



CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE
for CRVS Systems

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SNAPSHOT

OF CIVIL REGISTRATION AND VITAL STATISTICS SYSTEMS OF

PAKISTAN



Program information

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Housed at the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), the Centre of Excellence for Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) Systems is a global knowledge and resource hub that actively supports national efforts to develop, strengthen, and scale-up CRVS systems. It collaborates with organizations and experts to broker access to information and expertise, including global standards, tools, research evidence, and relevant good practice.

The Centre of Excellence was established with funding from Global Affairs Canada and IDRC and contributes directly to the work of the Global Financing Facility, a key financing platform of the UN Secretary General's Global Strategy for Women's, Children's and Adolescents' Health.

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Introduction

The purpose of this report is to provide a brief introduction to the civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) system in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

The information was based on a desk review of available documents on the Internet.

Among other things, the report presents:

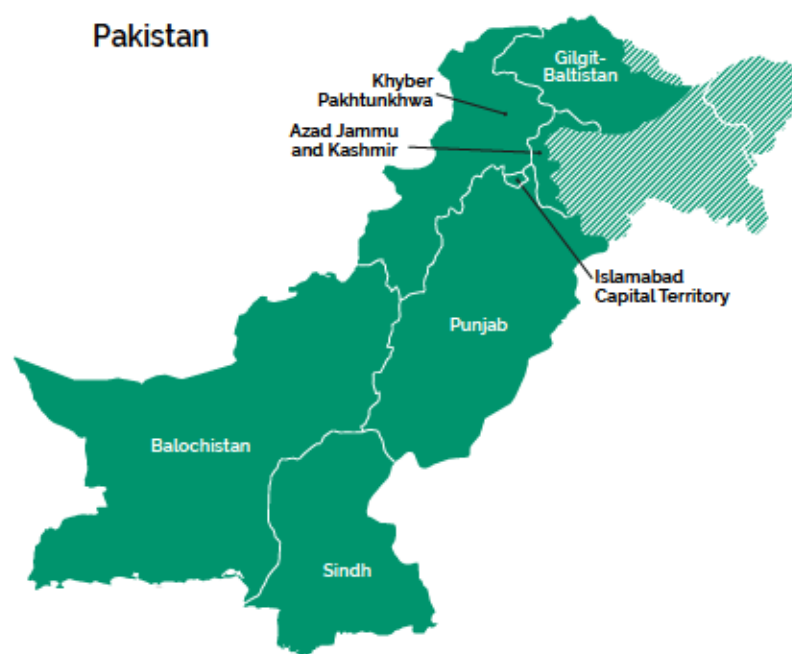
- Background information on the country;
- Selected indicators relevant for CRVS improvement processes;
- Stakeholders' activities; and
- Resources available to strengthen CRVS systems.

Brief country profile

The Islamic Republic of Pakistan is located in South Asia, bordered by India to the east, Afghanistan to the west, Iran to the southwest, and China to the northeast. In the south it has some 1,000 km of coastline along the Arabian Sea and Gulf of Oman.

Pakistan consists of four provinces (Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab, and Sindh), two autonomous territories (Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Gilgit-Baltistan) and one federal territory (Islamabad Capital Territory). Each province and territory is subdivided into divisions, which are further subdivided into districts, which are further subdivided into *tehsils*, or *taluka*, which are further subdivided into union councils.

Pakistan



Disclaimer: The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

- Land area: 881,913 km²
- Population: 212,215,030,¹ with an estimated annual growth rate of 2.1 percent.² As of 2018, 37 percent of the population reside in urban areas,³ with the remaining 63 percent residing in rural areas.
- Capital city: Islamabad
- Official working languages: Urdu and English
- Ministry responsible for civil registration: Local union councils and the National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA)
- Civil registration agents: Local union councils
- National statistical office: Pakistan Bureau of Statistics

CRVS dimensions

Births	
Completeness of birth registration	25% (2018) ⁴
Children under 5 years of age whose births were reported as registered	42% ⁵ (2017–18) ⁶
Births attended by skilled health personnel	69% (2017–18) ⁷
Women aged 15–49 who received antenatal care from a skilled provider	86% (2017–18) ⁸
DPT1 immunization coverage among 1-year-olds	75% (2018) ⁹
Crude birth rate (per 1,000 population)	28 (2018) ¹⁰
Total fertility rate (live births per woman)	3.5 (2018) ¹¹
Adolescent fertility rate (per 1,000 girls aged 15–19 years)	38 (2018) ¹²
Population under age 15	34% (2012) ¹³
Deaths	
Completeness of death registration	52% (2018) ¹⁴
Crude death rate (per 1,000 population)	7 (2019) ¹⁵
Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 live births)	57 (2018) ¹⁶
Under 5 mortality rate (per 1,000 live births)	69.3 (2018) ¹⁷
Maternal mortality ratio (per 100,000 live births)	140 (2017) ¹⁸
Marriages and divorces	
Marriage registration rate	Not available
Women aged 20–24 first married or in union before age 15	3% (2013) ¹⁹
Women aged 20–24 first married or in union before age 18	18% (2018) ²⁰
Divorce registration rate	Not available
Vital statistics including causes of death data	
Compilation and dissemination of civil registration-based statistics	Not available
Medically certified causes of death	Available

Civil registration system

Legislative framework

Until 1959, registration of births and deaths was conducted per acts and rules enacted well before the creation of Pakistan in 1947. Changes to the registration procedures were introduced with the adoption in 1959 of the Basic Democracies Order and the Municipal Administration Ordinance introduced in 1960. These new regulations made registration of vital events mandatory and implemented the registration process uniformly in both urban and rural areas. At present, registration of births and deaths is regulated by local government acts (*Punjab/KP/Sindh Local Government Acts 2013*, *Balochistan Local Government Act 2010*, and *Gilgit-Baltistan Local Government Act 2014*).

Marriage is regulated by a range of laws that either apply to all citizens or only to a specific religious community:

- *Christian Marriage Act*, 1872
- *Christian Divorce Act*, 1869
- *Hindu Marriage Act*, 2017
- *Child Marriage Restraint Act*, 1929
- *Parsi Marriage and Divorce Act*, 1936
- *Dissolution of Muslim Marriages Act*, 1939
- *Muslim Family Laws Ordinance*, 1961
- *Family Courts Act*, 1964 (Muslim)
- *Dowry and Bridal Gifts (Restriction) Act*, 1976 (all citizens of Pakistan)
- *Guardians and Wards Act* (applicable to all citizens of Pakistan but the communities may follow their own personal law instead)

An in-depth analysis was conducted of the civil registration legal framework in 2019 with the support of UNICEF. Based on the report, changes have been proposed to the legal framework. These changes were awaiting approval by Parliament,

expected in 2020. These changes included the 2018 draft *Personal Data Protection Bill*, which is modelled on the European Union General Data Protection Regulation.

Management, organization, and operations

Pakistan has a decentralized civil registration system in which local administrative bodies, local union councils, undertake the actual registration and bear legal responsibility to conduct registration.

Some responsibilities are also delegated to the national agency, the National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA), which supports the registration process in terms of digital keeping and providing access to vital events records registered by local union councils. The responsibility of NADRA (further serving as national identity, or ID, provider agency) extends to ensuring centralized processing of vital events records within a single civil registration management system. They also provide information and communication technology (ICT) equipment for digitized registration of vital events and issuance of registration certificates. NADRA operates under the Ministry of Interior as an official custodian of the data warehouse on national security and population.

NADRA is a division of the Ministry of the Interior but is an independent corporate body. NADRA Technologies Limited is registered with the Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan and is wholly owned by NADRA. Although it sits within the Ministry of the Interior, it operates autonomously of the government with respect to finance and management (as provided for by the NADRA Ordinance) and receives no government funding. By virtue of his or her post, the chair of NADRA is also the Registrar General of Pakistan. NADRA is responsible for registration of the national population and issuance of identity cards.

National CRVS systems coordination mechanisms

The task of overall coordination of CRVS development at the federal level has been assigned to the Ministry of Planning, Development and Special Initiatives (MoPD). A Technical Support Unit has been established within MoPD to oversee and facilitate the CRVS development process. Pakistan has also established a high-level coordination mechanism, the National CRVS Steering and Coordination Committee, which falls under the chairpersonship of the Federal Minister, MoPD. Members include representatives of several ministries:

- Federal planning and development ministry/departments;
- Ministry of the Interior;
- Ministry of Law and Justice;
- Ministry of National Health Services Regulations and Coordination;
- National Database and Registration Authority;
- Pakistan Bureau of Statistics;
- Provincial departments of health;
- Provincial local government and rural development departments; and
- Development partners (World Health Organization, UNICEF, and Plan International).

One of the steering committee's key objectives is to discuss, develop, and implement a comprehensive multi-stakeholder national CRVS strategic plan and national action framework. To further strengthen the coordination mechanism, provincial steering committees have been formed with provincial officers of the various ministries and departments as members.

Provincial-level steering, coordination, and implementation committees have been established, as well. These are composed of agencies recommended by the National CRVS Steering and Coordination Committee.

Administrative-level registration centres

Highly decentralized civil registration ensures that the registration services are available at the lowest levels of public administration: local union councils. The accessibility of registration services therefore matches availability of other basic services provided by the public administration.

Accessibility of civil registration services

Other than making registration services available at the local union councils, any further means of ensuring shorter distances to registration offices is linked with the government decision to increase the number of local union councils, shortening the distances to the nearest administrative point.

Registration of vital events

Birth registration is done by the local union councils upon a request by parents or close relatives at their place of residence, who must present their National Identity Card (NIC). The request should be backed by a birth notification from the hospital or attendant midwife. If the child was not born in a hospital or was born without the presence of a midwife, a vaccination card is used as documentation. The union council chairperson signs Form A, but if she or he is absent, the vice chair is authorized to sign the document on his or her behalf. The parents keep the original Form A, and the union council keeps a copy along with the required documents (for example, a hospital note and a copy of the parents' electronic NICs). The union council then registers the birth in its manual register.

Provinces have different timeframes for registration per their respective by-laws; for instance, Punjab is within 60 days while Sindh is within 30 days. If registration is done later than seven years after birth, the parents must obtain an affidavit from court and the district commissioner has to approve the registration. The parents will also have to submit a medical attestation that evaluates the age of the child and a school attestation when completing Form A. The parents need to publish a note in a local newspaper stating that they intend to register the child.

After the registration, parents receive original Form A. Official certification from NADRA requires 3 working days for timely registration, 7 working days in case of late registration (61 days to 7 years), and 20 working days for registration beyond the age of 7 years.

A request for **death registration** should be submitted within 60 days following the death occurrence. It should be submitted by a son or other blood relative at the local union council. The request should be backed with a hospital death certificate, graveyard slip, copy of the deceased's national identity card, and a copy of a son's or immediate relative's NIC.

Married couples initially get a manual **marriage** certificate (*nikkah nama*) from the same *nikkah khawan (molvi)* who solemnized the ceremony (*nikkah*), with the official stamp and signature of the registered *nikkah khawan*. Marriage is registered at the place of solemnization of the marriage. The *nikkah nama* is then registered with the respective union council office. To complete the registration, the couple needs to present copies of the following:

- *Nikkah nama*/manual marriage certificate;
- Bride's NIC;
- Bridegroom's NIC;
- NICs of the fathers of the bride and bridegroom;
- NIC from *nikkah khawan (molvi)*; and
- Passports in cases where the bride or bridegroom is foreign.

Vital events registered in union councils are also entered as digital records in the Civil Registration Management System (CRMS) using dedicated registration software supplied and maintained by NADRA. The system allows for access to personal information of informants and all registered vital events records belonging to a certain individual. Consequently, vital events certificates can be issued in any of the union councils across the country.

Backlog of unregistered births

No information available.

Sample registration forms

The design of the registration forms is not uniform across all provinces. The samples below represent a design that is valid only in a specific province.

- Birth certificate sample: i1.wp.com/birthcertificatepakistan.com/wp-content/uploads/Nadra-Pakistani-Birth-Certificate.jpg?w=443&ssl=1
- Death certificate sample: bizpointonline.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/sample-nadra-death-certificate-pakistan.jpg
- Death registration form (Form B): cda.gov.pk/documents/FORMS/death-reg.pdf
- Marriage certificate sample: zahidlaw.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/nadra-marriage-certificate.jpg

Registration fee

Birth registration is done free of charge except in Baluchistan province, which charges 100 rupees (US\$0.60). Except Punjab province, provinces charge 200 rupees (US\$1.20) for late birth registration. The fee charged for issuing a birth certificate is 100 rupees (US\$0.60). The penalty for late registration varies depending on how late the child is registered: 50 rupees (US\$0.30) is the charge after a period of 60 to 100 days, 100 rupees (US\$0.60) for 101 to 200 days, 150 rupees (US\$0.90) for 201 to 300 days, and 200 rupees (US\$1.20) from there on.

Death registration is done free of charge. In case of late registration, 50 rupees (US\$0.30) is charged after a period of 60 to 100 days, 100 rupees (US\$0.60) for 101 to 200 days, 150 rupees (US\$0.90) for 201 to 300 days, and 200 rupees (US\$1.20) from there on.

Fees for marriage registration vary depending on the place of registration.

Vital statistics system

Vital statistics

The Pakistan Bureau of Statistics is a federal agency under the Government of Pakistan charged with national statistical services and providing solid and comprehensive statistical research.

No vital statistics are produced from civil registration, as the coverage is too low. The Pakistan Bureau of Statistics is considered the entity to generate vital statistics, but there is no legal authority to this effect.

Causes of death

Cause-of-death statistics are not regularly processed by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics. Civil registration records are also not used as a source for processing available statistics data on cause of death in Pakistan. As in the case of vital statistics information, the cause of death data is collected through periodic surveys.

According to data from 2017 collected in line with the methodology developed by the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation, non-communicable diseases (chronic diseases) are estimated to account for 58 percent of all deaths in Pakistan. Out of all non-communicable diseases, cardiovascular diseases are estimated to account for 29 percent of deaths, 5 percent by chronic respiratory diseases, 8 percent by cancer, 3 percent by diabetes, and 12 percent by other chronic diseases. The remaining 42 percent of deaths were attributed to communicable, maternal, perinatal, and nutritional conditions.

Digitization

Computerization

NADRA has successfully implemented the CRMS at the local government level in Pakistan. Under this system, the government can register citizens' vital events (births, marriages, and deaths). The system provides an up-to-date status, reporting facilities for selected events, and business decision models for strategic decision-making in resource allocation, hence enabling better governance.

Although NADRA has no authority over the registration process itself, it provides the local union councils with a data acquisition software application and technical assistance through designated CRMS supervisors and regional management teams. Other than installing and supporting the operation of registration software in the local union councils, NADRA collects and stores all registered vital events centrally in the national population database. The software also includes an online application that acquires authenticated information aimed at the real-time flow of civil registration data, which allows parents' and informants' data to be populated from the national population database automatically using a unique identification number. NADRA also designed and started issuing digitally secured paper for certificates issued directly from the CRMS, which includes a verification mechanism to check the authenticity of new digitally secured paper.

NADRA plans to equip a total of 11,116 registration centres at the local union council level with digital registration processing and access to the CRMS. As of 2019, some 8,000 registration sites have been linked with the CRMS, with 3,000 remaining to be connected.

Online registration services at health facilities

Other than providing medical certificates later required to complete the registration process, health facilities are not involved in the registration process. Within the framework of the Digital Birth Registration project implemented in Sindh and Punjab provinces, health workers take an active role in capturing birth information and communicating it using mobile devices, as described in the section below.

Mobile technology application

The Digital Birth Registration project is a joint effort between UNICEF Pakistan and the Sindh and Punjab provincial governments, with technical support from the Telenor mobile network operator and departments of local government and health. The project was designed to ensure universal birth registration for children in target districts, primarily through improved governance structures and the use of specially designed information and communications technologies. Furthermore, the governments of Punjab and Sindh, as part of the national commitment of achieving universal civil registration and vital statistics in Pakistan by 2024, are fully committed to ensure universal birth registration for children under 18.

The project features the use of mobile phones to declare births directly from the home by a visiting health worker or a *nikah* registrar, who inputs the data into the Digital Birth Registration app on his or her phone. The data is then automatically transferred to the local union council responsible for registration, and the system communicates with NADRA for validation. After validation, a unique identification number is sent directly to the facilitator, who provides it to the applicant. The

applicant (and/or the facilitator) then presents this number, together with the required documents, to collect the birth certificate at the union council. This way, the Digital Birth Registration system saves the applicant at least two visits to the government offices. This is important because parents often fail to register their children primarily because they do not want to lose working days due to travelling to and from union councils. The project provides service delivery at the doorstep, thus minimizing the high opportunity cost associated with birth registration, which was one of the major demand-side limitations.

The project results have been highly encouraging, showing that 94 percent of births are now being registered in these union councils within the first 60 days, in accordance with the law.

Unique identification number

A 13-digit unique identification number is assigned at birth when the parents complete the child's birth registration form (Form RG-2, commonly known as the B-Form), and then a NIC with the same number is issued at the age of 18. For people whose birth was never registered, the unique identification number is assigned when they apply for an NIC. The first five digits of the unique identification number are based on the applicant's locality, the next seven are serial numbers, and the last digit is a check digit. The last digit also indicates the gender of the applicant: an even number indicates a female and an odd number indicates a male.

Population register

Pakistan's national population database is managed by NADRA and covers approximately 98 percent of the entire population.²¹ It is the single source of legal identity data and is linked to a Computerized National Identity Card (CNIC), which is positioned as the nation's primary form of identity verification. Personal information of persons who obtained a CNIC is also linked to their personal records in CRMS using their unique identification number.

Digitization of historical registration records

Digital vital events records exist only for those records that have been created after NADRA has equipped local union councils with the ICT registration platform. Paper archives of registered vital events at local union councils are not yet being systematically digitized.

Link with identification system

The CNIC is issued by NADRA. The card is available to any citizen of Pakistan who is 18 years of age or older. Although branded as computerized, the CNIC is a local implementation of a chip-enabled electronic identity card. In Pakistan, all adult citizens must register for the CNIC with a unique number upon reaching the age of 18. It serves as an identification document to authenticate an individual's identity as a citizen of Pakistan.

The digitized platform for issuance of the CNIC enables CRMS users to pull out all identity information of applicants who previously registered births and subsequent vital events. They can use this data to populate the CNIC electronic application form. The CNIC database is also consulted in the process of registering vital

events. For instance, an informant's information (for example, parents' information in the process of birth registration) is pulled out directly from the CNIC database based on the unique identification number presented. This information is used to automatically populate the electronic application to register the vital event.

Interface with other sectors and operations

The national database maintained by NADRA is the single source of legal identity data in Pakistan, and the CNIC is the primary form of identification used to authenticate across a number of public and private services. The national database features deduplication (deleting duplicate data) based on biometric data (Automated Fingerprint Identification System, or AFIS) and provides identity verification services to a number of public and private entities, billed according to a chargeback model.

The CNIC is mandatory for:

- voting;
- opening and operating bank accounts;
- obtaining a Pakistani passport;
- obtaining a driving licence;
- purchasing vehicles and land;
- purchasing a plane or train ticket;
- obtaining a mobile phone SIM card;
- obtaining electricity, gas, and water;
- securing admission to college and other post-graduate institutes; and
- conducting major financial transactions.

Improvement initiatives and external support

Improvement plan and budget

Strategic plan

Strengthening CRVS in Pakistan is one of the government's priorities. The Technical Support Unit was established under the Ministry of Planning, Development and Special Initiatives with an ambitious six-year roadmap to promote CRVS in the country. One initiative in this plan is to develop CRVS model districts (starting in 10 districts) throughout Pakistan and scale this to other areas during the next phase.

A national strategy for CRVS was being developed and was expected to be finalized in 2020.

Budgetary allocations and requirements

NADRA's financing model does not rely on government funding. It is designed to ensure sustainable financing by requiring that a fee for services rendered be given to the government. Those earnings are then used to provide a subsidy to the poor people of Pakistan to enable them to register for free. First-time applicants for an ID card get the card free, but expedited service (within two weeks) costs 1,100 rupees (US\$6.60). Further revenues are generated from external users of NADRA services. For example, NADRA charges banks around 35 rupees (US\$0.20) per person for authenticating an individual when opening a bank account. There were instances when NADRA experienced peaks in service demand, processing up to 55 million such transactions, which generated significant income and in a sustainable way.

A public company, NADRA Technologies Limited, is registered with the Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan. It is wholly owned by NADRA and is able to bid for contracts outside the country and earn revenues that can be reinvested in NADRA to support its operations.

Financing to operate vital events registration sites at the local union councils comes from councils' own budgets.

Activities identified as high priorities

Given the significance of CRVS legislation, the Technical Support Unit applied for the Global Grant Program through the Bloomberg Philanthropies Data for Health initiative. After a thorough and competitive process, Data for Health approved the grant to support the Technical Support Unit's legislative reform efforts starting in April 2020 and extending through December 2021.

Legislation reforms will focus on the following specific areas:

- Comprehensive mapping of existing laws for vital events notification, registration, and certification at the national and provincial levels;
- Identifying existing gaps in CRVS legislation by using international assessment tools; and
- Formulating and drafting an improved CRVS legislation framework for adoption and country-wide implementation through a broader consultative process among stakeholders.

The Technical Support Unit defined the following as immediate priorities:

- Creation and launch of CRVS model districts;
- Development of a National Strategic Plan for CRVS;
- Technology upgrade synergy among partners for data processing;

- Development of a long-term CRVS investment case;
- Implementation of ICD-10 coding in hospitals for causes of death;
- Possibilities of including private practitioners for CRVS death registration; and
- Strengthening of local bodies systems and synergies with NADRA and health departments.

Support from development partners

Pakistan benefits from the support of a range of development partners. UNICEF supports authorities with the development of a national CRVS strategy, United Nations Population Fund and WHO support authorities with generating vital statistics, and the World Bank provides financing of CRVS and identity management-related activities. Pakistan also benefits from the support of a dedicated Development Partners Group.

The Ministry of Planning, Development and Special Initiatives, working with provincial departments, NADRA, the WHO country and regional offices, Plan International, UNICEF, and other partners, organized a series of rapid and comprehensive assessments of the country's CRVS system to ascertain the current status of CRVS implementation in Pakistan. These studies used the CRVS assessment tool developed by WHO and the University of Queensland, Australia.

Conclusion

The formation of the National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA), registration of identity information, and issuance of identification credentials very early proved all the benefits that developed civil identification systems deliver both to citizens and the government. For citizens, various government services have become much more accessible, and they can better exercise state guaranteed rights. For the government, the identification system provides much-needed certainty regarding the identity of the person with whom they interact.

Such a breakthrough with civil identification has not yet resulted in increased vital events registration coverage. The perception of value that comes with the registration of vital events is much less than in the case of the National Identity Card. Further engagement of NADRA with local union councils will dramatically increase the technical capabilities of local union councils and increase service supply. Challenges remain on the demand side and raising awareness of the value of vital events registration. The creation of high-level inter-agency coordination mechanisms, established to develop policies to increase vital events registration rates, indicates that this issue will be dealt with as a government priority.



Resources

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