

# Reaching Children with a holistic approach

Enhancing synergies between  
social protection and civil  
registration systems for an  
inclusive and equitable society







# Introduction

**Birth registration and social protection are two critical areas for children that are closely linked and have a significant impact on the lives of children and families.**

Ensuring access to birth registration and social protection is a fundamental right of every child as enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Further, social protection programs can play a critical role in facilitating this access, especially for vulnerable and marginalized populations, thereby making a significant stride towards SDG16.9 (Legal identity for all, including birth registration). Moreover, strong civil registration systems can serve as a foundation of social protection systems, which provide comprehensive policies and programmes aimed at preventing and protecting all people against poverty, vulnerability and social exclusion towards SDG 1.3 (Social Protection Floor/Systems).

**However, despite recent initiatives to better link social protection interventions and civil registration, significant gaps still exist in social protection coverage and birth registration rates, particularly among the most vulnerable and marginalized populations including refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs) and those at risk of statelessness.** Addressing these gaps, therefore, requires a multi-sectoral approach that involves strengthening both social protection systems and Civil Registration (CR) systems, as well as building strong linkages between them.

**This document is intended to support practitioners and policymakers working on both social protection and birth registration/Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) systems to understand the importance of such linkages and how the synergies can be promoted with a win-win situation for both sectors.** It outlines mutual and reinforcing objectives, opportunities for joint work, key considerations when providing technical assistance and approaches to ensure the most vulnerable children have access to both birth registration and social protection.



The first two sections outline the importance of social protection and birth registration, followed by the importance of the synergies between the two (section 3). The fourth section provides steps to facilitate interoperability and concludes with recommendations.



## Section 1:

# What is social protection, and why is it important?



**Social protection, a set of policies and programs aimed at preventing or protecting all people against poverty, vulnerability and social exclusion throughout their life-course,<sup>1</sup> plays a vital role in supporting children's rights and addressing the vulnerabilities they face throughout their lives.**

Programs such as social transfers (including cash transfers), social insurance, (including social health insurance), labor market policies, (including family friendly policies such as paid parental leave and care services) and social welfare services & referrals provide support to children and families, particularly those who are most vulnerable, including children, girls, persons with disabilities and migrant/displaced population.

**Social protection can also offer support to children and their families by facilitating access to essential services such as health care, education, and other social services.** This can lead to a myriad of other benefits, including improved human development outcomes for children, a more productive labor force and strengthened local economies. The investment into social protection enables governments to not only provide immediate support to address poverty and vulnerabilities, but also support children to reach their full potential and contribute to society.

UNICEF is mandated to protect the rights of every child and its work on supporting child-sensitive social protection systems maintain a consistent rights-based approach to promote universal coverage for all children guided by the four key principles (Box 1).

<sup>1</sup> UNICEF (2019) Social Protection Framework. For the purposes of this technical note, when we refer to social protection, we are specifically focusing on non-contributory social transfers.

## Box 1: Four key principles that guide UNICEF's approach to Social Protection

### Source:

UNICEF. 2019. *UNICEF's Global Social Protection Programme Framework*

UNICEF's global framework for social protection programs stipulates a life course approach to be adopted for an effective, comprehensive, and integrated social protection system. A life course-based approach to social protection recognizes that vulnerabilities and risks evolve through the course of life and social protection programs and services should be tailored to support the different life stages. UNICEF's social protection across the life course diagram (see Figure 1) illustrates a comprehensive social protection system, designed to address the various needs of different population groups across the life course.

### The best interests of the child

UNICEF supports a rights-based approach to social protection rooted in the Convention of the Rights of the Child, and all our work in social protection is informed by this core principle.

### Progressive realization of universal coverage

UNICEF supports the progressive realization of universal coverage, which involves helping countries to identify and expand programs while recognizing the different capacities, contexts and challenges that countries face.

### National systems and leadership

UNICEF supports nationally-owned and led systems, and only in exceptional cases, including in some humanitarian contexts, would UNICEF consider supporting implementation of temporary social protection programs outside of government collaboration.

### Inclusive social protection

UNICEF is committed to inclusive social protection that is responsive to the needs of all children and sensitive to particular characteristics and identities which can increase the risk of exclusion, including gender, disability status, ethnicity, HIV status, and geographic location.

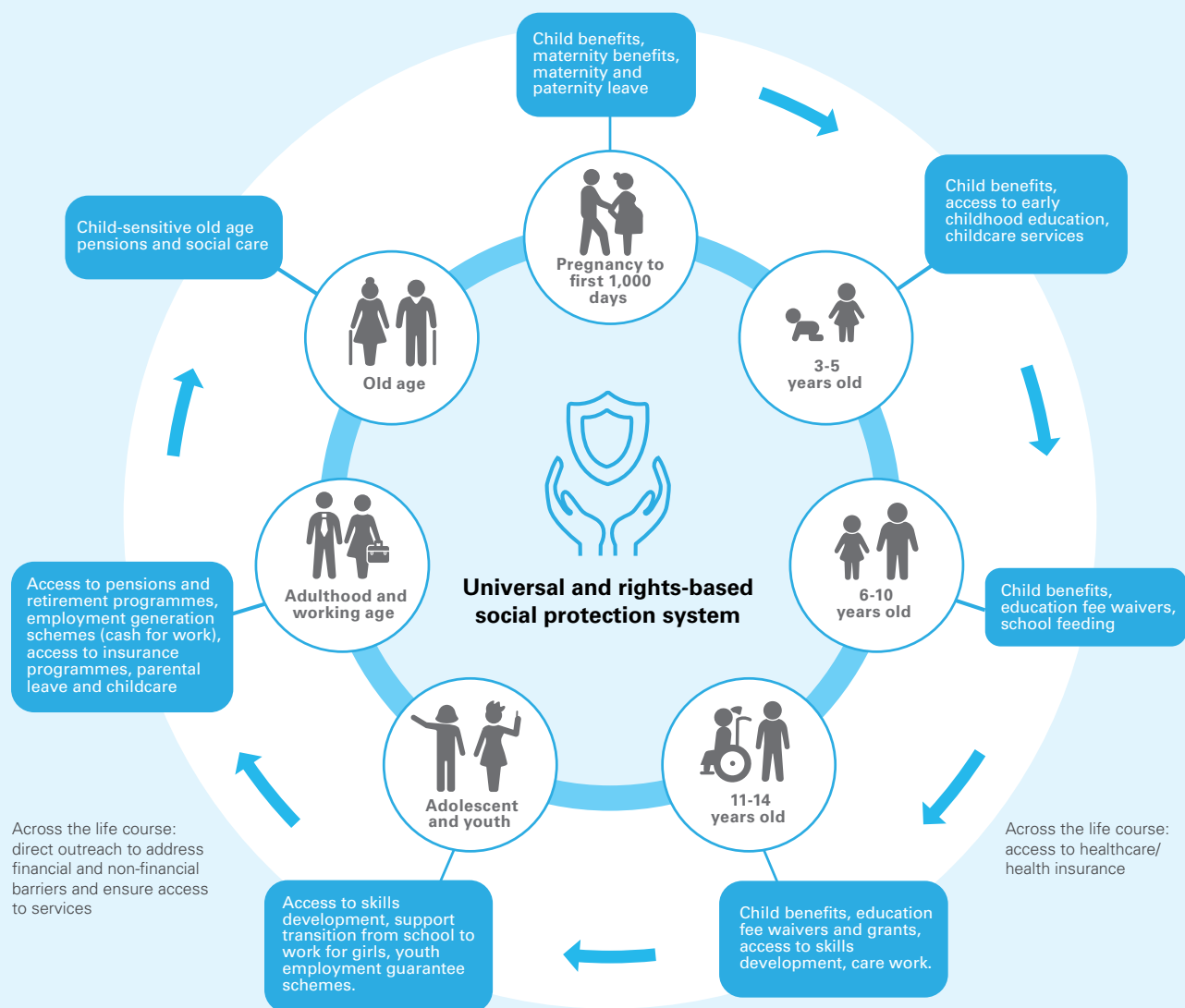
Social protection programs across the life course can help reduce poverty and inequality, promote social and economic inclusion and development, and contribute to achieving several SDGs. Prioritizing children's rights and their inclusion into social protection systems should not only address the immediate needs of children but also contribute to their long-term development and well-being. This includes collaboration and coordination with broader government services, including linkages with civil administration systems to support birth registration for children and facilitate their access to quality health care, education and social protection.



## Box 2: Social protection across the life course

### Source:

UNICEF. 2019: UNICEF's Global Social Protection Programme Framework



## Section 2:

# Why is birth registration important and what is its role in social protection systems?

**Birth registration is the first legal recognition of a child's existence and establishes their identity, nationality, and legal status.** Birth registration is also important for protecting children's rights, including the right to a name, the right to know and be cared for

by their parents, and the right to be protected from exploitation and abuse, serving as a safeguard against child labor, child marriage, trafficking, and other forms of exploitation.

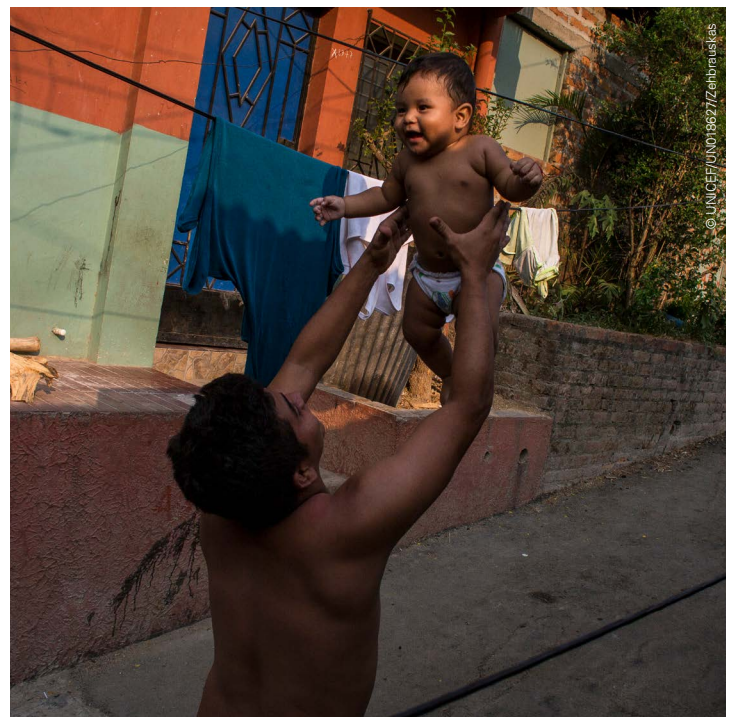
### Box 3: Article 7 and 8 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)

UNICEF is guided by the Convention on the Rights of the Child and strives to establish children's rights as enduring ethical principles and international standards of behaviour towards children. Birth registration is a fundamental right of every child, enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

**Article 7** of the Convention states that every child has the right to a name and nationality from birth, while **Article 8** states that the child has the right to preserve their identity.

## 1 in 4 children under the age of 5 do not officially exist

**Despite the importance of birth registration and the significant progress of increasing birth registration rates in recent years, there is still a substantial proportion of children that remain unregistered worldwide.** Large differences can be found in the coverage of birth registration across different regions with the lowest levels recorded across different regions in Africa, with only 41 percent coverage of children registered by their fifth birthday in Eastern and Southern Africa. A well-functioning death registration system is equally critical to provide a lifecycle approach to legal identity by alerting social protection systems about the exiting of beneficiaries upon their death.





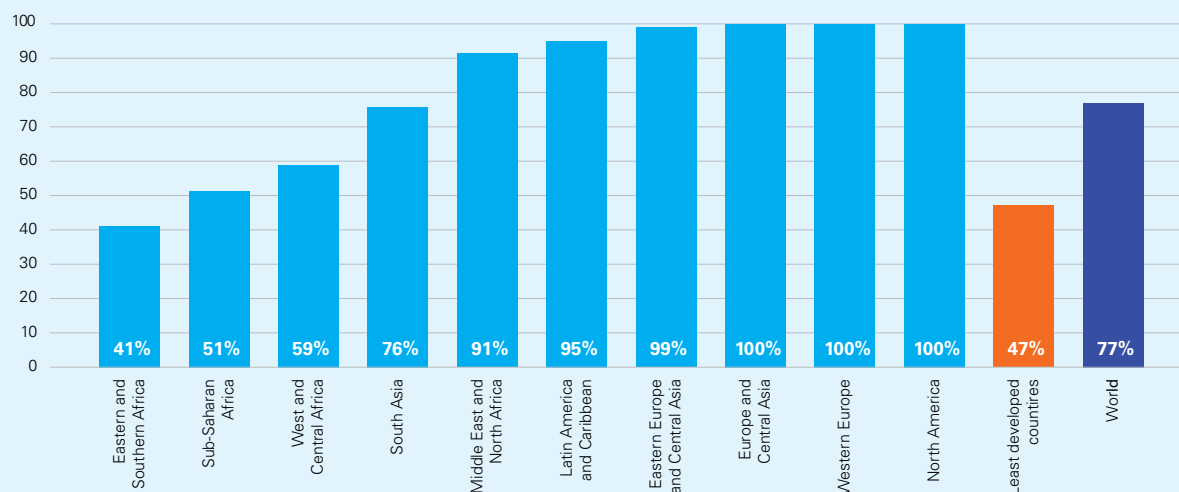
## Box 4: Percentage of children under age five whose births are registered, by region

### Source:

UNICEF global databases, 2023, based on Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS), Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS), other national surveys, censuses and vital registration systems, 2013-2022.

### Birth registration prevalence varies significantly across regions

Percentage of children under age five whose births are registered, by region



**Once a child's birth is registered, a birth certificate can be issued as an official document that provides proof of the child's birth registration** and includes detailed information about the child and their parents. Birth certificates are often required for various purposes, such as enrolment in schools, obtaining a passport, claiming inheritance rights, and accessing social protection benefits. When there is limited interoperability between civil registration systems and other government systems and databases, the burden is placed on the citizen/resident to prove their identity and other information such as citizenship/country of origin, residency and age to be able to access government services. Birth registration and birth certification should be done simultaneously, preferably through a one-stop process to reduce the drop-off between registration and certification. The availability of a birth certificate as proof of registration is a gateway towards protecting human rights and staking claims to essential services and benefits.

**While birth registration is a legal requirement in over 145 countries, the rates of birth certification can vary significantly.** Several factors contribute to the discrepancy between birth registration and birth certification rates, including limited awareness among parents about the importance of obtaining a birth certificate, administrative challenges in issuing birth certificates, and financial constraints that may hinder families from acquiring birth certificates for their children. According to UNICEF data, globally, it is estimated that 166 million children under the age of five do not have their births registered, and another 70 million registered children do not possess birth certificates. Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia account for the highest numbers of unregistered as well as uncertified children. In many countries, the gap between birth registration and birth certification rates is substantial, indicating the need for concerted efforts to ensure that children not only have their births registered but also possess the necessary

birth certificates. For instance, birth certification is on demand in Rwanda and Kenya and fees are charged even for issuing the first copy of birth certificates. This explains the substantial gaps between birth registration and certification in Rwanda (registration – 86% vs certification – 17%) and Kenya (registration – 76% vs certification – 34%) , particularly among the most disadvantaged children (including children living in rural areas, belonging to the poorest quintile, and children of mothers with low education).

**Civil administration systems, such as CR (Civil Registration) systems and population registries, are a national backbone system to manage identity of citizens, and are critical to ensuring access to social protection programs. A functioning CRVS system can ensure that every individual has a legal identity and is registered in the system, which can help ensure that they have access to a range of services, including social protection programs.** CRVS systems can also help identify the most vulnerable populations, including children without birth certificates, and ensure that they are able to access social protection services.

CRVS could also be inclusive to cover all population and thus complement other registries/systems that focus on certain population.

**Civil registration, vital statistics, and population registers are three distinct but interconnected systems that play a crucial role in documenting and managing vital events and population information. Each system serves specific purposes, and their seamless coordination is essential to support birth registration and social protection services effectively.**

The United Nations defines civil registration as the continuous, permanent, compulsory, universal recording of the occurrence and characteristics of vital events pertaining to the population, as provided through decree or regulation in accordance with the legal requirements in each country, with full respect for the rules regulating the protection and privacy of individual information. The output of this recording establishes a person's identity and familial relationships, lays the foundation for legal identity, and, if the civil registration system is managed effectively, can provide valuable vital statistics.



## Box 5: Civil administrative databases and systems: Definition and differences

### Source:

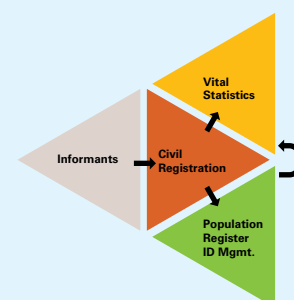
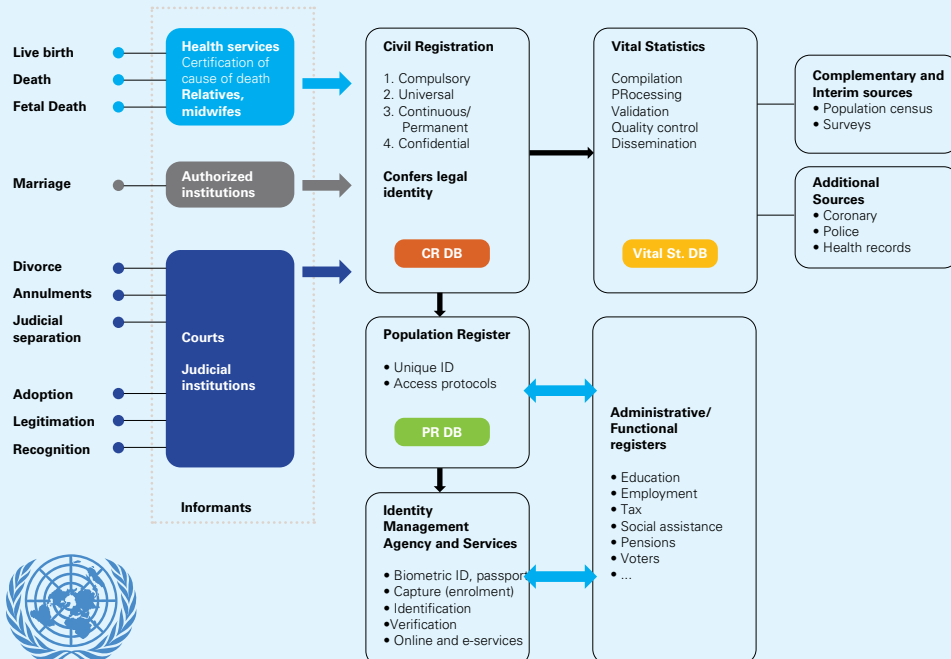
United Nations Legal Identity Agenda

Civil registration is the process of recording vital events, such as births, deaths, marriages, and divorces, by the government authorities. It is typically the responsibility of the civil registration system to capture and maintain accurate and comprehensive records of these events, ensuring legal recognition and establishing identity. Birth registration, in particular, is vital as it confers an individual's legal identity, nationality, and access to basic rights and services throughout life. Without birth registration, individuals may face difficulties in obtaining education, healthcare, employment, and other social protection benefits.

Vital statistics, on the other hand, involve the compilation and analysis of data from civil registration records. This system provides vital demographic information, such as birth rates, death rates, fertility rates, and causes of death. Vital statistics help policymakers, governments, and international organizations understand population trends, plan public services, and develop evidence-based policies. By analyzing vital statistics, governments can identify gaps in social protection services and prioritize areas that require targeted interventions.

Population registers serve as a comprehensive database that maintains individual-level information collected from various sources, including civil registration records and other administrative sources. Population registers provide a longitudinal view of demographic changes, enabling efficient planning of social protection programs and services. They facilitate the identification of vulnerable populations, such as orphans, children without parental care, and elderly individuals, helping to design targeted social welfare initiatives to meet their specific needs.

### Civil Registration, Vital Statistics and Identity Management System



### Simplified flow

This model represents a holistic approach to civil registration, vital statistics and identity management recommended by the United Nations, adapted from the *United Nations Principles and Recommendations for Vital Statistics System, Revision 3*; it can be adjusted to national circumstances and governing structures as necessary.

**Civil registration is also a crucial foundation for access to essential services including social protection.**

In order to benefit from social protection, citizens are often required to show proof of national identification at the point of registering for a social protection scheme. In addition, national ID is also often required by payment services providers (e.g., financial institutions) to make social protection payments to programme participants. For instance, in the BANGGA Papua program that provided child grants to families in remote locations, the payment of cash transfers through a government owned bank necessitated the programme participants to have a valid National identification card and number to meet financial regulations. Hence the civil registration, social protection program registration and bank account registration was completed as part of one comprehensive registration exercise.

**Many countries require national ID of parents for birth registration of their children, which pose barriers for those who do not have access to national ID systems.** For reasons such as distance, infrastructure, standard of local government services, and various

other factors, the most vulnerable are often unable to get national ID for themselves and face difficulties in registering their children's births. In particular, refugees, IDPs, other populations on the move, and those at risk of statelessness are worst affected as they lack necessary documentations, including birth certificates. Even the registration processes for such groups are cumbersome and discriminatory thus widening the gap. The implications can be devastating, where those who are in most need of social protection are inadvertently excluded from the social protection system. In order to avoid such occurrences, the health sector could begin collecting national ID details of parents during routine health services, especially antenatal registration, as this will provide a 4–5-month window for parents to apply for national ID cards if they don't have one. National ID authorities will also get adequate time to follow-up and ensure national ID cards are issued to them before the birth registration of their babies. This will also benefit social protection interventions as parents will be able to provide birth certificates of their children as well as their national IDs rights.

## Box 6: Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) addressing birth registration and social protection

As part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the United Nations has set a global goal to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a universal call to action to address these challenges, and UNICEF is committed to achieving these goals by working with partners and governments to provide assistance to children and their families. Birth registration, social protection and linkages between them are essential for achieving several of the SDGs., including:



**SDG 1:** No Poverty; **SDG 2:** Zero Hunger; **SDG 3:** Good Health and Well-Being; **SDG 4:** Quality Education; **SDG 5:** Gender Equality; **SDG 8:** Decent Work and Economic Growth; **SDG 10:** Reduced Inequalities; **SDG 16:** Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions; **SDG 17:** Partnerships for the Goals





## Section 3:

# How can the social protection system and birth registration system reinforce each other?

**The linkage between civil registration systems and social protection is mutually reinforcing.** Delivery of social protection programs provides opportunities to encourage families to ensure their children's births are officially recorded, leading to improved coverage and accuracy of civil registration systems. Conversely, civil registration systems can help in identifying and reaching the most vulnerable and marginalized populations who are in need of social protection interventions. Civil registration data can help governments target resources and design programs that are tailored to the specific needs and circumstances of individuals and families. These links and synergies can be made by providing information, referrals and improved access to services and programs.

**It is important that these linkages acknowledge the reach and coverage of birth registration and need not impose birth registration as a requirement for children and families access to social protection programs.** In such settings, social protection interventions should be used for screening unregistered children and referring them to civil registration authorities for follow-ups. Such an approach is aligned with a rights approach and avoids further exclusion of the vulnerable populations, who may be deprived of access to both birth registration and social protection.

**Evidence shows that expansion of cash transfer programs for children can help increase birth registration.** Cash transfer programs help to overcome some of the barriers that may prevent families from registering their children's births, such as lack of financial resources and the lack of awareness about the importance of registration, or associated accessibility issues. In Nepal (see case study for further details), high birth registration coverage (77%) is attributed to the

Child Grant Programme's (CGP) success in rolling out its inclusive program and operations across the country, resulting in equity for birth registration rates across families in rural (79%) versus urban areas (76%), for those in the lowest income brackets (80%) versus those that have been identified as more wealthy (74%), as well as coverage for children born to mothers with no education (76%) is at par with that of mothers with the highest education level (77%)<sup>2</sup>.

**Addressing exclusion, specifically for the most vulnerable families, marginalized groups and those furthest left behind, is a core objective for both social protection programs and birth registration initiatives as part of CRVS systems.** Strong civil registration and population registers that are updated maintain a comprehensive repository of persons data and their basic characteristics, such as gender, date of birth and place of residence, ensure that social protection programs and other government services can source and benefit from information that is comprehensive, inclusive and compiled in a standardized approach by the institutional authority with the appropriate legal mandate. The most marginalized groups are the most likely to miss out on access to both social protection and birth registration and an inclusive approach is needed across both systems and how these systems communicate and share data between them to address the multidimensional deprivations to the furthest left behind. In Yemen, both the Social Welfare Fund (SWF) that manages the unconditional transfer and the humanitarian cash transfer for marginalized communities provide referral services for birth registration, but have also coordinated with the Child Protection teams and civil registration offices to arrange mobile teams that will bring the birth registration and certificate process to the community level (see further in the case study).

**Social protection programs can also support birth registration by providing referral and case management which link with participants with services and social and behaviour change communication (SBCC) that supports communities and families.**

This can include campaigns to reinforce the importance of birth registration and support families with information regarding how to access and complete birth registration and certification. The Child Grant Program in Mozambique has included referral to the civil registration office when lack of birth registration is part of the agreed case management plan to address vulnerability and risk factors. Social protection interventions in Yemen that support the most excluded and marginalized communities – the *Muhamasheens* – provides unconditional cash and cash-plus services to the slum communities, including awareness campaigns and key messages on the importance of birth registration through a case management system. Over time, the program's intervention has seen a shift in behaviours with increasing demand for birth or identity registration among beneficiaries families that would like to send children to school and for adolescents that would like to open a bank account to support youth entrepreneurial enterprises.

**Social protection programs can support birth registration by working with local governments and civil registration authorities to streamline registration procedures and reduce costs for families.**

Social protection programs can partner with civil registration authorities, particularly, at the sub-national levels to help improve the reach and access to birth registration in an organic manner. The program can also leverage involving communities and civil society organizations to identify and address the systemic barriers that prevent marginalized and vulnerable groups from registering their children. In the Papua province in Indonesia, the BANGGA Papua child grant program facilitated the civil registration of families that were previously undocumented by national authorities. .

**Birth registration and civil registration can provide a reliable and accurate means of identifying populations for social and economic inclusion, and the delivery of essential public services.**

CRVS systems can support social protection programs to have accurate registration records by providing demographic and eligibility information, such as address, family size and composition, in order to efficiently deliver the appropriate services and benefits required.

**Civil administration services such as births, deaths and marriage registration also provide a legal framework for documenting vital events and capturing key information about individuals and families.**

The capture of vital statistics on CRVS and population registries allow policy makers to track demographic changes over time and provide insight into how the population is evolving in terms of age, gender, marriage rates, geographic distribution and other relevant indicators. Analysis of this data enables governments to study changes in the age structures and growth rates of the population and feed into the design and implementation of effective social protection programs and services. For example, if the analysis of the data on vital statistics – as well as the civil and population registries – reveal an ageing population, social protection stakeholders and policy makers can plan for increased demand for elderly support and healthcare services. Similarly, CRVS and other government administration systems may identify vulnerable citizens that require targeted support, such as single-parent families, child marriages, people with disabilities, or households without formal income.

**Civil registration systems and population registries can also support and strengthen the efficiency and effectiveness of social protection programs by reducing duplication, minimizing errors, and enabling better coordination between different government agencies.**

A common identifier across government administration databases and social protection, such as a foundational ID that establishes uniqueness provides a reliable and comprehensive capability to manage coordination across programs and the sector. With reliable and comprehensive civil registration data, governments can streamline administrative processes, verify eligibility criteria, and ensure that social protection benefits reach the intended beneficiaries in a timely and equitable manner.







## Section 4:

# Summary and recommendations

**Effective and inclusive social protection and civil administration systems can both significantly contribute to increasing birth registration rates and better access to social protection, and linkages and integration between the two systems present a compelling opportunity for mutual reinforcement.**

Synergies between social protection and civil registration systems can overcome challenges in birth registration and support its increase in coverage, as well as address exclusion gaps in social protection. These approaches not only address systemic barriers but also leverage effective and efficient social protection programs to facilitate birth registration. A robust CRVS system forms the national foundation for accurate birth registration and legal identity, enabling governments to effectively plan, deliver services, and protect the rights of children including for social protection.

The following points highlight key strategies for synergies and their potential impacts:

**1. Invest in Strengthening CRVS Systems as a foundation for policies and programs for children, including social protection:** Governments must prioritize the strengthening of CRVS systems where required. A well-functioning CRVS system and associated population registry ensures that every child's birth is registered, providing them with a legal identity and facilitating access to essential services. This foundation is crucial for accurate data collection, policy formulation, and effective service delivery across social protection and beyond. While there is merit to developing social registries to support targeting for social protection programs, it should not substitute the need to integrate with the CRVS or population register as the foundational source for identity of citizens. By recognizing the central role of CRVS systems in upholding legal identity and service provision, governments can strengthen their commitment to safeguarding children's rights.

**2. Enhance programmatic linkages between social protection, birth registration and other relevant services:** Social protection programs can serve as a catalyst for birth registration, particularly in contexts where families face vulnerabilities, poverty and marginalization. Likewise, support to birth registration also provides important entry points to enhance access to social protection. When implementing social protection programs and unregistered children are identified, particularly for vulnerable and marginalized groups, there should be a mechanism where children are referred to civil registration authorities for registration and certification. Similarly, civil registration systems should have a provision for identifying eligible children but not part of social protection interventions. This can be achieved through various design consideration and measures for social services, including social protection and health

- Make birth registration more accessible at health centers, as well as through community outreach for timely registration of births. Awareness-raising activities of social protection interventions can include messages highlighting the importance of registration immediately after birth and its advantages for both sectors.
- Promote making reference to birth registration and certification while supporting enrolment onto the social protection program. In Nepal, the Child Grant Programme has designed their registration and enrolment processes to align with birth certification requirements – thereby ensuring that the social protection program actively encourages caregivers to register their children's births and that children are not excluded from social protection because of lack of birth registration/certification.

- Provide birth registration support as part of ‘cash-plus’ or complementary services that may be delivered as part of awareness campaigns (as per the social protection services in Yemen) or via integrated case management plan that facilitates a referral to the civil registration office as per the Child Grant 0-2 program in Mozambique.

**3. Promote Inclusivity and Accessibility:** In tandem with social transfers, it is imperative to focus on making birth registration services accessible to all, including marginalized and disabled individuals. by streamlining the legal and policy frameworks, simplifying the registration processes, and making systems more inclusive, gender-responsive, and equity-based. Strategies should consider remote populations, marginalized groups, and people with disabilities, ensuring that barriers are dismantled and that every child’s right to birth registration is upheld. A social protection program can also support bridging any accessibility gaps in the short term, by facilitating access for remote groups as per the quasi-Universal Child Grant intervention in the Papua Province of Indonesia, or access for marginalized groups – such as the *Muhashasheens* that were supported by a Humanitarian Cash Transfer in Yemen.

**4. Establish Comprehensive Data Sharing while Protecting Privacy:** Building bridges between CRVS and social protection systems calls for comprehensive data sharing mechanisms, within the overarching, cross-sectoral data framework. While countries may have different starting points and approaches to reach data sharing mechanisms incrementally, governments could for example focus on interoperability to facilitate automatic enrollment of eligible children into social protection programs upon birth registration as well as exiting upon death registration, further reinforcing the dual benefits of these initiatives. Develop and adopt common data standards and protocols that ensure compatibility and seamless data exchange between civil administration systems, population registries, and social protection programs, while protecting privacy.

This includes

- Standardized formats for data collection, storage, and sharing to facilitate interoperability.
- Formal data sharing agreements between relevant government agencies responsible for civil administration, population registries, and social protection programs. These agreements should outline the purposes, scope, and mechanisms for data sharing, while also ensuring compliance with data protection laws and regulations.
- Leverage any standards-based design and interoperability initiatives, such as the Digital Convergence Initiative.<sup>3</sup>

**5. Invest in digital technologies and infrastructure:**

Harness digital solutions that are robust, secure and scalable to support interoperability, including the following approaches.

- Assess and enhance data storage capacities, improving data security measures, and implementing appropriate data governance frameworks to protect privacy and ensure data integrity.
- Initiate pilot projects to test and refine interoperability solutions at a smaller scale before scaling up to a national level. These pilots can help identify challenges, assess the feasibility of interoperability solutions, and generate best practices for broader implementation.
- Employ modern integration approaches for data sharing where possible, such as application programming interfaces (APIs) and web services, to facilitate real-time data exchange and interoperability between systems.
- Promote the use of unique identification systems, such as national identification numbers or unique identifiers linked to birth registration records, to facilitate data matching and integration across different systems. This allows for accurate and efficient identification of individuals across the civil administration and social protection sectors.

3 See <https://spdc.org/>

**6. Foster Interagency Collaboration:** Encourage collaboration and coordination among relevant government agencies, including civil registration authorities, social protection agencies, and other stakeholders. Facilitate regular communication, joint planning, and knowledge sharing to ensure alignment of strategies and interoperability efforts.

- **Infrastructure and Access:** In some regions, inadequate infrastructure and limited access to technology may hinder the integration efforts. Addressing these disparities is essential to ensure equitable benefits for all citizens.
- **Policy Alignment:** Harmonizing policies and legal frameworks between civil registration and social protection agencies is necessary to facilitate seamless data sharing and collaboration.

**7. Invest in Capacity Building:** Provide training and capacity building initiatives to enhance the technical skills and knowledge of personnel responsible for

managing civil administration systems, population registries, and social protection programs. This includes training on data management, data integration techniques, and interoperability standards.

**8. Monitor and Evaluate Interoperability:** Establish mechanisms to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of interoperability initiatives. Regularly assess the impact of interoperability on birth registration coverage, social protection program reach, data quality, and service delivery to identify areas for improvement and make evidence-based adjustments.

**9. Share Best Practices and Lessons Learned:** Foster knowledge sharing and collaboration among countries and stakeholders to share best practices, lessons learned, and success stories in developing interoperable systems for birth registration and social protection. Engage in regional and international forums to exchange experiences and promote cross-learning.





## Box 7: Case study. Increasing birth registration rates in Mozambique – civil registration and social protection systems supporting and enabling each other

### Source:

UNICEF. 2022. 24-MONTH IMPACT EVALUATION OF THE CHILD GRANT 0-2 COMPONENT IN THE NAMPULA PROVINCE IN MOZAMBIQUE 2019-2021. UNICEF Mozambique



UNICEF has been working with the Government of Mozambique since 2008 on strengthening civil registration systems and birth registration processes. Significant advancement of these national systems has been realized, particularly since 2016, through the digitization of birth registration records and interoperability with the health sector to enable increased accessibility to birth registration services. This includes the introduction of 143 new posts in health facilities across the country to support families with registration after giving birth.

The Child Grant 0-2 Program is a social protection intervention that provides unconditional cash transfers to primary caregivers of children, combined with case management services for risk protection and social behavioral change communications (SBCC). The innovative model of linking cash transfers with case management and SBCC – known as ‘cash plus care’ – is implemented by the National Institute for Social Action (INAS) as part of the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Action (MGCSA) with the overall objective to reducing poverty and social vulnerability, improving child well-being, and promoting access to basic social services. The Child Grant 0-2 Program is viewed as one of the key entry and facilitation points for birth registration services through the following approaches:

The case management service has incorporated Birth Registration as a core component of the Case Action Plan provided to families considered vulnerable to common protection risks. The case management system is facilitated by a social worker and refers all family members that require birth registration services – not just the child aged between 0 and 2 – and waives any applicable fees.



## Box 8: Case study. Social protection in a fragile context: supporting birth registration for vulnerable households and marginalised communities in Yemen

### Source:

UNICEF. 2023. Case study: Towards establishing a national nutrition responsive social protection system using an integrated approach in the context of a crises. UNICEF Yemen



Yemen remains one of the largest humanitarian crises in the world with its citizens still struggling against conflict, largescale displacement and increasing poverty rates.

The social protection system in Yemen is sustained by a comprehensive set of government-led programmes, including the Social Welfare Fund (SWF) and the Social Fund for Development (SFD), among others. The SWF represented the “national safety net” for Yemen reaching over 1.5 million households, but the social protection systems were not sustainable and on the verge of collapse as the country became embroiled in conflict in 2014.

From 2015, UNICEF has looked to leverage and build on the existing SWF systems and structures to support the Government of Yemen reinstate social protection services, including the following initiatives:

1. An **Unconditional Cash Transfer (UCT)** for the most vulnerable families across the country with nearly 1.5 million households receiving benefits. The UCT program is also complemented by a set of 'cash-plus' services – carried out by UNICEF together with government partners – to disseminate key information and messages, provide household level case management and facilitate referrals to health, nutrition, education and civil registration services. The 'cash-plus' components are being rolled out to selected districts across governorates for each payment cycle.
2. The **Integrated Model for Social and Economic Assistance (IMSEA)** is a multi-sectoral government program targeting the most marginalized minority group in Yemen: the Muhamasheens. The IMSEA is managed by UNICEF in collaboration with various government and non-governmental organisations to deliver humanitarian cash transfers supported by 'cash-plus' social care services and behavioural change.

With UNICEF playing a pivotal management and coordination role, birth registration and certification have become a key operational priority across both social protection programs. However, the approaches to facilitate birth registration have evolved to suit the different beneficiary profiles and conditions evident on each program.

The program has witnessed the gradual change of behaviours with an increasing number of families traveling to civil registration offices to register births and other life or death events. The barriers to birth registration for UCT beneficiaries include a lack of awareness of civil registration services, including where and how to register. UCT beneficiaries may also be geographically dispersed and may be required to travel long distances and incur considerable expense to present themselves at a civil registration office. Information campaigns have been employed to notify the community of upcoming payment locations, whereby information about birth registration requirements may also be shared, but these have been less effective in reaching the dispersed communities. As a result, UNICEF on occasion have coordinated with civil registration authorities for mobile civil registration teams to accompany the case management teams to facilitate birth registration at the community level.

Conversely, the marginalized communities of Muhamasheens are concentrated as part of dense slums with up to a 1,000 family within a slum community and are easier to reach. Many of the children in these communities do not go to school, but are more likely engaged in child labor or begging on the streets. They are often subjected to social and racial discrimination and have therefore refrained from accessing various public services, including schools. Nonetheless, key messages – as part of the social behavioural change communications – on the importance of schooling and the resultant need for birth certificates are starting to result in behaviour change.. Furthermore, livelihood and enterprise training and support provided to adolescents and youths have prompted them to request for birth and civil registration so that they may open bank accounts. As with the UCT, mobile teams from the civil registration office can be arranged to visit the community to facilitate the birth registration process, but the process is considered more effective and impactful given that all the vulnerable families needing support live in close proximity to each other.

## Box 9: Case study. The Nepal Child Grant promotes birth registration and furthering the investment, strengthening and digitization of civil registration and identity management systems.

### Source:

UNICEF. 2020. "Early Impact Evaluation and Evaluability Assessment of Nepal's Child Grant Programme (2009-2019)." UNICEF Nepal Country Office, Nepal.

UNFPA, UNICEF and WHO. 2023 Forthcoming. "Aligning Partner Support with the Government of Nepal to Strengthen Civil Registration and Vital Statistics and Geographic Information Systems," SDG3 GAP Data and Digital Accelerator and the Health Data Collaborative.

VARG and UNICEF. Cross-sectional survey on reduction of child malnutrition through social protection in the Karnali Zone. (Kathmandu: UNICEF Nepal, 2014).

Nepal's Child Grant Programme (CGP) is a child benefit program under the mandate of the Ministry of Home Affairs (MOHA) addressing malnutrition for all children under five.

Nepal is perhaps the only developing country where the birth registration coverage in rural areas (79%) is higher than in urban areas (76%), coverage in the poorest quintile (80%) is more than the richest quintile (74%), and coverage for children born to mothers with no education (76%) is at par with than that of mothers with the highest education level (77%).

To register for the CGP, the mother or primary caregiver must present an original and copy of the child's birth certificate. The registration and enrolment processes for the CGP at the community level are largely following paper based processes with beneficiary data only digitized at the central level where a centralized Management Information System (MIS), also known as the SSA (Social Security Allowances) Beneficiary Database is in place to support monitoring beneficiary uptake and service delivery.



The positive impacts of the CGP on birth registration coverage and the need to sustain the operations of the program have been a key driver to gradually expand the SSA Beneficiary Database – managed by MoHA – to facilitate registration and enrolment of beneficiaries across districts and provide real-time information of the beneficiary information. This has also encouraged and prompted the Government of Nepal – in partnership with the World Bank – to establish systematic interoperability and strengthening of civil registration systems, including the digitization of the birth registration and national identity management systems. The rollout of these systems has demonstrated the benefits of interoperability and automation for the social protection program to deliver a more efficient and effective registration process and reduced exclusion by automatically registering the child for the CGP when the birth is registered.



## Box 10: Case study. Social protection facilitating civil registration for remote communities previously invisible to national programs and systems in Indonesia

### Source:

UNICEF (2017). *Children in Indonesia: An analysis of poverty, mobility and multidimensional deprivation*. Jakarta: UNICEF  
 Huda, K., Carrera, F., Salame, H. S., Tarigan, A., Farooq, S. (2020). *An Inclusive Child Grant in Papua: Lessons Learnt from Implementing Cash Transfers in Remote Contexts*, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Australia  
 Huda, K., Farooq, S., Lang, H. (2021). *More than just cash: an innovative child grant in Papua province*, Development Pathways Blog, March 03, 2021

Papua is the eastern-most province of Indonesia with many ethnic groups still living in remote locations divided by mountains, jungles and rivers, thus making access to good infrastructure and basic services through Papua's geographic terrain very challenging. It is in this remote context that Papua experiences the highest poverty and inequality rates in the country with children particularly vulnerable. Papua's children experience lower education and nutritional attainment than the national average with over 35 percent living below the national poverty line and 59 percent living below twice the poverty line.<sup>4</sup>



National social protection programs in Indonesia lack sufficient coverage and contend with implementation challenges that constrain it from reaching the vulnerable and remote communities across the Papua province. The Provincial Government of Papua (PGP) responded to this challenge by establishing – with technical support from the Australian Government and UNICEF – the BANGGA Papua program: an inclusive child grant for all indigenous Papuan children from birth until the age of four. The PGP piloted and implemented the program in the poorest and most difficult to reach districts first, in order to garner important lessons to later scale the program. The communities that would benefit from the program had previously not been supported by national programs, nor had they experienced civil registration or identification documents.

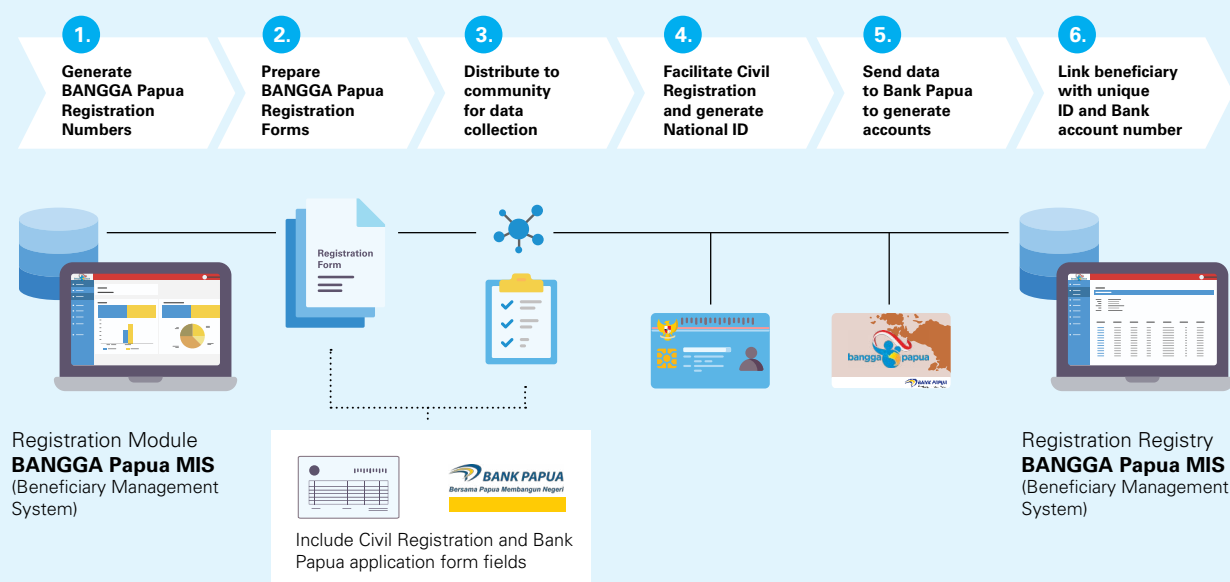
The implementation of the program hit an initial roadblock. A local state-owned payment service provider, Bank Papua, was selected to facilitate payments through individual bank accounts that would be set up for program recipients of the child grant. However, the Financial Services Authority and Central Bank of Indonesia ruled that no exception could be made and all BANGGA Papua recipients would require National Identification Numbers (NIKs) if they were to have a bank account set up for them. Neither civil registration infrastructure, nor Bank Papua operations existed in these remote communities. The PGP, however, innovatively converted this obstacle into an opportunity for Papuan citizens who have previously been invisible to national programs and civil registration systems.

4 UNICEF (2017). *Children in Indonesia: An analysis of poverty, mobility and multidimensional deprivation*. Jakarta: UNICEF



Conscious of the cost and time it takes to visit these communities, the BANGGA Papua program facilitated a “3 in 1” registration form that collected the required data from prospective beneficiaries in order to process civil registration, bank account opening and also program enrolment. Once the data was collected and reviewed by the BANGGA Papua Beneficiary Management System, it was leveraged by the CRVS system to issue national identification numbers and cards. The beneficiary data along with the national IDs were then used by Bank Papua to open new bank accounts.

**Figure 1: BANGGA Papua registration process**



The civil registration of these communities previously untouched by national programs and administrative systems made national headlines. The social protection program registration form and solution became an *opportunity* to increase financial inclusion and civil registration. This synergized approach led to the issuance of National ID to all program beneficiaries and the ensuing attainment of birth certificates for their registered children.

While the initial objective was to provide much needed income support to remote and vulnerable communities, the program became the vehicle for indigenous Papuans to obtain legal identity documents which would facilitate their access to broader state services. More importantly, the absence of a national identity didn't become the obstacle that stopped the program in its tracks, but actually stimulated the demand for civil registration and birth registration services.





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