



APAI-CRVS
Empowering citizens in Africa

Decade for Repositioning
of Civil Registration and
Vital Statistics in Africa
2017-2026

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

GHANA Decentralising Civil Registration

Bringing birth and death registration closer to every community
Country Case Studies: Decentralization Experiences

Plenary Session 3: Decentralization —Ensuring Universal Access
EGMRG Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe | 18 July 2026
Republic of Ghana
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THE CONTEXT — Why Decentralization Was Needed

The starting point: access gaps, centralised processes and unequal reach

ACCESS

16 regions · 261 districts

The Births and Deaths Registry (BDR) registration system was centralised such that, all approvals and registrations had to be finalized and printed at the National Office despite the 4 levels of establishment.

However, issuance of birth certificates has always been at the local level.

EQUITY

Services had to move closer

A centralised model constrained timely registration and citizen participation—especially for hard-to-reach communities..

In 2020, the Registration of Births and Deaths Act 2020 (Act 1027) was enacted to fully decentralise operations of the BDR.

SYSTEM GAP

Deaths remained under-recorded

In 2025, birth coverage was 74%, while death registration coverage was only 32%.

Decentralisation is therefore both a service-delivery reform and a rights-based pathway to universal registration.

THE JOURNEY — Our Decentralization Approach

How Ghana is embedding CRVS within local government and frontline services

1

Legal foundation

The 1992 Constitution of Ghana is anchored on decentralised governance;

Act 1027 defines district-level CRVS responsibilities.

2

Institutional shift

In December 2022, district BDR staff were ceded to the Office of the Head of Local Government Service.

3

Local Government Integration

CRVS is now embedded within the local governance framework, empowering MMDAs to strengthen oversight, enhance coordination across local institutions, and improve community access to registration services

4

Strengthened Collaboration

District registrars collaborate with GHS, assemblies, schools, cemeteries, traditional leaders and communities.

5. Review of birth registration operations across all 261 MMDAs, in partnership with UNICEF, to identify opportunities for strengthening Ghana's CRVS system.

6. Joint capacity building efforts with staff of the BDR and Ghana Health Service – Public Health Nurses, District Health Information Officers, Midwives, Community health nurses in charge of deliveries

FRONTLINE DELIVERY — How Decentralization Works

Roles and partnerships that bring birth and death registration closer to communities

1

District office

The district registry operates as a department of the MMDA, creating a permanent local service point.

2

Registrar functions

District Registrars safeguard records, collate data and submit quarterly reports for oversight and planning.

3

Assembly support

MMDAs provide office space, utilities, administration and maintain community population registers.

4

Local ecosystem

GHS, schools, cemeteries, traditional leaders and communities support notification, awareness and compliance.

Community notification → district registration → regional approval / consolidation → national approval / stewardship



WHAT WE ACHIEVED — Results and Impact

PROXIMITY

Registration at the frontline

Birth and death registration services are embedded within district structures, with registration services fully decentralized and certificate printing expanded to all regional offices, progressing toward district-level delivery

ACCOUNTABILITY

Clear district responsibilities

Act 1027 clarifies roles across all levels: District Registrars manage registration and reporting, Regional and National offices provide oversight and quality assurance, while MMDAs support coordination and local accountability

PERFORMANCE

Improved registration coverage

Birth registration coverage has been hovering around 76% in 2024 and 74% in 2025;

Death registration coverage has been hovering around 35% in 2024 and 38% in 2025.

The reform created a stronger platform for universal access—but decentralisation is not complete until resources, systems and data also follow the function.

WHAT WORKED — Enablers of Progress

The institutional and operational choices that strengthened local ownership and access

INTEGRATION

Staff embedded locally

Ceding district BDR staff to the Local Government Service strengthened administrative accountability within MMDAs.

CLARITY

Defined legal roles

Registration of Births and Deaths Act 1027 clarifies the responsibilities of District Registrars and Assemblies for records, reporting and support.

PARTNERSHIP

Frontline collaboration

Partnerships with health facilities, schools, community leaders, funerals and burial service providers strengthen outreach, expand public awareness, and improve access to birth and death registration services.

This is made possible due to ongoing training efforts and advocacy calls for relevant staff within the CRVS system to strengthen institutional collaboration

Local ownership works best when legal authority, administrative accountability and community partnerships reinforce one another.

WHAT DIDN'T — Constraints and Lessons

Where implementation remains incomplete and what Ghana has learned

FISCAL GAP

Functions moved faster than funds

District offices still face gaps in the staffing, transport, connectivity and equipment.

SYSTEM GAP

Data remain fragmented

Interoperability, historical-record digitisation, cause-of-death integration and data-quality controls need strengthening.

ACCESS GAP

The last mile remains hardest

Distance, weak infrastructure, low awareness and cultural practices continue to affect timely and complete registration.

The lesson: devolution must move together with financing, technology, supervision, data quality and sustained public engagement.

WHAT'S NEXT — Our Vision for the Future

SERVICE ACCESS

Reach the last mile

Adopt an optimal service-point strategy: additional offices, shared public facilities, mobile registration points and phone-based channels. Full implementation of CRVS Strategic Plan 2025 - 2030

ONE CRVS SYSTEM

Connect institutions and data

Improve interoperability, digitise historical records, integrate cause-of-death processes and strengthen data-quality controls. Ongoing integration between BDR, GHS and NIA

SUSTAINABILITY

Finance and govern delivery

Set minimum service-point standards, align resources with devolved functions, and activate whole-of-government CRVS coordination.

MESSAGE TO COM6 • Make universal registration a sustainably funded local service—locally delivered, nationally accountable, and accessible to all.



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Everyone counts in Africa

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Thank you

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