



Annual Expert Group Meeting for Registrar Generals (EGMRG) on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics

Concept Note

**Theme: New CRVS Decade (2026–2036): Consolidating the Gains of
APAI-CRVS and Securing the Future of Civil Registration and Vital
Statistics in Africa through Integration, Decentralization, and
Digitalization**

Dates: 17 - 21 July 2026

Venue: Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe

1. Background

The Africa Programme for Accelerated Improvement of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (APAI-CRVS) since its inception in 2012, has been the continent's flagship initiative for strengthening Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) systems. Over the past decade, significant progress has been made in raising the political profile of CRVS, developing technical resources, and fostering a community of practice. The 2025 Expert Group Meeting for Registrar Generals (EGMRG) in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea, marked a critical juncture, focusing on three transformative strategies—interoperability, decentralization, and digitalization—as levers to accelerate progress towards universal registration of all vital events.

The year 2026 marks a critical phase for CRVS systems in Africa. It signals the end of the first APAI-CRVS Decade (2017-2026) and the final five-year push to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including universal legal identity (SDG 16.9). More importantly, it offers a unique opportunity to set a bold, new agenda for the next ten years.

As we approach the final years of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the APAI-CRVS Decade (2017-2026), it is imperative to reflect on the progress made, consolidate the gains, and chart a strategic course for the next decade. The EGMRG in July 2026 will serve as this pivotal moment, tasked with reviewing the implementation of the recommendations from the last ministerial meeting (COM5) held in Zambia in 2019 and from the EGMRG of 2025 held in Malabo and translating the vision of a robust, inclusive, and resilient CRVS ecosystem into a concrete action plan for 2026-2036.

This Expert Group Meeting for Registrar Generals (EGMRG) is the designated platform to consolidate the hard-won gains of the past, to build momentum as we prepare for the 6th Conference of African Ministers responsible for Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (COM6) into concrete action, and operationalize the African eCRVS Shared Asset (ACSA).

The theme for the 2026 EGMRG is, "***New CRVS Decade (2026–2036): Consolidating the Gains of APAI-CRVS and Securing the Future of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Africa through Integration, Decentralization, and Digitalization***," reflects the need to move from foundational work to widespread, sustainable implementation.

2. Rationale and Context

Despite notable progress, significant challenges remain. The 2025 EGMRG in Malabo identified persistent bottlenecks, including underfunding, fragmented systems, and low registration coverage for births, deaths, marriages, and divorces. The meeting produced a set of recommendations aimed at accelerating progress through interoperability, decentralization, and digitalization.

The 2026 EGMRG is therefore essential to:

- Take stock of how African Member States have implemented the COM5 resolutions and 2025 Malabo recommendations, ensuring that the technical and political commitments translate into tangible action.
- Review the progress and lessons learned from the APAI-CRVS Strategic Plan (2023-2027) as it nears its conclusion, and use these insights to inform the next decade.
- Leverage Shared Assets: Introduce and operationalize the finalized outputs of the African eCRVS Shared Asset (ACSA) initiative—a continental resource package comprising design principles, data standards, and functional requirements—to guide digital transformation efforts.
- Set the Agenda for a New Decade: The new CRVS decade (2026-2036) needs a clear, country-owned action plan. Define a unified, practical, and country-owned action plan for the next ten years, centred on the three proven accelerators of Integration, Decentralization, and Digitalization, to secure the future of CRVS in Africa.
- Understand how to secure the CRVS future. How to move from project-based donor funding to sustainable, nationally-budgeted CRVS systems that function as foundational Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) for the continent.

3. Overall Objective

The overall objective of the 2026 EGMRG is to build a collective path forward for the new CRVS decade by consolidating the gains of APAI-CRVS, accelerating the implementation of high-impact strategies, and ensuring CRVS systems are resilient, inclusive, and sustainable pillars of legal identity and governance across Africa.

Specific Objectives

1. **Review Implementation of Past Recommendations:** Assess progress made by African countries in implementing the COM5 resolutions and the 2025 Malabo EGMRG recommendations, identifying successes, challenges, and best practices.
2. **Operationalize and Adopt the African eCRVS Shared Asset (ACSA):** Present the finalized resource package from the ACSA workshop (design principles, data standards, functional requirements) and discuss modalities for its adoption, adaptation, and piloting in member states.
3. **Deepen Country Action on the Three Accelerators:** Facilitate cross-country learning and develop actionable plans for strengthening CRVS systems through:
 - **Interoperability:** Moving beyond interoperability to create fully integrated systems where CRVS is the foundational ID for all government services (health, education, justice, social protection).

- **Decentralization:** Scaling up and optimizing models for decentralized service delivery to ensure universal access, particularly for marginalized and hard-to-reach populations, including in fragile contexts.
 - **Digitalization:** Adopting and scaling secure, interoperable, and scalable digital solutions, leveraging the ACSA, to enhance data quality, enable real-time analytics, and improve user experience.
4. **Strengthen the Foundation for All Life Events:** Building on the Malabo discussions by developing specific, actionable recommendations for; Integrating marriage and divorce registration through legal reform and institutional coordination. Achieving at least 80% death registration completeness with high-quality cause-of-death data, leveraging health-CRVS interoperability.
- To share emerging good practices in capturing data for these events with a special focus on marriage, divorce, and cause-of-death reporting.
5. **Formulate a Consolidated Action Plan for the New CRVS Decade (2026-2036):** Develop a strategic action plan that outlines priority actions, resource mobilization strategies, and monitoring frameworks for the next ten years, ensuring alignment with the SDGs, Agenda 2063, and national development plans.

4. Expected Outcomes

The 2026 EGMRG is expected to produce the following outcomes:

1. **A Progress Report:** A summary report on the status of implementation of the 2025 Malabo EGMRG recommendations, including updated technical and policy guidance for member states.
2. **ACSA Adoption and Governance Framework:** A plan for the dissemination, adoption, and technical support of the ACSA resource package, including identification of initial pilot countries and a framework for ongoing governance.
3. **Consolidated Action Plan for the New CRVS Decade (2026-2036):** A flagship document that outlines priority actions, key performance indicators, and resource requirements for the next ten years, structured around Integration, Decentralization, and Digitalization.
4. **A Technical Roadmap for Completing the Vital events Lifecycle:** A set of updated recommendations on how to strengthen legislation and operational procedures for the universal registration of births, deaths, marriages, and divorces, with a particular emphasis on cause-of-death reporting. Develop specific recommendations and a work plan for improving the registration of marriages, divorces, and deaths, including the use of digital tools and interoperability.

5. **Revitalized Political Momentum:** A renewed declaration from Registrar Generals and their Ministers reaffirming the political commitment to the new CRVS decade, including a call for sustained domestic resource mobilization and calls for sustained political and financial investment.

5. Participants

The meeting will bring together:

- **Registrar Generals and Directors of Civil Registration** from all African Member States.
- **CRVS Technical Experts** from member states (including IT managers, statisticians, and health sector counterparts).
- **Representatives of Regional Economic Communities (RECs)** (EAC, ECOWAS, SADC, IGAD, CEMAC).
- **Development and Technical Partners:** APAI-CRVS Core Group members (UNECA, AUC, UNICEF, UNFPA, WHO, World Bank, AfDB, Vital Strategies, GHAI, OIF), the ACSA technical team, and other key stakeholders.
- **Observers** from civil society, academia, and the private sector.

6. Format of the Meeting

The 5-day meeting will be structured to balance plenary sessions with in-depth technical working groups, fostering dialogue and peer learning.

- A. **Days 1 and Day 2 (Plenary)** : Opening ceremony, updates from the Core Group, a special session on the ACSA, and thematic plenary sessions on **Integration, Decentralization, and Digitalization**. These sessions will include framing presentations followed by country case studies.
- B. **Day 3 (Technical Breakout Sessions):** Parallel working groups to dive deeper into each of the three accelerators, as well as sessions on:
 - i. **Session 1:** Progress on Marriage and Divorce Registration .
 - ii. **Session 2:** Enhancing Cause-of-Death Reporting through Interoperability.
 - iii. **Session 3:** Securing and Funding CRVS as Digital Public Infrastructure.
- C. **Day 4 (Technical Breakout Sessions):** Working groups will focus on drafting the **Consolidated Action Plan for the New CRVS Decade (2026- 2036)**, building on the discussions from the previous days and the ACSA outputs.

- D. **Day 5 (Plenary):** Presentation of draft action plans and recommendations from the working groups. Plenary discussion, validation of outcomes, and adoption of the final recommendations and action plan. Closing ceremony.

7. Working Languages

The working languages of the meeting will be English, French, and Portuguese. Interpretation services will be provided.

8. Organizers

The meeting is being jointly organized by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) in collaboration with the APAI-CRVS regional core group partners.

9. Draft Agenda

The Draft Agenda is Provided in Annex 1.

10. Contact

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