



APAI-CRVS
African Population and Vital Statistics Institute

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

ZANZIBAR - TANZANIA CRVS Decentralization: Bringing Services Closer to the People

A Decade of Bringing Civil Registration Closer to the People
Country Case Study: Decentralization Experiences

Plenary Session 3: Decentralization — Ensuring Universal Access
EGMRG Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe | 18 July 2026
Zanzibar, United Republic of Tanzania
Presenter: Mohamed Ame Makame, Executive Director, ZCSRA



THE CONTEXT — Why Decentralization Was Needed

The Starting Point: Challenges We Faced that Decentralization addressed.

- 1 An Archipelago Nation**
Unguja, Pemba and many smaller islands, with remote communities far from any of district registration offices
- 2 Long, Costly Journeys**
Citizens travelled far to reach centralized registration offices and to some is found to be time consuming and costly
- 3 Delays in Rural Areas**
Registration was often delayed, especially in hard-to-reach communities where some people give less priority on life events registration
- 4 Under-Registration**
Many births and deaths went unrecorded - limiting legal identity, health care, education, inheritance and social protection

OUR GUIDING PRINCIPLE

“Civil registration should be available where life events occur - not only at government offices.”

THE JOURNEY — Our Decentralization Approach

How We Are Bringing CRVS Services Closer to Communities

10+ Years Ago

UNFPA-supported pilot: digital CRVS system launched at health facilities

1

2

2018 – ZCSRA Act No. 3

Legal mandate for decentralization — health facilities & Sheha at SHEHIAs become registration agents for events takes place at community level

2022 – eCRVS System Redevelopment

Modern web-based platform plus the Sheha Mobile App for community-level registration

3

Todate – All 11 Districts

Birth, death, marriage & divorce registration now decentralized nationwide (to isles level through Shehas representatives)

5

4

2025/2026 - Vital Strategies Support

Business Process Improvement: streamlined workflows, unified mobile app, better data quality



WHAT WE ACHIEVED — Results and Impact

A decade of reform delivered measurable change across five dimensions:

1

Institutional

- Strong legal framework
- Services delivered at district level

2

Digital Transformation

- Modern platform & mobile registration
- Real-time, interoperable data

3

Service Delivery

- Shorter distances, faster certificates
- Fewer delays, better experience

4

Governance

- Stronger supervision & accountability
- Better availability of vital statistics

5

Development Impact

- Higher legal identity coverage
- Better chance to achieve SDG 16.9



LESSONS LEARNED

What Worked, What Didn't, and What We Learned

- Political commitment is essential to sustain reform
- Legal reform anchors sustainable decentralization
- Technology alone isn't enough — pair it with proper business process improvement
- Closer look is needed to Community leaders (Sheha) in extending coverage to hard-to-reach areas
- Health facilities are strategic entry points for registration
- Continuous training builds lasting institutional capacity
- Digital systems need continuous improvement, not one-off launches
- Data quality must be designed into systems and processes from day one

WHAT'S NEXT — Our Vision for the Future

Zanzibar's roadmap for the next chapter of CRVS modernization:

- Universal birth & death registration
- Fully digital, end-to-end CRVS
- Deeper interoperability with health & ID systems
- Automated, data-driven policy & planning
- Expanded community-based & online services
- CRVS become foundation of eKYC under ongoing digital transformation in Zanzibar

“Building a modern, inclusive, and fully decentralized CRVS system that ensures every life event is registered and every person is counted.”



APAI-CRVS
Every person counts in Africa

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Thank you

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