Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS)

Mains Syllabus: GS II - Important Aspects of Governance, Transparency and Accountability, E-governance- applications, models, successes, limitations, and potential.

Why in the News?

Recently, the third ministerial conference on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics for Asia and the Pacific was held in Bangkok, Thailand.

What are CRVS?

- **CRVS** - The United Nations defines civil registration and vital statistics as the continuous, permanent, compulsory and universal recording of the occurrence and characteristics of vital events of the population in accordance with the law.
- **Vital Events** – It includes births, deaths and marriages, divorces, besides causes of death.
- **CRVS Decade** - In 2014, the United Nations' Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), launched the "CRVS Decade" to 'Get every one in the picture.'
- **Increase in Registration** - Over the last decade, in the countries in the Asia Pacific region, the number of children under 5 who are unregistered had dropped to 51 million, from 135 million in 2012, a reduction of more than 60%.
- 29 countries currently have reported over 90% registration of births in a year, and 30 countries have achieved this for death registration.
- **Missing Registrations** - Despite this progress, an estimated 14 million children across the region still do not have their births registered by their first birthday and every year, an approximate 6.9 million deaths also go unrecorded.
- **Target Extension** - With the chosen decade complete, but 100% registration still not achieved, the Governments across Asia and the Pacific, on June 25, 2025, signed off on a landmark decision to ensure the all births are registered and all deaths are recorded by 2030.

What are the significances of the system?

- **Establishment of Legal Identity** - Registering births and deaths is a fundamental aspect of a person's legal identity, and besides, grant access to a whole range of life cycle benefits/functions for any one living in a society.
- **Access to Essential Services** - Birth registration grants individuals formal legal recognition, enabling access to essential rights and services, including health services.
- **Legal Evidence Document** - Death certificates serve as legal proof of death,

supporting families with matters such as inheritance, insurance and other administrative processes.

- **Resilient CRVS System** - It aims to create a universal, inclusive and resilient CRVS systems a step closer to reality.
- **Protect Populations in Vulnerable Situations** - As birth and marriage registration can serve as safeguards against child marriage, trafficking and modern slavery by verifying age and identity.
- **Intergenerational Impact** - Birth registration empowers registered mothers to secure legal identity and rights for their children, breaking cycles of invisibility and exclusion.
- **Achieving Sustainable Development Goal (SDG)** - Acknowledging legal identity in good governance and justice, is also target 16.9 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

What is thestatus of civil registration system in India?

- **Nodal Authority** - In India, the Registrar General and Census Commissioner(RGCI) is responsible for civil registration as well as the production of vital statistics.
- **Nodal Ministry** –Though the commissionerate comes under the Union Home Ministry, the Ministry of Health supports the civil registration system providing incentives for registration, manpower and logistics support under the National Health Mission.
- **Cost of Registration** - There is no fee for birth registration within the prescribed period of 21 days, although fees for birth certificates may vary according to State/local body.
- **National CRVS System** - The Indian national CRVS coordination mechanism was established in August 2015, while a national CRVS strategy and a comprehensive assessment are still in progress.
- **Registration of Births and Deaths (RBD) Act, 1969** - The registration of births and deaths is mandatory under the act.
- Amendments to it, have made possible digital registration of births and deaths, and the recognition of electronic documents that can be stored safely and securely in the Digilocker by all.

In India, legal provisions now cover the registration of adopted, orphaned, abandoned, surrendered, and surrogate children, along with children of single parents or unmarried mothers.

- **Reporting Cause of Death** - It has been made mandatory for medical institutions to provide cause of death certificates to the Registrar.
- **Increase in Registration** - As a result of these proactive policies, the registration of births had increased from just over 86% at the beginning of the CRVS decade to over 96% in India.

Initiatives on Registration System

• **Civil Registration System** – It is a centralized portal for online and offline registration of birth and death covering the entire gamut of the civil registration system
  - Registration of events,
  - Generation of certificates
  - Generation of statistical tables and reports
• **Data Digitization Project** – It has been started with the support of UNICEF, to keep old records in easy to retrieve digital form has started.
• This will help in storage of registers in electronic format and allow easy access to the records.

What are the challenges in civil registration?

- **Lack of Awareness** – Most people are not aware of the the need and importance of registration of vital events such as birth, death and still birth.
- **Low Priority** – States and Union Territories accorded to priority to civil registration system in terms of budget allocation, man power allocation and infrastructure creation.
- **Lack of Coordination** – There is inadequate coordination among concerned departments of home ministries and health ministries in sharing the data.
- **Low level of Reporting** – There are impediments in registration units such as hospitals in reporting the births and deaths.

Under the Civil Registration System (CRS), controlled by the RGI, government hospitals have been entrusted with the responsibility of functioning as registrar.

Private hospitals are supposed to report the events in their jurisdiction to the registrar so that certificates can be issued to the family.

For more information on Registration system in India, Click Here.

- **Deficiencies in Digital Infrastructures** – This make the adoption of CRVS system difficult to implement.

What lies ahead?

- Achieving 100% coverage requires inclusive and accessible service delivery, harnessing the power of digital transformation, strengthening legal foundations and building inter-operable data systems.
- Ensuring gender equity in registration, safeguarding personal data and privacy is also essential.

References

The Hindu | A commitment to count every single birth and death



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