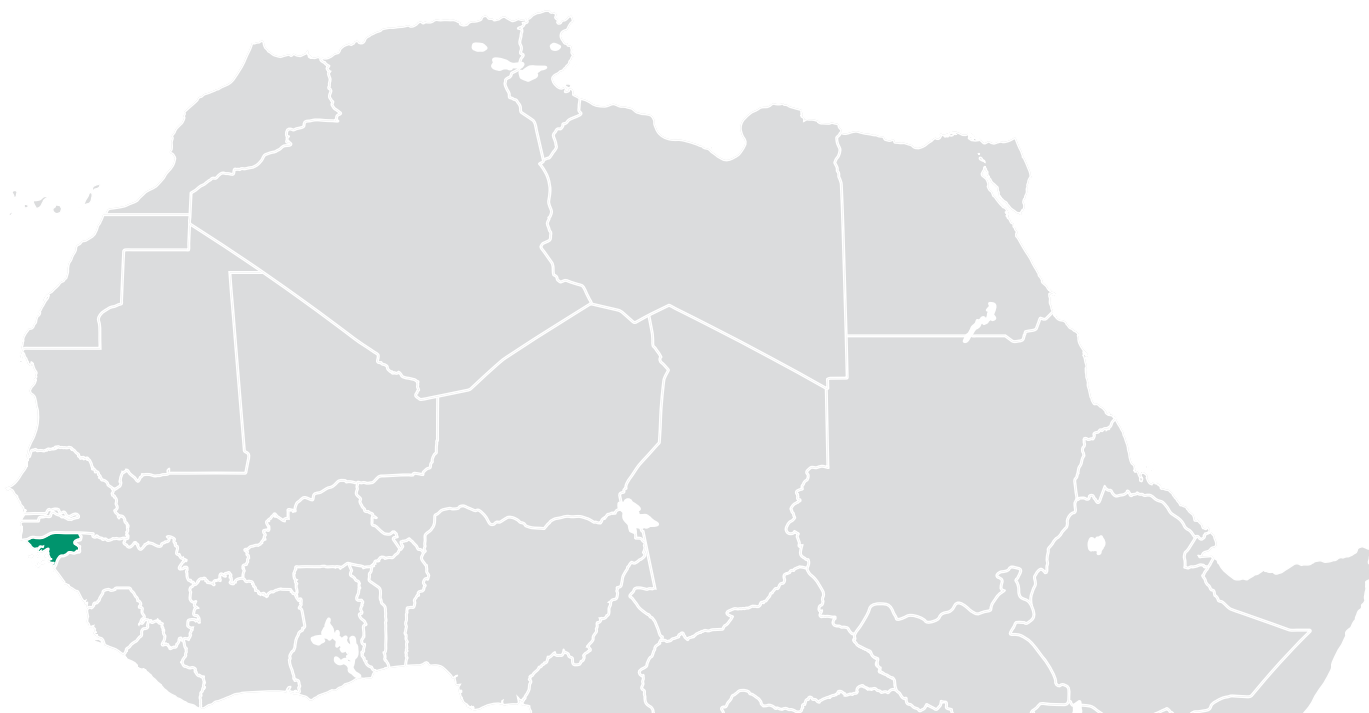




**CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE**  
for CRVS Systems

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# SNAPSHOT

OF CIVIL REGISTRATION AND VITAL STATISTICS SYSTEMS OF THE

# REPUBLIC OF GUINEA-BISSAU



**ECA**

## 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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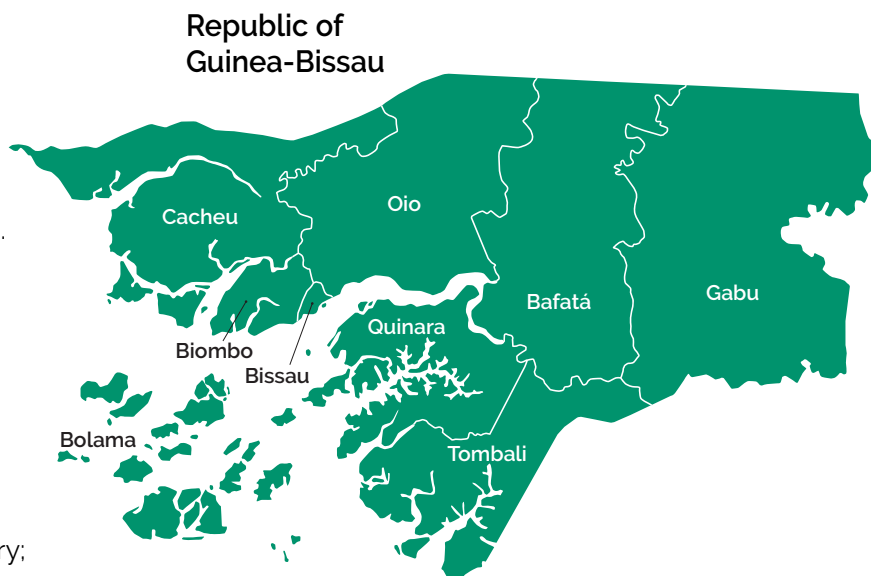
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## Introduction

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

The information was collected through a questionnaire completed by the Ministry of Justice in November 2020 and supplemented by a desk review of available documents. Among other things, the report presents:

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



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

## Brief country profile

The Republic of Guinea-Bissau is a country in West Africa that borders Senegal to the north, Guinea to the southeast, and the Atlantic Ocean to the west. Guinea-Bissau was once part of the Kingdom of Kaabu as well as part of the Mali empire. Parts of this kingdom persisted until the 18th century, while a few others had been under some rule by the Portuguese empire since the 16th century. In the 19th century, it was colonized as Portuguese Guinea. Upon independence, declared in 1973 and recognized in 1974, the name of its capital, Bissau, was added to the country's name to avoid confusion with Guinea (formerly French Guinea).

Guinea-Bissau is divided into eight regions (*regiões*) and one autonomous sector (*sector autónomo*). The regions are Bafatá, Biombo, Bissau, Bolama, Cacheu, Gabu, Oio, Quinara, and Tombali. The regions, in turn, are subdivided into 37 sectors.

The population grew from 0.98 million in 1990 to 1.2 million in 2000 to 1.52 million in 2010 to 1.87 million in 2018.

- Land area: 36,125 km<sup>2</sup>
- Population: 1,874,303, with an annual growth rate of 2.5 percent<sup>1</sup>
- Capital city: Bissau
- Official working language: Portuguese
- Ministry responsible for civil registration: Ministry of Justice
- Civil registration agency: Directorate of Civil Identification, Registries and Notaries
- National statistical office: Instituto Nacional de Estatística e Censos, or National Institute of Statistics



## CRVS dimensions

### Births

Completeness of birth registration <sup>2</sup>	Not available
Children under 5 years of age whose births were reported as registered	46% (2018) <sup>3</sup>
Births attended by skilled health personnel	54% (2018) <sup>4</sup>
Women aged 15–49 who received antenatal care from a skilled provider	81% (2019) <sup>5</sup>
DPT1 immunization coverage among 1-year-olds <sup>6</sup>	84%
Crude birth rate (per 1,000 population)	34 (2020) <sup>7</sup>
Total fertility rate (live births per woman)	4.5 (2018) <sup>8</sup>
Adolescent fertility rate (per 1,000 girls aged 15–19 years)	103 (2018) <sup>9</sup>
Population under age 15 years	47% (2018) <sup>10</sup>
Institutional deliveries: percentage of deliveries in a health facility	50.4% (2018) <sup>11</sup>

### Deaths

Completeness of death registration	Not available
Crude death rate (per 1,000 population)	7.9 (2020) <sup>12</sup>
Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 live births)	35 (2018) <sup>13</sup>
Under-5 mortality rate (per 1,000 live births)	51 (2018) <sup>14</sup>
Maternal mortality ratio (per 100,000 live births)	667 (2019) <sup>15</sup>

### Marriages and divorces

Marriage registration rate	Not available
Women aged 20–24 first married or in union before age 15	7% (2018) <sup>16</sup>
Women aged 20–24 first married or in union before age 18	26% (2018) <sup>17</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	Not available

## Civil registration system

The Ministry of Justice is responsible for civil registration in Guinea-Bissau. Birth registration has been carried out free of charge since 1976 and is offered at no charge until 8 years of age.

### Legislative framework

In Guinea-Bissau, civil registration and vital statistics are guided by the following laws:

- Decree-Law No. 47678/1967 was approved on 5 May 1967 and it underwent a slight modification in 1969;
- Decree No. 7/2010, 31 May 2010;
- *Nationality Law No. 6/2010*, 21 June 2010; and
- Guinean Nationality Regulation, Decree-Law No. 6/2011, 23 February 2011.

At this time, there is a plan to revise the Civil Registration Code financed by the Portuguese government through Portuguese Cooperation and the United Nations System. The code is being reviewed and discussed internally by technicians from the Ministry of Justice. A technical meeting will soon be called with the legal community with a view to enriching and technically validating it. After that, it will be approved by competent national bodies.

### Management, organization, and operations

These entities are responsible for the registration of vital events and identification:

- Ministry of Justice;
- Ministry of Health; and
- Ministry of Economy (National Institute of Statistics).

The current Civil Registration Code establishes the obligation to communicate, declare, and register events. It guarantees the principles of universality, continuity, and permanence of services; defines the functions and competences of civil registry personnel; and provides for the statistical function of vital events.

The law covers all geographic areas of the country and includes nationals and refugees.

### *National CRVS systems coordination mechanisms*

National coordination mechanisms have been formalized. A technical working group provides a forum for CRVS systems stakeholders. The legal instrument for the creation of the technical working group is Decree-Law No. 1/2011, 2 February, which institutes the National Civil Registry Plan.

Committee members include:

- Ministry of Economy;
- Ministry of Education;
- Ministry of Health;
- Ministry of Internal Affairs;
- Ministry of Justice;
- Ministry of Territorial Administration;
- Ministry of Women, Family and Social Protection; and
- Partners: UNICEF, PLAN International, United Nations Population Fund, and Center for Technological Enhancement and Electronic Governance.



### *Administrative-level registration centres*

The lowest administrative unit where the local civil registration offices are found is the *região*. There is a total of 74 civil registration centres in Guinea-Bissau: 10 are urban and 64 are rural.

The country has 148 civil registrars, with 31 based in urban centres and 117 based in rural centres.

### *Accessibility of civil registration services*

The average distance to a civil registration centre is more than 10 km. Most people travel to these centres on foot, by boat/canoe, or by car.

### *Registration of vital events*

Civil registration is carried out under the Ministry of Justice, through the Directorate of Civil Identification, Registries and Notaries, as provided in the Civil Registration Code of 1967.

Events covered by the civil registration system are listed in Table 1 below.

**Table 1: Events covered by the civil registration system.**

Vital event	Is event covered?	Are definitions aligned to United Nations-suggested definitions?
Live birth	Yes	N/A
Death	Yes	N/A
Marriage	Yes	N/A
Divorce	Yes	N/A
Adoption	Yes	N/A
Other	Profiling	N/A

The legal framework for **birth registration** in Guinea-Bissau is stipulated in the Civil Registration Code of 1967. The parents, doctor, family member, and chief of the village are mandated declarants for birth registration.

Requirements for birth registration include:

- Identification of the child's parent;
- Presence of the parents at the time of registration;
- Birth notification from the hospital (to obtain the date of birth);
- Immunization card (to obtain the date of birth in case the child is not born at the hospital; and
- Child's name.

The key data elements collected at birth registration include:

- **Child:** Name, sex, date of birth, date and place of registration;
- **Mother of the child:** Name of the mother, date of birth or age, marital status; and
- **Father of the child:** Name of the father, date of birth or age, marital status.

A birth certificate is required for proof of identity. Parents request the full narrative certificate when the child needs to obtain an identity card or passport.

Time allowed for registration is 30 days by law, but children up to and including the age of 7 can be registered. Registration is free of charge for children up to 7 years old.

The mandated legal informant to register a **death** is the civil registry officer. Twenty-four hours is allowed for registration. Fetal deaths are not registered.

At registration, no fee is paid, but penalties are charged for late registration. The declarants are required to present the medical death certificate issued by the doctor, the deceased's identity card, date of death, and age of the deceased.

The key data elements collected at death registration include:

- **Deceased:** Name, sex, date of birth or age, marital status, place of usual residence, place of residence of the mother (for deaths under 1 year of age); and
- **Death:** Date of death, date of registration, place of occurrence, cause of death, certifier, type of place of occurrence (hospital, home, etc.).

A death certificate is required for burial, inheritance, and obtaining social assistance.

The legal age for **marriage** is 18 for both men and women, or 16 years for both sexes with the parent's or legal guardian's consent. There is a legal obligation to register marriages; the marriage is registered at the time it is celebrated. Upon request, the marriage certificate can be issued the day the marriage is celebrated. The place of registration is the civil registration office or the place where the marriage occurs.

Requirements for marriage registration include:

- Husband's presence at the register;
- Husband's presence at the time of registration;
- Husband's proof of residence;
- Wife's proof of residence;

- Wife's proof of age;
- Husband's proof of age;
- Marriage witness; and
- Procuration if one of the spouses is not present.

During the preparation process for the wedding, birth certificates are required to prove the ages of the future husband and wife. The certificate of matrimonial capacity may be required if one of the spouses is abroad or is not a citizen of Guinea-Bissau.

In the marriage register, the following information is collected:

- **Spouses:** Date of birth or age of the bride, place of residence of the bride, date of birth of the groom, scheme of assets adopted by the spouses; and
- **Marriage:** Date of occurrence, date of registration, place of occurrence, place of registration.

A marriage certificate is also vital to transfer or share ownership of land and to access bank loans.

### *Registration fee*

There is no charge to register vital events. The time allowed for registration is 30 days by law, but children can be registered free of charge up to and including age 7.

The costs of registering and certifying vital events are shown in Tables 2 and 3.





Table 2: Cost of registration of vital events.

Vital event	Certification fees	Certification cost	Remarks
Birth	Yes	8 to 13 years: US\$5.84 14 years and up: US\$13.35	Birth registration for children 0 to 7 years is free
Marriage	Yes	Certificate: US\$4.17 Attestation of residence: US\$4.17 Marriage process: US\$12.85	
Divorce	Not available		
Death	Yes	Registration (within 48 hours): US\$3.33 Application: US\$4.10 Recognition: US\$0.41 Case cover: US\$0.83 Certificate: US\$4.17 Late registration (after 1 year): US\$8.34 plus court costs	

Table 3: Costs for certification of vital events.

Vital event	Certification fees	Certification cost	Remarks
Births	Yes	8 years and up: US\$5.84 14 years and up: US\$13.35	
Marriages	Yes	Marriage certificate: US\$4.17	
Divorces	Not available		
Deaths	Yes	Registration: US\$33 Application: US\$4.1 Recognition: US\$0.41 Case cover: US\$0.83 Certificate: US\$4.17 Late registration: US\$8.34	

### *Backlog of unregistered births*

The estimated backlog of unregistered births (those that are unregistered after 1 year) and the estimated backlog of vital events was not provided.

### *Sample registration forms*

Registration forms are processed manually (on paper); all vital events are directly recorded on non-standardized forms.

## Vital statistics system

### Vital statistics

The National Institute of Statistics, under the Ministry of Economic Planning and Finance, is empowered by *Law No. 1/91 of 25 March 1991*.<sup>18</sup>

The institute is responsible for compiling vital civil registry statistics in close collaboration with the following:

- Ministry of Justice: Directorate General for Civil Identification, Registries and Notaries, responsible for policies related to identity, registries, and notaries, as well as acquisition and loss of nationality;
- Ministry of Health: Through health structures including Legal Medicine and the National Institute of Public Health; and
- Ministry of Territorial Administration: Through the City Council of Bissau and Local Administration, which manages the burial of corpses in cemeteries.

Vital statistics data is processed manually by the civil registry offices and sent to the regional conservatories. The conservatories must compile the data and send it to the general director of the civil registry. Vital statistics are not published by another government entity. The Ministry of Justice is making efforts to cooperate with the Ministry of Economy and Finance (National Institute of Statistics) to strengthen the partnership between the two ministries regarding vital statistics; the same is being done with the Ministry of Health.

However, regarding marriage registration, vital statistics have not been handled by the National Institute of Statistics, nor are statistics produced and published.

### Coverage and completeness

The registration of vital events covers all segments of the population and all geographic areas in the country. Completeness of registration of vital events has not been estimated.

## Causes of death

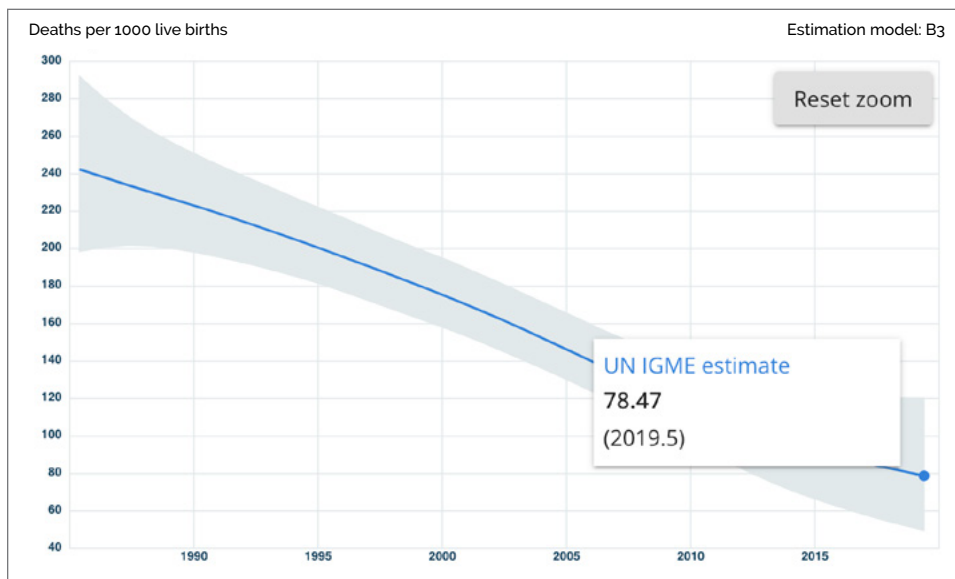
**Table 4: Cause-of-death information collection through the civil registration system.**

Cause of death (COD)	Is COD information collected through the civil registration system?	Is the Standard International Medical Certificate for COD used to record deaths?
For deaths occurring in health facilities	Yes	Not available
For natural deaths occurring in the communities	No	Not available
For non-natural deaths occurring in the communities	No	Not available

For non-institutional deaths, verbal autopsy tools or methods are not used to collect cause-of-death information, and the cause of death is not coded according to the International Classification of Diseases version 10 (ICD-10).

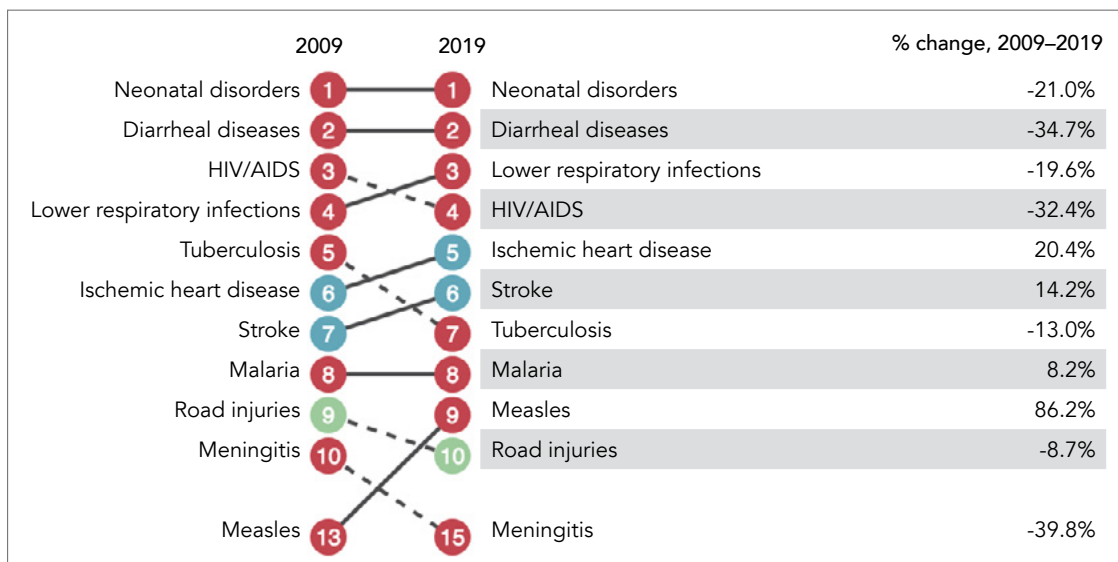
Other sources indicate the under-5 mortality rates at 78.47 deaths per 1,000 as of 2019 (Figure 1).<sup>19</sup>

Figure 1: Mortality rate for children under age 5.



Health data provides the 10 leading causes of death in Guinea-Bissau from 2009 to 2019 (Figure 2):<sup>20</sup>

Figure 2: Top 10 causes of death, 2009–2019.



## Digitization

The Center for Technological Enhancement and Electronic Governance (CEVATEGE), under the Ministry of Presidency and Council of Ministers, supports the digitization of civil registration. Identity management is done by SEMLEX, an international company that is under the responsibility of the Ministry of Justice.

## Computerization

Computer use in CRVS is outlined in Table 5.

**Table 5: Computer use for registering civil status facts.**

Centre	Are computers used for civil registration?
Local registrars across the country	No
Urban centres	No
Healthcare facilities	No

### *Online registration services at health facilities*

No information was provided.

### *Mobile technology application*

No information was provided.

### *Unique identification number*

No information was provided.

### *Digitization of historical registration records*

No information was provided.

### *Link with identification system*

A person's identity card certificate, which contains the information from their birth certificate, is required to create the identity (ID) card.

The Ministry of Justice, National ID Services, is responsible for issuing national IDs. The national

ID program was introduced in 2013 to achieve new levels of security and to prevent fraud and counterfeiting. The new integrated ID card includes a civilian automated fingerprint identification system (AFIS) to reduce potential internal fraud, eliminate duplicate identities, and precisely verify the identity of legitimate cardholders.

Applicants must establish their identity by providing a birth certificate; then they fill out an application form for enrollment at an ID station. Next, the cardholder's identification data is encoded, and an operator captures a digital photograph and two index fingerprints. The captured information is registered and stored in a central database. The national ID card contains the name, date of birth, national identity number, facial image, and a minutia of the left and right index finger embedded within a 2D PDF 417 bar code.

### *Data protection and data privacy*

Guinea Bissau does not have any legislation for personal data protection.

## Interface with other sectors and operations

No information was provided.

## Improvement initiatives and external support

### Improvement plan and budget

There is a strategic plan for the Ministry of Justice, Directorate of Civil Identification, Registries and Notaries, for 2019 to 2028.

### *Budgetary allocations and requirements*

The total budget for the approved costed strategic plan is US\$10,699,231.75.

### *Activities identified as high priorities*

The CRVS activities identified as high priorities in the costed strategic plan are listed in Table 6.



Table 6: High-priority activities lacking funding in the national plan.

High-priority areas in the strategic plan lacking funding <sup>21</sup>	Estimated cost (in US\$)	Expected government allocation	Expected budget gaps	Remarks
Revision of the Civil Registration Code and improvement of institutional and organizational aspects	74,171.11	0	0	<p>There have already been initiatives by UNICEF to finance technical meetings for discussion of the new proposal for the Civil Registration Code. However, the process is far from being finalized.</p> <p>The following activities are planned:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meetings with the legal community</li> <li>• Technical discussion</li> <li>• Review of articles</li> <li>• Editing and printing</li> </ul>
Reinforcement of the system (resources and physical infrastructure)	2,170,729.00	0	0	Through the financing of the Peace Building Fund, four civil registry services were rehabilitated in four regions.
Improvement of access and quality in civil registry services	3,203,097.56	0	0	<p>With the support of UNICEF, 26 hospital registration services are in operation, with a view to ensuring access to the registration registry. However, more services are needed to guarantee the right to identity for all children from birth.</p> <p>Social mobilization is promoted. Birth registration for children ages 0 to 7 years in the communities is financed by Plan International, UNHCR, Peace Building Fund, FEC, and UNICEF.</p>
Implementation of a reliable and quality vital statistics production system	1,437,216.29	0	0	A formal partnership was established between the Ministry of Justice and Ministry of Economy (National Institute of Statistics) to reinforce the continuous collection, compilation, and processing of civil registration data.
Computerization of the civil registry system	3,563,623.42	0	0	
Reinforcement of the coordination, monitoring, and evaluation of the system	250,394.37	0	0	Over the past four years, UNICEF has provided financial and continuity coordination meetings for the National Committee for Civil Registration.
<b>10,699,231.75</b>				

Some upcoming priorities in the country's or civil registration office's planning cycle include:

- Review the Civil Registration Code, aligning it with international standards and promoting its modernization;
- Reinforce the system's capacity in terms of resources and physical infrastructure;
- Improve access and quality in civil registry services;
- Implement a reliable and quality vital statistics production system;
- Computerize the civil registry system;
- Reinforce coordination, monitoring, and evaluation of the system;

- Improve the advocacy and communication system to increase demand for services; and
- Recruit and provide continuous civil registry information.

Guinea-Bissau would like to achieve more effective and efficient coordination among national key stakeholders at the country level through pooling the efforts of the actors involved in the civil status system.

## Support from development partners

The development partners who provided support to the CRVS systems improvement initiative for the Republic of Guinea-Bissau are listed in Table 7.

**Table 7: Support from development partners.**

International organizations, NGOs, and partners	Mandate
United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)	Promote the rights of the child and ensure physical, psychological, and mental well-being; and support law reform and coordination of CRVS activities
European Union	Foster stability, promote human rights and democracy, contribute to prosperity, and support the rule of law and good governance
Peace Building Fund	Support peace and political dialogue, conflict resolution, revitalizing of the economy, and restoring of essential administrative services
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)	Protect all people who, when persecuted, are forced to flee their places of origin to safeguard their lives, security, and freedom
Plan International	Promote lasting improvements in the quality of life of disadvantaged children in developing countries through processes that unite people from different cultures and add meaning and value to their lives
FEC	Operate for a wide network of dialogue, mobilization, cooperation, and awareness among people, communities, and churches

## Conclusion

The Republic of Guinea-Bissau has initiated and developed a National Strategy of Civil Registry and Production of Vital Statistics with the support of its technical and financial partners, with the mission of restructuring and modernizing the country's civil registry system.

This is a broad and concerted plan to make the Guinean civil registry a credible source for citizen identification. The aim is to ensure that civic rights and duties are fulfilled, personal data is protected and confidential, social protection and assistance actions are planned, and policies and programs are developed using the statistics that the system generates.

The new civil registration system aims to:

- overcome the main existing problems and blockages;
- guarantee the registration of all civil events and the issuing of documents; and
- provide a secure basis for the production of vital statistics as reliable, credible, up-to-date, and useful information for good governance and for defining development policies and programs at all levels.

The new proposal will be implemented through a first action plan for a five-year period (2019–2023). It will be followed by a second action plan, duly adjusted based on the previous one, for a new five-year period (2024–2028).

The Republic of Guinea-Bissau has taken great strides to improve CRVS systems. Some notable achievements include:

- Recruit new medical examiners to certify the causes of death for deaths occurring outside health facilities;
- Define budget allocations from the state budget to produce vital statistics and causes of death;
- Train community health workers on the verbal autopsy form and its practice;
- Increase the salary of technicians involved in the production of vital statistics, working at the National Institute of Statistics headquarters, as well as at the regional plan and statistics directorates;
- Train health personnel, including the National Institute of Public Health of Guinea-Bissau (INASA), on the use of the International Classification of Diseases (ICD) in coding the causes of death; and
- Develop a methodological document for the production of vital statistics that defines the concept of vital events, level of data compilation, data quality control, digitization, processing and production of vital statistics, data security, and confidentiality.



## Resources

### Websites

Republic of Guinea-Bissau – Government Portal:  
[gov.gw](http://gov.gw)

UNICEF – Guinea-Bissau:  
[data.unicef.org/crvs/Guinea-Bissau](http://data.unicef.org/crvs/Guinea-Bissau)

World Health Organization (WHO) – Guinea-Bissau:  
[who.int/countries/gnb](http://who.int/countries/gnb)

### Additional materials

Civil Code of Registry of 1967: [data.unicef.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/codigo\\_civil\\_guine\\_bissau\\_e\\_legisl\\_complementar.pdf](http://data.unicef.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/codigo_civil_guine_bissau_e_legisl_complementar.pdf)





## Endnotes

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- 2 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 one year. For further reading, see ECA, ESCAP, and Statistics Norway. 2016.
- 3 UNICEF Reports. n.d. Country profiles: Guinea-Bissau. [data.unicef.org/country/gnb/#](https://data.unicef.org/country/gnb/#)
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- 19 United Nations Inter-agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation. Guinea-Bissau: Under-5 Mortality Rate – Total.
- 20 Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation. 2019. Guinea-Bissau. [healthdata.org/Guinea-Bissau](https://healthdata.org/Guinea-Bissau)
- 21 The high priorities should be identified in the assessment leading to the preparation of the strategic plan. Priorities could differ from country to country. In general, examples could be advocacy, updating the legal framework, improving registration coverage, improving quality of registers, strengthening coordination among key stakeholders, generating vital statistics including causes of death, introducing technology, and clearing the backlog of birth registration.



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FACILITY**

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