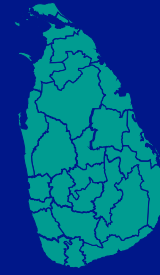


# Sri Lanka



## The Challenge

In November 2014, Sri Lanka became a signatory to the Ministerial Declaration for Universal Registration in Asia and the Pacific thereby committing fully to the Regional Action Framework on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) spearheaded by the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), for the period extending from 2015–2024. Sri Lanka has a mature and well-established, though largely paper-based, CRVS system dating back about 150 years. The island nation has a high completeness of birth and death registration, as close to all births take place in hospitals, and most deaths are captured by the many death registration points across the country. However, challenges remain around the quality of cause-of-death data, as well as the timeliness and overall accuracy of vital statistics information.

## The Approach

Under the Bloomberg Philanthropies Data for Health Initiative, technical assistance is provided to the government of Sri Lanka to help strengthen the capacity of the overall system to produce quality vital statistics. This includes improving the accuracy of cause-of-death data and the speed, efficiency, and consistency of mortality coding. Sri Lanka's government has made significant progress in strengthening the CRVS system since it began in 2015.

## Impact

**CRVS Governance and Coordination:** A high-level CRVS Interagency Coordination Committee, the Steering Committee on Data for Public Health Policy, was established in September of 2019. One of the main objectives for this committee is to streamline the flow of vital statistics and to ensure that data collected are high-quality, accurate and timely. The committee is the first of its kind in Sri Lanka to look closely at CRVS-related system issues and improvement efforts. Since its inception, it has already successfully unified stakeholders to prioritize strategy and decision-making across key CRVS agencies in the country.

**Counting Every Birth and Death:** To optimize the performance of the CRVS system and to ensure that the notification and registration processes are streamlined, Sri Lanka has begun a comprehensive CRVS legal and regulatory review as part of its Phase 3 Initiative goals. This review will facilitate system strengthening to ensure that the Sri Lankan CRVS system is active instead of passive, and that the role of the health sector in the process of notification and registration is clear. This will be the first-ever comprehensive legal and regulatory review of the Sri Lankan CRVS system.

**Better Facility Cause-of-Death Data:** In 25 of the major hospitals across the country, Sri Lanka is strengthening capacity in cause-of-death certification. Sri Lanka has approximately 130,000 deaths each year, and legally, death registration should include a cause of death. Just under 50% of these deaths occur in hospitals and are medically certified, although practice among doctors remains variable. To institutionalize certification improvement, a standardized pre-service undergraduate medical curriculum was developed successfully by key local stakeholders and is set to be implemented across the all medical faculties throughout the country. Additionally, several job aids have been developed including a handbook for certification, and a cause-of-death app (“CoD Guide”), which is being hosted on the Ministry of Health's server for widespread use across hospitals nationwide.

## Ongoing Work

### CRVS Governance and Coordination

In addition to the successful establishment of the high-level CRVS Interagency Coordination Committee, the establishment of a national mortality review committee is under discussion. This committee would be responsible for the quality, accuracy, and timeliness of cause-of-death activities and related mortality data across the country, which is critical for health policy and decision-making.

### Counting Every Birth and Death

The recommendations that come out of the above mentioned CRVS legal and regulatory review will set the stage for strategic improvements which are aimed at: 1) cementing the role of the health sector in the registration process as notifiers of vital events and 2) supporting and facilitating the streamlining of CRVS business processes. Currently, several business process maps are being developed to clarify existing processes and identify improvements.

### Better Facility Cause-of-Death Data

The Sri Lankan government is also developing a national scale-up strategy to ensure continuous skill development, which includes identifying a national cadre of master trainers who will provide ongoing, routine training in certification. Creating a complementary course for in-service physicians on medical certification of cause of death, in addition to the successful implementation of the pre-service curriculum, will ensure continuity and allow physicians to continuously maintain and improve their skills to produce high-quality cause-of-death data. The Sri Lankan government is also committed to establishing a quality control system for cause of death data from certification to vital statistics production.

### ICD Mortality Coding

Efforts are currently focused on conducting an initial assessment of the process and quality of ICD mortality coding, which will then be followed by a comprehensive training for existing and newly appointed ICD mortality coders. This effort aims to strengthen the country's ability to produce accurate and timely vital statistics for decision-making.