











## How can we strengthen CRVS systems as a means to improving gender equality?

During the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, PARIS21, alongside the Republic of the Philippines, Global Affairs Canada, UN Economic Commission for Africa and Data2X hosted an event to investigate the challenges, opportunities and solutions to strengthen CRVS systems as a means of improving gender equality.

The Chair, Johannes Jütting, Secretariat Manager of PARIS21, opened the event by reminding participants that up to 50 million children born each year are not registered and do not legally exist. These children, in turn, have no access to basic rights such as education and health care and are invisible when important policies are put into place. Later on, this lack of registration can have disproportionately high repercussions. For example, it can lead to difficulty in obtaining employment or accessing social services. Women are especially affected by the repercussions of not being registered — by not having access to a national ID card, they will in turn be denied the right to open a bank account, vote or inherit property, for example. If a mother is not registered, her children are far less likely to be registered as well; creating a vicious cycle of official invisibility, lack of opportunity and poverty.

The Canadian Parliamentary Secretary Karina Gould, in her keynote speech, reiterated the importance of a well-functioning CRVS system and presented various initiatives the Canadian government has started to support the development of a comprehensive registration system that captures significant life events for both men and women. Moreover, she emphasised the need to start working more with non-state actors to reach the most vulnerable, and to think, work, partner and finance differently if we want to ensure that no one is left behind.

Lisa Bersales, National Statistician and Civil Registrar General of the Philippines, Emily Pryor, Senior Director at Data2X and Oliver J.M. Chinganya, Director of the African Centre for Statistics at the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) took the floor to confirm some of the underlying challenges, such as lack of leadership, co-ordination and use of modern technology, but also to present what is already taking place to address them. The Philippines, for example, has achieved a 93% registration rate by working through a public-private partnership that assists with the digitisation of records. They are now working towards increasing the death registration rate which is currently at 66%. The speakers felt that strong CRVS systems can also be attributed to strong civil society organisations (CSO) and that these organisations will have a prominent role to play in communicating the impact of proper CRVS investment. Another issue discussed was the role social institutions (i.e. customs, social norms and local legal frameworks) play in providing negative incentives for registration, in particular for baby girls. Increased education of village leaders, advocacy activities and the provision of positive incentives could positively contribute to addressing these constraints.

To conclude, the Chair presented the following main takeaways:

- 1. Advocacy has proven to be a powerful tool we need to continue to communicate the impact of investing in CRVS for governments and citizens at the national, regional and local levels
- 2. We know what we need to do it is just a matter of improving quality and quantity
  - a. Public-Private partnerships for digitisation for example
  - b. Greater advocacy
  - c. Strengthen co-ordination across Ministries and the NSO, and also between international organisations
  - d. Make better use of innovations and technology
  - e. Provide positive incentives for registration
- 3. We need to better understand why we have not advanced further in this agenda by digging deeper at the local level to understand cultural specificities