



## BRAZIL CASE STUDY REPORT

# Evaluation of UNICEF Work in Strengthening Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems





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## Brazil Case Study Report. Evaluation of the UNICEF Work in Strengthening Civil Registration and Vital Statistics

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This report, 'Brazil Case Study Report. Evaluation of the UNICEF Work in Strengthening Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems' was prepared by Zoran Dokovic. Eduard Bonet Porqueras, Evaluation Specialist at the Evaluation Office, managed the overall evaluation with support from Beth Ann Plowman, Senior Evaluation Specialist at the Evaluation Office. Edward Isaac Freeman provided technical advice and guidance as external expert.

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## LIST OF ACRONYMS

<b>ARPEN</b>	National Associations of Civil Registrars of Natural Persons (Associação dos Registradores de Pessoas Naturais)
<b>CGN</b>	National Steering Committee of the Birth Registration and Basic Documentation (Comitê Nacional de Mobilização para o Registro Civil de Nascimento)
<b>COVID-19</b>	Coronavirus disease 2019
<b>CRC</b>	National Civil Records Information Centre (Central de Informações de Registros Cíveis Nacional)
<b>CRVS</b>	Civil Registration and Vital Statistics
<b>IBGE</b>	The Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística)
<b>ICT</b>	Information and Communication Technology
<b>MERCOSUR</b>	Mercado Común del Sur (Southern Common Market)
<b>SIRC</b>	National System of Civil Registry Information (Sistema Nacional de Informações de Registro Civil)



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Brazil is a country of continental dimensions (8.5 million km<sup>2</sup>), with many parts of the country geographically isolated, especially in the Amazon River basin (northern Brazil) and in the northeastern part of the country. Politically, the country is a federation of 27 states, and the socio-economic indicators in the northern and northeastern areas are considerably below the national average, reflecting the social disparities and exclusion that these regions face.

Since 2000, the Government of Brazil has made a significant effort, with UNICEF support, to increase birth registration rates. These efforts have resulted in registration rates approaching near-universal coverage. However, progress has not been even across the country; by 2014, while the rates of unregistered children had been significantly lowered across the country, they were still considerably higher in the North and Northeast.

Supporting the Government of Brazil to design the policies aimed at achieving universal birth registration, UNICEF has contributed to efforts to translate national policies to the levels of

local government. This approach targeted the remaining unregistered, mostly economically disadvantaged and indigenous populations in remote rural and border areas. The approach required designing interventions that considered the local circumstances as well as cultural and traditional aspects of the interaction of marginalized populations with mainstream society. The design and implementation of the UNICEF-administered Municipal Seal programme in 294 municipalities in the targeted regions created a sense of urgency and helped to increase the commitment by municipal authorities to closing the gap of unregistered births. To achieve this, it



became important to strengthen partnerships with religious leaders and communities in the targeted areas and communities and to generate a relevant message framing the importance of birth registration in a narrative better suited to reaching the targeted population. Since reaching this population required approaching, identifying and referring individuals in border regions, UNICEF actively promoted cross-state cooperation in partnership with the regional organization Mercado Común del Sur (MERCOSUR), gathering South American states in the Amazon region in a joint effort.

After many years of supporting the mainstreaming of civil registration services into health facilities and maternity wards, UNICEF completed its programme aimed at supporting national authorities to expand the network of digitally-interconnected maternity wards and local notary offices responsible for civil

registration. The notary offices are also integrated in a nationwide interoperable and digitized network of notary-operated civil registration databases. The system enables expedited sharing of registered information within the network and expanding opportunities for sharing and verification of vital events data by other government systems.

UNICEF programming in support of efforts aimed at reducing the rates of unregistered births was closely aligned with national priorities and was implemented in the parts of the country with the highest rates of unregistered births. After working for almost a decade to strengthen the civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) system in Brazil, UNICEF has since 2014 been selective using ongoing programmes to maximize results and leverage other thematic areas to reduce rates of unregistered births.



# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background

At the turn of the twenty-first century, the issue of birth registration was not a focus for the Government of Brazil and was seen primarily as a relationship between individuals and civil registration officials. Under the law, civil registration is the responsibility of notary offices (“civil registration offices of natural persons”). These offices operate as private entities and, although they are supervised by the judiciary, they have administrative and financial autonomy. As privately run entities, they were clearly not designed to cover all parts of the population equally. As such, there were no alternatives for including population groups living in remote areas. Private civil registration offices were also not sensitive to the specificities of vital events registration arising from ethnic and cultural diversity. The work of notaries was lacking a uniform and standardized approach to registering vital events, as these standards had not been adopted at national level. There was no communication system between individual notaries or with the health facilities where most births occur. Neither was there a national database of registered persons or interoperability between the information systems that processed civil registry data.

For many years, Brazil experienced a high number of unregistered births. This high number was associated with several factors, such as poverty, social exclusion, distance between the place of birth and the registry office, as well

as the costs incurred to register. From 2000, birth registration gained importance, with the Government becoming increasingly aware of how access to registered vital events and identity data in digital format could be used to increase the efficiency of the overall governance system. This resulted in a multiyear project aimed at the digitization of vital events registration services, which also contributed to a steady increase in overall birth registration rates. Over time, it also revealed that the same level of effort does not produce equal results in all parts of the country. Economically disadvantaged regions, populated by scattered rural indigenous populations, would require a tailored approach. It further showed that reaching marginalized populations in less developed areas would require a degree of innovation in identifying and referring individual cases for registration.

## 1.2 Methodology

This report was produced using information obtained from an in-depth desk review and it was complemented with the information obtained from key informant interviews. The selection of Brazil as a case study for the evaluation was done according to several criteria explained in the evaluation report.<sup>1</sup> The evaluation methodology used for this country case study is based on theory-based contribution analysis and is used to elaborate on the relative influence/contribution of the UNICEF Country Office to a known, discernible change or result.

<sup>1</sup> See the report here: <https://www.unicef.org/evaluation/reports#/detail/16474/evaluation-of-unicef-work-in-strengthening-civil-registration-and-vital-statistics-systems>

For this evaluation, those known, discernible changes are based primarily on the access, inclusion and coverage of birth registration as officially established over an observed period of time, from 2014 to 2020 (pre-COVID-19). While the analysis is based on these years, elements from before 2014 have been included whenever it has been appropriate to bring a historic context and perspective to the main developments during the observed time period. Progress in rates of registration of other vital events is also considered.

The analysis aims to provide detailed information on the actions of UNICEF, the government and other partners in order to adequately tell the 'contribution story'. To that end the analysis is centred on

elaborating the CRVS-strengthening logic of intervention of the national stakeholders as well as that of UNICEF in Brazil. The methodology focuses further on the analysis, which aims to verify the steps and assumptions in the logic of intervention, their realization in practice, and other major factors contributing to the results. This way, the analysis provides a granular view of what works specifically related to the strengthening of the CRVS systems. Based on observed results, this report focuses on why and how the result was achieved, whether UNICEF-supported efforts influenced or made an important contribution to the observed result, and what role that intervention played vis-à-vis those of other actors.





# 2 COUNTRY CONTEXT ON CIVIL REGISTRATION AND VITAL STATISTICS

## 2.1 Country context

The Federative Republic of Brazil is the largest country in South America and the world's fifth-largest country by area, as well as the sixth most populous. The federation is composed of the union of the 26 states and the Federal District. Bounded by the Atlantic Ocean on the east, Brazil has a coastline of 7,491 kilometres. It borders all other countries in South America except Ecuador and Chile and covers 47.3 per cent of the continent's land area.

**Capital city:** Brasília

**Official working language:** Portuguese

**Territorial size:** 8,515,767 km<sup>2</sup>

**Total population:** 210,147,125

**Ministry responsible for civil registration:**

Ministry of Justice and Public Security

[www.justica.gov.br/](http://www.justica.gov.br/)

**Civil registration agency:** Public Notaries

[www.arpenbrasil.org.br](http://www.arpenbrasil.org.br)

**National statistical office:** The Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE)

[www.ibge.gov.br](http://www.ibge.gov.br)




**Figure 1: Key vital statistics indicators**

Births	
Percentage of children under age 5 whose births are registered	96.4% (2015) <sup>2</sup>
Births attended by skilled health personnel	99% (2015) <sup>3</sup>
Crude birth rate (per 1,000 population)	14 (2018) <sup>4</sup>
Total fertility rate (live births per woman)	1.7 (2018) <sup>5</sup>
Adolescent fertility rate (per 1,000 girls aged 15-19 years)	58 (2018) <sup>6</sup>
Deaths	
Completeness of death registration	99% (2016) <sup>7</sup>
Crude death rate (per 1,000 population)	6 (2018) <sup>8</sup>
Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 live births)	12 (2019) <sup>9</sup>
Under-five mortality rate (per 1,000 live births)	14 (2019) <sup>10</sup>
Maternal mortality ratio (per 100,000 live births)	60 (2017) <sup>11</sup>

Prior to the 1990s, the Government used indirect demographic methods, such as information obtained from census data and demographic and household sample surveys, to assess the number of unregistered births. In the late 1990s, however, with the gradual improvement of registration rates, the Government introduced a different approach: the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) began comparing a historical series of birth records

captured by the civil registry statistics survey against the total number of notifications of births occurred, as recorded by the live birth information system of the Ministry of Health. The first such pairing of the two birth databases, conducted in 2015, showed that 98.3 per cent of notified births in the Ministry of Health system were also registered in the civil registry of natural persons, and that 96.9 per cent of all births had been notified.

<sup>2</sup> UNICEF, 'Brazil Key Demographic Indicators', <<https://data.unicef.org/country/bra/>>, accessed 25 February 2021.

<sup>3</sup> World Bank, 'Births Attended by Skilled Health Staff (% of total), Brazil', <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SH.STA.BRTC.ZS?locations=BR>, accessed 25 February 2021.

<sup>4</sup> World Bank, 'Birth Rate, Crude (per 1,000 people), Brazil', <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.DYN.CBRT.IN?locations=BR>, accessed 25 February 2021.

<sup>5</sup> World Bank, 'Fertility Rate, Total (births per woman), Brazil', <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.DYN.TFRT.IN?locations=BR>, accessed 25 February 2021.

<sup>6</sup> World Bank, 'Adolescent Fertility Rate (births per 1,000 women ages 15-19), Brazil', <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.ADO.TFRT?locations=BR>, accessed 25 February 2021.

<sup>7</sup> World Bank, 'Completeness of Death Registration with Cause-of-Death Information (%), Brazil', <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.REG.DTHS.ZS?end=2016&locations=BR&start=1992>, accessed 25 February 2021.

<sup>8</sup> World Bank, 'Death Rate, Crude (per 1,000 people), Brazil', <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.DYN.CDRT.IN?locations=BR>, accessed 31 January 2021.

<sup>9</sup> UNICEF, 'Brazil Key Demographic Indicators', <<https://data.unicef.org/country/bra/>>, accessed 25 February 2021.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

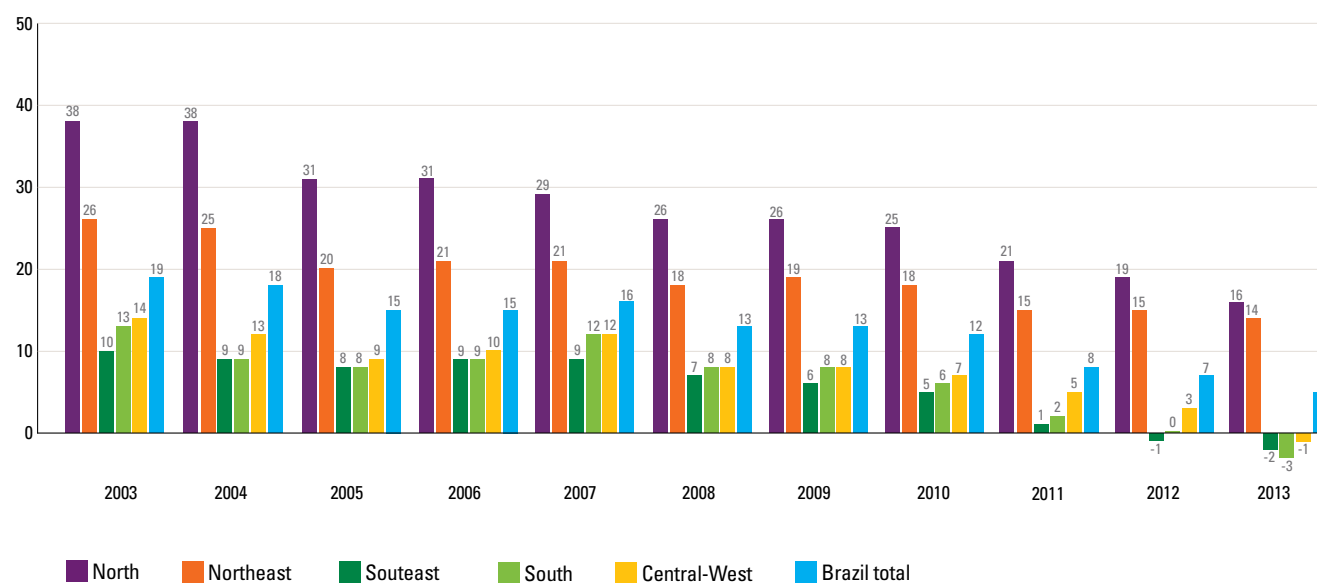
<sup>11</sup> Ibid.



From 2003–2013, the number of children not registered in the civil registry of natural persons within a year from birth fell from 18.8 per cent

in 2003 to 5.1 per cent in 2013, according to the 2014 IBGE civil registry statistics report.

Figure 2: Rate of unregistered births, 2003 -2013, by region<sup>12</sup>



Source: Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics

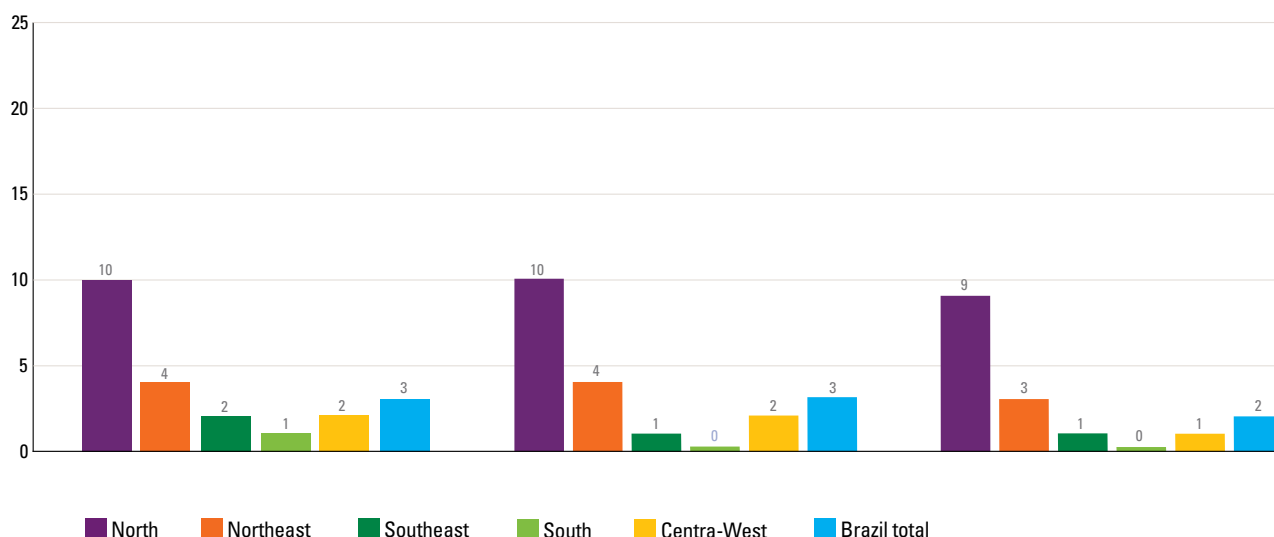
After completing a major assessment of the number of unregistered births in 2015, IBGE continued monitoring the progress of closing the gap of registered births, and publishes on annual basis the rates and volume of unregistered births. As estimated by IBGE, the overall number of registered births dropped from 5.1 per cent in 2013 to 2.4 per cent in 2019. As Figure 2 shows, the reduction of unregistered births continued from 2006 until 2019, but with varying success depending on the geographical areas. In the South, Southeast and Central-West regions, birth registration rates approached universal coverage, while the number of unregistered births steadily dropped. In the Northeast and North regions, the

lack of birth registration remains an issue. While the statistics show a small but steady reduction in unregistered births, as of 2019, 8.6 per cent of new-borns in the North region and 3.2 per cent in the Northeast region remain unregistered. Though IBGE statistics are not disaggregated along urban/rural lines, these regions are the least densely populated, suggesting that reaching all populations in rural and remote areas remains a persistent challenge. Moreover, the majority of households in these regions are categorized as lower middle-income households. This hints to a likely correlation between income level and the number of unregistered births.

<sup>12</sup> Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics, 'Civil Registry Statistics, 2003-2013 and Population Projection by Sex and Age for the Period 2000-2030', IBGE, Brasilia, 2013.



**Figure 3:** Rate of unregistered births, 2016 -2019, by region



Source: Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics

## 2.2 Intervention logic behind efforts to strengthen the CRVS system

This report focuses primarily on activities implemented in the period 2014–2020. However, in order to better understand activities over this period of time, it is important to underline significant interventions made prior to this period, starting from 2000. These interventions resulted in a major improvement in the way the national CRVS system operates, and are important elements in gaining an understanding of the context in which interventions during the observed time period took place.

Beginning in 2005, national authorities became increasingly aware of the importance of birth registration certificates in acquiring other valid identification documents. The problem of identity fraud was becoming increasingly difficult to address without being able to verify claimed identity in the registration records. Also, large numbers of births were never registered, which meant that a significant proportion of the population was ‘invisible’ to the administration

and might have been cut off from state services and the formal economic sector.

Legal reforms, including national legislation guaranteeing the right to birth registration free of charge, were enacted in 1997. In 2002, the Ministry of Health began providing a financial incentive to all maternity hospitals that kept an advanced birth registration post on their premises, allowing new parents to start the registration process before returning home. In 2002, the Ministry of Health issued a resolution which specified that R\$ 5 (\$1.72 USD at the 2000 exchange rate) be allocated to the hospital for each child registered by the maternity ward. The conditions of this monetary incentive included the hospital’s obligation to prove that the child received his/her birth certificate prior to being discharged from the facility.

In addition, norms were established for the empowerment of hospitals participating in the baby-friendly hospital initiative, which are regulated in directives SAS / MS no. 756 of 16 December 2004 and no. 09 of 10 January 2008. According to these ordinances, one of the criteria for the certification of a Baby-Friendly Hospital,



is to ensure that at least 70 per cent of newborns leaving the hospital are registered in the civil birth register, as evidenced by the hospital information system.

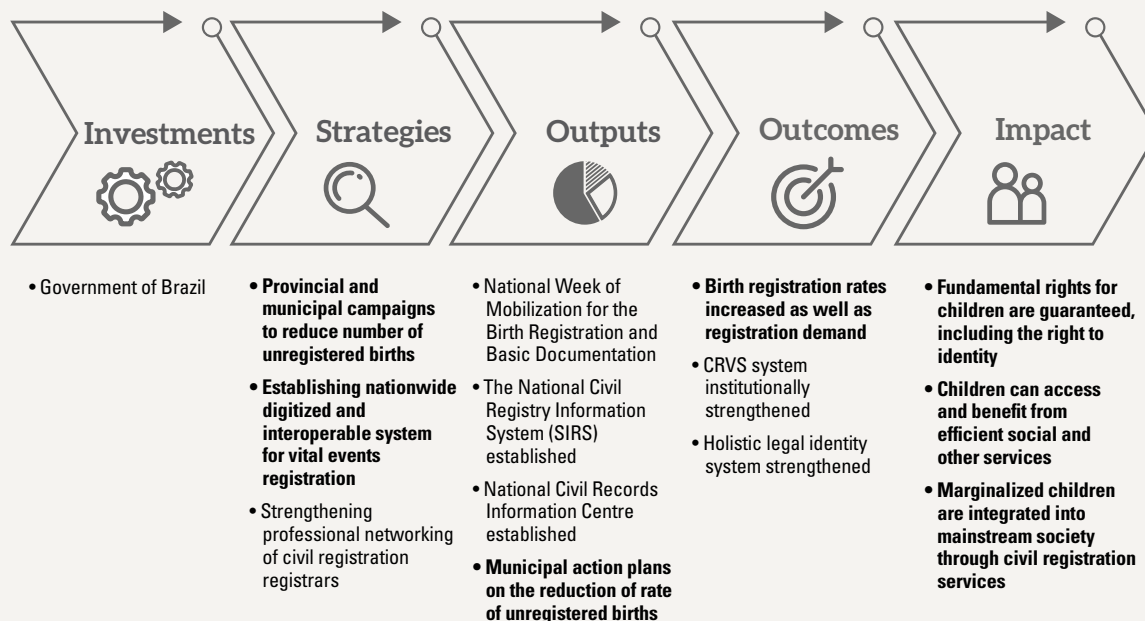
The following year, the Brazil Human Rights Secretariat began partnering with civil society to raise awareness of the issue. The first National Birth Registration Mobilization Day was instituted, a campaign that became permanent and marked the beginning of a national movement. In 2007, a national policy was established to promote collaboration between civil registration authorities and the health sector, and a long-term budget was allocated. Subsequently, civil registration services in public hospitals went online, with information fed into a national database.

In 2007, the Special Secretariat for Human Rights established priorities for the strengthening of the civil

registration system. These priorities were focused on three axes of implementation: mobilization, expansion of the service network and structural conditions. With Decree No. 6,289 of 6 December 2007, the National Steering Committee for Birth Registration and Basic Documentation (CGN) was constituted. Under the aegis of the CGN, the sub-committee on structuring conditions was created to carry out medium- and long-term structuring actions, strengthening the national civil registration system with legislative improvement and information flows.

Work by the CGN has defined most of the interventions undertaken by the Government over the observed time period. From this work, an intervention logic can be constructed as described in Figure 4. Elements of the intervention logic marked in blue colour reflect areas where UNICEF was most active in supporting the strengthening of Brazil's CRVS system.

**Figure 4:** Elements of the intervention logic behind Brazil's efforts to strengthen the CRVS system



\* The intervention logic for UNICEF CO mirrors that of the government in many ways. As such, UNICEF's areas of intervention are highlighted in **bold** above and reflect the investments, strategies, outputs, outcomes, and impacts pursued through UNICEF's interventions



## 2.3 Mapping of strategies used by the Government to strengthen the CRVS

### Provincial and municipal campaigns to reduce the number of unregistered births

In the late 1990s, a number of campaigns were initiated by the Government and operationalized at the provincial and municipal levels to reduce the number of unregistered births. A key element of this strategy was removing fees for birth registration, a provision which came into force in 1997 as defined by Article 30 of The Law No. 9,534, of 10.12.1997).

Promoting universal birth registration was officially introduced as public policy in January 2003, with the adoption of the “Zero Hunger” programme. The Secretariat of Human Rights of the Presidency of the Republic coordinated the development and the implementation of the strategy to ensure civil registration for all, focusing specifically on birth registration. The National Plan for the Civil Registration of Birth was launched in May 2004, and since then it has been used to guide the national movement, with shared management and based on partnerships.

The main governmental and civil society actors involved in the conceptualization and implementation of strategies aimed at promoting birth registration were elaborated in a decree instituting the “National Commitment for the Eradication of Under-registration of Births and Expansion of Access to Basic Documentation”, and which instituted the National Week of Mobilization for the Civil Birth Registry and Basic Documentation (Dec no. 6,289/2007). With the Decree No. 10,063, of 14 October 2019, revoking the decree from 2007, the Government reiterated the national commitment for the eradication of unregistration and reinstated the national week as well as the mandate of the CNG.

The key policies aimed at reducing unregistered births are:

- Undertaking mobilization actions for birth registration,
- Raising awareness on the procedures for birth registration,
- Further expansion of the network of civil birth registration services and basic civil documentation to reach national coverage,
- Strengthening of the Brazilian system for birth registration, to guarantee universalization, computerization, standardization and security, and
- Expanding free access to birth registration.

The Ministry of Women, Family and Human Rights coordinates the work of the national steering committee of the National Commitment for the Eradication of Under-registration of Births and Expansion of Access to Basic Documentation. The steering committee also comprises the ministries of: Justice and Public Security; Economy; Agriculture, Livestock and Supply; Citizenship; Health; and the Environment.

### Establishing a nationwide digitized and interoperable system for vital events registration

A decade ago, the CRVS system in Brazil was largely fragmented, with very little communication and coordination among registration offices across the country. There was a general lack of standardization in the design of civil registration records, including the way they were archived. The design of the civil registration system required that for each person there was only a single master registration record at the location where the birth was originally registered. All other vital events (i.e. marriage, divorce, death,) if registered in a different location, had to be communicated and reflected in the master personal registration record. Given the size of the country, for quite a proportion of the population this stood as a significant problem, as they personally had to make sure that any new event was reflected in the master personal



registration record. Furthermore, every so often public authorities would request to verify vital events records in order to grant access to one of a range of services. In such cases, the burden of obtaining the evidence remained with the citizens, who in many cases had to make long trips to the location where their master record was located. Finally, the business model of the registration offices relied upon the revenues from fees charged to obtain copies of registration certificates. As a result, remote and hard-to-reach offices remained underdeveloped due to lack of revenue.

Leveraging the advances in information and communication technology (ICT), the Government developed a strategy for digitizing and interconnecting civil registration systems in each civil registration office. The Government concluded that such a strategy served the public interest and would generate significant savings, both for citizens and for public administration, and make the registration process far less bureaucratic and more efficient. With this goal in mind, the Government decided to establish the national system of civil registry information (SIRC) and its steering committee, through Decree No. 8,270 of 26 June 2014.

The purpose of the SIRC, which by 2019 had become fully operational, is to capture, process, archive and make available data related to records of birth, marriage, death and stillbirth, produced by public notaries acting as civil registration offices of natural persons. The SIRC was envisaged as a digital platform that compiles all civil registration information in a single environment. Article 2, Decree 8,270 defines the main purposes of the SIRC as:

- To promote the improvement of the exchange of data between civil registration offices of natural persons and the public authorities,
- To promote interoperability between the systems of civil registration offices and government registers, and
- To standardize the procedures for sending the records from civil registration offices to the federal executive branch.

## Strengthening professional networking of civil registration registrars

Where the goal of the SIRC is to provide an ICT platform for interconnection between civil registration offices and interoperability with other public administration stakeholders, coordination of the data-sharing process remained with civil registration registrars. With civil registration offices being self-sustaining and operating as entities independent from central authority, the coordination aspect of the data-sharing was resolved through the creation and strengthening of a national professional association of civil registration registrars (ARPEN). ARPEN operates the national civil records information centre (CRC) built on top of the SIRC platform. It is used by the individual civil registration offices and other public authorities to communicate and/or verify vital events data.

## Investments and coordination among government actors

Digitization of the civil registration process was a subject of discussion well before the process was actually initiated in 2014 with the SIRC decree. It involved multiple actors from different organs of the federal Government and ARPEN. The passing of the decree formalized a broad national coordination mechanism with the goal of coordinating the digitization, establishing the SIRC and ensuring interoperability between the SIRC and other public administration actors.

As result, a steering committee was created composed of representatives of 11 ministries, secretariats and institutes, including the Ministry of Social Security, the Secretariat for Human Rights of the Presidency of the Republic, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Social Development and Combatting Hunger, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Planning, Budget and Management, the National Institute of Social Security, and the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics.

The purpose of the steering committee is to ensure that the interoperable digitized system would allow participants to verify vital events information at the source where they were registered. Upon authorization from the steering committee, other government entities and municipalities may request access to the information available in the SIRC.

Steering committee members also bear the costs of the establishment and operation of the

SIRC system. As of 2020, total investments in the establishment of the system were estimated at 28 million Brazilian real:

**2008-2011:** system development:

1 million Brazilian real /year

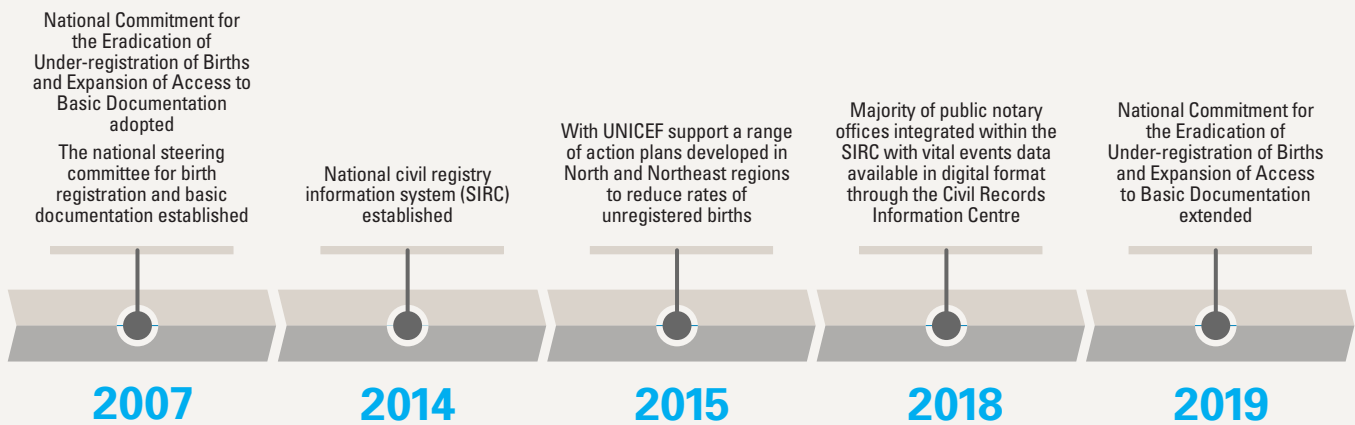
**2012-2015:** development and maintenance:

4 million Brazilian real /year

**2016-2019:** development and maintenance:

3 million Brazilian real /year

**Figure 5: Key milestones**



## 2.4 Mapping of planned and attained outputs

### Regional and municipal campaigns to clear backlog of unregistered births

The National Mobilization Week for Birth Registration was programmed in accordance with the amendments to Law 6,015, which regulates civil registries. It has as its general objectives:

- Involving public advocates of civil, political and social rights as well as government and non-government actors in order to achieve the universalization of birth registration and basic documentation among the entire Brazilian population; and

- Contribute to ensuring the sustainability of the effort to eliminate under-registration and universal access to basic documentation, ensuring that under-registration rates do not increase again and that late registrations are resolved in early childhood.

Through exhibitions, debates and exchanges of experience between different actors involved in the theme of birth registration and basic documentation, the National Mobilization Week is designed to stimulate and inspire the commitment of the society to the promotion of the right to identity as a fundamental human right.



## SIRC

The SIRC is the key product of the digitization of civil registration services. It allows the capture, processing, archiving and availability of data relating to records of birth, marriage, death and stillbirth produced by civil registration offices, and controls the sharing of registered information within the network of registration offices. Its implementation is unique in that it does not rely on a centralized database of all registered records. It is rather a platform that allows any registration office to verify vital information directly in the records of another registration office, or to communicate registered information in order to update a master personal record. The verification service is also provided to other approved public administration actors. The platform integrates approximately 7,700 civil registry offices across the whole country.

It contributes to reducing the overall number of unregistered births by preventing multiple registrations and verifying that a person has not been yet registered. It further contributes to improvements in the delivery of public services, facilitating access to social rights and benefits by being able to swiftly verify if a person qualifies for specific services. With the SIRC in place, civil registry data are now protected and recoverable in digital media. With the integrated management of vital events information, the Government is empowered with an important instrument to address fraud in the granting of benefits as well as specific types of crime such as document counterfeiting and trafficking of human beings.

## National Civil Records Information Centre (CRC)

Implementation of the SIRC system provided basis for the creation of other services, such as the National Civil Records Information Centre. This system is organized, owned and operated by ARPEN. It is a platform built on top of the SIRC system as a means of performing the tasks required for the civil registration registrars. The CRC allows the citizen, for example, the issuance of a certificate from one city, state or country to the other, or to communicate registration of a vital event to the civil registration office in which the master personal registration record is located. In order to make this possible, on 25 July 2014 the National Council of Justice published Provision 38/2014, which provided the foundation for the creation of the CRC. This provision regulated mandatory use of electronic means of communicating registered vital events information sent from one office to another in order to issue notification of any event that has occurred in the citizen's master personal record. The CRC is divided into sub-platforms: SIRC NOTARY, used by civil registration officials for ongoing registrations, SIRC WEB INTERNET, used to include, change and delete civil records data individually over the internet, SIRC CARGA, used for transmission of civil records data files through the registry office's own system, SIRC CARTHORIUM, used to capture, alter and delete civil records individually, when the civil registration office does not have internet access, and CENTRO DE TRANSPORTE DE REGISTRO CIVIL, used to receive vital events registration data sent by other civil registration offices through the CRC platform.



# 3 UNICEF'S WORK IN CIVIL REGISTRATION AND VITAL STATISTICS

## 3.1 Programming

UNICEF support to national efforts to improve the CRVS system in Brazil pre-dates the period examined in the evaluation.

Birth registration rates improved steadily from 2000, partially due to UNICEF advocacy efforts and technical assistance to the Government at central, state and municipal levels. While the focus of this case study is on the period from 2014–2020, it is important to underline that a major part of the national plan to address under-registration was implemented prior to 2014, with notable progress in reducing rates of unregistered children. UNICEF support was important in achieving such progress. In 2007, UNICEF supported the development of the National Commitment for the Eradication of Under-Registration of Births and Expansion of Access to Basic Documentation (2008–2018). A central element of this comprehensive strategy was the integration of the health sector (hospitals and maternity wards) and the civil registration notary offices at municipal levels. It involved governmental partners (at central, state and municipal levels), civil society and other stakeholders, including ARPEN. In addition, UNICEF helped the Government define new strategies to be incorporated (e.g. capacity-building for civil registrars and health care staff). As of 2014, UNICEF focused on supporting authorities in parts of the country still facing challenges in reducing the number of registered births.

## 3.2 Measurable contributions

From 2014, the focus shifted from dedicated programming on CRVS strengthening toward supporting municipal authorities to reduce the number of unregistered births.

With this shift in mind, the organization's work on birth registration was mainstreamed into protection, communication and health programmes in order to ensure registration for every child at birth, especially indigenous, riparian, communities of former slaves (quilombolas) and gypsy populations. Among other actions in support of birth registration, UNICEF supported legal and policy reform and dissemination, civil registry strategic planning through national and local committees, and capacity-building and awareness-raising in collaboration with a network of religious groups.

## 3.3 Outputs and strategies

### Background

As noted above, a number of important interventions took place prior to the period examined by the evaluation, from 2000–2014.

In addition to the monetary incentives granted to hospitals per child registered, UNICEF supported the implementation of the 2001 National Programme for the Promotion of Birth Registration, placing outreach units of the notary public within maternity wards in the states with lowest birth registration rates.



The Government's original plan was to establish registration offices in maternity wards. However, this approach did not yield the expected outcomes. Several factors contributed to the low implementation rate. The high cost of maintaining a fully-functioning civil registration unit within a maternity ward, particularly considering the low number of children born daily, was one of the main factors limiting the sustainability of this approach.

Therefore, UNICEF helped the Government develop new approaches (e.g. capacity-building for civil registrars and health care staff), develop training tools such as the "10-step Manual for Civil Registration in Maternity Wards" and explore new mechanisms for linking maternity wards and civil registrars at a lower cost.

In the first stage, a health care professional would physically take birth registration data to the nearest civil registration office, where the birth registration and the subsequent issuance of birth certificate would occur. The health care professional would then take the document back to the parents.

The second stage consisted of installing an online system within a maternity ward. Birth registration was conducted online, although the health care professional would also have to physically go to the nearest civil registration office to render the document official and receive the birth certificate.

The third and current stage enables an online solution to birth registration without the need for the presence of the civil registration office on the premises of maternity wards/hospitals. Maternity wards/hospitals are now connected online with the civil registration offices.

The initial strategy of placing civil registrars in maternity wards was replaced with a lower-cost solution of linking both institutions remotely with an online connection. The initial (equipment) cost of setting up the current online system in the State of Pernambuco, linking a total of 212 maternity wards with 198 civil registration offices, was approximately \$1.5 million USD (at the 2008

exchange rate). UNICEF also provided assistance towards the nationwide roll-out of this model.

## 1 Provide every child with a certificate upon birth

In 2014, UNICEF support shifted to supporting all levels of government to develop and implement policies to reduce number of unregistered births in the North and Northeast regions of the country. These policies targeted economically disadvantaged and indigenous populations residing in remote and border areas.

### Data-gathering and referral mechanism for identifying unregistered children

In order to strengthen evidence-based programming and support advocacy strategies, UNICEF collaborated with partners to conduct a situation analysis on indigenous children. The focus was on geographical areas generally inhabited by vulnerable groups: marginal areas of large cities and the semi-arid and Amazon regions. Generating evidence and data was key to identifying the most vulnerable children and adolescents and better understanding their specific needs. In 2017, UNICEF invested in an analysis of disparities between states and municipalities with regard to key indicators including: birth registration; exclusion from education and age-distortion at school; malnutrition, including stunting amongst indigenous children and obesity; early pregnancy among children aged 10–14 and adolescents aged 15–19; as well as homicides of adolescents. The results were used for advocacy purposes at federal and local levels and to support the elaboration of targeted multi-sectoral action plans to promote and protect specific rights of indigenous children (nutrition, education, birth registration, etc.).

In 2015, data from the situation analyses and bottleneck analyses on birth registration informed advocacy initiatives led by UNICEF which resulted in agreement on an Agenda for Amazonian Children, signed by nine governors of the



Amazon region. This analysis was also used to develop a set of recommendations to overcome bottlenecks related to ensuring universal birth registration of children, particularly indigenous, riparian and former slave communities.

These recommendations were developed by representatives from the Brazilian Government, the judicial system, representatives of indigenous communities living near border areas, and human rights experts as a result of two meetings organized by UNICEF and partners, with the participation of MERCOSUR experts on human rights and indigenous peoples.

### **Supporting strategies development to address under registration including by mainstreaming birth registration as part of other ongoing UNICEF activities**

At the federal level, UNICEF worked with the Special Secretariat on Indigenous Health, under the Ministry of Health, to develop an integrated agenda on indigenous health protection. At the sub-national level, in the Amazon region, UNICEF promoted a debate involving leaders and health and indigenous social protection managers to identify achievements and discuss perspectives related to early childhood, education, birth registration and mortality, as well as indigenous nutrition, focused on Xavante ethnic group, one of the most excluded groups of the indigenous population.

In cooperation with the Ministry of Health, UNICEF Brazil promoted six seminars in some of the most vulnerable special indigenous sanitary districts to address the high rates of infant mortality and low nutritional status of indigenous children. Around 50 participants were present at each seminar, including managers and technicians from the federal, state and municipal levels, as well as representatives of non-governmental organizations and indigenous leaders, including women. Discussions on infant mortality, indigenous stunting, education and birth registration led to the identification of key determinants related to health, culture and environment.

### **Promoting cross-border cooperation**

With UNICEF support, in 2015 the Government worked toward universal registration of children with a special focus on indigenous and other vulnerable groups, including through discussions with neighbouring countries through MERCOSUR forums. As a result of two meetings organized by UNICEF and partners, with the participation of high-level MERCOSUR authorities on human rights and indigenous peoples, a set of recommendations to overcome bottlenecks related to achieving universal birth registration – particularly of children in indigenous, riparian and former slave communities – were prepared. Efforts continued via a workshop in which 30 religious leaders participated, seeking agreement on referral mechanisms that connect religious communities and authorities to locate and register children, especially indigenous children.

## **2 Invest in safe and innovative technological solutions to facilitate birth registration**

By 2014, UNICEF had wrapped up its programme of linking notary offices with maternity wards as described in detail above.

## **3 Engage communities to demand birth registration for every child**

### **Working with religious leaders to promote birth registration**

One of the key UNICEF strategies to identify remaining unregistered children was continued cooperation with religious leaders, with the goal of ensuring their engagement on violence prevention initiatives, including locating children without birth registration. Under a broader partnership with a range of religious groups within the Movement for Peace and Protection framework, UNICEF and the Catholic institution Pastoral da Criança used an informative leaflet with messages on violence prevention as part of an awareness-



raising dialogue at homes and churches, targeting families with children. The initiative reached 1,000,000 families in 3,900 municipalities with messages of non-violent education and promotion of birth registration. These materials were also used for advocacy during national events, such as the Day of Dignity, and during awareness-raising workshops conducted in communities. Awareness-raising activities and dissemination of materials reached vulnerable children, engaging more than 25,000 people.

### **UNICEF Municipal Seal**

The UNICEF Municipal Seal is a strategy used by UNICEF Brazil to strengthen public policies and reduce inequalities that affect the lives of Brazilian children and adolescents living in the Amazon and semi-arid regions of the country. The municipalities that enrol in the Seal commit themselves to undertaking, through a participatory process, a situational assessment of children and adolescents

living in their communities and to developing and implementing a Municipal Plan of Action to address the key issues affecting girls and boys. Enrolled municipalities nominate a person to coordinate Seal activities in their municipalities. UNICEF then trains municipal managers, their teams and local duty-bearers on how to develop and implement effective public policies for children that will help the municipalities qualify for the Seal and encourages them to continue these efforts even after the Seal's four-year cycle has ended.

The Municipal Seal of Approval is awarded to municipalities that are able to put in place the required number of systemic results and perform better than the average of their peers with respect to key social indicators. One such indicator is birth registration, and by end 2018, notable progress had been achieved in reducing the number of unregistered births in participating municipalities (240 total).



# 4 KEY OBSERVATIONS

## 4.1 Relevance

After more than a decade of sustained support to increasing registration services supply, UNICEF adapted to the shift in Government policy, which from 2014 focused primarily on reducing rates of unregistered births in marginalized parts of the country. This also marked a shift from strengthening the supply side of the registration system to focus on generating demand for registration among under-registered marginalized populations.

To make its programmes more relevant for the context, UNICEF conducted additional research to better understand the key characteristics of the situation in regions where the interventions were implemented. The findings of this research were used to inform the development of the municipal action plans as envisaged by the national strategy.

UNICEF further established that generating demand for birth registration can be successfully achieved through mainstreaming birth registration activities across a range of existing programmes.

## 4.2 Effectiveness

Reaching the most marginalized and achieving universal birth registration demands more resources and coordinated action, while results may be rather modest. At this stage of the process, raising awareness and expecting action from the targeted community is often not enough. It is more often the case that each individual instance of non-registration should be identified, followed up on and referred for registration.

Close cooperation with municipal authorities ensures that programmes are informed by knowledge of the local context. Working together with municipal authorities therefore leads to policies and action plans that provide the most effective use of resources in identifying and referring unregistered children. Engaging with public actors in the regions with the highest rates of unregistered children helped addressing some root causes of under-registration. And also working with religious leaders enabled UNICEF to approach communities that were not necessarily tightly linked with mainstream society. It is an effective means of approaching specific communities with the type of narrative they are more receptive to.

Cross-border cooperation is the most effective way of ensuring that populations who frequently move across borders are properly targeted and sensitized to the importance of birth registration. UNICEF presence throughout the region means that the organization is well-placed to facilitate cross-border cooperation, in cooperation with other regional partners, to improve efficiency in targeting people on the move.

## 4.3 Coherence

UNICEF demonstrated strong coherence with national priorities and strategies aimed at strengthening the CRVS system and reducing the number of unregistered births. UNICEF participated in the formulation of these strategies from 2000–2010, including the National Commitment for the Eradication of Under-registration of Births and Expansion



of Access to Basic Documentation, the most important policy of the period.

UNICEF actions were coherent with this policy, which called for the development of provincial and municipal plans to reduce the rates of unregistered births. Within its available resources, UNICEF focused on high-level advocacy to contribute to developing informed and efficient polices at municipal level that were coherent with the national commitment.

Apart from close cooperation with public authorities, UNICEF successfully partnered with religious communities in remote areas. This partnership was central for enabling alternative means of communicating with communities on the importance of birth registration.

UNICEF interventions are also coherent with the broader regional approach to reducing the number of unregistered births in the Amazon area. With that in mind, UNICEF benefitted from partnering with MERCOSUR to promote coordinated cross-border interventions to reduce the rate of unregistered births.

## 4.4 Innovation

The UNICEF Municipal Seal programme is a high-profile intervention that carries appeal with local communities in the municipalities where it was implemented. Receiving the UNICEF Seal demonstrates commitment to the public interest, including the interest of the marginalized communities. The large number of participating municipalities (294) introduced a level of urgency and competition, with municipal authorities wanting to be recognized as being effective in achieving the programme goals. These incentives allowed UNICEF to be effective in advocacy and support to the municipal authorities in developing and implementing action plans.

In addition, the use of maternity wards to issue notifications of births to the respective notary office using a dedicated online platform has been a key innovation that resulted in stronger integration of health facilities in the registration process. It significantly reduced the discrepancy between the total number of births indicated in health facility records and the number of births registered by notaries.



# 5 CONCLUSIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS

The Brazil case typifies a situation that occurs in other countries; a country that has made great progress in achieving near-universal birth registration nevertheless has pockets of marginalized populations that remain excluded from the service. In countries with large populations such as Brazil, even a small percentage of unregistered children translates into hundreds of thousands of excluded children. With Brazil in the sample of case study countries, the evaluation will be able to examine the extent to which UNICEF has been strategic in supporting and strengthening an established and highly functional CRVS system at national level. The Brazil case illustrates the effectiveness of UNICEF support in reaching the most marginalized populations and is an example of targeted assistance in the context of broader national CRVS reforms.

## 5.1 Limitations of this case study

This case study is the result of a desk review of UNICEF Brazil CRVS programme documents, supplemented by a review of other available documents from government and non-government stakeholders in Brazil. It was developed during the period when the world was engulfed in the COVID-19 pandemic, which severely curtailed global travel and limited in-person social contacts. As result, this study lacked on-site consultations with key interlocutors in Brazil, limiting the inclusion of additional perspectives. Taking into account the period covered by this study, obtaining direct feedback from many UNICEF and non-UNICEF interlocutors was no longer possible due to staff rotation within UNICEF as well as within Brazilian government structures. The ability to consult officials involved with CRVS reforms at

the beginning of the observed period would have been useful to better understand specific strategic decisions made early in the reform process and which have decisively affected CRVS reforms over past eight years.

## 5.2 Lessons learned and good practices

UNICEF was a key partner of the Government in strengthening of the CRVS system. While in the first decade steady progress could be observed, addressing the last remaining percentages of unregistered births requires more time and a different approach, and might require disproportionately more resources per single registration. It also requires tailored policies that are suited to the local circumstances, including approaches that are sensitive to the cultures of the indigenous population.

The Brazil experience shows that UNICEF contributed mobilizing and advising relevant stakeholders to develop and implement carefully designed policies based on accurate research. In essence, UNICEF success depends on the ability to generate political commitment, first at the highest levels of Government and subsequently at provincial and municipal levels to systemically work toward closing the gap of unregistered births.

UNICEF also showed that it is important to work with other regional partners that provide a platform for promotion of regional cooperation. MERCOSUR demonstrated usefulness in serving as platform to develop policies to target and identify persons frequently moving across borders, to sensitize them on the importance of birth registration and to ensure that births are registered as they occur.



## Annex 1 Data for Evidence Story

### Estimated unregistered live births by region, 2016-2019

	2016		2017		2019	
Region	Total Estimated	Percentage of non-registered births	Total Estimated	Percentage of non-registered births	Total Estimated	Percentage of non-registered births
<b>Total Brazil</b>	<b>2,893,822</b>	<b>3.22</b>	<b>2,949,798</b>	<b>2.61</b>	<b>2,968,736</b>	<b>2.37</b>
<b>North</b>	<b>316,423</b>	<b>10.1</b>	<b>319,439</b>	<b>9.46</b>	<b>324,855</b>	<b>8.55</b>
Rondônia	26,887	1.83	27,595	1.2	28,167	0.77
Acre	16,148	8.79	16,623	6.74	16,864	6.33
Amazonas	79,185	10.81	79,736	9.85	79,624	9.78
Roraima	12,050	20.11	12,318	18.13	13,920	18.3
Pará	141,441	11.15	141,601	11.12	143,724	9.48
Amapá	16,222	12.41	16,104	11.35	16,590	9.42
Tocantins	24,490	5.19	25,462	4.32	25,967	3.68
<b>Northeast</b>	<b>812,603</b>	<b>4.07</b>	<b>828,242</b>	<b>3.55</b>	<b>847,205</b>	<b>3.2</b>
Maranhão	114,158	7.85	115,331	6.43	119,221	4.7
Piauí	47,173	3.71	48,526	3.44	49,606	3.33
Ceará	129,780	3.76	130,492	3.85	134,656	3.67
Rio Grande do Norte	46,403	2.68	46,831	1.97	48,465	1.49
Paraíba	56,339	1.48	57,473	1.26	60,383	1.28
Pernambuco	132,717	5.34	137,307	4.71	139,914	4.51
Alagoas	49,949	3.4	51,280	3.11	53,042	2.47
Sergipe	32,427	3.07	33,917	2.62	34,262	2.29
Bahia	203,656	2.78	207,086	2.26	207,657	2.4
<b>Southeast</b>	<b>1,133,865</b>	<b>1.92</b>	<b>1,156,702</b>	<b>1.03</b>	<b>1,151,809</b>	<b>0.96</b>
Minas Gerais	256,197	1.09	262,891	0.88	264,744	0.48
Espírito Santo	53,966	1.89	56,717	1.15	57,206	0.88
Rio de Janeiro	220,522	6.8	224,147	3.06	221,401	2.69
São Paulo	603,180	0.5	612,948	0.34	608,457	0.55

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	2016		2017		2019	
Region	Total Estimated	Percentage of non-registered births	Total Estimated	Percentage of non-registered births	Total Estimated	Percentage of non-registered births
<b>South</b>	<b>393,183</b>	<b>0.59</b>	<b>398,797</b>	<b>0.43</b>	<b>396,882</b>	<b>0.31</b>
Paraná	155,677	0.5	158,359	0.44	156,789	0.34
Santa Catarina	95,678	0.84	98,677	0.44	99,919	0.25
Rio Grande do Sul	141,827	0.51	141,761	0.43	140,174	0.33
<b>Central-West</b>	<b>237,748</b>	<b>1.68</b>	<b>246,493</b>	<b>1.55</b>	<b>247,845</b>	<b>1.33</b>
Mato Grosso do Sul	42,903	1.78	45,147	1.6	44,678	1.24
Mato Grosso	54,390	3.41	58,202	2.8	59,258	2.21
Goiás	96,584	1.2	98,371	1.31	99,724	1.27
DF	43,872	0.47	44,773	0.38	44,185	0.38

NOTE: Data extracted from the System of Vital Statistics of the IBGE, <https://www.ibge.gov.br/estatisticas/sociais/populacao/26176-estimativa-do-sub-registro.html?edicao=26186&t=downloads>



## Annex 2 List of documents reviewed

Camila Schwinden	The Vital Statistics Journey: A case study of Mozambique, 2014
Carolina de Abreu Batista Claro	Public Policies for the Eradication of Civil Birth Sub-registration in Brazil, 2008–2018
Estefania Calderon	Civil Records and Identification Offices: Analysis and country records
IBGE	Civil Registry Statistics Technical note 01/2020 clarifications on the sub-registration of births
Lehmkuhl, Camila Schwinden; Silva, Eva Cristina Leite	The National System of Civil Registration Information (SIRC) and Access to Information
Ministry of Social Security of Brazil	National Civil Registry Information System - SIRC
UNICEF Brazil	Brazil 2012–2016 RAM Combined Outcomes Outputs and End Year Summary Narratives Report
UNICEF Brazil	Annual report, 2014
UNICEF Brazil	Annual report, 2015
UNICEF Brazil	Annual report, 2016
UNICEF Brazil	Annual report, 2017
UNICEF Brazil	Annual report, 2018
UNICEF Brazil	Annual report, 2019
UNICEF Brazil	Strategy Note, Brazil, 2016
UNICEF Brazil	Good Practices Accelerate the Achievement of MD/MDGs
UNICEF Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean	What We Must Know About Birth Registration in Latin America and the Caribbean
UNICEF	Regional Study on Progress and Rates of Identification and Birth Registration (working document)



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