



MINISTRY OF PLANNING
DEVELOPMENT AND
SPECIAL INITIATIVES

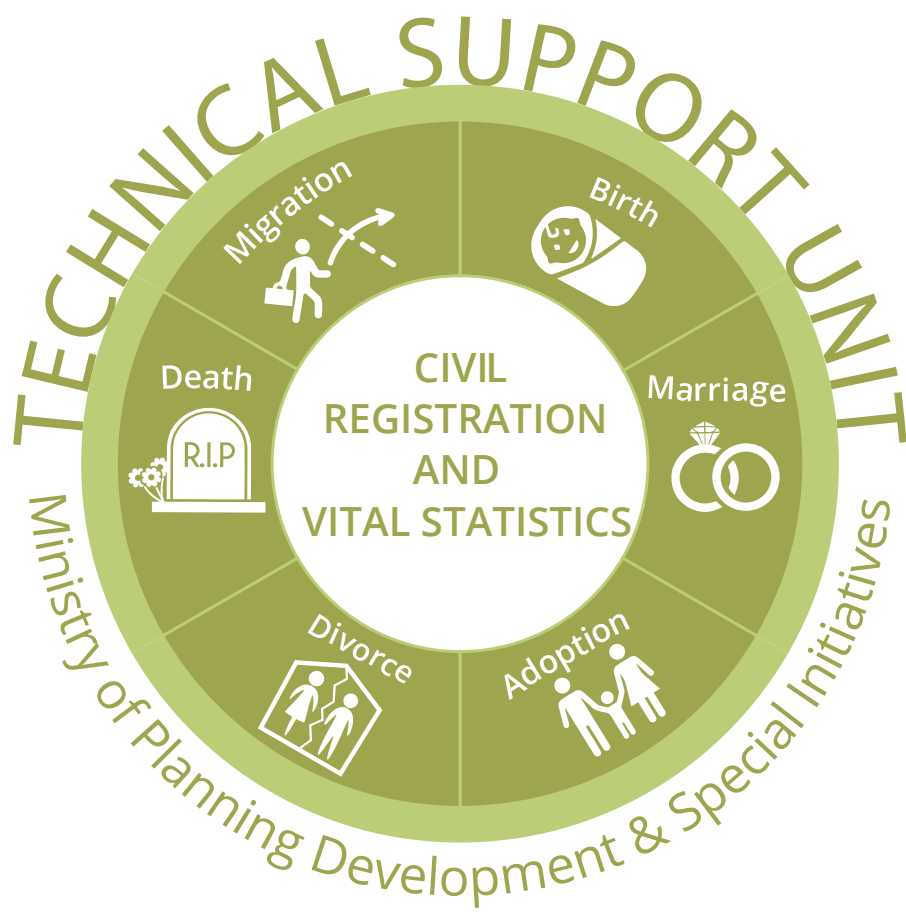
NATIONAL FRAMEWORK ON CRVS REFORMS



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NATIONAL FRAMEWORK TO REVAMP AND REFORM CIVIL REGISTRATION OF VITAL EVENTS AND ENSUING VITAL STATISTICS SYSTEM IN PAKISTAN

PREAMBLE

Civil Registration is the continuous, permanent, compulsory and universal recording of the occurrence and characteristics of vital events of the population under the law of the country. Vital statistics is the collection of statistics on vital events in a lifetime of a person as well as relevant characteristics of the events themselves and the person and persons concerned. Vital statistics provide crucial

and critical information on the population in a country. Together civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) systems are central to human development and good governance.

Birth registration is the first right of a child and the key to legal identity and an individual's right to recognition as a person before the law and their formal relationship with the state. It provides individuals with documentary evidence to prove their legal identity and family relationships. Furthermore, identity and identity documents are important for accessing essential services like healthcare, education and social protection and other ensuing rights and civic rights such as political participation, recourse to justice, nationality, and financial inclusion like property ownership, formal employment, inheritance, and access to banking and financial services.

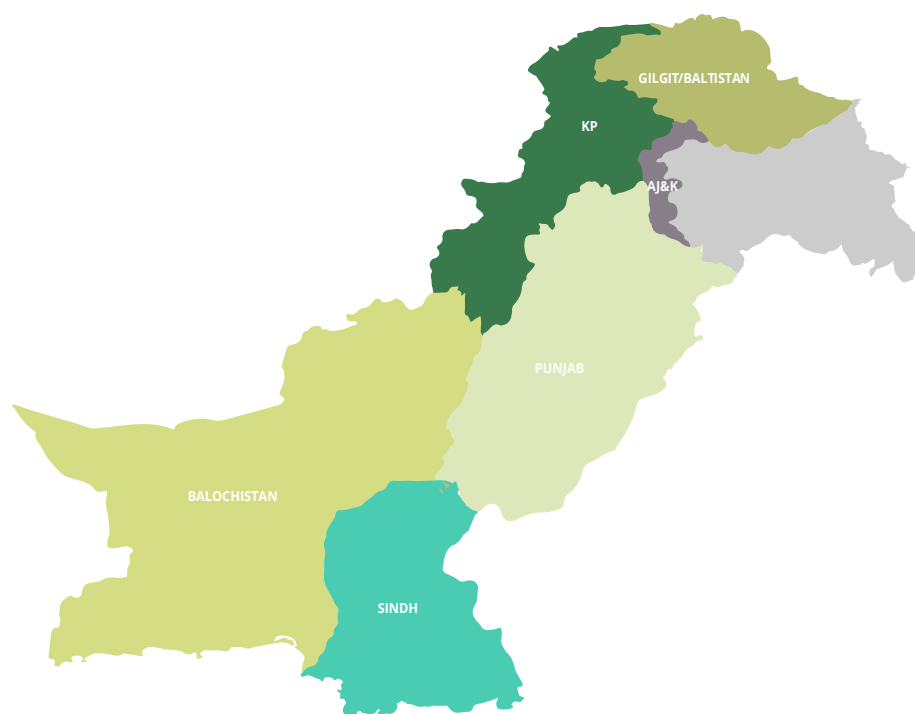
Similarly, universal registration of vital events and timely preparation of vital statistics provide essential tools for decision-making and policy and programme planning. For example, it is crucial to understand why and where people are dying to develop programmes that will fight disease and reduce infant and maternal mortality. Registration of marriages based on verified birth certificates can prevent early child marriages, while registration of divorces and timely issuance of divorce decrees may prevent complications for the involved parties. Knowing how many people live in the country and its subdivisions based on universal civil registration, as well as the leading causes of death, fertility rates, and life expectancy, based on timely vital statistics enhances public administration. It provides decision-makers with information to better respond to the needs of society through more effective, efficient, and directed policies at the national and local levels. Comprehensive CRVS systems are vital to identify public health policy priorities and implement universal health coverage.

Recording every life event enables producing the most accurate, complete, and timely statistics on the health and demographics of the population, and maintaining a national civil registry or population database. Producing vital statistics through sample surveys serves a valuable function of highlighting and drawing attention to the possible scale of the situation. Surveys, however, can be costly and may not cover the most vulnerable segments of the population, nor can they be used for local planning purposes. They are not a long-term substitute for vital statistics derived from a universal CRVS system.

CRVS systems are crucial for achieving and monitoring the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly those related to maternal and infant mortality. By identifying populations at risk, it becomes possible to make targeted interventions and take other preventative measures. SDGs, with a strong emphasis on poverty eradication, governance, accountability, and health, must have CRVS at its core.

CRVS IN PAKISTAN

Pakistan located in the South Asian region, covering an area of about 796,095 square kilometres is the sixth most populous country in the world. Administratively, Pakistan comprises four provinces besides two autonomous territories, and one federal capital territory. Each province/area is divided into districts, which are the main administrative units for programme implementation. According to the Population Census of 2017, the total population of Pakistan increased to 207 million in 2017 average annual compound growth rate of 2.4 per cent¹ from 10 million in 1998. This represents 2.6 per cent of the world's total population which arguably means that one person in every 39 people on the planet is a



Pakistan demographic health survey 2017-2018

resident of Pakistan. Human Development Index of Pakistan is 0.562 (2017), positioning it at 150 out of 189 countries and territories.

According to the Population & Housing Census 2017, the rural population of Pakistan is 64 per cent. Though civil registration (CR) and vital statistics (VS) represent key institutions of a country and provide a basis for assessing country's progress towards Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Pakistan like many other countries of the region neither has a comprehensive system for registration of births and deaths nor a system for reporting complete and accurate causes of deaths. This is contributing to the unfortunate situation

called “Scandal of Invisibility” where many births and deaths are not being registered and deprive the country of valuable information for planning and decision-making³. Moreover, information disaggregated by age, gender, location and socioeconomic status is also not available at present.

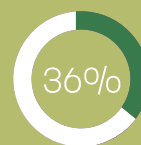
In 2013 a “Rapid and Comprehensive Assessments of the CRVS System” was organised in the country to provide an overview of the status of CRVS Pakistan. The registration of births and deaths has been done continuously since Pakistan’s independence (1947). However, there have been a number of modifications in the procedures of data aggregations. It has challenged policymakers and administrators to take some concrete and cohesive steps for a standardised system. In 2000 the National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) was established as a tangible and useful step forward for a central data repository of personal identification. Pakistan has made notable progress in some areas of CRVS, especially in laying an adequate CRVS infrastructure.

However, there exist significant gaps in some other critical components, particularly for reporting number of births and deaths with causes of deaths, use of ICD coding, data quality, and coverage of reporting.^{4,5} At present, demand for CRVS is low in

PDHS 2017-18



4 IN 10
CHILDREN (42%)
UNDER 5 YEARS



Have a birth certificate
yet there is a long way to go



Only less than 5% deaths
are being registered in the country

the country, possibly due to a lack of understanding of the value and importance of both registrations of vital events and production of timely and high-quality vital statistics. PDHS 2017-18 showed that only 4 in 10 children (42%) under five years of age have been registered, and 36 per cent have a birth certificate. Hence there is a long way to go. The situation for death registration is dire since only less than 5 per cent of deaths are being registered in the country.

Pakistan, as a signatory party to the 1990 Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC) is responsible for undertaking all appropriate legislative, administrative and

other measures for a child to be registered immediately after birth. Pakistan has ratified 2001 UN General Assembly Resolution 'A World Fit for Children,' Article 44(1), which commits to developing systems to ensure the registration of every child at or shortly after birth and UNCRC in which Article 7 pertains to registration, name, nationality, and care of every child. It further emphasised that all children have the right to a legally registered name, officially recognised by the government.

The government's civil registration system requires that a newborn be registered within the shortest possible time after birth. However, it is a matter of concern that the general public is not aware of the importance of birth/death and registration of other vital events. Hence, people tend to register vital events only if and when they need it. PDHS 2017-18 indicates that children under age two are less likely to be registered (39 per cent) than children age 2-4 (44 per cent).

PDHS 2017-18

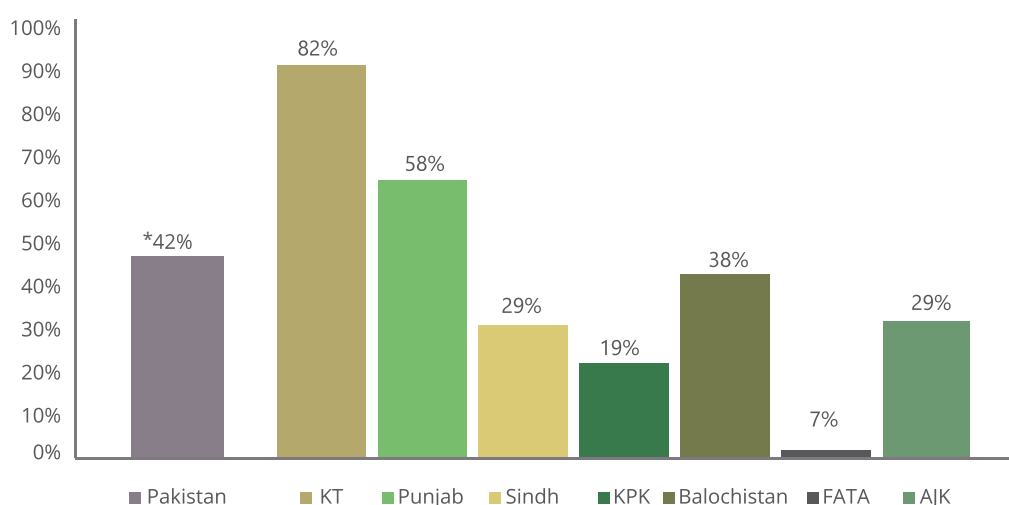


Children under age 2 are less likely to be registered (39%) than children age 2-4 (44%)



Birth registration is considerably higher in urban (60%) than in rural (34%) areas

Status of birth registration under 5 years of age



* Excluding Azad Jammu and Kashmir & Gilgit Baltistan

Birth registration is considerably higher in urban (60 per cent) than in rural (34 per cent) areas. Moreover, huge disparities exist in terms of birth registration coverage among the provinces as only 2 per cent of children in FATA and 19 in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa are registered as compared with 82 per cent in ICT Islamabad.

An effective legal framework is a fundamental prerequisite for the smooth functioning and efficient performance of any system. In the case of civil registration and vital statistics system, the laws, bylaws/regulations, standard procedures, clear definitions, and standard formats/forms are not uniformly implemented in Pakistan. Due to shortcomings in the legal framework, roles and responsibilities are not clearly defined. There exists a conflict between mandates of local government departments who are responsible for civil registration of vital events and NADRA being the national data repository.

On the administrative side, the mechanism for verification of particulars of reporter/parents/guardians, and authentication/verification of issued certificates is made difficult because of the manual registers.

Since CRVS by definition is multisectoral, a variety of actors are involved in the notification, recording, and registering of vital events (citizens, healthcare workers, doctors, police officers, clerics, and ministries of health, justice and home affairs, for example) and the use of its outputs (such as health authorities, tax authorities, and policymakers). The involvement of multiple institutions and actors in CRVS makes coordination and governance a key challenge in building effective CRVS system. At the moment, a regular reporting system is almost nonexistent to support the flow of information at the provincial and national levels. Moreover, the linkage is missing across different components that represent a multiplicity of information flows from various sources and agencies and comprise the overall CRVS system. For example, verbal autopsy (VA) systems collecting cause of death (COD) information should be able to speak to the CR system dealing with death registration. Same is the case with surveillance systems and population registries, as they need to be linked to systems of births and deaths registration. There are, in fact, little vital statistics generated from the civil registration system that is crucial information for policymaking/planning and also for the guidance of health programmes across national health systems.

In practice, CRVS system is fragmented and compartmentalised. Different sectors, for example health, population statistics, and social security are typically not able to access the same database and to generate vital statistics from the civil registration data. Arguably, providing such access requires CRVS to be treated as a public good, being able to support decision-making for a multiplicity of sectors.



NATIONAL FRAMEWORK TO REVAMP AND REFORM CRVS IN PAKISTAN

The Planning Commission is the apex body charged with leading and revamping the inter-institutional collaboration and systems to improve CRVS in Pakistan. In this context of adjusting to new realities and challenges in participatory and collaborative paradigm, the National Planning Commission has been designated the role of facilitator, stewardship, as well as an integrator to promote and coordinate policy formulation, reform and innovation in partnership with relevant ministries, divisions, departments and other organizations⁷.

For this purpose, as per its mandate, it has undertaken⁸ to study and evaluate the impact of technologies as a tool to develop a robust CRVS system and promote coordinated national responses as is manifested in the policy points given below.



VISION

By 2030, all people in Pakistan will benefit from universal and responsive CRVS systems that facilitate the realisation of their rights and support good governance, health, and development.



OBJECTIVES

Objective 1: To achieve universal and timely civil registration of births, deaths, and other vital events.

Objective 2: To provide individuals with legal documentation of civil registration of births, deaths, and other vital events, as necessary, to verify identity, civil status, and access to ensuing rights.

Objective 3: To produce and disseminate accurate, complete, and timely vital statistics (including causes of death) based on registration records.



ACTION POINTS

1. Political commitment is an essential prerequisite for the development and optimally functioning CRVS system. Political commitment is critical for ensuring that CRVS systems are adequately resourced and designed to be inclusive and responsive. It will enable CRVS improvements to be embedded in national development plans.
2. Parliamentary caucuses around strengthened CRVS systems will be established at national and provincial levels. They will ensure that relevant government stakeholders effectively take on their roles and responsibilities, and unify around a comprehensive multisectoral national CRVS strategy detailing budget and commitments required for implementation.
3. Civil registration and vital statistics will be embedded in national development plans and national strategies to promote the planning, implementation, and monitoring of the



Sustainable Development Goals and for the development of statistics.

4. National and Provincial CRVS Coordination Mechanisms and Strategies have many tangible benefits and real impact. It will be priority to establish and support these national coordination mechanisms and strategies for improving national civil registration and vital statistics systems. Collaboration will be made a continuous and iterative process among civil registries, national statistical offices, agencies responsible for national identity management, health sector and other relevant stakeholders to ensure the realisation of the common shared vision.

5. All levels of government must be engaged in the process of establishing political commitment and development of

a comprehensive multi-sectoral national CRVS strategy.

6. In addition to supply-side measures which will be detailed below, demand generation among the public will be created by enhancing awareness of the importance of vital events registration. It will also help underline the value of vital statistics on relationships of mutual trust and accountability between the registration authorities and the public in ways that are respectful of culture and behavioural sensitivities.

7. Health, education and other public services, as well as the media, social workers and civil society, will be mobilised in providing information about the value of CRVS and encouraging the public to register vital events. It will be accomplished through national and subnational campaigns and drives to encourage individuals and families to register vital events in particular advocacy and outreach directed explicitly to hard-to-reach and marginalised population groups. Advocacy will also be undertaken on the benefits of vital statistics

8. Barriers to registration, particularly those that impede access by persons from marginalised groups will be identified and removed

9. A sound legal framework is the basis of a universal and responsive CRVS system. Legislation, rules, regulations and bye-

laws/SOPs will be reviewed, updated, and amended to:

- provide definitions of vital events;
- make the civil registration of vital events compulsory;
- define the functions, duties and responsibilities of civil registration;
- make birth registration free of charge, or charge a low fee from the family for late registration, by the authorities and those who are obliged to register.
- give incentives to families for timely civil registration;
- ensure access to registration for all without discrimination under prescribed international standards
- protect the confidentiality of data in civil registration records and ensure that data is securely shared between the approved departments for quality assurance and to produce required vital statistics;
- ensure quality, timeliness and completeness of vital statistics produced from the civil registration of vital events;
- put in place measures to protect the integrity of civil registration records and prevent fraudulent registration of vital events;
- align certification of deaths with international standards as defined by the World Health Organization;
- ensure uniform implementation of regulations across Pakistan.

10. Penalties and incentives for registration of vital events will be reviewed to make these more effective avoiding unintended effects and adverse impacts on realisation of rights.

11. Existing legislation, information flows and processes assign the responsibility of vital events registration to the parents or the beneficiary. There will be a policy shift whereby the responsibility of such registration will be diverted to the state.

12. Identity management, civil registries, health information systems, and statistical production will be linked, as standalone systems have significant drawbacks in terms of inclusiveness, sustainability, use for governance functions and vital statistics production. To prevent fragmented and parallel identity management systems, efforts will be geared towards integrating and linking systems where possible, with due consideration for critical issues such as data security, privacy, and confidentiality. It may include issuing unique and random personal identification numbers at birth.

13. While removing the existing confusion and conflicts between rules of businesses, roles and responsibilities and mandates of LG departments and their subordinate units and NADRA, an active association will be developed between the two entities. The aim will be to establish verification of information using the NADRA database, which in turn will be strengthened with an

optimal and complete vital events registration system.

14. Currently limited and often nonexistent linkages of various reporting/notifying entities with the events registration entity will be expanded and strengthened.

15. Where the conducive environment allows, vital events notification and registration process will be optimised by introducing appropriate technology and digital registration options.

16. Civil registration and vital statistics is the foundational system upon which the identity documentation is built. The civil registration and vital statistics and identity management sectors should advocate the integration of both systems, including the issuance of unique personal identity numbers at birth as an integrated part of the birth notification and registration process, and using death registration to ensure the accuracy of the identity management system. The integrity of the identity management system is strengthened when built on timely, secure, and accurate birth data provided by the civil registry.

17. For vital events data compilation and its translation into useful evidence, the grassroots system will be strengthened with data repository at the different tiers of governance according to the prevailing system with the upward flow of information at the provincial and national levels. There will be regular sharing of information with NADRA national and provincial offices as





the data repository entity.

18. Existing legal void for the entity to which data will be repositioned for generation of vital statistics will be addressed

19. Existing business processes within CRVS system will be studied and analysed to ascertain prospects for increased cost-effectiveness and resource gaps. Investments will be considered for incremental improvements in areas of human resources, infrastructure, equipment, and supplies.

20. Mechanisms will be established for career development and skills enhancement of technical persons like physicians to determine and record immediate and underlying causes of death accurately. Similarly, training of registration staff in accurate registration and certification procedures and practices, possibly through online qualification systems along with periodic retraining will be imparted. Staff in the national statistical office will be provided training on using administrative data to produce statistics.

21. Revamped legal and institutional framework will be effectively applied through restructured design and implementation of CRVS operational procedures and practices to ensure the essential function of civil registration in providing legal identity, civil status, family relationships, nationality, and other rights. These will facilitate the transmission of data to the approved departments for the production

of vital statistics.

22. There is a lack of routine measurement of registration completeness in Pakistan. Regular assessment of completeness is a critical element of ongoing quality assessments of civil registration and vital statistics systems. Inequality assessments of registration completeness is a crucial step towards ensuring that no one is left behind and not registered. Routine registration completeness assessments will be incorporated as part of ongoing quality assessments of civil registration and vital statistics system.

23. Inequality assessments will be conducted to ensure that hard-to-reach and marginalised groups are registered, and that these groups are identified and considered in efforts related to completeness assessment and registration.

24. Proposed reforms in CRVS operational procedures and practices are:

- Review of registration forms and procedures and their alignment with international standards for legal and statistical purposes.
- Introduction of innovations to increase access to registration, such as mobile registration and use of information technology for registration and maintaining civil registration records.
- Technical analysis and risk assessment will be conducted to establish how digital technologies can best be used to support CRVS processes in a scalable and sustainable way, and ensuring that mitigation strategies are in place when there are possible threats to the rights of individuals, such as privacy.

25. Efforts will be made for the digital collection, maintenance, and dissemination of data including online civil registration and service delivery to support efficient public service delivery and e-government.

26. Innovation and application of information and communication technology will be



deployed to facilitate civil registry of vital events in remote and hard-to-reach areas.

27. There will be a modernisation of civil registration and vital statistics systems, including digitisation and integration with existing administrative and survey data, while recognising the importance of system planning for information and communications technology (ICT). Identification, documentation, and sharing of best practices will be facilitated and guidelines and recommendations consolidated on modernisation and integration.

28. A vital events registration system which is universal produces timely, accurate, and complete vital statistics. Even if civil registration is incomplete and confined to some regions of the country, for example, urban areas, the information should nonetheless be compiled and analysed alongside vital statistics from other sources. In the longer term, the aim is to produce complete, nationally representative statistics using civil registration as the primary source.

29. There will be continued efforts to improve cause-of-death data and produce vital statistics, including analysis of the data even when they are incomplete, or there are issues concerning their quality, as the analysis can be used for system improvements. Capacity-building activities will be undertaken to improve the ability to produce accurate, complete, and timely cause-of-death data and analyse existing data. Vital statistics shall be made available to key users and in the public domain within a reasonable time frame. Metadata, including

information on the content, context and limitation of the statistics, shall be provided to users to increase their understanding of the data.

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31. Production and dissemination of accurate, complete, and timely vital statistics will be reached by institutionalising the routine production of such reports. It includes a commitment from the relevant government agencies to dedicate staff time and other resources to the creation of the reports, as well as regular consolidation and reconciliation of data through a technical group on data integration and quality assurance, as part of the national civil registration and vital statistics coordination mechanism.

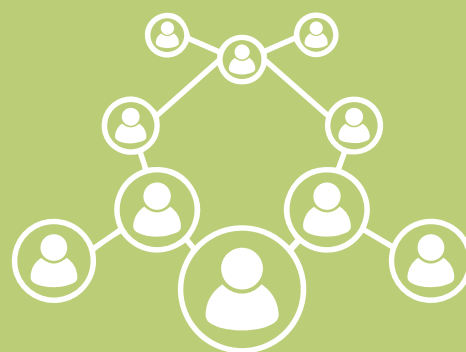
32. Civil registration authorities will be encouraged to share micro-level data instead of aggregated data on vital events with national statistical offices while being mindful of data security, privacy, and confidentiality. Additionally, civil registration authorities will be encouraged to establish a feedback loop with national statistical offices for data improvement, including regular assessments of registration completeness.

MAJOR ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF DIFFERENT SECTORS

The national framework envisages mainstreaming of the health sector in civil registration of births, deaths and cause of deaths. It will be achieved conforming to existing law, rules and regulations and remaining within the mandates already defined and in vogue.

The role of union councils/corresponding units under local government setups will be strengthened for civil registration of marriages, divorces, separation, and adoption, and this will be adequately topped up with necessary human and material resources.

Data and flow of information will be linked and streamlined at three tiers of governance— district (district administration), province (local government department), and national (Ministry of Planning, Development and Special Initiatives). There will be a parallel flow of data to the corresponding tiers of NADRA and bureau of statistics under provincial/area planning and development



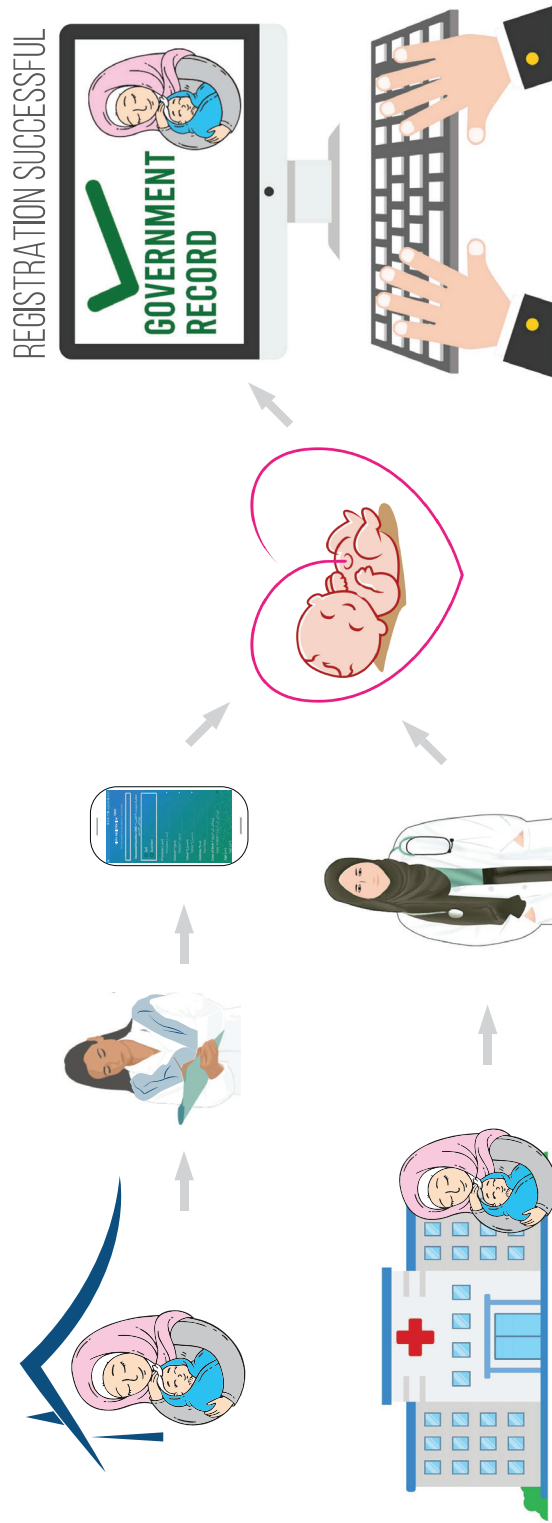
departments and Pakistan Bureau of Statistics under Ministry of Planning, Development and Special Initiatives.

Health departments (district health system, including outreach workers, provincial and area health departments and Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination) will maintain their databases of vital events (births, deaths, and cause of deaths) notification data. Notifications of such vital events will be complemented by other sectors like education.

All the data and information will be reconciled at regular intervals at the corresponding levels with corresponding agencies.



PROPOSED CRVS MODEL BIRTH REGISTRATION:



STEP
01

BIRTH
NOTIFICATION
COUNTER
IN HEALTH
FACILITY

STEP
02

BIRTH
(COMMUNITY /
HEALTH FACILITY)

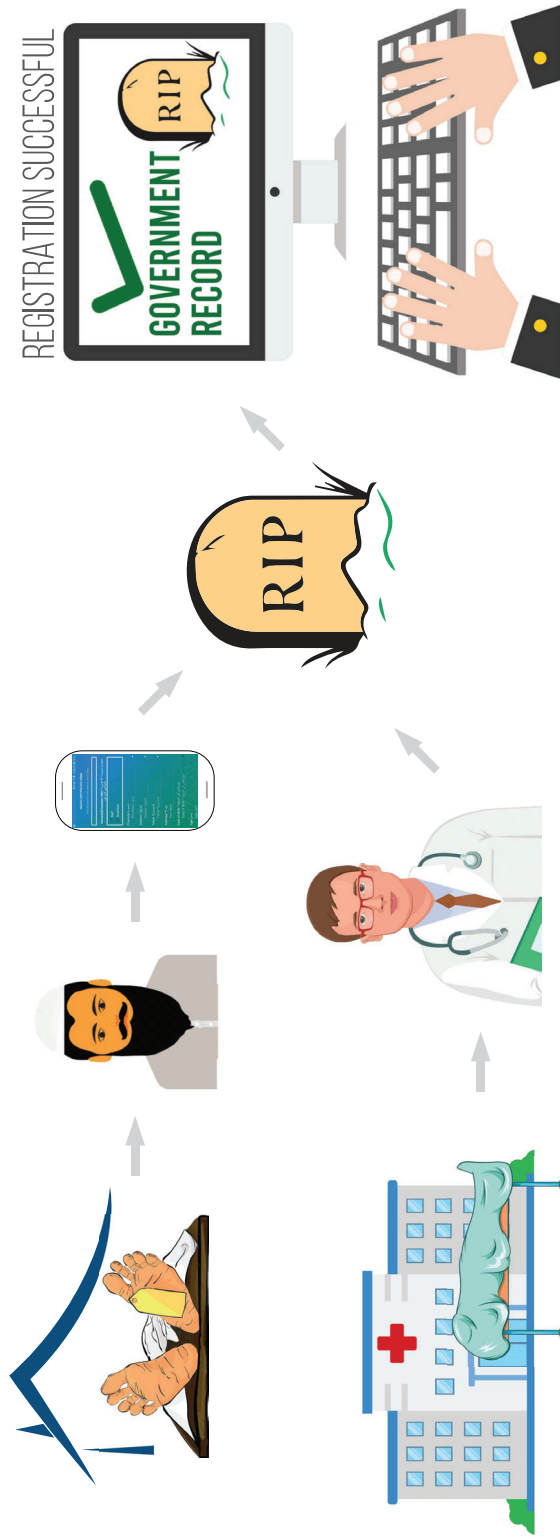
STEP
03

REAL-TIME
NOTIFICATION OF
BIRTH BY DOCTOR/
MIDWIFE

STEP
04

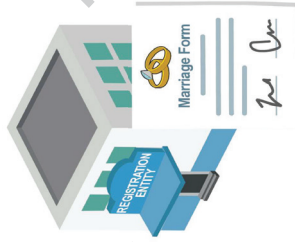
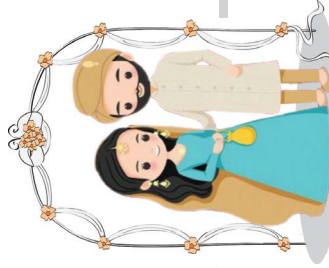
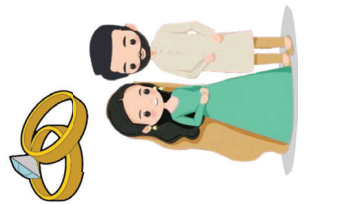
BIRTH
REGISTERED AT
REGISTERING
ENTITY

PROPOSED CRVS MODEL
DEATHS REGISTRATION:



PROPOSED CRVS MODEL MARRIAGES REGISTRATION:

Pre-Marriage Notification



Post-Marriage Registration

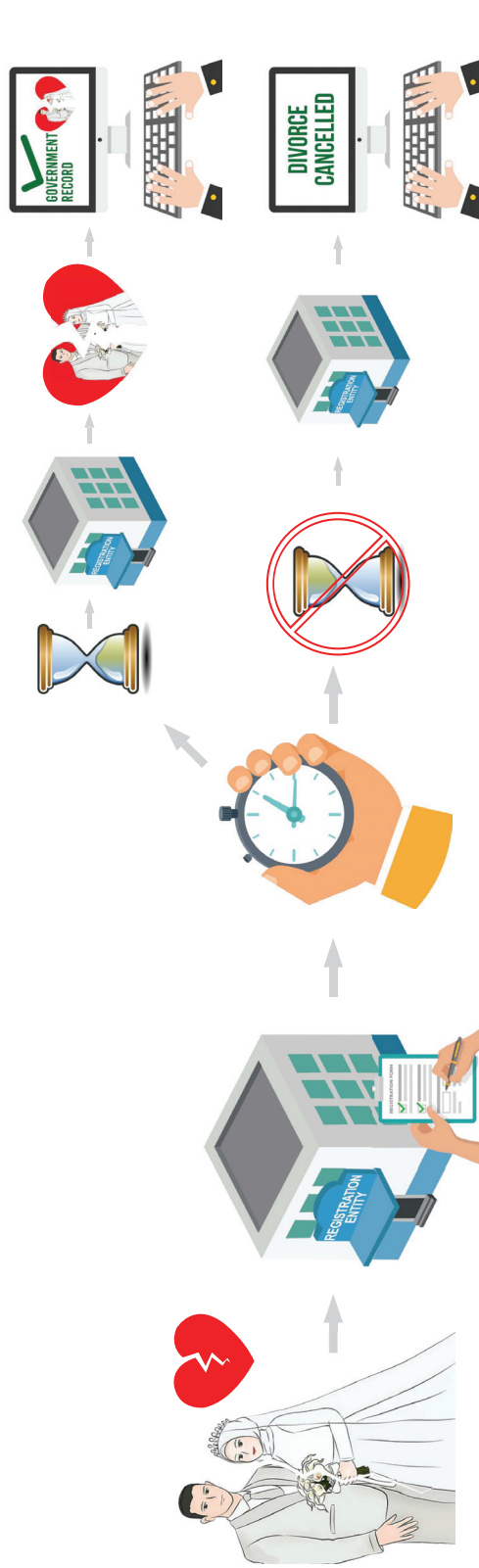


PROPOSED CRVS MODEL DIVORCES REGISTRATION:

Notification

Registration

REGISTRATION SUCCESSFUL



STEP
01

APPROACHING
REGISTERING
ENTITY

STEP
02

PRE-REGISTRATION
OF DIVORCE

STEP
03

RECONCILIATION /
DIVORCE
WITHIN
STIPULATED TIME

STEP
04

DIVORCE
REGISTERED
AT REGISTERING
ENTITY



MINISTRY OF PLANNING, DEVELOPMENT
AND SPECIAL INITIATIVES GOVERNMENT OF PAKISTAN