

Barriers and Facilitators to Female Death Registration in Solomon Islands

KEY FINDINGS



Barriers to Female Death Registration

Limited awareness, accessibility, patrilineal cultural norms, and death certificate requirements vary by institution



Facilitators to Female Death Registration

Practical and administrative requirements, support during registration

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Short term: Awareness campaigns, gender responsive training

Medium term: Institutional coordination, capacity strengthening

Long term: Decentralization, digitization, policy reform and financing, norms change

BACKGROUND

Civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) systems are essential for producing reliable mortality data to guide public health planning, resource allocation, and legal recognition of deaths. Yet, in the Pacific region, death registration remains incomplete, with average completeness just under 20%, the lowest in the Asia–Pacific region.¹ In Solomon Islands, completeness is estimated to be below 40%, despite a long-standing legal mandate for timely and accurate death registrations.¹ These gaps significantly limit the country’s ability to track mortality trends and respond effectively to health and development needs, while potentially obscuring sex disparities in registration and reporting of deaths.

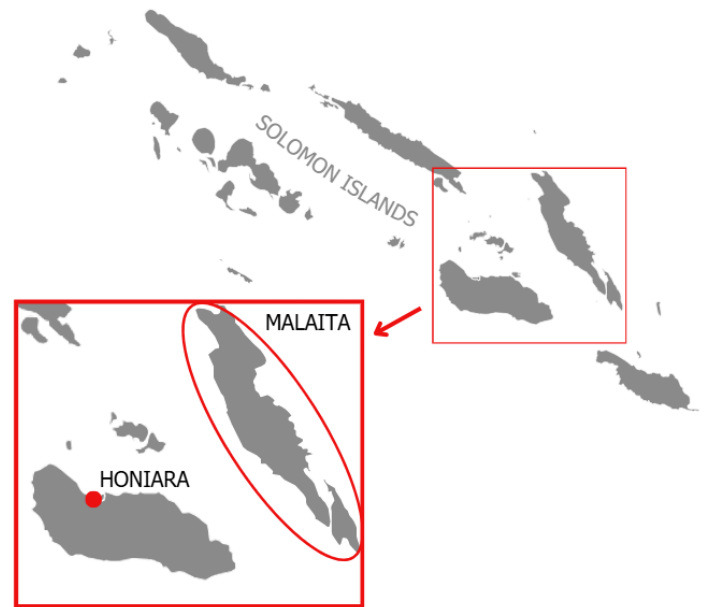
Female deaths are generally under-registered compared to male deaths in settings with weak CRVS systems, reflecting broader gender disparities.² This gap leads women and girls to become systematically underrepresented in mortality statistics, limiting the visibility of gendered health and social outcomes and constraining evidence for equitable policy responses.² Addressing this gap is critical to Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 3 (health and well-being), SDG 5 (gender equality), SDG 16 (inclusive institutions and legal identity), and SDG 17.19 (strengthened statistical capacity).³ Understanding these gendered patterns highlights the importance of qualitative insights into the barriers and facilitators shaping female death registration, to inform equitable CRVS strengthening efforts.

OBJECTIVES

The study aimed to understand barriers and facilitators to female death registration, with broader implications for strengthening CRVS systems. Specifically, the research:

1. Describes the barriers to female death registration, recognizing that systemic challenges may have differential impacts across gender lines.
2. Identifies facilitators that currently support female death registration processes, to understand existing strengths within the system that can be leveraged for improvement.
3. Identify mechanisms and opportunities for strengthening female death registration systems.

Study Sites



STUDY DESIGN



WHAT (Approach)

Cross-sectional Qualitative Study



WHERE (Site)

Honiara and Malaita
To compare high vs. low female registration areas



HOW (Data Collection)

- 20 In-Depth Interviews
- 8 Key Informant Interviews
- 4 Focus Group Discussions



WITH WHOM (Participants)

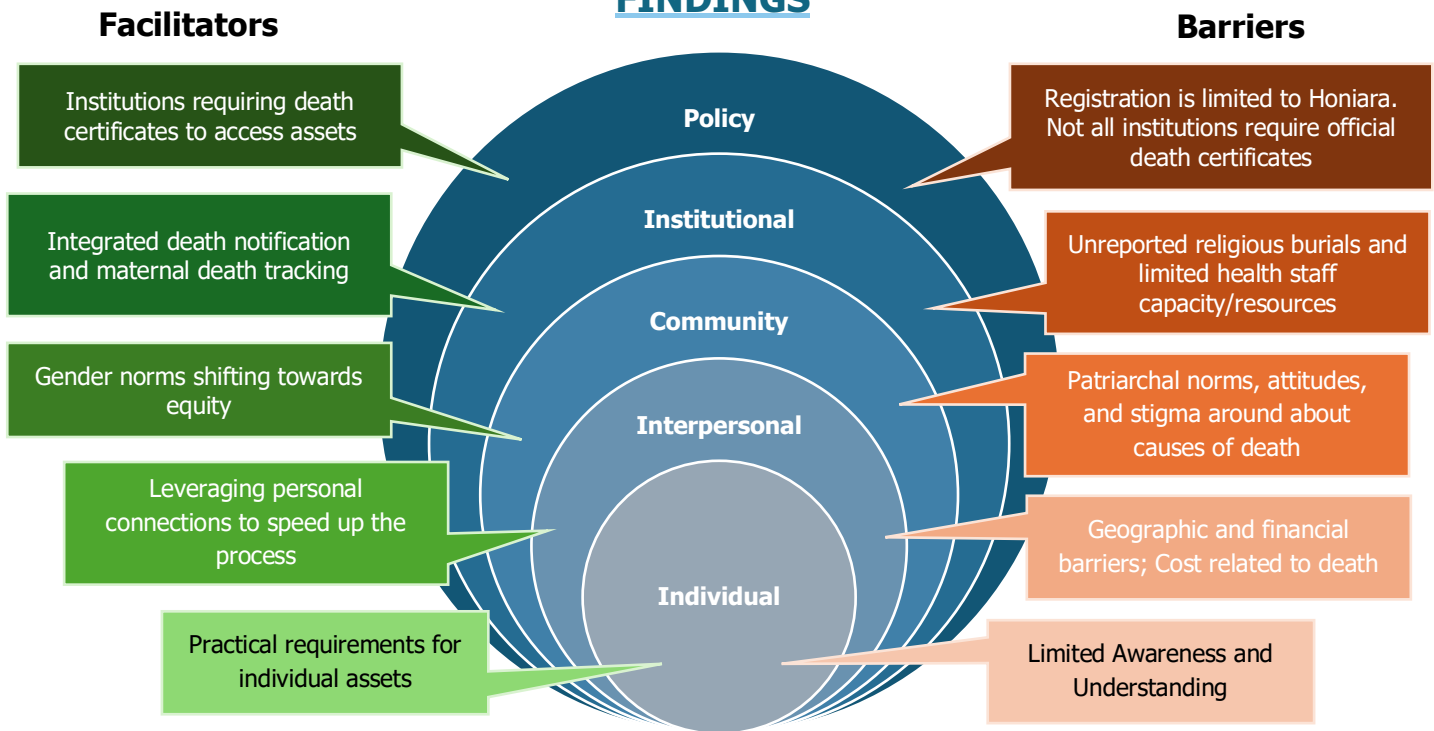
- Family members of registered and unregistered
- Community leaders
- Government registration officials
- Healthcare professionals



ANALYSIS (Framework)

- Socioecological Model
- Thematic Analysis

FINDINGS



Key Facilitators

Practical requirements for individual assets: When women hold formal employment or assets, families are motivated to register deaths to access bank accounts, cease salaries, claim pensions from the National Provident Fund, or process inheritance.

Support During Registration: Families benefit when proactive health workers or administrative staff provide guidance, making the process more accessible. Health workers who actively follow up with families and provide guidance facilitate female death registration.

Shifting Gender Norms: Religious leaders and community members note that education and church teachings promoting gender equity are gradually challenging traditional views. These shifting norms are beginning to support more equitable treatment of female death registration. One religious leader explained:

“Culture is also another ... When we look down on women, there are things that are there, but we are not interested in recording it. I mean, that was the practice in the past. But now the church brings the idea of equality, that we are all equal.”

Key Barriers

Patriarchal Cultural Norms and Attitudes: In Malaita, patrilineal traditions position men as household heads and landowners. Consequently, women's deaths are often viewed as less important to record because they are not often linked to land inheritance or property transfers. This cultural devaluation leads families to deprioritize female death registration since it is not associated with material benefits. One NGO worker noted:

“We have cultural barriers and a lot of the provinces are different, but majority is patrilineal system where the male is more important in the family than female. Only certain provinces have the matrilineal system like Isabel.”

Geographic and Accessibility Barriers: The centralization of civil registration services in Honiara creates significant barriers for rural communities and health workers in Malaita. Long travel distances, limited transport options, costs associated with death and poor connectivity make it extremely difficult for families to access health facilities where death notification occurs; most severely impacting women in remote areas.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Short-term

Awareness Campaigns

- Promote the value of female death registration for equitable resource allocation

Gender-Responsive Training

- Staff training for sensitivity to gender-based violence

Mid-term

Institutional Coordination

- Formalize referral pathways
- Introduce feedback mechanism for health workers
- Standardize reporting tools and guidance

Capacity Strengthening

- Train health workers on death notification and certification procedures, emphasizing gender sensitivity

Long-term

Decentralize & Digitize

- Expand access (utilize existing local bodies, leverage technology to expand mobile registration)

Policy Reform & Financing

- Update the Civil Registration Act to make death registration compulsory
- Update budget lines in national planning to expand CRVS reform
- Ensure gender lens is incorporated into CRVS planning and implementation

Norms Change

- Ongoing dialogue with leaders and around gender-based violence and death registration

IMPLICATIONS

Addressing gender inequities in death registration could benefit from culturally appropriate awareness campaigns, gender-responsive training for registration staff, strengthened institutional coordination, and community dialogue challenging patriarchal beliefs. These interventions have the potential to protect women's rights and dignity, and ensure equitable funding and accurate public health data.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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CITATIONS

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3. United Nations Statistics Division. SDG indicators metadata repository. United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. Updated March 30, 2026. Accessed May 10, 2026. <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/metadata/>

To read the full report [click here:](https://genderhealthdata.org/resource/barr-iers-and-facilitators-to-female-death-registration-in-honiara-and-malaita-solomon-islands-a-cross-sectional-qualitative-study/)
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