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**United Nations**



**African Union  
Commission**



**Federal Democratic  
Republic of Ethiopia**

*Experts' Group Meeting On Civil Registration and Vital Statistics*

UN Conference Centre  
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia  
10 – 12 August 2010

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**RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE EXPERTS' GROUP MEETING ON CIVIL  
REGISTRATION AND VITAL STATISTICS TO THE CONFERENCE OF  
AFRICAN MINISTERS RESPONSIBLE  
FOR CIVIL REGISTRATION**



## Introduction

1. An experts' group meeting (EGM) was convened from 10 to 12 August 2010 at the United Nations Conference Centre (UNCC) in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia to prepare for the First Conference of African Ministers responsible for Civil Registration, to be held at the same venue from 13 to 14 August 2010. Both the Conference and the preparatory meeting of experts were organized jointly by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) – African Centre for Statistics (ACS), the African Development Bank (AfDB), and the African Union Commission (AUC); and hosted by the Government of Ethiopia, with additional financial support from the Health Metrics Network (HMN) and technical support from the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD). The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) also collaborated.
2. The meeting brought together officials from national civil registration offices and National Statistical Offices (NSOs) of most African countries. Also in attendance were participants from regional, subregional, international and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other development partners (a full list of participants is attached as annex I).
3. The EGM was convened to prepare for the first Conference of African Ministers responsible for Civil Registration. The objectives of the EGM therefore derive from those of the Conference of Ministers, which are:
  - (a) To mobilize and rally political commitment and leadership of national governments, civil registration authorities and NSOs in the improvement of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) systems in Africa for national development and monitoring of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs); and
  - (b) To address the need for enhanced regional commitment and partnership in the improvement of CRVS systems in Africa.
4. This report summarizes the main outcomes and recommendations made during the experts' group meeting for the improvement of CRVS systems in Africa.

## Recommendations

5. After considering the reports and background documents presented during the meeting, and following extensive discussions, the group of experts make the following recommendations to the Conference of African Ministers Responsible for Civil Registration for consideration.

The meeting recommends that:

## Policy Issues

1. The African Union Commission should establish a standing African Ministerial Conference on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (AMCCReVS) to provide a forum for discussion of political and policy issues related to civil registration and vital statistics in Africa;
2. The Statistical Commission for Africa (StatCom-Africa), as the apex inter-governmental body responsible for statistics, should establish a Working Group on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics;
3. Countries should explore the possibility to enshrine civil registration in national constitutions and charters, given its importance for public policy, good governance, human rights, rights of children, and as a basis for reliable vital statistics;
4. Countries should revisit and update their CRVS laws and statistical legislation in line with United Nations guidelines and recommendations, to improve CRVS programmes; evidence-based legislative drafting techniques should be used to draft and revise comprehensive organic law, subsidiary rules/administrative regulations, and operational manuals;
5. Countries should adopt laws and policies that ensure timely and compulsory registration of vital events occurring within their national territories, with guarantees for equal access to the system for all persons, regardless of nationality, immigration or marital status, including refugees, internally-displaced persons and marginalized populations. However, there is need for further discussions on the inherent implications for nationality and citizenship of birth registration and issuance of birth certificates to non-nationals, including refugees;
6. Countries should develop strategies to derive vital statistics from the registers, including regular publication and dissemination of the statistics, with due regard to privacy and confidentiality of personal information;
7. Countries should take full advantage of the ongoing sectoral reform programmes, democratization and decentralization processes in Africa to bring civil registration services close to target populations, to achieve universal coverage of civil registration. Governments therefore need to establish central and subnational registration offices, including in remote rural areas and close to camps for refugees and internally-displaced persons, and ensure their proper functioning and accessibility;
8. Countries should revisit the issue of fees, and consider free registration of vital events, as well as free issuance of certificates, specifically for first time current registration;

9. Countries should allocate adequate financial and human resources to support civil registration and vital statistics systems;
10. Countries should include provisions for CRVS systems in National Development Plans, and the National Strategies for the Development of Statistics (NSDS) and other statistical plans;
11. ECA, AfDB and AUC should finalize the draft medium-term regional plan and guidelines on CRVS, with inputs from this experts' group meeting and call upon countries to adopt and use them in their quest to improve their respective CRVS systems;
12. ECA should consider establishing a substantive post on civil registration and vital statistics with appropriate support staff at the African Centre for Statistics, to ensure the sustainability of ongoing efforts to improve CRVS systems in Africa; and
13. Development partners should support national initiatives and programmes, including aligning their assistance accordingly.

## Technical Issues

14. Universities and national and regional statistical and demographic training institutions should develop appropriate curricula for building capacity and improving CRVS systems in Africa. The African Group on Statistical Training (AGROST) should consider putting CRVS on its agenda;
15. Countries should establish systematic and scientific methods and procedures for monitoring and evaluation of civil registration and vital statistics systems;
16. Countries should develop appropriate instruments, techniques and accessible procedures for registering vital events that were not immediately registered on occurrence, as well as make provision for back-logged registration;
17. Countries should consider adopting the World Health Organization's standard classification of causes of death. Each country should adopt appropriate modalities for determining causes of deaths which occur outside medical facilities;
18. Countries should develop appropriate technical and operational methodologies to interface civil registration and vital registration systems with other demographic and social statistical undertakings; and
19. Countries should establish, as soon as possible, a high-level coordination committee for CRVS in order to improve the functioning of the systems.

## Operational and Advocacy Issues

20. Implementation guidelines should include provisions for use of information and communication technologies in the operation of CRVS systems, as well as arrangements for archiving and managing relevant CRVS data and information;
21. Proposed plans and programmes for developing CRVS should reflect cultural and social conditions specific to Africa;
22. Awareness-raising campaigns on the procedures and importance of civil registration should be scaled up, in particular through community outreach programmes to ensure public participation in the CRVS process. Emphasis should also be given to raising awareness and knowledge of CRVS among government officials;
23. Special arrangements should be made for creating awareness about the importance of registration of events in rural areas;
24. Countries should involve Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), NGOs and community and traditional leaders in the development and implementation of advocacy and communication strategies for CRVS;
25. Countries should promote public/private partnerships with media houses and other strategic stakeholders to provide space for free delivery of educational messages on CRVS; and
26. Countries should work towards the establishment of integrated population registers/databases with the view of focusing initially on priority areas, including the registration of births, deaths, marriages and divorces.