 37, para. 93.

⁴¹ United Nations, Handbook on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems: Preparation of Legal a Framework, New York, 1998. Pp. 17-18, para. 42.

	Citation to specific provisions of responsive legislation	In accordance with guidance above, describe legislation and whether it aligns with the best practice	Citation to other regulations and rules	In accordance with guidance above, describe regulations or rules and whether they align with the best practice	Gaps/opportunities for legal or regulatory reform
Process includes clear timeline					
Local offices able to provide certified copies of information from the definitive register					

05

Chapter

Technology and Security Issues

Why it is important: There are significant benefits to using information technology (IT) in civil registration systems, including improved coverage and access to civil registration services. However, electronic transmission and storage of personally identifiable information raise privacy and security issues, particularly unlawful access and misuse of information. Countries moving toward electronic systems should ensure appropriate restrictions are in place to protect individuals' privacy.

14. Technology

Best Practice Achieved? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Best Practice: The use of computers, tablets, and other electronic devices should be permitted for collection of data for births, deaths, and causes of death, and this data should be allowed to be transmitted using mobile technology and/or the Internet between government agencies and other authorized entities.⁴² Electronic signatures (or unique identifiers in lieu of signatures) should be explicitly permitted to facilitate electronic collection of information, registration of vital events, and issuance of certificates.⁴³

Guidance: Describe any law relating to digitization of CRVS information. Describe laws related to the permitted use or prohibition of technology (e.g., computers, tablets, phones, or other devices) to collect and transmit data related to births, deaths, and/or causes of death. If there is no law specifically applicable to CRVS information, describe any laws related to the use or prohibition of technology in other settings that might be applied by analogy.

	Citation to specific provisions of responsive legislation	In accordance with guidance above, describe legislation and whether it aligns with the best practice	Citation to other regulations and rules	In accordance with guidance above, describe regulations or rules and whether they align with the best practice	Gaps/opportunities for legal or regulatory reform
Data collected by government					

⁴² United Nations, Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System, Revision 3, New York, 2014. Paras. 378, 381-382.

⁴³ Pacific Community, Legislation for Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in the Pacific: Best Practice Guidelines and Examples, Noumea, Secretariat of the Pacific Community, 2016. P. 46.

	Citation to specific provisions of responsive legislation	In accordance with guidance above, describe legislation and whether it aligns with the best practice	Citation to other regulations and rules	In accordance with guidance above, describe regulations or rules and whether they align with the best practice	Gaps/opportunities for legal or regulatory reform
Data shared among government agencies					
Data shared with interested persons (digital certificates)					

	Citation to specific provisions of responsive legislation	In accordance with guidance above, describe legislation and whether it aligns with the best practice	Citation to other regulations and rules	In accordance with guidance above, describe regulations or rules and whether they align with the best practice	Gaps/opportunities for legal or regulatory reform
Online registration (e-government system)					
Use of electronic signatures (or unique identifiers in lieu of signatures) is permitted					

15. Security of sensitive digital information

Best Practice Achieved? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Best practice: Increasingly, data is being collected and transmitted using mobile technology or the Internet. Technology can make a CRVS system more efficient and should be permitted for collection, transmission, and storage of CRVS data; however, it raises concerns regarding the security of sensitive personal information.⁴⁴

Guidance: Describe laws related to the secure transmission of data using mobile networks and/or the Internet, including any requirements related to encryption. If there is no law specifically applicable to the security of CRVS information, describe any laws related to the use or prohibition of technology in other settings that might be applied by analogy. Describe the legal framework for allowing legitimate use of data by academics and other members of the public for the benefit of the country, while protecting sensitive personal data.

	Citation to specific provisions of responsive legislation	In accordance with guidance above, describe legislation and whether it aligns with the best practice	Citation to other regulations and rules	In accordance with guidance above, describe regulations or rules and whether they align with the best practice	Gaps/opportunities for legal or regulatory reform
Encryption and data security for digitally transmitted and stored data					

⁴⁴ For more information, see United Nations, Handbook on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems: Computerization, New York, 1998; Harbitz, M., Gregson, K. Toward Universal Birth Registration: A Systemic Approach to Application of ICT, Inter-American Development Bank and UNICEF, 2015.

	Citation to specific provisions of responsive legislation	In accordance with guidance above, describe legislation and whether it aligns with the best practice	Citation to other regulations and rules	In accordance with guidance above, describe regulations or rules and whether they align with the best practice	Gaps/opportunities for legal or regulatory reform
Systems in place to ensure storing, archiving, and back-up of digital information					

06

Chapter

Key Issues with Registration

Why it is important: Registration is the foundation of legal identity and facilitates access to key population services, such as education and healthcare. Complete registration of vital events, particularly births and deaths, is essential for realizing human rights and promoting better health outcomes.

16. Universal application

Best Practice Achieved? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Best Practice: There must be a legal requirement for the civil register authority to register all births and deaths, and to keep foetal deaths in a separate register for statistical purposes. In keeping with the UN principles for a CRVS system, registration should be inclusive and compulsory, and should capture all vital events occurring in every geographical area and every population group in the country.⁴⁵

Guidance: Describe whether registration is compulsory and, if so, for whom. Indicate whether the law applies to all vital events that occur in the country. Consider all forms of discrimination that may take place, including geography, racial; ethnic or religious groups; nomadic, displaced, native or aboriginal populations; refugees or asylum seekers within the country; foreign nationals born in the country; temporary workers; or any other characteristics. Indicate whether and how the law applies to citizens of the country residing abroad. Consider whether the law requires the government to take affirmative steps to register people who might not otherwise be able to, such as persons with disabilities, persons who speak other languages, and persons who live in remote areas.

⁴⁵ United Nations, Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System, Revision 3, New York, 2014. Para. 34.

		Citation to specific provisions of responsive legislation	In accordance with guidance above, describe legislation and whether it aligns with the best practice	Citation to other regulations and rules	In accordance with guidance above, describe regulations or rules and whether they align with the best practice	Gaps/opportunities for legal or regulatory reform
Live birth	Compulsory for all					
	Regardless of race, gender, religion, ethnicity, or population group					
	Regardless of nationality, residency, or refugee/asylum status					
	Regardless of geography					
	Regardless of objections by person or the family					
	Regardless of other characteristics					

		Citation to specific provisions of responsive legislation	In accordance with guidance above, describe legislation and whether it aligns with the best practice	Citation to other regulations and rules	In accordance with guidance above, describe regulations or rules and whether they align with the best practice	Gaps/opportunities for legal or regulatory reform
Death	Compulsory for all					
	Regardless of race, gender, religion, ethnicity, or population group					
	Regardless of nationality, residency, or refugee/asylum status					
	Regardless of geography					
	Regardless of objections by person or the family					
	Regardless of other characteristics					

		Citation to specific provisions of responsive legislation	In accordance with guidance above, describe legislation and whether it aligns with the best practice	Citation to other regulations and rules	In accordance with guidance above, describe regulations or rules and whether they align with the best practice	Gaps/opportunities for legal or regulatory reform
Foetal death	Compulsory for all					
	Regardless of race, gender, religion, ethnicity, or population group					
	Regardless of nationality, residency, or refugee/asylum status					
	Regardless of geography					
	Regardless of objections by person or the family					
	Regardless of other characteristics					

		Citation to specific provisions of responsive legislation	In accordance with guidance above, describe legislation and whether it aligns with the best practice	Citation to other regulations and rules	In accordance with guidance above, describe regulations or rules and whether they align with the best practice	Gaps/opportunities for legal or regulatory reform
Other considerations	Citizens living abroad					
	Persons with disabilities					
	Persons in remote areas					
	Persons who speak native languages					
	Persons who speak foreign languages					

17. Definition of vital event and other key terms

Best Practice Achieved? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Best Practice: Clear definitions are required to establish a system for collecting high-quality data. Definitions should align with international World Health Organization (WHO) standards; this will help countries track development progress and meet international reporting requirements.

The UN definition of “live birth” is the following: the complete expulsion or extraction from its mother of a product of conception, irrespective of the duration of pregnancy, which, after such separation, breathes or shows any other evidence of life, such as beating of the heart, pulsation of the umbilical cord, or any definite movement of voluntary muscles, whether or not the umbilical cord has been cut or the placenta is attached.

The UN definition of “death” is the following: the permanent disappearance of all evidence of life at any time after live birth has taken place (post-natal cessation of vital functions without capability of resuscitation). This definition therefore excludes foetal deaths.

“Foetal death” is defined by the WHO as death prior to the complete expulsion or extraction from its mother of a product of conception, irrespective of the duration of the pregnancy. The death is indicated when, after such separation, the foetus does not breathe or show any other evidence of life, such as beating of the heart, pulsation of the umbilical cord, or definite movement of voluntary muscles.

Tracking stillbirths and other foetal deaths is important for public health purposes, and some countries therefore maintain a separate foetal death register, including stillbirths. Because these foetal deaths are registered separately, stillbirths and other foetal deaths should not be registered in the birth register, as they do not affect civil status. Countries should differentiate between a stillbirth, which should be registered in the foetal death registry, and a child death, when there is a birth but a death soon thereafter, which is registered in the birth and death registries.

Dead fetuses weighing 500 grams or more at birth (or those of 22 completed weeks of gestation or crown-heel body length of 25 centimeters or more if weight is not known) should be registered. For statistical purposes, terminology such as “abortion,” “early foetal death,” and “late foetal death” should be replaced with weight-specific measures.⁴⁶

Guidance: Include the definition of each vital event contained in the country’s legal framework. Note: Definitions for vital events are also considered in Chapter III, Section 2. For the purposes of this section, pay particular attention to whether the definitions, read together, are coherent and whether the definitions of life and death create any other legal issues. Indicate whether and how the legal framework deals with the (non-)registration of foetal deaths and stillbirths. If there are any other key definitions, note these below in a separate row and indicate whether they align with UN definitions or otherwise advance or delay the registration work.

⁴⁶ United Nations, Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System, Revision 3, New York, 2014. Para. 2, footnote 3.

	Citation to specific provisions of responsive legislation	In accordance with guidance above, describe legislation and whether it aligns with the best practice	Citation to other regulations and rules	In accordance with guidance above, describe regulations or rules and whether they align with the best practice	Gaps/opportunities for legal or regulatory reform
Live birth					
Death					
Foetal death					
Other key terms					

18. Minimum information required to register

Best Practice Achieved? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Best Practice: The UN recommends that minimum information be required for registration of births, deaths, and foetal deaths. In addition to the information required for registering a vital event, additional information is recommended for public health purposes to be included in statistical reports in order to improve public health analyses.⁴⁷ For judicial and administrative purposes, additional data elements required to be captured for the registration of vital events must be clearly listed in the register.⁴⁸ Ideally, the legislation should not prescribe the precise format of the register(s)—in contrast to data elements to be captured—as this may be overly prescriptive. (For more details on the information required for registration of each vital event, see the worksheet of CRVS minimum information best practices on the next page.)

Guidance: Describe whether information is required to be captured in the register and related forms in order to register a vital event, as well as whether information is required to be included in statistical report. For manner of death and cause-of-death information, describe exactly which information must be provided. Indicate which data elements are included among the administrative data recorded for the registration of each vital event. Consider whether the data elements and form required are overly prescriptive.

In order to compare the various requirements against best practices, complete the additional worksheet on the following page.

	Citation to specific provisions of responsive legislation	In accordance with guidance above, describe legislation and whether it aligns with the best practice	Citation to other regulations and rules	In accordance with guidance above, describe regulations or rules and whether they align with the best practice	Gaps/opportunities for legal or regulatory reform
Live birth					

⁴⁷ UN Recommendations, para. 66, Table III.1.

⁴⁸ United Nations, Handbook of Vital Statistics Systems and Methods Volume I: Legal, Organizational, and technical aspects, New York, 1991. P. 23.

	Citation to specific provisions of responsive legislation	In accordance with guidance above, describe legislation and whether it aligns with the best practice	Citation to other regulations and rules	In accordance with guidance above, describe regulations or rules and whether they align with the best practice	Gaps/opportunities for legal or regulatory reform
Death					
Foetal death					

18A. Worksheet: Minimum information required to register

	Best Practice: Live Birth	Actual: Live Birth	Best Practices: Foetal Death	Actual: Foetal Death	Best Practices: Death	Actual: Death
Characteristic of Event [●=Compulsory, ○=Recommended]						
Date, (time) and place of registration	●		●		●	
Date, (time) and place of occurrence	●		●		●	
Attendant at birth	●		○		●	
Type of place of occurrence (hospital, home, etc.)	○		○		○	
Type of birth (twin, triplet, etc.)	●		○			
Cause of death			○		●	
Manner of death					○	
Whether autopsy findings used to establish COD					○	
Death occurring during pregnancy, childbirth, puerperium					○	
Certifier			○		●	
Characteristics of Newborn/Foetus [●=Compulsory, ○=Recommended]						
Sex	●		●			
Weight at birth	●		○			
Delivered in wedlock			○			
Characteristics of Mother/Father/Decedent [▼=Mother (C), ▽=Mother (R); ▲=Father (C), △=Father (R); ■=Decedent (C), Decedent (R)]						
Date of birth	▼/▲		▼/▲		■	
Sex	-/-		-/-		■	
Marital status	▼/▲				■	
Educational attainment	▼/▲		▽/△		□	
Literacy status	▽/△		▽/△		□	
Ethnic and/or national group	▽/△		▽/△		□	
Citizenship	▽/△		▽/△		□	

	Best Practice: Live Birth	Actual: Live Birth	Best Practices: Foetal Death	Actual: Foetal Death	Best Practices: Death	Actual: Death
Economic activity status	▽/△		▽/△		□	
Usual occupation	▽/△		▽/△		□	
Whether birth was registered*					□	
Born in wedlock*					□	
Place of usual residence	▼/▲		▼/▲		■	
Place of usual residence of mother*					■	
Duration of residence in usual place	▼/△		▽/△		□	
Place of previous residence	▽/△		▽/△		□	
Place/country of birth	▼/△		▽/△		□	
Date of last menstrual period	▽		▽			
Number of prenatal visits	▽		▽			
Month of pregnancy prenatal care began	▽		▽			
Children born alive to mother during her entire lifetime	▼		▼			
Children born alive to mother during her entire lifetime and still living	▽		▽			
Foetal deaths to mother during her entire lifetime	▼		▼			
Date of last previous life birth	▼		▼			
Date of marriage	▼		▼			
Additional Information for Legal Identity Registration [●=Compulsory, ○=Recommended]						
Name and surname	●				●	
Name and surname of parents	●				●	
Nationality	●				●	
Nationality of parents	●					
Identity, signature, and seal of Registrar	●				●	
Identity document & registration data relating to birth					●	

*For deaths under 1 year of age.

	Best Practice: Live Birth	Actual: Live Birth	Best Practices: Foetal Death	Actual: Foetal Death	Best Practices: Death	Actual: Death
Additional Information for Administrative Registration [●=Compulsory, ○=Recommended]						
Number of the record	●				●	
Name and geographical code of the local civil registration office	●				●	
Unique ID number of child/decedent	●				●	
Unique ID number of parents	●					
Name and surname of informant	●				●	
Unique ID number of informant	○				○	
Informant's place of usual residence	●				●	
Informant's relationship to child/decedent	●				●	
Documentation presented by the informant**	●				●	
Name(s) and surname(s) of witness(es)					●	
Unique ID number(s) of witness(es)					●	
Signatures of informant and local registrar***	●				●	

**Medical certificate issued by physician or midwife, coroner's report, verbal autopsy, MCCOD

***Note: Leave space for complementary notations and remarks and for official stamps

19. Informants

Best Practice Achieved? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Best Practice: Registration records should be completed as soon as possible after the vital event. The simplest and quickest method to achieve this is to require an informant to provide the needed information soon after the event has occurred.⁴⁹ The informant is the person who is legally required to report to the local registrar the occurrence and details of a vital event within the prescribed time limit.⁵⁰ The informant is important because the registrar can only register a vital event on the basis of the informant's declaration, either verbally or in writing.⁵¹ The law should clearly and unequivocally ensure that there is one and only one person primarily responsible for serving this role; however, the law may designate individual alternatives.⁵² The appropriate informant, in priority order of preference for the different types of vital event, are given below:⁵³

Informant	Live birth and foetal death	Infant death	Death of an adult person
The head of the institution (or designee) if the event occurred in an institution	1	1	1
The mother	2	2	--
The father	3	3	--
The attendant at the delivery	4	--	--
The nearest relative of the mother	5	4	--
The nearest relative (e.g., the surviving spouse or partner; or a brother, a sister, the father or mother of the decedent)	--	--	2
Any other adult person having knowledge of the facts	6	5	3

49 United Nations, Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System, Revision 3, New York, 2014. Para. 281.

50 United Nations, Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System, Revision 3, New York, 2014. Paras. 349, 356.

51 United Nations, Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System, Revision 3, New York, 2014. Para. 351.

52 United Nations, Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System, Revision 3, New York, 2014. Para. 352.

53 Note inconsistencies among UN documents: This list comes from Cf. United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Statistics Division, New York, 2001. P. 59. However, other documents are either less prescriptive or inconsistent, e.g., United Nations, Handbook on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems: Preparation of a Legal Framework, New York, 1998. Pp. 48-49, paras. 119-121; births: p. 181, article 67; foetal deaths: p. 193, article 118; adult deaths: p. 191, article 107; United Nations Handbook of Vital Statistics Systems and Methods Volume 1: Legal, Organizational, and Technical Aspects, New York, 1991. Pp. 19-20, paras. 169-172.

When vital events occur in health institutions, the most effective approach is to designate the institution as primarily responsible for notifying the event.⁵⁴ In certain circumstances, especially those involving unnatural deaths and deaths occurring outside of health facilities, police and other officials with knowledge of the facts should bear responsibility for informing the registrar of the vital event. Unnatural deaths and deaths occurring outside of health facilities are often underreported because many CRVS systems rely on families (rather than government authorities) to report these deaths. There should be a clear requirement for someone other than family members to refer suspected unnatural deaths for investigation. The requirement should also indicate who should report the suspected unnatural death, who should receive this information, and the procedures for doing so.⁵⁵

When no other informant is able to report the vital events, any adult with knowledge of the fact should be required (or at least permitted) to report the vital event. Responsibility might be placed on other government officials, such as local government representatives, tribal leaders, coroners,⁵⁶ medical examiners, or community health workers. Religious actors who might be responsible for notifying home births or deaths could include priests, imams, or others presiding over naming ceremonies or funeral/burial ceremonies. Funeral directors may also be required to provide information to the registrar based on particulars collected about the decedent from next of kin.⁵⁷ Countries should consider how best to ensure that information from these possible informants is shared with the civil registrar –whether through an obligation to notify within a specified time period or by keeping a register that is shared with the civil registrar on a periodic basis.

Guidance: For each vital event, indicate the enumerated informants, any hierarchy, and whether each is permitted or required, as well as any special procedures for informing the civil registrar.

	Citation to specific provisions of responsive legislation	In accordance with guidance above, describe legislation and whether it aligns with the best practice	Citation to other regulations and rules	In accordance with guidance above, describe regulations or rules and whether they align with the best practice	Gaps/opportunities for legal or regulatory reform
Live birth					

⁵⁴ United Nations, Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System, Revision 3, New York, 2014. Para. 350.

⁵⁵ United Nations, Handbook on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems: Preparation of a Legal Framework, New York, 1998. Pp. 52-53, paras. 126, 128.

⁵⁶ While UN guidance is silent regarding the requirement for coroners to notify unnatural deaths to the civil registrar, the US model law contains a clear requirement for coroners to report unnatural deaths to the civil registrar. Model State Vital Statistics Act and Model State Vital Statistics Regulations 2011. Revision, p. 29, lines 1219-1223.

⁵⁷ United Nations, Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System, Revision 3, New York, 2014. Para. 350; Model State Vital Statistics Act and Model State Vital Statistics Regulations 2011. Revision, p. 29, lines 1219-1223.

	Citation to specific provisions of responsive legislation	In accordance with guidance above, describe legislation and whether it aligns with the best practice	Citation to other regulations and rules	In accordance with guidance above, describe regulations or rules and whether they align with the best practice	Gaps/opportunities for legal or regulatory reform
Death					
Foetal death					

20. Place of Registration

Best Practice Achieved? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Best Practice: A legal framework might limit registration of vital events to a primary registration area in a certain location: (1) the place of the event's occurrence, (2) the decedent's/mother's usual residence, or (3) either location. Allowing registration at the place of the event's occurrence, rather than requiring that it occur at a residence, should facilitate and accelerate registration of vital events. If registration at both place of residency and place of occurrence is not practical, it is preferable to require vital events to be registered at the place of occurrence.⁵⁸

In the case of births, even where registration is limited to place of occurrence, the place of mother's usual residence should still be recorded for statistical and legal purposes.⁵⁹

Guidance: Describe where registration of vital events must occur (i.e., place of residence vs. place of occurrence vs. either).

	Citation to specific provisions of responsive legislation	In accordance with guidance above, describe legislation and whether it aligns with the best practice	Citation to other regulations and rules	In accordance with guidance above, describe regulations or rules and whether they align with the best practice	Gaps/opportunities for legal or regulatory reform
Live birth					

⁵⁸ United Nations, Handbook of Vital Statistics Systems and Methods Volume I: Legal, Organizational, and Technical Aspects, New York, 1991. p. 20, paras. 177-179.

⁵⁹ United Nations, Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System, Revision 3, New York, 2014. Para. 358.

	Citation to specific provisions of responsive legislation	In accordance with guidance above, describe legislation and whether it aligns with the best practice	Citation to other regulations and rules	In accordance with guidance above, describe regulations or rules and whether they align with the best practice	Gaps/opportunities for legal or regulatory reform
Death					
Foetal death					

21. Time allowed for registration

Best Practice Achieved? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Best Practice: The UN recommends that uniform processes and time periods for registering vital events be applied throughout the country. The maximum time period allowed for registration should be as short as possible so as to facilitate current and accurate registration. Deadlines are often between 14-30 days for birth registration and around 3 days for death registration, but vary by country.⁶⁰ A grace period of up to one year after the event has occurred may be allowed for extenuating circumstances.⁶¹

Guidance: Describe the deadlines for timely registration. Pay attention to whether different stakeholders have different deadlines. Indicate who, if anyone, has authority to modify these deadlines and under what circumstances. Note: Late and delayed registrations are discussed in Chapter III, Section 25.

	Citation to specific provisions of responsive legislation	In accordance with guidance above, describe legislation and whether it aligns with the best practice	Citation to other regulations and rules	In accordance with guidance above, describe regulations or rules and whether they align with the best practice	Gaps/opportunities for legal or regulatory reform
Live birth					

⁶⁰ United Nations, Handbook of Vital Statistics Systems and Methods Volume I: Legal, Organizational, and Technical Aspects, New York, 1991. Pp. 20-21, paras. 180-184.

⁶¹ United Nations, Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System, Revision 3, New York, 2014. Para. 363.

	Citation to specific provisions of responsive legislation	In accordance with guidance above, describe legislation and whether it aligns with the best practice	Citation to other regulations and rules	In accordance with guidance above, describe regulations or rules and whether they align with the best practice	Gaps/opportunities for legal or regulatory reform
Death					
Foetal death					

22. Cost of current registration

Best Practice Achieved? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Best Practice: UN principles for a registration system state that there should be no charge for registering a birth, death, or foetal death.⁶² Payment of any fee to register these vital events before the statutory deadline would act as a disincentive to timely registration. Sometimes, there is no fee if the event is registered before a deadline, but there is a fee if registered after the deadline.

Guidance: Include details of all fees and deadlines related to notification and registration of vital events that are included in the legal framework. Note that costs of receiving certificates are analyzed in Chapter III, Section 26.

	Citation to specific provisions of responsive legislation	In accordance with guidance above, describe legislation and whether it aligns with the best practice	Citation to other regulations and rules	In accordance with guidance above, describe regulations or rules and whether they align with the best practice	Gaps/opportunities for legal or regulatory reform
Live birth					

⁶² United Nations, Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System, Revision 3, New York, 2014. Para. 364.

	Citation to specific provisions of responsive legislation	In accordance with guidance above, describe legislation and whether it aligns with the best practice	Citation to other regulations and rules	In accordance with guidance above, describe regulations or rules and whether they align with the best practice	Gaps/opportunities for legal or regulatory reform
Death					
Foetal death					

23. Proof required to register

Best Practice Achieved? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Best Practice: Registrars should require proof of the veracity of the information to be registered. The level or proof or evidence required for registration must be sufficiently stringent to provide assurance of the accuracy of the information without being so burdensome as to discourage registration.⁶³ Verification of the vital event can be achieved through documentary or oral evidence. Documentary evidence is always preferred, with the most common form of documentary evidence being a medical notification of birth, medical certificate of cause of death (MCCOD), or a coroner's report; however, these may not always be available and, in such cases, witnesses may be substituted.^{64,65,66}

The health sector should be obliged to issue medical notifications of birth — free of charge — for all medically attended births. A medical certificate of birth constitutes critical documentary evidence of the occurrence of a birth, which can be used to satisfy CR verification requirements. Consequently, it is important that the medical birth certificates be issued free of charge in a uniform format throughout the country.⁶⁷

UN documents acknowledge that, although cause-of-death information is essential for public health purposes, it should not generally be required to register a death.⁶⁸ However, in some countries, notification of the “fact of death” is verified by delivering the MCCOD, which will contain the cause of death (COD). This raises two issues: If delivery of the MCCOD as evidence of the fact of death is required in order to register the death, countries may inadvertently be creating a requirement for COD as part of the registration process. In order to protect the confidentiality of the deceased and their surviving family, the physician may alter the COD on the MCCOD if the death is due to a stigmatized cause, such as HIV or suicide, which could bias COD statistics for health policy- and decision-making.

Guidance: Describe the documents or other evidence required to register a vital event within the statutory deadline. Describe any requirement for medical professionals and/or the health sector to issue a medical certificate of birth and any payment required for the issuance. Describe whether an MCCOD or other proof of COD is required to register a death (separate the requirements for medically attended deaths and deaths that occur at home).

Local rules should provide guidance on how to determine the place and time of the vital event. This will be especially important where the event was unattended and there are no reliable witnesses. For example, jurisdictional questions may arise with unattended deaths, such as persons who are found dead or brought-in-dead to health facilities. As a default, death is generally pronounced either (a) in an institution at the time when a medical practitioner observes the death, or (b) when and where a body is discovered, regardless of when the death occurred. Medical examiners, coroners, or medical-legal officer may declare a more accurate place and time of occurrence after further examination and investigation. There should also be rules to determine time and place of unattended births, such as a child discovered without any known guardians (foundlings), or when the location is necessary for determining nationality. Children without a provable date and place of birth are

63 United Nations, Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System, Revision 3, New York, 2014. Para 365-366.

64 United Nations, Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System, Revision 3, New York, 2014. Paras. 365-366, 368.

65 United Nations, Handbook of Vital Statistics Systems and Methods Volume I: Legal, organizational and technical aspects, New York, 1991. P. 21, paras. 189-192.

66 United Nations, Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System, Revision 3, New York, 2014. Para 371. For late or delayed registrations, the law should indicate the required documentary evidence that is acceptable for late or delayed registrations. See Section 25.

67 United Nations, Handbook on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems: Preparation of a Legal Framework, New York, 1998. P. 51, para. 124.

68 United Nations, Handbook on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems: Preparation of a Legal Framework, New York, 1998. Pp. 52-52, para. 126.

particularly vulnerable, so the country should have clear rules emphasizing the best interest of the child and avoiding any possibility of statelessness. There should also be rules for determining the place of occurrence when the event occurs on a moving vehicle, such as a car, train, ship, or train.

	Citation to specific provisions of responsive legislation	In accordance with guidance above, describe legislation and whether it aligns with the best practice	Citation to other regulations and rules	In accordance with guidance above, describe regulations or rules and whether they align with the best practice	Gaps/opportunities for legal or regulatory reform
Live birth					
Death					
Foetal death					

24. Provision for late and delayed registration

Best Practice Achieved? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Best Practice: A late registration occurs after the legally specified time period, but within a grace period, usually one year after the vital event.⁶⁹ Delayed registration occurs after the grace period.⁷⁰ Deadlines for birth registration are often between 14-30 days and around 3 days for death registration, but vary by country.⁷¹ While late registration should be discouraged so that vital events are registered in a timely manner, the procedures should not be so restrictive that they prevent late registration of events. Procedures should take account of the difficulties in finding or verifying evidence of past events while striving to maintain the integrity of the records.⁷²

Guidance: Describe the process and timelines for late and delayed registration of vital events. Note whether fees, the required proof, or other requirements are different for late and delayed registration. Indicate whether fees can be amended without legislative action.

	Citation to specific provisions of responsive legislation	In accordance with guidance above, describe legislation and whether it aligns with the best practice	Citation to other regulations and rules	In accordance with guidance above, describe regulations or rules and whether they align with the best practice	Gaps/opportunities for legal or regulatory reform
Live birth					

69 United Nations, Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System, Revision 3, New York, 2014. Para. 363.

70 United Nations, Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System, Revision 3, New York, 2014. Paras. 369-370.

71 United Nations, Handbook of Vital Statistics Systems and Methods Volume I: Legal, Organizational, and Technical aspects, New York, 1991. P. 21, para. 182.

72 United Nations, Handbook on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems: Preparation of a Legal Framework, New York, 1998. P. 57, para. 135.

	Citation to specific provisions of responsive legislation	In accordance with guidance above, describe legislation and whether it aligns with the best practice	Citation to other regulations and rules	In accordance with guidance above, describe regulations or rules and whether they align with the best practice	Gaps/opportunities for legal or regulatory reform
Death					
Foetal death					

25. Certified copies of vital event information

Best Practice Achieved? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Best Practice: A key responsibility of the registrar is to issue birth and death certificates, which serve as official evidence of the information on vital events listed in the register.⁷³ A certificate is a document, in paper or electronic format, issued by the registrar and containing all or part of the exact information included in the original vital record, and which, when issued by the registrar, has the full force and effect of the original vital record.⁷⁴ These certificates come in several forms, including a computer printout, a photocopy or reproduction of the original record, or a separate form with handwritten or typed information. Depending on the information required, the certificate may contain all the information from the register (full- or long-form) or limited information (partial- or short-form).

Only interested parties or their legal representatives should be able to request full certificates. Limited forms, such as information contained in a short-form certificate, may be information that is in the public domain – such as full name, name of parents, sex, place and date of birth, marriage, and death. Other information may be sensitive, and disclosure to the wrong person could violate the right to privacy – issues of paternity and wedlock, cause of death information, etc. Only the immediate family, spouses, heirs, and third parties with a legitimate interest should have access to such sensitive information.⁷⁵ The local registrar should have authority to determine the legitimacy of such requests. Government agencies may also require such information for legitimate purposes.

The receipt of a birth or death certificate, which is required for access to certain services, is often a significant incentive for registration. On the other hand, charging for a certificate can serve as a disincentive for registration. Although UN principles provide that issuance of the original certificate may be subject to a fee,⁷⁶ other experts recommend that the first certificate be issued free of charge.^{77,78}

Note that foetal death registration is for statistical, not legal, purposes, so certificates should not be issued for foetal deaths.⁷⁹

Guidance: Indicate who is able to receive certified copies of information on vital events contained in the register, what evidence is required to prove the identity of the requester, and what information is contained in the certified copy, whether full or partial. Include details of all fees payable in connection with receipt of the certified copy. Differentiate original vs. additional copies, if applicable.

⁷³ United Nations, Handbook on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems: Preparation of a Legal Framework, New York, 1998. Pp. 65-67, paras. 153-158.

⁷⁴ Model State Vital Statistics Act and Model State Vital Statistics Regulations 2011 Revision, p. 4, lines 140-144.

⁷⁵ United Nations, Handbook on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems: Preparation of a Legal Framework, New York, 1998. Pp. 14-15, para. 37.

⁷⁶ United Nations, Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System, Revision 3, New York, 2014. Para. 364.

⁷⁷ UNICEF, A Passport for Protection: A Guide to Birth Registration Programming. Ch. 1, p. 25; United Nations, Handbook on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems: Preparation of a Legal Framework, New York, 1998. P. 67, para. 158 permits fees for certificates; United Nations, Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics Systems, Revision 3, New York, 2014. Para. 364.

⁷⁸ United Nations, Handbook on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems: Preparation of a Legal Framework, New York, 1998. P. 67, para. 158 permits fees for certificates; United Nations, Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics Systems, Revision 3, New York, 2014. Para. 364.

⁷⁹ United Nations, Handbook of Vital Statistics Systems and Methods Volume 1: Legal, Organizational, and Technical aspects, New York, 1991. P. 16, para. 123.

	Citation to specific provisions of responsive legislation	In accordance with guidance above, describe legislation and whether it aligns with the best practice	Citation to other regulations and rules	In accordance with guidance above, describe regulations or rules and whether they align with the best practice	Gaps/opportunities for legal or regulatory reform
Live birth					
Death					
Foetal death					

26. Access linked to registration

Best Practice Achieved? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Best Practice: Complete registration of births and deaths will be affected by demand from citizens for birth and death certificates. Linking access to key services to birth/death registration can increase demand. Key services might include national IDs, passports, voter registration, drivers' licenses, access to the national health insurance plan, burial permits, access to pensions (or the pensions of loved ones who have died), inheritance, and other property rights.⁸⁰ Marriage and divorce may also be linked to registration. For example, a birth certificate may be required to prove the age of a young bride, and spouse' death certificate may be required to permit re-marriage. Some private companies may require certificates for access to services, such as life insurance, banking, cellphones, or Internet access.⁸¹

While requiring a certificate to access key services will certainly increase demand for CRVS registration, overly strict requirements can reduce access to the other services—an unintended consequence that may violate the human rights of the unregistered person. For example, if a birth certificate is mandatory for school attendance, children may be deprived of an education if their family did not register them. The system must balance these competing needs.⁸²

Guidance: Summarize whether and which CRVS documents/information are required to access any of the key services listed above. Indicate whether registration is sufficient for access to the service or whether the person or family must present the certificate proving the vital event occurred. In those cases, indicate whether the certificates are mandatory for access to the services or whether alternatives are permitted to access the system. Note that these rules are rarely included in the CRVS law, but in laws and regulations related to the particular subject area (i.e., insurance rules are contained in the insurance laws and regulations). Note that foetal death registration is for statistical, not legal, purposes, so there should not be services linked to foetal deaths.

⁸⁰ For additional uses to individuals of vital statistics, see United Nations, Handbook of Vital Statistics Systems and Methods Volume I: Legal, Organizational, and Technical aspects, New York, 1991. P 12, Table 2.1.

⁸¹ United Nations, Handbook on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems: Preparation of a Legal Framework, New York, 1998. Pp. 32, 106, paras. 82, 204, 206, 212.

⁸² UNICEF, A Passport for Protection: A Guide to Birth Registration Programming. Ch. 2, pp. 66-67.

	Citation to specific provisions of responsive legislation	In accordance with guidance above, describe legislation and whether it aligns with the best practice	Citation to other regulations and rules	In accordance with guidance above, describe regulations or rules and whether they align with the best practice	Gaps/opportunities for legal or regulatory reform
Birth certificate					
Death certificate					
Other CRVS document					

27. Other incentives and disincentives for registration

Best Practice Achieved? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Best Practice: In addition to the fees and other requirements discussed in other sections, the government may institute other measures that will create incentives or disincentives for registration. The system should be designed to make registration as quick, easy, and affordable as possible, while maintaining the integrity of the system. Unnecessary conditions for registration will act as a disincentive. Disincentives that should be avoided include additional fees or other administrative or criminal penalties, multiple or lengthy forms, multiple or lengthy trips to registrar offices, limited hours for registrars, burdensome evidence required, etc.

Requiring sensitive and potentially embarrassing information as a pre-condition for registration may also act as a disincentive and should be avoided. For example, the need to name a father in the case of a birth to a single mother can be a major barrier to registration. While it is preferable that both parents are detailed on the registration certificate (in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child), the legislation should not prevent the registration of a child's birth if the mother cannot or will not name the father, or if the father refuses to acknowledge the child. For certain population groups, requiring disclosure to a government agency of citizenship status, nationality, ethnicity, religion, or other characteristic may act as a disincentive.

Conversely, the registrar may create additional incentives for registration. These incentives might take a variety of forms, such as subsidizing fees, gifts in exchange for registration (such as newborn kits), or access to additional services. Another possible incentive for birth registration is naming rights; the UN Model Law proposes that whoever registers the birth should have the power to name the child, so long as the name chosen by father, mother, or both by mutual agreement, prevails.⁸³

Guidance: Describe all other incentives and disincentives for registering a vital event. Note if there is any presumption regarding paternity based on marital status.

⁸³ United Nations, Handbook of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems: Preparation of a Legal Framework, New York, 1998. Model State Vital Statistics Act and Model State Vital Statistics Regulations 2011 Revision, p. 183, Article 74.

	Citation to specific provisions of responsive legislation	In accordance with guidance above, describe legislation and whether it aligns with the best practice	Citation to other regulations and rules	In accordance with guidance above, describe regulations or rules and whether they align with the best practice	Gaps/opportunities for legal or regulatory reform
Live birth					
Death					
Foetal death					

28. Incomplete records, amendments, and corrections

Best Practice Achieved? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Best Practice: The legal framework should contain clear provisions for amending records, including correcting errors, name changes, disputed entries, legitimations, adoptions, and other changed circumstances. This process should be judicially led; this relieves the registrar of being a judge in his own cause.⁸⁴ Minor corrections due to clerical errors discovered at the time of registration, burial, or cremation should be permitted free of charge.⁸⁵

In some cultures, a child is not given a name until after a naming ceremony. Registration practices should be sensitive to those customs to minimize the number of name changes required, while ensuring timely registration of the birth. One way to achieve this is to register the birth with a “temporary” name and permit the delivery of a baptismal certificate within a defined number of days — at which point the child’s name will be changed.⁸⁶

Guidance: Describe which types of amendments the registrars can make on his/her own and which can only be made following judicial intervention/court order. Describe all procedures facilitating or impeding delayed naming of a child pursuant to naming ceremonies or similar customs, including time periods, certificates to be delivered, etc. Note any process for legitimation or adoption of a child following initial registration of birth.

	Citation to specific provisions of responsive legislation	In accordance with guidance above, describe legislation and whether it aligns with the best practice	Citation to other regulations and rules	In accordance with guidance above, describe regulations or rules and whether they align with the best practice	Gaps/opportunities for legal or regulatory reform
Live birth					

⁸⁴ United Nations, Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System, Revision 3, New York, 2014. Paras. 410-414.

⁸⁵ United Nations, Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System, Revision 3, New York, 2014. Para. 364.

⁸⁶ United Nations, Handbook on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems: Preparation of a Legal Framework, New York, 1998. Pp. 24-25, para. 63; p. 99, para. 178.

	Citation to specific provisions of responsive legislation	In accordance with guidance above, describe legislation and whether it aligns with the best practice	Citation to other regulations and rules	In accordance with guidance above, describe regulations or rules and whether they align with the best practice	Gaps/opportunities for legal or regulatory reform
Death					
Foetal death					

29. Monitoring and evaluation of institutional processes

Best Practice Achieved? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Best Practice: Completeness of registration can only be achieved if the legal obligation to notify and register vital events is monitored and enforced. Note that a system of supportive supervision and monitoring is likely to be more effective than a system of fines and penalties, in part because the infrastructure required to adjudicate fines and penalties may not be available (overworked court systems, appeals procedures, collection of fines, etc.).⁸⁷ In contrast, a good system of reporting, monitoring, and feedback (for example, regular reports from those obliged to notify vital events, such as health facilities, community health workers, or funeral homes, that are compared against birth and death registers) may be more feasible and effective.

Guidance: Describe any documented system of fines, incentives, or oversight to ensure institutions are complying with the legal requirement to register and provide the proof of vital events. Include a description of the monitoring system and the amount of fines or penalties, as well as parties subject to fines or penalties.

	Citation to specific provisions of responsive legislation	In accordance with guidance above, describe legislation and whether it aligns with the best practice	Citation to other regulations and rules	In accordance with guidance above, describe regulations or rules and whether they align with the best practice	Gaps/opportunities for legal or regulatory reform
Live birth					

⁸⁷ UN Recommendation, para. 294.

	Citation to specific provisions of responsive legislation	In accordance with guidance above, describe legislation and whether it aligns with the best practice	Citation to other regulations and rules	In accordance with guidance above, describe regulations or rules and whether they align with the best practice	Gaps/opportunities for legal or regulatory reform
Death					
Foetal death					

07

Chapter

Key issues for certifying cause of death

Why it is important: Understanding the cause of death (COD) and manner of death for every death is critical to ensuring that usable cause-specific mortality data are produced by the CRVS system. Countries should strive to have an accurate and detailed COD and manner of death attached to every registered death. COD information is necessary for all deaths within the country — whether the person dies in a health facility under the supervision of a physician, at home under natural causes, under violent or accidental circumstances, or during an emergency or disaster.

It is important to note the difference between the medical certificate of cause of death and the death certificate issued by the civil registration agency. The death certificate issued by the civil registrar after the death is registered provides a legal confirmation of the fact of death and enables the inheritance and settlement of an estate, issuance of burial/cremation permits, and any other entitlements pursuant to the country's legal arrangements. The medical certificate of cause of death is issued by a medical professional or health facility, certifying the fact, manner, and cause of death for the deceased; this is essential for generating vital statistics and for public health policy.

30. Compulsory COD certification

Best Practice Achieved? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Best Practice: All deaths should be assigned a manner of death and an underlying cause of death. The “manner of death” refers to the categorization of each death as either from: a natural cause; an accident, suicide, homicide, or undetermined cause. By contrast, COD provides a medical diagnosis and assigns a specific sequence of medical causes, including an underlying cause. The causes of death are “all those diseases, morbid conditions or injuries which either resulted in or contributed to death and the circumstances of the accident or violence which produced such injuries.” The underlying cause of death is defined as “the disease or injury which initiated the train of morbid events leading directly to death, or the circumstances of the accident or violence which produced the fatal injury.”⁸⁸

Guidance: In theory, a COD determination should be required before registering a death, but countries will need to consider this requirement given local conditions and capacity. Deaths that occur in health facilities under the supervision of a physician have the greatest chance of being correctly certified as to manner and cause. By contrast, deaths that occur in the home or community rarely, if ever, have an accurate cause associated with them — particularly those due to natural causes. It is particularly important to have information on unnatural deaths (e.g., homicides, poisonings, road traffic accidents and other externally caused deaths), as this information can influence policies related to drug use, homicide, road safety, etc. In most countries, those deaths are referred to the police, medical-legal services, or a coroner for investigation of manner of death and COD. By contrast, determining causes of death during a natural or man-made disaster or other emergency involving mass casualties may fall under the authority of a rescue agency or military unit.

For each of the circumstances of death listed below, describe whether any government agencies or other organizations are responsible for determining cause or manner of death. Indicate whether the agency or organization is required by law to determine cause of death and manner of death for some, or all, of those deaths, or whether they have discretion to do so. Indicate whether there are any deadlines for when the certification must be completed (e.g., within 24 hours of the death).

The next section will examine the individuals authorized to certify the cause of death, so do not include that here. Finally, remember that civil registration serves two purposes: legal and statistical. There may be researchers who determine COD for purely statistical purposes that are not legally valid, such as a survey of cancer or HIV patients. For the purposes of this section, we are only interested in legally-mandated COD determinations — not statistical studies.

⁸⁸ United Nations, Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System, Revision 3, New York, 2014. Glossary.

	Citation to specific provisions of responsive legislation	In accordance with guidance above, describe legislation and whether it aligns with the best practice	Citation to other regulations and rules	In accordance with guidance above, describe regulations or rules and whether they align with the best practice	Gaps/opportunities for legal or regulatory reform
Medically-Supervised					
Natural community or home					

	Citation to specific provisions of responsive legislation	In accordance with guidance above, describe legislation and whether it aligns with the best practice	Citation to other regulations and rules	In accordance with guidance above, describe regulations or rules and whether they align with the best practice	Gaps/opportunities for legal or regulatory reform
Violent, accident, or suicide					
Emergency or disaster					
Missing body					

31. Certifiers of COD

Best Practice Achieved? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Best Practice: A certifier of COD is the person authorized by law to certify the fact of death, the manner of the death, and the specific disease, injury, or other causes of death. In the case of foetal death, certifiers attest only to the fact of death — not the manner of death or other information.⁸⁹ Certifiers might include the physician or surgeon who attended the decedent during his terminal illness, a medical practitioner who examined the body after death, a coroner or other medical-legal authority, a midwife, a nurse, another trained person, or a layperson. These persons should have clear authority and responsibility to certify the COD and manner of death within the scope of their authority.⁹⁰

Guidance: Certifiers of COD are almost always medical professionals or medical facilities. Be careful to distinguish certifiers of COD from registration officers who issue a death certificate.

For each of the circumstances of death below, indicate who is allowed or required to certify cause of death. Note whether there is a clear definition or understanding of who can certify the death. For example, if “medical practitioners” can certify, note the definition of “medical practitioner” either in the cited law or another controlling text. Be specific about the authority of each certifier and any gaps in the system. For example, if the “physician attending the death” is required to certify facility deaths, explain who would certify the COD for deaths that occur without an attending physician (such as when a person is brought in dead to the hospital or dies before a physician can see the patient). Another gap might occur if doctors at public hospitals are required to certify deaths, but private hospitals are not. For deaths due to external causes (such as violent or accidental deaths), indicate which deaths can be certified by the police or other authorities and which must be referred to the medical-legal officer, coroner, or their equivalent.

	Citation to specific provisions of responsive legislation	In accordance with guidance above, describe legislation and whether it aligns with the best practice	Citation to other regulations and rules	In accordance with guidance above, describe regulations or rules and whether they align with the best practice	Gaps/opportunities for legal or regulatory reform
Medically-Supervised					

⁸⁹ United Nations, Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System, Revision 3, New York, 2014. Para. 39; Harbitz, M., Kentala, K. Dictionary for Civil Registration and Identification 2015. P. 13.

⁹⁰ United Nations, Handbook on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems: Preparation of a Legal Framework, New York, 1998. Pp. 52-53.

	Citation to specific provisions of responsive legislation	In accordance with guidance above, describe legislation and whether it aligns with the best practice	Citation to other regulations and rules	In accordance with guidance above, describe regulations or rules and whether they align with the best practice	Gaps/opportunities for legal or regulatory reform
Natural community or home					
Violent, accident, or suicide					
Emergency or disaster					
Missing body					

32. Form of COD determination and/or certification

Best Practice Achieved? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Best Practice: The WHO International Standard Form of the Medical Certificate of Cause of Death (MCCOD) is the recommended form for recording COD information for certification. The form is designed to elicit the underlying cause of death, as well as the antecedent causes. Underlying cause of death is defined as “the disease or injury which initiated the train of morbid events leading directly to death, or the circumstances of the accident or violence which produced the fatal injury.”⁹¹ These diseases and injuries should be coded in accordance with the rules of the International Classification of Diseases (ICD).⁹²

The ICD, developed by the WHO, is the foundation for the identification of global health trends and statistics. ICD defines the universe of diseases, disorders, injuries, and other related health conditions. These are organized systematically to allow for sharing and comparing health information across facilities, regions, and times. The tenth volume, ICD-10, is the standard global diagnostic tool for epidemiology, health management, and clinical purposes.⁹³

The COD information on the MCCOD should be treated as confidential and not appear on the death certificate issued by the civil registrar.⁹⁴

Guidance: Civil registration laws in some countries require some form of MCCOD as a precondition for registering a death, or even as a requisite for obtaining permission to bury a body. Similarly, the use of the international standard MCCOD helps ensure accuracy and consistency in determining the underlying cause of death required to generate reliable vital statistics. While, in practice, not all countries use this international standard, the WHO MCCOD contains the key information needed for legal and statistical purposes. Note that the MCCOD (issued by a medical practitioner) is a separate form from an official death certificate (issued by a civil registrar or duly appointed and empowered agent).

Describe any law, regulation, or directive specifying the form to be used to medically certify the cause of death. Indicate whether the International Standard Form and/or ICD-10 are used and, if easily available, indicate the date when use of that form began. If non-standard forms or coding are used, describe which information is required to be contained in a MCCOD or equivalent documents. For example, coroners, police, emergency personnel, or others may have a different form. In all cases, pay attention to whether the underlying cause of death is identified, and whether the subsequent diseases that led to the death have also been recorded. Indicate whether coding is required or permitted to be undertaken automatically using IRIS or a similar software program and whether coding is required to be undertaken centrally or at a subnational level.

⁹¹ <http://www.who.int/topics/mortality/en/>

⁹² United Nations, Handbook on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems: Preparation of a Legal Framework, New York, 1998. Pp. 52-53, Paras. 12-126.

⁹³ United Nations, Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System, Revision 3, New York, 2014. Para. 494.

⁹⁴ United Nations, Handbook on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems: Preparation of a Legal Framework, New York, 1998. Pp. 52-53.

	Citation to specific provisions of responsive legislation	In accordance with guidance above, describe legislation and whether it aligns with the best practice	Citation to other regulations and rules	In accordance with guidance above, describe regulations or rules and whether they align with the best practice	Gaps/opportunities for legal or regulatory reform
Medically-Supervised					
Natural community or home					

	Citation to specific provisions of responsive legislation	In accordance with guidance above, describe legislation and whether it aligns with the best practice	Citation to other regulations and rules	In accordance with guidance above, describe regulations or rules and whether they align with the best practice	Gaps/opportunities for legal or regulatory reform
Violent, accident, or suicide					
Emergency or disaster					
Missing body					

33. Verbal autopsy and determinations of cause of death without medical certification

Best Practice Achieved? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Best Practice: While a proper medical certification of cause of death based on directly observed clinical or autopsy data is the most reliable, a shortage of medical staff and/or difficult access to health facilities in many countries makes this certification difficult. This is particularly the case for deaths occurring outside of health facilities. In those cases, it may be appropriate to use verbal autopsy (VA) — a structured interview of the decedent’s family members or other caregivers who can provide enough information to determine the probable COD, either using a computer algorithm (Automated VA) or by a physician who reviews the interview results and assigns a COD (Physician-Certified VA).⁹⁵

Guidance: Note that the use of verbal autopsy in national CRVS systems is a relatively recent development. Therefore, standards and best practice regarding the use of VA for ascertaining COD in CRVS systems are still under development. Nevertheless, information on COD at the population level is important for public health decision-making, and COD data generated through VA can make a significant contribution to public health data. In the interim, UN guidance indicates that local physicians, coroners and/or investigations by the registrar will be used to ascertain COD when there is no attending physician who can complete the MCCOD.⁹⁶

Describe how COD is determined if no medical certification is available. Indicate whether, and in what circumstances, the law permits VA —Physician-Certified VA, Automated VA, or another form. If VA is explicitly mentioned, indicate as such. Indicate whether a COD derived from Physician-Certified VA would satisfy any requirement that COD be “medically certified” for legal or statistical purposes. For Automated VA, indicate whether the derived COD would satisfy the requirement to determine COD at an individual level for legal purposes or whether it could be used for public health purposes at a population level.

	Citation to specific provisions of responsive legislation	In accordance with guidance above, describe legislation and whether it aligns with the best practice	Citation to other regulations and rules	In accordance with guidance above, describe regulations or rules and whether they align with the best practice	Gaps/opportunities for legal or regulatory reform
Physician-Certified VA					

⁹⁵ United Nations, Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System, Revision 3, New York, 2014. Paras. 499-501.

⁹⁶ United Nations, Handbook on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems: Preparation of a Legal Framework, New York, 1998. P. 52, para. 126.

	Citation to specific provisions of responsive legislation	In accordance with guidance above, describe legislation and whether it aligns with the best practice	Citation to other regulations and rules	In accordance with guidance above, describe regulations or rules and whether they align with the best practice	Gaps/opportunities for legal or regulatory reform
Automated VA					
Other forms of VA					
Other determination of COD if no MCCOD or VA					

34. Transmission of COD information to civil registration and statistics agencies

Best Practice Achieved? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Best Practice: COD information, whether determined through an MCCOD or through VA, should be transmitted to the civil registrar and statistics agencies for legal and statistical purposes, as appropriate. Notifying the civil registrar of the COD should be undertaken directly by the health facility by delivering or transmitting a copy of the MCCOD issued by the attending physician or other medical certifiers. The direct link from certifier to civil registrar achieves efficient transmission of MCCOD data to the civil registrar without placing an additional burden on an intermediary, often a mourning family, to carry the MCCOD to the register.⁹⁷⁹⁸

Guidance: The direct link is also important between other certifiers of COD and the civil registration and statistics agencies, although there is not yet an international standard. For example, UN guidance does not contain an explicit requirement for coroners to report COD directly to the civil registrar, but this practice is required under the US model law. Currently, there is also no international consensus regarding the direct reporting of VA-generated COD information to the civil registrar or to statistical agencies.

For each circumstance below, describe whether and how the COD information is transmitted to the civil registrar and/or statistics agencies. Pay particular attention to whether any intermediaries could diminish the quality or lower the quantity of the information reaching the government agencies.

	Citation to specific provisions of responsive legislation	In accordance with guidance above, describe legislation and whether it aligns with the best practice	Citation to other regulations and rules	In accordance with guidance above, describe regulations or rules and whether they align with the best practice	Gaps/opportunities for legal or regulatory reform
MCCOD					

⁹⁷ United Nations, Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System, Revision 3, New York, 2014. Paras. 498-501.

⁹⁸ Direct transmission of COD information from certifier to the government may also improve the quality of data. As more people have access and knowledge to potentially sensitive information, certifiers may provide incomplete or inaccurate COD data to avoid stigmatizing the family. For example, a physician may not indicate that a person died of suicide or HIV-related causes on a MCCOD that is handed to the family.

	Citation to specific provisions of responsive legislation	In accordance with guidance above, describe legislation and whether it aligns with the best practice	Citation to other regulations and rules	In accordance with guidance above, describe regulations or rules and whether they align with the best practice	Gaps/opportunities for legal or regulatory reform
Results of verbal autopsy					
Results of medical-legal/coroner's report/autopsy					
Other COD determinations					

35. Access to COD information

Best Practice Achieved? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Best Practice: COD information contains sensitive and often confidential medical information. This information is critical for legal and statistical purposes, but it must be carefully secured. Information on cause of death can also be important to close family members of the decedent for insurance and other matters. UN guidance provides that close family members should have the right to request that COD information be included in a death certificate; however, the existence of such a right could give rise to biased reporting by physicians. As a consequence, country practices are varied — some do not include COD information on death certificates issued by the CR; others do.⁹⁹

The death certificate issued by the CR is the official legal document providing evidence of death. Similarly, where an extended list of people can request and receive a death certificate, COD should not be included to protect the privacy of the decedent and his/her family.¹⁰⁰

Guidance: For each of the following, indicate who can access, or request access, to the COD information. Indicate any other security measures that ensure the confidentiality and security of the information. For the death certificate, indicate whether the COD information is always listed in certified copies.

	Citation to specific provisions of responsive legislation	In accordance with guidance above, describe legislation and whether it aligns with the best practice	Citation to other regulations and rules	In accordance with guidance above, describe regulations or rules and whether they align with the best practice	Gaps/opportunities for legal or regulatory reform
Death certificate					

⁹⁹ United Nations, Handbook on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems: Preparation of a Legal Framework, New York, 1998. P. 71, para. 165.

¹⁰⁰ United Nations, Handbook on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems: Preparation of a Legal Framework, New York, 1998. P. 52, para. 126.

	Citation to specific provisions of responsive legislation	In accordance with guidance above, describe legislation and whether it aligns with the best practice	Citation to other regulations and rules	In accordance with guidance above, describe regulations or rules and whether they align with the best practice	Gaps/opportunities for legal or regulatory reform
MCCOD					
Results of Verbal autopsy					
Results of Medical-legal/coroner's report/autopsy					
Other COD eterminations.					

36. Burial permits and disposal of bodies

Best Practice Achieved? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Best Practice: Applicable laws should require a burial permit to transport or dispose of all bodies. This requirement is often included in municipal laws/regulations, but could also be included in the civil registration law. UN guidance recommends that a country's legal framework should require all deaths to be registered as a condition to issuing a burial permit.¹⁰¹ The need for a burial permit to transport or dispose of a body is a significant incentive for ensuring that the death (and cause of death) is notified, registered, and/or medically certified.¹⁰²

Guidance: The registration requirement for burial permits may be difficult to comply with, particularly in locations where registration offices are difficult to access or where local or religious customs require burial within a short time after death. In some places, the burial permit is not a formal legal document, but takes the form of obtaining permission from a local official.

Where registration of deaths is a prerequisite for issuing burial permits, issuing authorities may be required to share burial records with the civil registrar to assist with monitoring. Where burial permits are issued without the need for notification and/or registration of the event, it may be appropriate to require the issuing authority to notify the civil registrar of all deaths. In a system where notification and/or registration of a death is not required to obtain a burial permit, private funeral facilities and cemeteries may constitute an alternative entry point for ensuring that deaths are notified and/or registered. By requiring that private funeral facilities and cemeteries ensure that a burial permit exists for all cremations/burials they oversee, that incentive is reinforced. There is currently no best-practice consensus related to the above.

Describe the process for issuing a burial permit, including the requirements, details of who issues the burial permits, and any timelines. Describe if there are provisions regarding the interaction between the issuing authority and the civil registrar, as well as a framework for maintaining and sharing permit records. Describe the legal requirements for transport, burial, cremation, funerals, etc., including the steps required to obtain a burial permit, and where and how details of the transport or disposal are recorded. Describe legal requirements (including medical certificate of death and/or death certificate and/or coroner's report, etc.) for issuing a burial permit. Indicate whether these service providers are required to notify the civil registrar of deaths.

¹⁰¹ United Nations, Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System, Revision 3, New York, 2014. Para. 362.

¹⁰² United Nations, Handbook on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems: Preparation of a Legal Framework, New York, 1998. Para. 206.

	Citation to specific provisions of responsive legislation	In accordance with guidance above, describe legislation and whether it aligns with the best practice	Citation to other regulations and rules	In accordance with guidance above, describe regulations or rules and whether they align with the best practice	Gaps/opportunities for legal or regulatory reform
Authority issuing burial permits					
Cemeteries and other burial facilities					

	Citation to specific provisions of responsive legislation	In accordance with guidance above, describe legislation and whether it aligns with the best practice	Citation to other regulations and rules	In accordance with guidance above, describe regulations or rules and whether they align with the best practice	Gaps/opportunities for legal or regulatory reform
Cremation					
Transportation of a dead body					
Other requirements for handling corpses					

37. Training and other resources to improve COD data

Best Practice Achieved? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Best Practice: Practicing medical professionals must be trained and retrained in certifying cause of death. To improve quality of information in medical certificates of death and mortality data, physicians must be trained in how to correctly complete the international standard form of the medical certificate of cause-of-death. Medical certification of cause of death should be included in mandatory curricula for all medical students and in all post-graduate medical education and professional in-service trainings.¹⁰³ The ICD coding function is essential to the production of high-quality mortality data and requires specialized training. Therefore, it is recommended that a dedicated ICD-coder cadre be created and funded.¹⁰⁴

Guidance: Describe any law, regulation, or directive related to training for physicians and other medical professionals (e.g., medical officers, nurses, etc.) in certifying COD. Indicate whether training in certification of cause of death is optional but counts toward continuing medical education requirement and whether training is required for licensure or re-licensure. Any requirement related to this training is likely to be contained in the rules/regulations of the country's medical association or other body that accredits and licenses physicians.

Describe any law, regulation, or directive related to training in certifying cause of death for medical students, physicians, and other medical professionals. Any requirement related to training in medical certification of cause of death for medical trainees is likely to be contained in the rules/regulations related to the curricula of medical schools/colleges. Describe any law or directive creating a job classification of ICD coders. Include details on job title, ministry/entity that oversees the cadre, whether the job is full-time, and any other relevant details.

	Citation to specific provisions of responsive legislation	In accordance with guidance above, describe legislation and whether it aligns with the best practice	Citation to other regulations and rules	In accordance with guidance above, describe regulations or rules and whether they align with the best practice	Gaps/opportunities for legal or regulatory reform
Physician training in COD certification					

¹⁰³ World Health Organization, Strengthening Civil Registration and Vital Statistics for Births, Deaths, and Causes of Death, Resource Kit, 2012, Module 4.

¹⁰⁴ World Health Organization, Strengthening Civil Registration and Vital Statistics for Births, Deaths, and Causes of Death, Resource Kit, 2012, Modules 4, 5.

	Citation to specific provisions of responsive legislation	In accordance with guidance above, describe legislation and whether it aligns with the best practice	Citation to other regulations and rules	In accordance with guidance above, describe regulations or rules and whether they align with the best practice	Gaps/opportunities for legal or regulatory reform
Medical school training in COD certification					
Dedicated cadre of trained ICD coders					
Other resources or training available					

38. Enforcement, monitoring, and evaluation

Best Practice Achieved? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Best Practice: Completeness of mortality data can only be improved if legal obligations to determine and certify COD are monitored and enforced.¹⁰⁵

Guidance: Describe any documented system of fines, incentives, and oversight applied to those required to determine or certify COD, and ensure that COD has been determined. Include a description of the monitoring system and the amount of fines/penalties, parties subject to fines/penalties, etc.

Review rules and procedures regarding medical malpractice or medical misadventure for additional oversight and penalties for medical practitioners involved in patient death.

	Citation to specific provisions of responsive legislation	In accordance with guidance above, describe legislation and whether it aligns with the best practice	Citation to other regulations and rules	In accordance with guidance above, describe regulations or rules and whether they align with the best practice	Gaps/opportunities for legal or regulatory reform
Fines or other penalties					

¹⁰⁵ World Health Organization, Strengthening Civil Registration and Vital Statistics for Births, Deaths, and Causes of Death, Resource Kit, 2012, pp. 55-57.

	Citation to specific provisions of responsive legislation	In accordance with guidance above, describe legislation and whether it aligns with the best practice	Citation to other regulations and rules	In accordance with guidance above, describe regulations or rules and whether they align with the best practice	Gaps/opportunities for legal or regulatory reform
Incentives					
Monitoring and evaluation					

08

Chapter

Production of Vital Statistics

Why it is important: Vital statistics inform governments and their external partners about the patterns and trends of diseases, mortality, fertility, and migration in a given country's population. The collection, analysis, and dissemination of vital statistics are essential for informed public policy and decision-making to improve health and socioeconomic outcomes.

39. Agency responsible for vital statistics

Best Practice Achieved? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Best Practice: Clear authority and responsibility for the production and dissemination of vital statistics should improve availability of information to decision-makers. For vital statistics, there should be, at least, a national organization or agency to compile national data and to establish uniform national standards and guidelines.¹⁰⁶

Guidance: Describe whether the legal framework assigns authority and responsibility for the production and dissemination of vital statistics. If so, describe which entities are required to produce and publish vital statistics, how frequently, and where.

	Citation to specific provisions of responsive legislation	In accordance with guidance above, describe legislation and whether it aligns with the best practice	Citation to other regulations and rules	In accordance with guidance above, describe regulations or rules and whether they align with the best practice	Gaps/opportunities for legal or regulatory reform
Compiling national vital statistics data					

106 United Nations, Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System, Revision 3, New York, 2014. Para. 42.

	Citation to specific provisions of responsive legislation	In accordance with guidance above, describe legislation and whether it aligns with the best practice	Citation to other regulations and rules	In accordance with guidance above, describe regulations or rules and whether they align with the best practice	Gaps/opportunities for legal or regulatory reform
Establishing national standards or guidelines for vital statistics					
Disseminating vital statistics					

40. Information sharing

Best Practice Achieved? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Best practice: Increasing use of vital statistics data has the potential to improve information available for decision-making and increase demand for better vital statistics. It is important that government agencies have access to information on vital events to validate identity data (e.g., assurances that birth and death certificates are accurate) and for the production of vital statistics.¹⁰⁷ There may also be legitimate reasons for sharing data with other countries. While these legitimate uses of vital statistics data should be encouraged, the UN recommends the adoption of confidentiality criteria that do not inhibit the transmittal of personal registration data to responsible researchers who retrieve the information for scientific or other purposes.¹⁰⁸

Guidance: Describe all laws relating to sharing of data, databases, and information regarding births, deaths, and causes of death among national and subnational government agencies, foreign governments, civil society, and international organizations, such as the World Health Organization. Be specific about the type of information that must or must not be shared or made public and under what circumstances it can be shared (for example, if data must be de-identified before sharing). Describe the legal framework for allowing legitimate use of data by academics and other members of the public for the benefit of the country, while protecting the confidentiality of sensitive personal data.

	Citation to specific provisions of responsive legislation	In accordance with guidance above, describe legislation and whether it aligns with the best practice	Citation to other regulations and rules	In accordance with guidance above, describe regulations or rules and whether they align with the best practice	Gaps/opportunities for legal or regulatory reform
National government agencies					

¹⁰⁷ United Nations, Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System, Revision 3, New York, 2014. Para. 418.

¹⁰⁸ World Health Organization, Strengthening Civil Registration and Vital Statistics for Birth, Deaths, and Causes of Death, Resource Kit, 2012, p. 59.

Subnational government agencies					
International bodies and/or foreign governments					
Academic researchers					
Public					

41. Regular publication of recent data

Best Practice Achieved? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Best practice: It is important that vital statistics are current when published, to ensure up-to-date information is available for decision-making. Detailed annual tabulations of each type of vital event, cross-classified by its demographic and socioeconomic characteristics, should be published at least annually.¹⁰⁹ Total monthly or quarterly summary counts of vital events should be published on a time schedule prompt enough to provide information for decision-making.¹¹⁰ Even if registration is not complete, tabulations are to be prepared and users should be provided with the information available and the level of completeness of registration.¹¹¹ Although important, timeliness should not supersede completeness and accuracy.¹¹²

Guidance: Describe any mandate that birth, death, and COD data be published on a schedule, including the mandated frequency and/or the specification of a maximum time lag of data being published.

	Citation to specific provisions of responsive legislation	In accordance with guidance above, describe legislation and whether it aligns with the best practice	Citation to other regulations and rules	In accordance with guidance above, describe regulations or rules and whether they align with the best practice	Gaps/opportunities for legal or regulatory reform
Full reports published annually					

¹⁰⁹ United Nations, Handbook of Vital Statistics Systems and Methods Volume I: Legal, Organizational, and Technical Aspects, New York, 1991. P. 46, para. 333.

¹¹⁰ United Nations, Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System, Revision 3, New York, 2014. Para. 38.

¹¹¹ United Nations, Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System, Revision 3, New York, 2014. Para. 240.

¹¹² United Nations, Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System, Revision 3, New York, 2014. Para. 576.

	Citation to specific provisions of responsive legislation	In accordance with guidance above, describe legislation and whether it aligns with the best practice	Citation to other regulations and rules	In accordance with guidance above, describe regulations or rules and whether they align with the best practice	Gaps/opportunities for legal or regulatory reform
Total monthly or quarterly summary counts published					
Timely data in reports					

42. Minimum list of tabulations

Best Practice Achieved? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Best practice: Countries should publish, at least annually, a series of tabulations calculated from vital event data in a format recommended by the UN.¹¹³ The minimum tabulations require a nuanced disaggregation.

Guidance: Describe any law defining the format for reporting vital statistics data, including any requirement to publish the tabulations in a format recommended by the UN. The table on the following page can assist with determining whether the minimum tabulations are being produced.

	Citation to specific provisions of responsive legislation	In accordance with guidance above, describe legislation and whether it aligns with the best practice	Citation to other regulations and rules	In accordance with guidance above, describe regulations or rules and whether they align with the best practice	Gaps/opportunities for legal or regulatory reform
Live birth data					
Death data					

¹¹³ United Nations, Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System, Revision 3, New York, 2014. Pp. 157-159.

	Citation to specific provisions of responsive legislation	In accordance with guidance above, describe legislation and whether it aligns with the best practice	Citation to other regulations and rules	In accordance with guidance above, describe regulations or rules and whether they align with the best practice	Gaps/opportunities for legal or regulatory reform
Infant death data					
Foetal death data					
Summary tables					

42A. Worksheet: Minimum list of tabulations

Live births by...	
	place of occurrence & sex of child
	place of occurrence & place of usual residence of mother
	place of registration, month of occurrence, & month of registration
	month, place of occurrence & place of usual residence of mother
	age, place of usual residence, & marital status of mother
	age of father
	place of usual residence, age, & educational attainment of mother
	educational attainment & age of mother & live-birth order
	place of usual residence & age of mother, sex of child & live-birth order
	live-birth order & interval between last & previous live births to mother
	place of birth, place of usual residence, & age of mother
	place of usual residence & age of mother & legitimacy status
	place of occurrence, site of delivery, & attendant at birth
	site of delivery, attendant at birth, & birth weight
	birth weight & place of usual residence & educational attainment of mother
	gestational age, place of usual residence of mother & birth weight
	birth weight, place of usual residence of mother & month in which prenatal care began
	age & place of usual residence of mother & month in which prenatal care began
	live-birth order, place of usual residence of mother, & month in which prenatal care began
	place of usual residence of mother & duration of residence at the current usual residence
Deaths by...	
	place of usual residence & sex of decedent
	place of occurrence & place of usual residence & sex of decedent
	month & place of occurrence & place of usual residence of decedent
	place of registration, month of occurrence, & month of registration
	place of occurrence & site of occurrence
	place of usual residence, age & sex of decedent
	age, sex, place of usual residence & marital status of decedent
	place of usual residence, age, sex, & educational attainment of decedent
	sex, cause of death, place of usual residence, & age of decedent
	month of occurrence & cause of death
	Place of occurrence, sex of decedent, & type of certification
	age & type of usual activity of decedent
	Maternal deaths by cause of death & age of woman
Infant deaths by...	
	place of occurrence & place of usual residence of mother
	month of occurrence & sex & age of child
	place of usual residence of mother & age & sex of child
	cause of death, place of usual residence of mother & sex & age of child
Live births & foetal deaths	
	Confinements by type of birth & status of issue (live-born or born dead)
	Confinements by birth order & birth weight, for each type of birth
	Confinements by type of birth & age of mother, for each sex
Foetal deaths by...	
	age & place of usual residence of mother & sex of foetus
	sex & legitimacy status of foetus
	age of mother & legitimacy status & sex of foetus
	place of usual residence of mother, sex, & birth weight
	place of usual residence of the mother & gestational age & birth weight
	age & place of usual residence of mother & birth weight
	sex & gestational age
	age of the mother & total birth order (live births plus foetal deaths)
	month of pregnancy in which prenatal care began & number of visits & place of usual residence of the mother
	place of occurrence & type of certification
Summary Tables	
	Live births, deaths, infant deaths, foetal deaths, marriages, & divorces by place of usual residence
	Crude birth rate, crude death rate, infant mortality rate by sex, foetal mortality rate, crude marriage rate, & crude divorce rate, by place of usual residence
	Time series of live births by place of usual residence of mother (past 10 years)
	Time series of deaths by place of usual residence of decedent (past 10 years)
	Time series of infant deaths by place of usual residence of mother (past 10 years)
	Time series of foetal deaths by place of usual residence of mother (past 10 years)
	Time series of vital events in the country (past 10 years)

Appendix A – Recommend Standard for Labeling Laws Saved on Shared Folder

Laws should be saved in the following format:

Country_YYYYMMDD_Short Title of Law_DRAFT_Language_Translation.filetype

Below is a key that explains each component of this format:

1. Country

- a. Use the short title of the country name. Generally, this should be the same title as the parent country.
 - i. Ex: China (not The People's Republic of China) or S. Africa (not The Republic of South Africa)
- b. Sub-national laws should be saved in a separate folder under each country. For sub-national laws, add the region following the country name.
 - i. Ex: Russia_Chuvasia

2. Date

- a. Use the “YYYYMMDD” format
- b. For laws, use the enactment date. Usually, this will be the day the law was officially published. It is not necessary to determine the effective date. For some laws, researchers may only know the year or month — as much information as available should be included. If no enacted or published date can be easily determined, leave this section blank.
- c. For litigation, use the date when the decision was published.

3. Short Title of Law (or Litigation)

- a. Use a short, yet understandable, title of the bill or litigation. In general, more information rather than less is better. Researchers should include the type of law (e.g. law, constitution, regulation, gazette, etc.). If the legislation is numbered, include the number as well.
 - i. Ex: “Law 4256 on Public Health” or “MoHealth Decree 1234 on Hospital Admission” or “John Doe v. Jane Doe”

4. Draft or Final

- a. Only finalized laws should be captured. If there are relevant laws that are not final, label them: DRAFT. Otherwise, leave this section blank.

5. Language and Translation

- a. Designate the language using an ISO 639-1 two-letter language code. A list of codes is available at: http://www.loc.gov/standards/iso639-2/php/code_list.php
 - i. Ex: EN (English); ZH (Chinese); ES (Spanish)
- b. If the file has been translated from the original language into English, researchers should write whether it is an official or unofficial translation.
 - i. Ex: EN (English_unofficial)

6. File type

- a. Designate the file suffix.
 - i. Ex: Microsoft Word file (.doc or .docx) or Adobe Acrobat (.pdf)

Other examples:

- ▶ Canada_Alberta_20000719_Birth and Death Registration_EN.pdf
- ▶ Turkey_20080516_Circular 2008/6_EN_unofficial.doc
- ▶ Russia_200106_CRVS Act_RU.pdf
- ▶ Bangladesh_2010_Instructions to Hospital Staff_DRAFT_BN.doc

Appendix B - CRVS Legal and Regulatory Review Summary

Country:

Analysis completed by:

Closing Date of Review:

☐ **Best practice not yet achieved**
☐ **Best practice achieved**
☐ **Not applicable**

Enabling Environment

1. Vital statistics derived from civil registration system	
2. Vital events captured and defined	
3. Roles and responsibilities of government stakeholders	
4. Rule-making authority	
5. Coordination	
6. Resources	

Structure of the Registrar

7. Roles and responsibilities of national registrar	
8. Roles and responsibilities of registrars in a decentralized system	
9. Roles and responsibilities of local registrar at primary registration offices	
10. Location of primary registration offices	
11. National control or uniform/model law	
12. Fitness of registrars	
13. Process for sharing information between local and national registrar offices	

Technology and Security Issues

14. Technology	
15. Security of sensitive digital information	

Key Issues with Registration

16. Universal application	
17. Definition of vital event and other key terms	
18. Minimum information required to register	

	19. Informants	
	20. Place of Registration	
	21. Time allowed for registration	
	22. Cost of current registration	
	23. Proof required to register	
	24. Provision for late and delayed registration	
	25. Certified copies of vital event information	
	26. Access linked to registration	
	27. Other incentives and disincentives for registration	
	28. Incomplete records, amendments, and corrections	
	29. Monitoring and evaluation of institutional processes	
Key Issues for Certifying Cause of Death		
	30. Compulsory COD certification	
	31. Certifiers of COD	
	32. Form of COD determination and/or certification	
	33. Verbal autopsy and determinations of cause of death without medical certification	
	34. Transmission of COD information to civil registration and statistics agencies	
	35. Access to COD information	
	36. Burial permits and disposal of bodies	
	37. Training and other resources to improve COD data	
	38. Enforcement, monitoring, and evaluation	
Production of Vital Statistics		
	39. Agency responsible for vital statistics	
	40. Information sharing	
	41. Regular publication of recent data	
	42. Minimum list of tabulations	

CIVIL REGISTRATION AND VITAL STATISTICS (CRVS) LEGAL AND REGULATORY REVIEW

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