



**CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE**  
for CRVS Systems

**LE CENTRE D'EXCELLENCE**  
sur les systèmes ESEC

# SNAPSHOT

OF CIVIL REGISTRATION AND VITAL STATISTICS SYSTEMS OF

# SIERRA LEONE



**ECA**

## Program Information

### About the Centre of Excellence for CRVS Systems

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 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.

### About the International Development Research Centre (IDRC)

Part of Canada's foreign affairs and development efforts, the IDRC invests in knowledge, innovation and solutions to improve the lives of people in the developing world. IDRC works with many stakeholders including civil society organizations, think tanks, regional organizations and government departments in the developing world to promote growth, reduce poverty, and drive large-scale positive change.

---

Published by the Centre of Excellence for Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) Systems in partnership with the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA).

This publication was authored by Yacob Zewoldi, a consultant for the Centre of Excellence for Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems.

International Development Research Centre  
PO Box 8500,  
Ottawa, ON Canada Tel 1 613-236-6163  
Email: [crvs@idrc.ca](mailto:crvs@idrc.ca)  
[www.CRVSystems.ca](http://www.CRVSystems.ca)

© International Development Research Centre 2019

The research presented in this publication was carried out with financial and technical assistance from the Centre of Excellence for CRVS Systems. Housed at the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), it is jointly funded by Global Affairs Canada and IDRC. The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent those of Global Affairs Canada, IDRC, or its Board of Governors.

# Contents

Program Information .....	ii
Introduction .....	2
Brief country profile .....	2
CRVS dimensions .....	3
Civil registration system .....	4
Legislative framework .....	4
Management, organization and operations .....	4
Interface with other sectors and operations .....	6
Vital statistics system .....	6
Vital statistics .....	6
Causes of death .....	6
Budget for vital statistics production .....	6
Digitization .....	7
Computerization .....	7
Mobile technology application .....	7
Improvement initiatives and external support .....	8
Improvement plan and budget .....	8
Support from development partners .....	9
Proposals to improve coordination .....	9
Resources .....	9
Websites .....	9
Additional materials .....	10
Conclusion .....	10
Annex: Organizational chart of the National Civil Registration Agency .....	11
Endnotes .....	12

## Introduction

The purpose of this report is to provide a brief introduction to the civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) systems in Sierra Leone

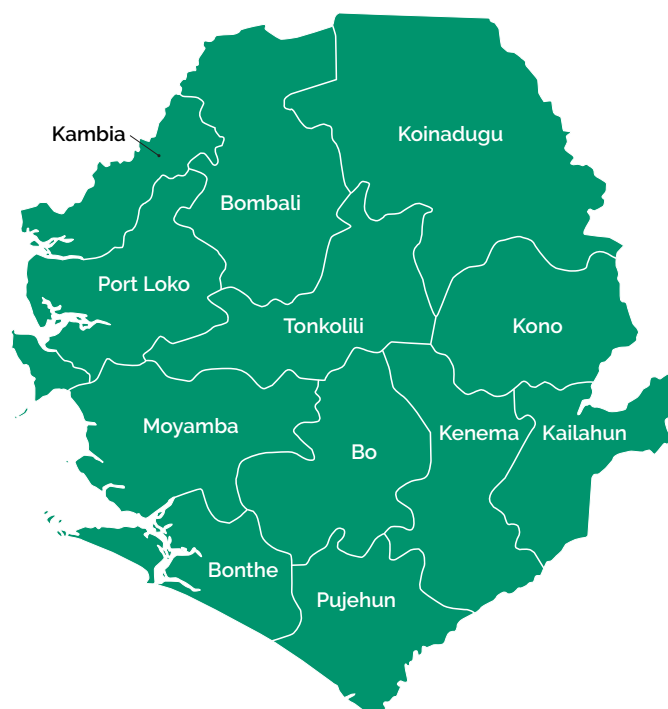
The information was collected through a questionnaire completed by the National Civil Registration Authority in February 2019 and supplemented by a desk review of available documents. The report presents country background, selected indicators relevant for CRVS improvement processes, stakeholders' activities and resources available and needed to strengthen CRVS systems, coordination, among others.

## Brief country profile

Sierra Leone is bordered by Guinea on the north and northeast west, Liberia on the south and southwest and the Atlantic Ocean on its west coast. It has a long coastline along the Atlantic Ocean to its south and south-west. It has a total surface area of 72,300 square kilometres.<sup>1</sup>

According to the 2015 census, the total population was 7.09 million with a growth rate of 3.2 percent of the total population. The rural population was about 59 percent.<sup>2</sup> The 2019 mid-year population estimate was 7.9 million.<sup>3</sup> Sierra Leone has five major administrative regions: (i) Eastern, (ii) Northern, (iii) North-Western, (iv) Southern and (v) Western.

### Sierra Leone



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

- Capital city: Free Town
- Official working language: English
- Ministry responsible for civil registration: Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA)
- Civil registration office: National Civil Registration Authority (NCRA)
- National statistics office: Statistics Sierra Leone (Stats SL)

## CRVS dimensions

### Births

Completeness of birth registration <sup>4</sup>	Not available
Children under 5 years of age whose births were reported as registered with a civil authority	81.1 % (2017) <sup>5</sup>
Births attended by skilled health personnel	81.6 % (2014) <sup>5</sup>
DTP1 immunization coverage among 1-year-olds <sup>6</sup>	97 % (2016) <sup>7</sup>
Crude birth rate (per 1,000 population)	35 (2016) <sup>7</sup>
Total fertility rate (live births per woman)	4.5 (2016) <sup>7</sup>
Adolescent fertility rate (per 1,000 girls aged 15-19 years)	115.6 (2016) <sup>8</sup>
Population under age 15	42.1 % (2017) <sup>9</sup>

### Deaths

Completeness of death registration	Not available
Crude death rate (per 1,000 population)	13 (2016) <sup>7</sup>
Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 live births)	82 (2017) <sup>10</sup>
Under five mortality rate (per 1,000 live births)	111 (2017) <sup>10</sup>
Maternal mortality ratio (per 100,000 live births)	1360 (2015) <sup>11</sup>

### Marriages and divorces

Marriage registration rate	Not available
Women aged 20-24 first married or in union before age 15	13 (2014) <sup>12</sup>
Women aged 20-24 first married or in union before age 18	39 (2014) <sup>12</sup>
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 data	Not available

## Civil registration system

### Legislative framework

In 2016, the Parliament of the Republic of Sierra Leone enacted the National Civil Registration Act. The Act called for the establishment of the National Civil Registration Authority, the continuous and compulsory registration of citizens and non-citizen residents in Sierra Leone as well as issuance of Biometric National Identity Cards with unique non-duplicating and non-replicating National Identification Numbers assigned to every resident in Sierra Leone.<sup>13</sup> The vital events referred to in the Act are: live births, deaths, foetal deaths, marriages, divorces, nullities, adoptions, legal separations, legitimatizations and recognitions. The Act also covers identity management.

### Management, organization and operations

#### *National CRVS systems coordination mechanisms*

The following Committees and Taskforce facilitate the CRVS Systems improvement process in Sierra Leone. Each of these Committees or structures operate within the Terms of Reference coordination, leadership and governance structure agreed on by all stakeholders associated with CRVS.

Coordination mechanisms	Member ministries, departments and agencies
CRVS Steering Committee: provides policy directive and technical advice to Government for decision making and general coordination of CRVS in Sierra Leone.	Ministry of Internal Affairs (Chair), Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Health & Sanitation, Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development; Ministry of Information; Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs, Justice Ministry, Education Ministry, National Civil Registration Authority; Statistics Sierra Leone; National Electoral Commission; United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (Co-chair); European Union (EU); British Department for International Development (DfID); World Health Organization (WHO); Irish Aid; United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF); United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA); Plan International; World Bank; and African Development Bank.
CRVS Taskforce / Technical Working Group at National and District Levels: provides technical advice on thematic areas (birth, death, marriages, divorce, adoption, ID Management, etc.) and constitutes Subject Matter Specialists from various Institutions collaborating with the CRVS Programme	National Civil Registration Authority (NCRA) – Chair, Ministry of Health and Sanitation; Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development; Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs; Statistics Sierra Leone; National Electoral Commission; Immigration Department; National Social Security and Insurance Trust (NSSIT); UNICEF; WHO, UNFPA, National Revenue Authority, Ministry of Education, Plan International, Civil Society Organizations, and others
Sub-committees on Births and Deaths	NCRA; UNICEF; Plan International; Ministry of Local Government and Rural development; Ministry of Health and Sanitation; Statistics Sierra Leone; and WHO.

### *Administrative level registration centres*

The administrative hierarchy for Civil Registration is: National, Regional, District and Chiefdom/community levels. The lowest administrative unit where the local civil registration offices exist is at community level in the chiefdoms. The next higher NCRA offices are at District levels, which report to the Regional and National levels i.e. Births and Death Registration Centres. There are currently 2,946 Local Civil Registrars throughout the country. Out of these, 346 are NCRA employees serving urban areas in 17 NCRA District Offices across the country. In the rural areas, registration is conducted by 2,600 health workers in 1,300 health facilities across the country through a Memorandum of Understanding duly signed with the Ministry of Health and Sanitation for use of health facilities and where necessary, health professionals.

### *Accessibility of civil registration services*

Most households reside less than 5 kilometres from district registration offices or health facilities. NCRA estimates that the time it would take the furthestmost service seekers to reach a registration centre is less than one hour by motorcycle, which is the common mode of transport.

### *Registration of vital events*

Some highlights in the current registration process:

- Vital events registered are: Birth, Death, Foetal death, Marriage, Divorce, Nullity, Adoption, Legal separation, Legitimatization and Recognition.
- Identity management is a core business of NCRA.
- National Identification and the Civil Registration Systems are linked through unique individual numbers.
- Causes of death information is recorded during death registration.
- Definitions of these vital events are aligned to the United Nations' international recommendations.<sup>14</sup>
- Registration of births, marriages, divorces and deaths is free.
- Registration of vital events is mostly paper-based at this stage.
- Legal and statistical records are prepared separately.
- Birth and death certificates are issued free but charges are levied for certificates associated with late registrations. Fees for vital events is given in Table 1 below.

**Table 1: Direct costs associated with certification of vital events**

Vital events	Cost of certificates	Remarks
Birth	No fee for registration within the statutory period	Fee is charged for late (USD 0.17 or Le 1,500) or delayed registration (USD 0.34 or Le 3,000) and for a certified true copy (USD 0.57 or Le 5,000)
Marriage	USD 5.7 (Le 50,000)	Office of the Registrar and Administrator General
Divorce	USD 5.7 (Le 50,000)	Office of the Registrar and Administrator General
Death	No fee for registration within the statutory period	Fee is charged for late (USD 0.17 or Le 1,500) or delayed registration (USD 0.57 or Le 5,000) and for a certified true copy (USD 0.57 or Le 5,000)

Source: NCRA

Sierra Leonian Leone (Le) 1 = US\$ 0.0001<sup>15</sup>

### *Backlog of unregistered births*

There is an estimated 19 percent backlog of unregistered births in Sierra Leone.<sup>5</sup>

### **Interface with other sectors and operations**

Sierra Leone is in the process of building an Integrated National Civil Registration System, whereby different databases would be linked through a unique National Identification Number issued by the NCRA to individuals. National identification and civil registration systems are already linked. Databases of the NCRA and other Government Ministries, Departments and Agencies such as the Ministry of Health and Sanitation, Statistics Sierra Leone, National Social Security Insurance Trust, Electoral Commission, National Revenue Authority and Immigration among others, will be linked to ensure interoperability. This will also ensure accountable social service delivery and promote good governance.

## **Vital statistics system**

### **Vital statistics**

The National Civil Registration Act, 2016, mandates NCRA to collect, compile, abstract and publish vital statistics from civil registers. The Statistical Act of 2002 vests responsibility on Statistics Sierra Leone to collect, compile and disseminate data and statistics from censuses, sample surveys and administrative records.<sup>16</sup> In 2017, an annual report was prepared by the Ministry of Health and Sanitation on births and deaths which was previously responsible for births and deaths registration, before these were integrated into the NCRA. Moving forward, the NCRA will produce annual statistics reports beginning with 2018 to be published in mid-2019.

### **Causes of death**

NCRA is mandated by law to collect, compile, abstract and publish statistics on causes of death. A Registration Officer is required to enter in the register of deaths, the required particulars associated with the event and the cause of the death as certified by a registered Medical Practitioner. Causes of death information is yet to be comprehensively recorded according to the International Classification of Diseases (ICD) format and disseminated.

### **Budget for vital statistics production**

Budgetary allocation from the Government treasury for Vital Statistics from Civil Registers for the current fiscal year (2019) is inadequate. Nonetheless, the NCRA compiles and produces vital statistics records with support from development partners complementing the Government, mainly UNICEF.



## Digitization

Unlike civil registration laws in many African countries, The National Civil Registration Act 2016, opens the door for creating an electronic registration system and implementing new technology to improve CRVS systems in Sierra Leone. Efforts to make this real is on course with commitments from stakeholders in the country.

## Computerization

Not all local registrations offices in the country have computers. Computers are in the urban registration centres only. The plan is to have computers at all chiefdom level registration centres, when established.

Not all health facilities have computers. The National civil registration Authority has done assessments to ascertain the readiness for the establishment of permanent and continuous civil registrations in all Health facilities.

Electronic media is used to transfer vital statistics data from the civil registration system to the office responsible for compiling vital statistics.

## Mobile technology application

Currently, mobile technology is not used for notification of the occurrence of vital events or at any stage of the CRVS processes. However, plans are on course to adopt the use of mobile and other appropriate technology means to enhance notification and data transmission.

## Sample registration forms

Not available on NCRA website currently. However, the forms are being revised to capture strong security features which, once finalized will be posted on the website.

Computers used in	Yes	No	Remarks
All local registrations offices in the country		X	Computers are in the urban registration centres only. The plan is to have computers at all chiefdom level registration centres, when established.
Urban centers	X		Computers are used for civil registration.
Health facilities		X	The National civil registration Authority has done assessments to ascertain the readiness for the establishment of permanent and continuous civil registrations in all Health facilities.
Other, please specify			Electronic media are used to transfer vital statistics data from the civil registration system to the office responsible for compiling vital statistics.

## Improvement initiatives and external support

### Improvement plan and budget

#### Strategic plan

In 2017, a five-year strategic plan was developed for CRVS systems improvement for the plan period of 2018–2022.

NCRA is conducting a Comprehensive Country CRVS Systems Assessment in April 2019 with full support from development partners led by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA). The objective of the assessment is to

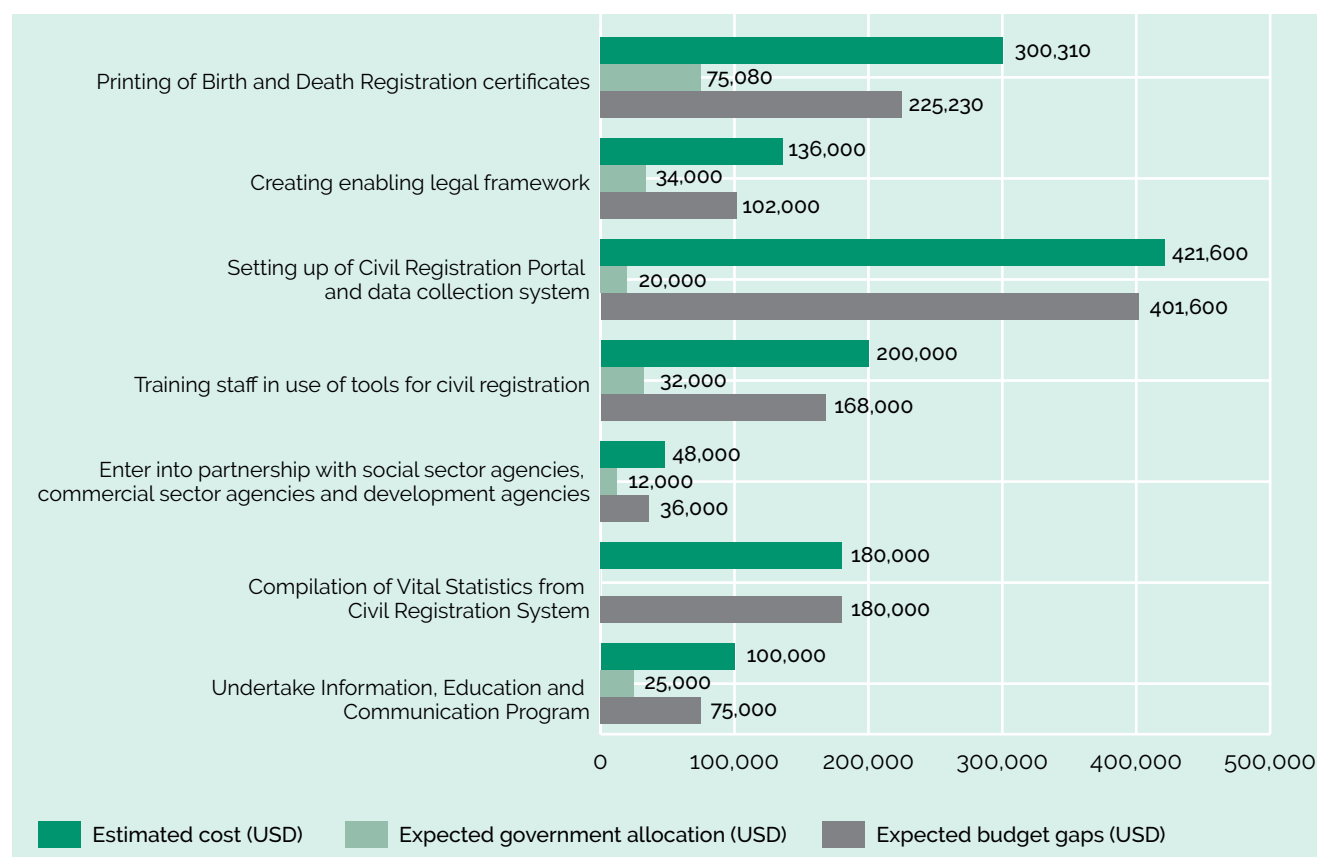
revise and expand the existing plan. The prioritized recommendations emanating from this exercise will serve as a starting point for the development of a comprehensive and costed five-year improvement plan in line with international guidelines.

#### Budgetary allocations and requirements

- Estimated total cost of CRVS-related activities for 2018–2022: US\$ 7,716,912
- Government allocation for CR systems for the 2019 fiscal year: US\$ 220,823
- Development Partners' support for (i) Civil Registration System: UNICEF, US\$ 400,000 and UNDP, US\$ 310,000 (ii) Identity registration process: European Union: Euro 1.0 million. This is an indicative budget for the fiscal year 2019.

#### Activities identified as high priorities

**Figure 1: High priority activities in CRVS systems improvement plan and estimated costs in US dollars**



## Support from development partners

International organizations	Kind of support
Plan International Sierra Leone	Child centered
UNICEF	Child centered
UNDP	Development, inclusive governance
EU	Development, inclusive governance
WHO	Health related
UNFPA	Reproductive Health and Maternal Death

## Proposals to improve coordination

Coordination was identified as key element by NCRA in the National CRVS Systems landscape. The following suggestions were made to improve working arrangements for national stakeholders and Development Partners.

### *National CRVS stakeholders*

- Quarterly CRVS Steering Committee meeting should be organized and heads of agencies (both development partners and government line functionaries) should endeavor to attend;
- The Government of Sierra Leone needs to ensure a dedicated political will and commitment to fully fulfil its financial commitment towards CRVS improvement; and
- The Government should have a national CRVS strategic plan that is owned by all stakeholders.

## *National institutes and development partners*

- The National CRVS Taskforce should meet monthly and each institution should have designated representatives.
- NCRA should develop and maintain the production of quarterly stakeholder CRVS activity reports and plans.
- NCRA should link district and national level stakeholder meetings with the central level for the improvement of CRVS system in the country.

## Resources

### Websites

- National Civil Registration Authority: <http://ncra.gov.sl/>
- Statistics Sierra Leone: <https://www.statistics.sl/>
- Ministry of Health and Sanitation: <http://health.gov.sl/>
- Africa Health Observatory and WHO. Sierra Leone. [http://www.aho.afro.who.int/profiles\\_information/index.php/Sierra\\_Leone:Analytical\\_summary\\_-\\_Health\\_Status\\_and\\_Trends](http://www.aho.afro.who.int/profiles_information/index.php/Sierra_Leone:Analytical_summary_-_Health_Status_and_Trends)
- UNICEF-Sierra Leone: <https://data.unicef.org/resources/crvs/sierra-leone/>
- WHO-Sierra Leone: <https://www.who.int/countries/sle/en/>
- U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): Global Health – Sierra Leone. <https://www.cdc.gov/globalhealth/countries/sierra-leone/default.htm>

## Additional materials

- Government of Sierra Leone. 2014. *Establishing 21st Century Identity Management in Sierra Leone: Strategic Directions for Integrating Civil Registration and Identification*.  
<https://www.crc4d.com/downloads/2014-04-establishing-21st-century-identity-management-sierra-Leone.pdf>
- UNDP. 2017. Sierra Leone 2017 Annual Report: The next phase of development. <https://www.undp.org/content/dam/sierraleone/docs/annualreports/UNDP%20Sierra%20Leone%20Annual%20Report%202017.pdf>

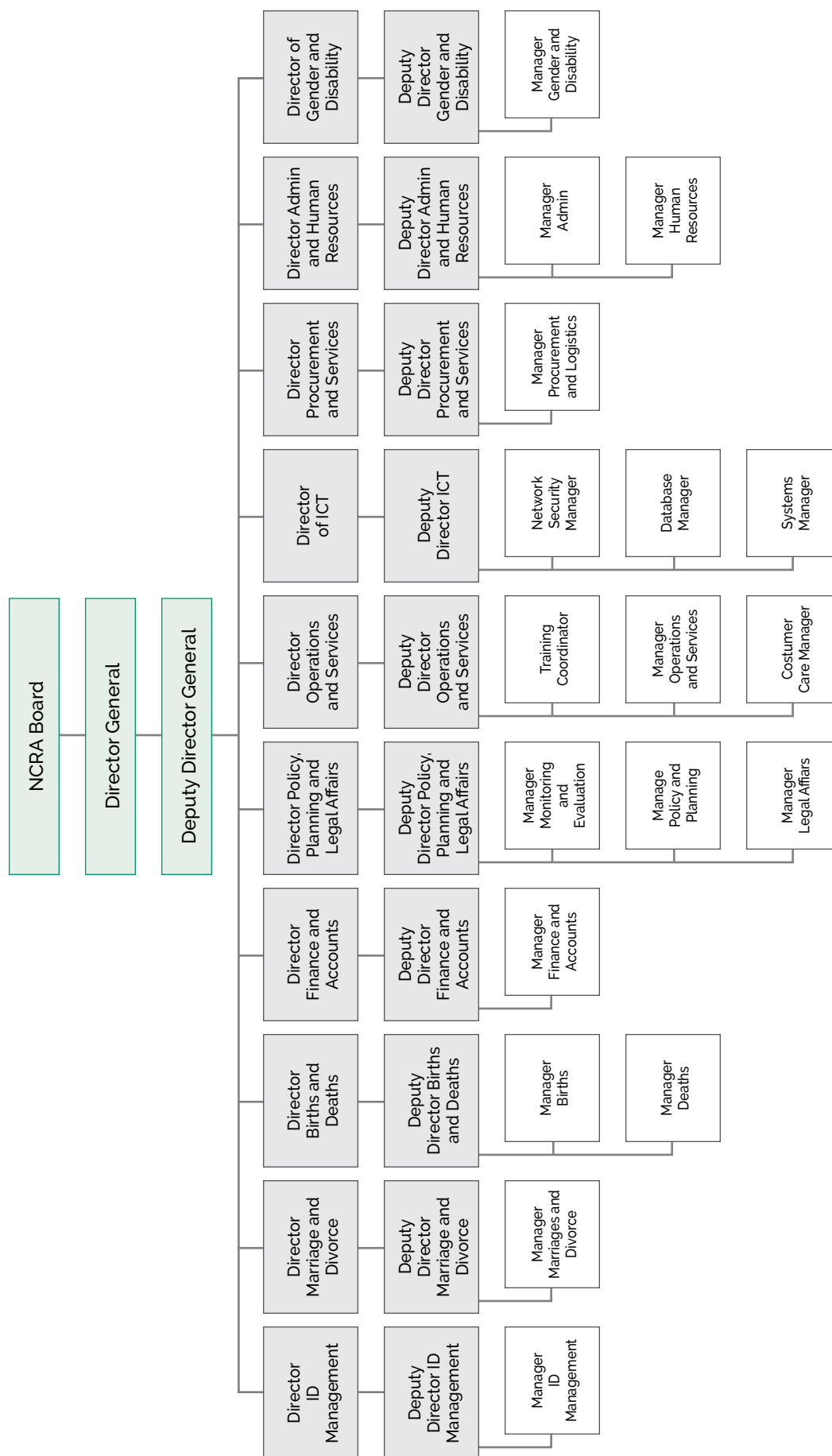
## Conclusion

The process to transform the CRVS System into a modern and fully functional system has strong political support from the Government of Sierra Leone. This is demonstrated by the strong support from His Excellency, the President of the Republic of Sierra Leone who is keen to see a viable CRVS System implemented in the shortest possible time. His Cabinet, Parliament and other Government functionaries also recognize the high value of such a system and are therefore committed to delivering on this new reform in order to promote democratic good governance and accountable service delivery for the people.

The Government's commitment to the CRVS Systems improvement began with Parliament's approval of the Civil Registration Act in 2016 and the establishment of the National Civil Registration Authority to manage and coordinate the CRVS initiative in Sierra Leone. Technically, the Civil Registration Act and practices are aligned to international principles and recommendations. The fact that Civil Registration and Vital Statistics, including Causes of Deaths, and National Identity Management, are under the NCRA is an added value as it integrates all forms of registration systems done in the past before the establishment of the NCRA.

As Sierra Leone is determined to modernize its CRVS Systems, it has to identify and address major weaknesses in the systems. The NCRA is currently conducting a Comprehensive Country Assessment, as recommended by the Second Conference of African Ministers responsible for Civil Registration and in line with the UNECA's Africa Programme on Accelerated Improvement of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (APAI-CRVS) guidelines. The exercise will help identify the serious challenges and possible gaps in the CRVS Systems and itemize prioritized recommendations which will serve as input for an informed, forward-looking, action-oriented and costed strategic plan for the country that will guide various interventions from the Government and its partners.

## Annex: Organizational chart of the National Civil Registration Agency



## Endnotes

- 1 United Nations. 2018. *Demographic Yearbook – 2017*. [https://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic-social/products/dyb/dyb\\_2017/.ST/ESA/STAT/SER.R/47](https://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic-social/products/dyb/dyb_2017/.ST/ESA/STAT/SER.R/47). Accessed on March 3, 2019.
- 2 Statistics Sierra Leone. 2015. *Sierra Leone 2015 Population and Housing Census Key figures*. [https://www.statistics.sl/images/StatisticsSL/Documents/Census/2015/2015\\_census\\_fact-sheet.pdf](https://www.statistics.sl/images/StatisticsSL/Documents/Census/2015/2015_census_fact-sheet.pdf)
- 3 Statistics Sierra Leone. 2015. *Sierra Leone 2015 Population and Housing Census Population Projections* [https://www.statistics.sl/images/StatisticsSL/Documents/Census/2015/sl\\_2015\\_phc\\_thematic\\_report\\_on\\_population\\_projections.pdf](https://www.statistics.sl/images/StatisticsSL/Documents/Census/2015/sl_2015_phc_thematic_report_on_population_projections.pdf)
- 4 Birth or death registration completeness means the actual number of registered births or deaths divided by the estimated number of births or deaths in a particular country or area, in a specified time period usually a year. For further reading refer to ECA, ESCAP and Statistics Norway (2016).
- 5 Statistics Sierra Leone. 2018. *Sierra Leone Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2017, Survey Findings Report*. Freetown, Sierra Leone: Statistics Sierra Leone. [mics.unicef.org](https://mics.unicef.org).
- 6 Percentage of surviving infants who received the first dose of diphtheria, pertussis and tetanus vaccine.
- 7 UNICEF. 2017. Global Databases. [https://data.unicef.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/wuenic2017rev\\_web\\_update.xlsx](https://data.unicef.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/wuenic2017rev_web_update.xlsx)
- 8 World Bank. 2018. *Adolescent Fertility Rate*. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.ADO.TFRT>
- 9 United Nations. 2017. *World Population Prospects. Volume II: Demographic Profiles: 2017 Revision. Population Division*. [https://esa.un.org/unpd/wpp/Publications/Files/WPP2017\\_Volume-II-Demographic-Profiles.pdf](https://esa.un.org/unpd/wpp/Publications/Files/WPP2017_Volume-II-Demographic-Profiles.pdf)
- 10 UN Inter-Agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation. 2018. *UN IGME Total Under-5 Mortality Rate, Infant Mortality Rate and Neonatal mortality database 2018*. <http://www.childmortality.org/>
- 11 World health statistics 2016: monitoring health for the SDGs, sustainable development goals. [https://www.who.int/gho/publications/world\\_health\\_statistics/2016/en/](https://www.who.int/gho/publications/world_health_statistics/2016/en/)
- 12 UNICEF. 2018. Child Marriage. <https://data.unicef.org/topic/child-protection/child-marriage/>
- 13 Government of Sierra Leone. 2016. *The National Civil Registration Act, 2016*. <http://www.sierra-leone.org/Laws/2016-14.pdf>
- 14 United Nations. 2014. *Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System – Revision 3*. Statistics Division, Statistical Papers, Series M No. 19/Rev.3. <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/standmeth/principles/M19Rev3en.pdf>
- 15 XE currency converter. Accessed on April 02, 2019. <https://www.xe.com/currencyconverter/convert/?Amount=1&From=USD&To=SLL>
- 16 Government of Sierra Leone. 2002. *The Statistics Act, 2002*. [https://www.statistics.sl/images/StatisticsSL/Documents/statistics\\_and\\_census\\_acts.pdf](https://www.statistics.sl/images/StatisticsSL/Documents/statistics_and_census_acts.pdf)





**CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE**  
for CRVS Systems

**LE CENTRE D'EXCELLENCE**  
sur les systèmes ESEC

[www.CRVSystems.ca](http://www.CRVSystems.ca)