



## GUINEA CASE STUDY REPORT

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





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This report, 'Guinea Case Study Report. Evaluation of the UNICEF Work in Strengthening Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems' was prepared by Ann Livingston. 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>APAI-CRVS</b>	Africa Programme on Accelerated Improvement of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics
<b>BR</b>	Birth registration
<b>C4D</b>	Communication for development
<b>CIRMEC</b>	Intersectoral Coordination for the Reform and Modernization of Civil Status
<b>COAR</b>	Country Office Annual Report
<b>COVID-19</b>	Coronavirus disease
<b>CRC</b>	Convention on the Rights of the Child
<b>CRVS</b>	Civil Registration and Vital Statistics
<b>DHS</b>	Demographic and Health Survey
<b>DNEC</b>	Direction Nationale de l'Etat Civil
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>EVD</b>	Ebola virus disease
<b>FGM/C</b>	Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting
<b>GAVI</b>	Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunisation
<b>ICT</b>	Information and communications technology
<b>ID</b>	Identity document
<b>IDRC</b>	International Development Research Centre
<b>MATD</b>	Ministère de l'Administration du Territoire et de la Décentralisation
<b>MICS</b>	Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey
<b>MNCH</b>	Maternal, newborn and child health
<b>MoH</b>	Ministry of Health
<b>NIS</b>	National Institute of Statistics
<b>PNACC</b>	Programme National d'Appui aux Communes de Convergence
<b>PRSP</b>	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
<b>SDG</b>	Sustainable Development Goal
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNDAF</b>	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme

Acronyms continued ►

◀ **Acronyms** back

<b>UNFPA</b>	United Nations Population Fund
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children’s Fund
<b>WASH</b>	Water, Sanitation, Hygiene
<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organization



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Guinea suffers from high levels of poverty and stark gender disparities. Since the early 2000s, the fall in foreign aid and the inequitable distribution of available resources has led to a decline in the delivery of and access to basic social services for the poorest populations. The situation exacerbated the differences in access between the poor and the rich, the urban and rural populations. In 2013, the country was severely impacted by the Ebola outbreak and the negative effects of the coronavirus pandemic further reinforced inequality in regard to accessing basic social services and economic opportunities.

Since the early 2000s, Guinea has taken concrete actions to improve its Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) system. The government demonstrated political leadership by strengthening the institutional and legal framework of CRVS to align with international standards. These efforts led to the creation of the 2018 Civil Registration Reform and Modernization Strategy. Supported by UNICEF and development partners, the strategy has seen the rate of birth

registration increase since the turn of the century and birth registration inequalities have been reduced over the observed period. However, with a birth registration rate of 62 per cent, continued efforts are necessary to reach universal registration in Guinea.

From 2014 to 2020 (pre-COVID-19), UNICEF primarily supported Guinea's CRVS system by strengthening its legal and policy frameworks. The technical guidance and expertise provided



to the government for the elaboration of its Civil Registration Reform and Modernization Strategy contributed to significant CRVS strengthening. Additionally, UNICEF supported efforts to improve service delivery mechanisms and build workforce capacity at the decentralized level. Initiatives included CRVS training sessions for personnel, new equipment and new technology.

UNICEF's efforts also laid the foundations for the inter-operability of systems with the health sector while using an integrated, cross-sectoral approach. This allowed for the integration of the birth registration component into health packages and proved to be an efficient means of increasing birth registration rates. Finally, UNICEF's work on advocacy at the institutional level helped obtain a decree on inter-operability between the health and CRVS sectors. At the communal level, UNICEF supported initiatives to increase awareness among the most vulnerable populations. Advocacy efforts included the distribution of informative materials to populations, social mobilization of community leaders, and awareness and media campaigns.

However, amidst UNICEF's interventions in the country, major bottlenecks to building a resilient CRVS system still remain, including on the supply side. While the country is now equipped with a CRVS legal framework, the persistence of insufficient operational capacities, untrained personnel and technical weaknesses is still preventing CRVS initiatives from producing a major increase in birth registration rates.

Through a theory-based approach and desk review process, this case study examines UNICEF's level of engagement and identifies the initiatives undertaken between 2014 and 2020 to strengthen CRVS in Guinea. The analysis highlights UNICEF's identifiable contributions that led to an increase in birth registration rates and shows that UNICEF remains a key player in birth registration at the decentralized level and a strong partner to governmental institutions in charge of CRVS. The case study also points to major challenges that still exist despite UNICEF's involvement. The analysis indicates that there is a strong potential for Guinea to improve its CRVS system should the country, with the support of international partners, build on strong partnerships and coalition and work towards reinforcing inter-operable systems and capacity-building to increase registration rates. Finally, the report shares good practices, lessons learned and areas of improvement for future practice.



# 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Overview of the situation

Inequalities are striking in Guinea with regard to social, economic and human development, disproportionately affecting women, children and vulnerable populations. In 2014, the country and its development partners battled the Ebola virus disease that had begun the previous year, worsening the lives of millions of people who were already living in precarious conditions.

Birth registration is currently estimated at 62 per cent based on the Demographic Health Survey (DHS) 2018. It is the most recent available data covering this area. Inequities in birth registration rates throughout the country are important. There are major differences in registration rates depending on the place of residence, wealth quintile, the mother's level of education (mothers also often happen to be the head of household), and the level of literacy (or lack of it). However, no substantial difference in birth registration rates has been found based on sex, with less than a 1-point differential between men and women (respectively 62.4% and 61.5%). For children who are registered, obtaining a birth certificate remains an issue. In 2014, one in four children did not have a birth certificate, preventing them from accessing basic rights and services.

Still, in comparing the two data sets from 2012 and 2018, it can be concluded that Guinea was successful in increasing birth registration in rural areas throughout the observed period, thus reducing inequalities based on residence. The data trend also differed depending on regions. As such, the birth registration rate in Kindia has remained stable, while in Mamou and Labé the

rate of registered births jumped by 20 per cent. And, quite surprisingly, urban centres such as Conakry and Boké experienced a notable decrease in birth registration of more than 8 per cent.

While the national average rate of birth registration seems comparatively higher than Guinea's peer group of low-income countries it does not adequately reflect the current state, bottlenecks and challenges faced by Guinea's CRVS system. Insufficient resources, lack of knowledge on procedures in workers processing registration requests, and inadequate equipment are all factors which contribute to producing unreliable, incorrect registration of vital events.

Guinea began reforming its CRVS system by strengthening its legal framework and policies, which ultimately led to the implementation of the 2018 Civil Registration Reform and Modernization Strategy. The government and its development partners hope to close the gap and are committed to reaching out to the last 38 per cent of children unaccounted for.

### 1.2 Methodology for a case study as part of the global evaluation

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 Guinea 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. 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 Guinea. 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.

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<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>



# 2 COUNTRY CONTEXT ON CIVIL REGISTRATION AND VITAL STATISTICS

## 2.1 Country context

Guinea is a country located in West Africa and bordered by Guinea Bissau, Senegal, Mali, Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, Sierra Leone and the Atlantic Ocean. Guinea is a poor country with 55.2 per cent of its population living in poverty, ranking 174th out of 189 countries on the 2018 Human Development Index.

**Capital city:** Conakry

**Official working language:** French

**Territorial size:** 245 857 km<sup>2</sup> (NIS, 2018)

**Total population:** 12,414,293

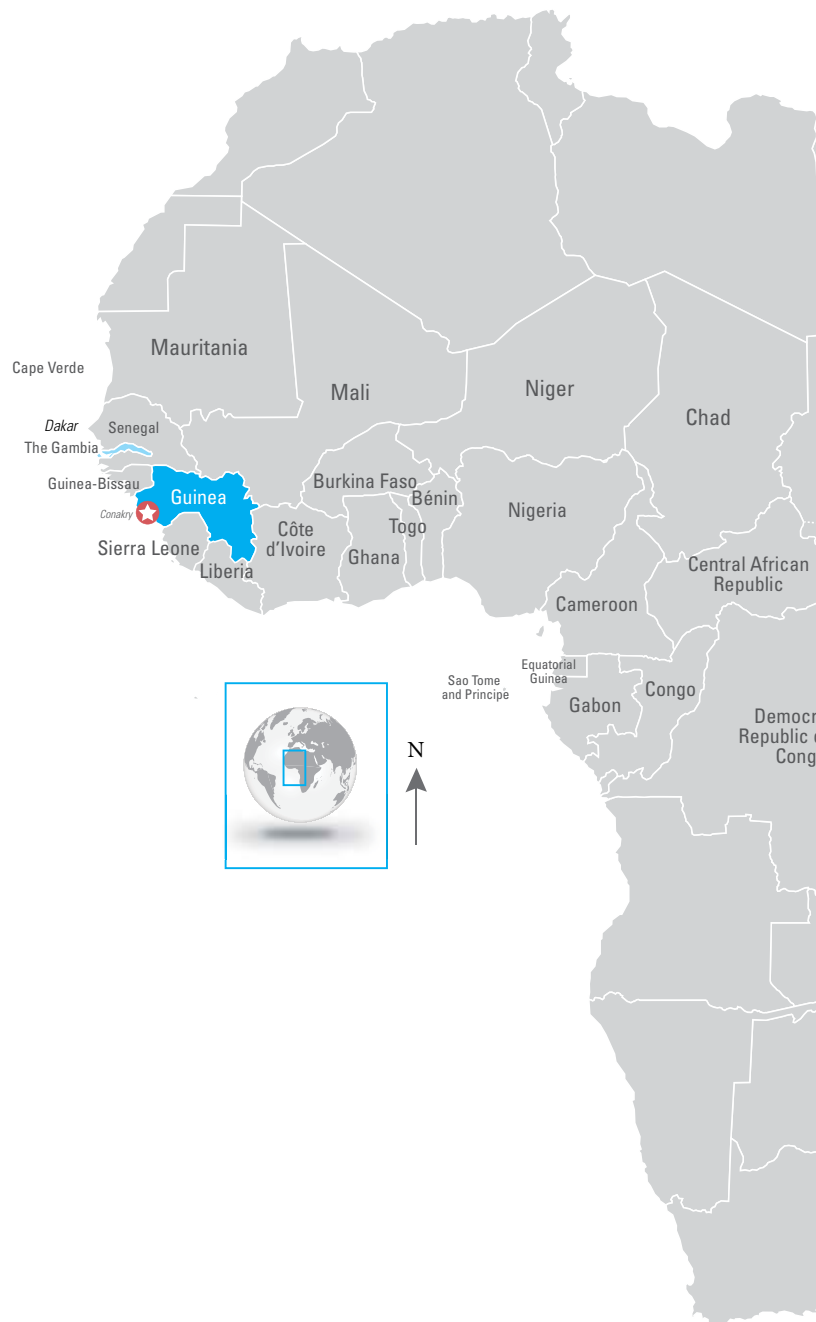
**Ministry responsible for civil registration:**

Ministère de l'Administration du Territoire et de la Décentralisation (MATD)

**Civil registration agency:** Direction Nationale d'Etat Civil (DNEC)

**National statistical office:** Institut National de la Statistique (INS)

The organization of the civil registration system follows the country's decentralized administrative structure. The country is divided into seven administrative regions of Boké, Faranah, Kankan, Kindia, Labé, Mamou and N'Zérékoré. Conakry, the capital city, is under a special zone, called the Governorate of Conakry.




**Figure 1: Key vital statistics indicators**

Births	
Completeness of birth registration <i>SDG Indicator 16.9</i>	Not available
Children under 5 years of age whose births were reported as registered <i>SDG Indicator 16.9.1</i>	62% (2018)
Births attended by skilled health personnel <i>SDG Indicator 3.1.2</i>	62.7% (2016) <sup>2</sup>
Crude birth rate (per 1,000 population)	36 (2016) <sup>3</sup>
Total fertility rate (live births per woman)	4.9 (2016) <sup>4</sup>
Adolescent fertility rate (per 1,000 girls aged 15–19 years) <i>SDG Indicator 3.7.2</i>	120 (2018) <sup>5</sup>
Deaths	
Completeness of death registration	Not available
Crude death rate (per 1,000 population)	9 (2016) <sup>6</sup>
Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 live births) <i>SDG Indicator 3.2.2</i>	64 (2019) <sup>7</sup>
Under-five mortality rate (per 1,000 live births) <i>SDG Indicator 3.2.1</i>	98.8 (2019) <sup>8</sup>
Maternal mortality ratio (per 100,000 live births) <i>SDG Indicator 3.1.1</i>	679 (2015) <sup>9</sup>
Marriages	
Marriage registration rate	Not available
Women aged 20-24 married or in union before age of 15 <i>SDG Indicator 5.3.1</i>	21% (2016) <sup>10</sup>
Women aged 20-24 married or in union before age of 18 <i>SDG Indicator 5.3.1</i>	54% (2016) <sup>11</sup>
Divorce registration rate	Not available

<sup>2</sup> National Institute of Statistics – Institute National de la Statistique. 2017. Enquête par grappes à indicateurs multiples (MICS, 2016), Rapport final, Conakry, Guinée. <http://mics.unicef.org/surveys>

<sup>3</sup> UNICEF, The State of World's Children 2017. <https://www.unicef.org/sowc2017/>

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> DHS Guinea 2018.

<sup>6</sup> UNICEF, The State of World's Children 2017. <https://www.unicef.org/sowc2017/>

<sup>7</sup> UNICEF, Data country profile, 2019 <https://data.unicef.org/country/gin/>

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> World Health Organization, Statistics: monitoring health for the SDGs, sustainable development goals, 2016, [https://www.who.int/gho/publications/world\\_health\\_statistics/2016/en/](https://www.who.int/gho/publications/world_health_statistics/2016/en/)

<sup>10</sup> UNICEF, *The State of World's Children 2017*.

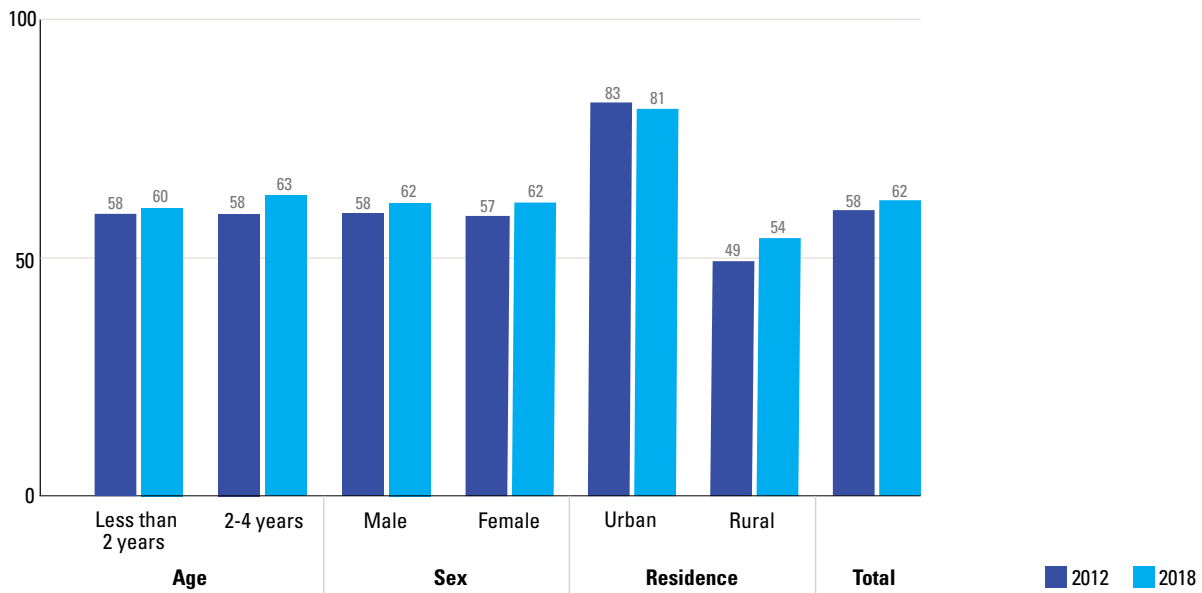
<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> UNICEF, Towards Universal Birth Registration in Guinea, The Hague, March 2014.

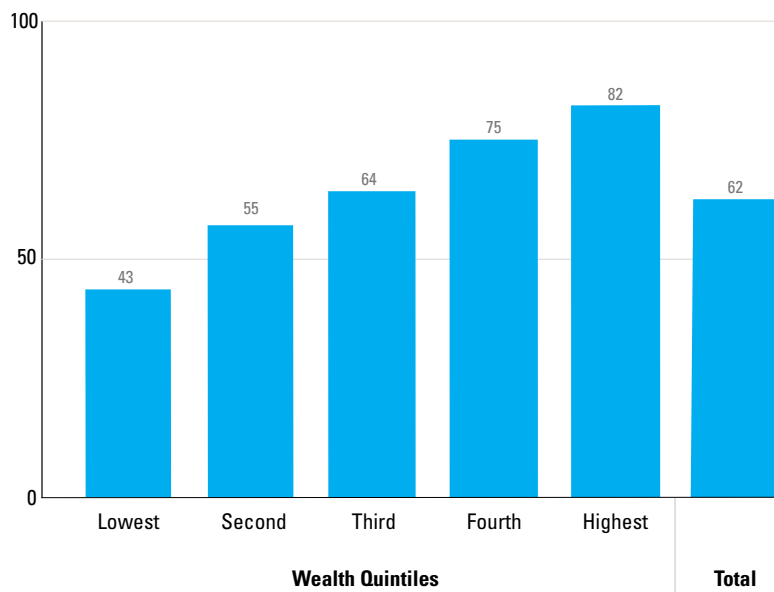
<sup>13</sup> UNICEF/Republic of Guinea, Towards Universal Birth Registration, CRC4D, 2014.



**Figure 2:** Percentage of children under five years old who have their birth registered in Guinea, 2012–2018



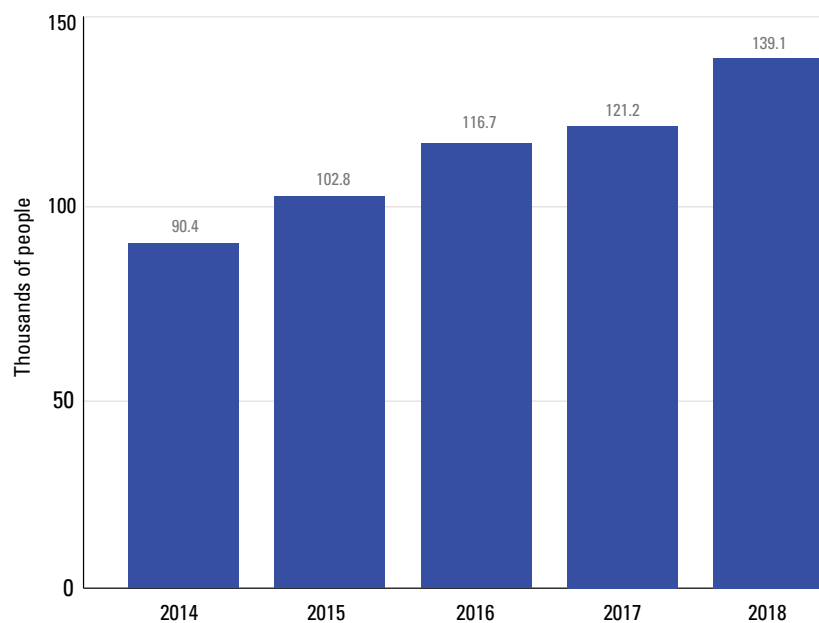
**Figure 3:** Percentage of children under five years old who have their birth registered in Guinea in 2018, by wealth<sup>14</sup>



<sup>14</sup> Data from MICS 2016 available for these data points, respectively: lowest wealth quintile 54.7%; second quintile 67.8%; third quintile 75.2%; fourth quintile 85.7%; highest quintile 95%.



**Figure 4:** Number of birth certificates delivered in Guinea, 2014–2018



## 2.2 Intervention logic to strengthen the CRVS system

During the observed time period, Guinea has initiated several processes to strengthen its nascent, largely paper-based CRVS system. The initiatives were based on the recommendations from the Regional Workshop on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems in Dar es Salaam (2009); the Conferences of African Ministers responsible for civil registration held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in 2010; Durban, South Africa in 2012 and Yamoussoukro, Côte d'Ivoire in 2015 and the Africa Programme on Accelerated Improvement of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (APAI-CRVS). The workshop in Dar es Salaam was the first-ever workshop to highlight the issue of weak CRVS systems and their consequences on the lives of rights holders. It was initiated by the international community to address what has been called a 'Scandal of Invisibility' since populations in Africa and Asia are born and die without leaving a trace in any legal record or official statistics. The subsequent Conference(s) of

African Ministers responsible for civil registration were meant to capitalize on the findings from the Regional Workshop to generate political commitment at the highest level of government and to develop a regional programme for CRVS across Africa. The APAI-CRVS Programme provided a policy and programmatic framework for the implementation of CRVS systems on the continent. It advised that all countries should undertake comprehensive assessments of CRVS systems and prepare costed national plans irrespective of the state of development of their systems.

In 2017 Guinea created a committee in charge of leading the national work on CRVS (CIRMEC), which came to supplement the already existing National Directorate on Civil Registration (DNEC). Most recently, the Civil Registration Reform and Modernization Strategy 2018–2022 was developed to strengthen and modernize Guinea's CRVS system in accordance with international standards.

The vision of the Civil Registration Reform and Modernization Strategy for 2018–2022 is to build a modern, integrated and efficient CRVS

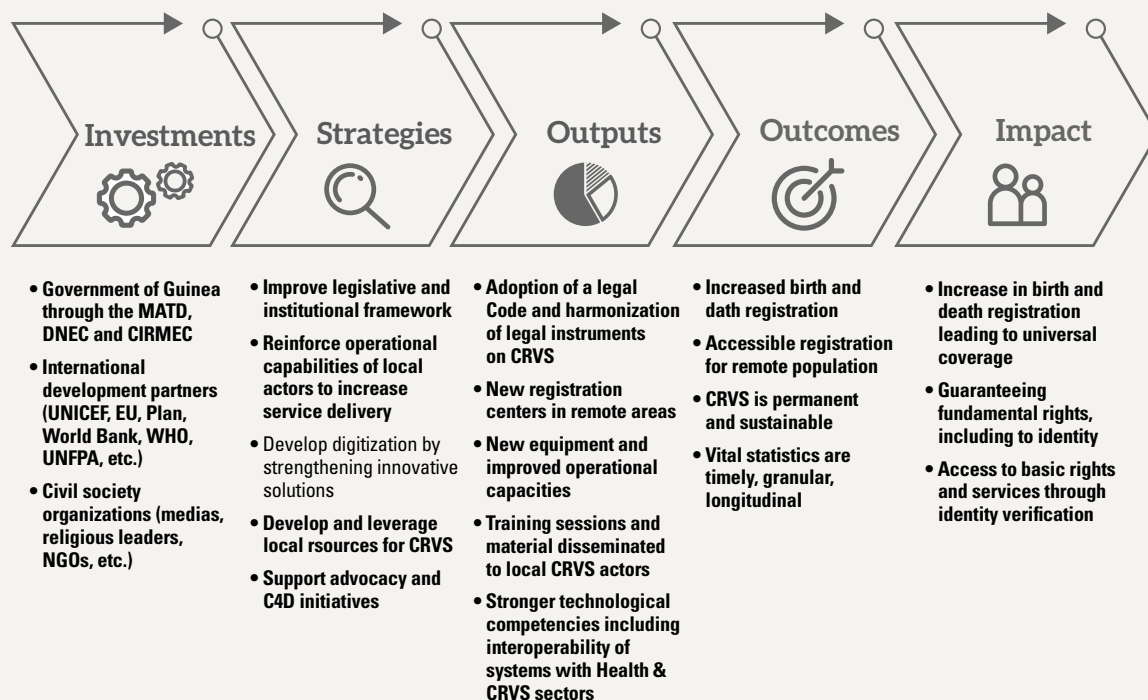
system according to international standards and serving national development. Building on this vision, the reform strategy focuses on two goals: on one hand, strengthening civil registration services into a well-functioning tool enabling access to rights for all including legal identity and access to a nationality; and on the other hand strengthening the production and recording of vital statistics to better plan and monitor development programmes.

To do so, coordinated efforts by the government and development partners have centred on

- i) improving legislative frameworks and institutions,
- ii) reinforcing operational capacities of local actors to improve service delivery,
- iii) strengthening the use of innovative solutions, and
- iv) supporting advocacy and communications for development initiatives.

The above strategies have all been identified in the National CRVS Strategy.

**Figure 5: Elements of Guinea’s and UNICEF’s Intervention logic on CRVS**



UNICEF Intervention Logic based on Country programme Document 2018–2022.

\* 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

### Improving legislative frameworks and institutions

In 2017, a high-level coordination platform called the Intersectoral Coordination for the Reform and Modernization of Civil Status (CIRMEC) was set up under the Prime Minister's Office and coordinated by the Prime Minister's Office, Ministry of Territorial Administration and Decentralization (MATD), Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and financial technical development partners. Its aim was to set up a unified framework for consultation, guidance, coordination and decision-making in the area of CRVS. CIRMEC generally ensures the coordination of all the activities planned in the field of civil registration. As such, it coordinated and validated the 2018 Civil Registration Reform and Modernization Strategy (referred to in the text as the 'the National CRVS Strategy'). The National CRVS Strategy aims to establish a legal environment conducive to the efficiency of the registration system, and achieve universal registration, while taking into account equity and the guarantee of fundamental rights.

The European Union, along with development partners, has also contributed to the development of the National CRVS Strategy and its implementation by providing technical expertise, institutional knowledge and financial support to government bodies. Yet, challenges remain in terms of ensuring efficient coordination and building synergies between actors involved in the field of CRVS.

### Reinforcing operational capacities of local actors to improve service delivery

Due to the lack of equipment and operational knowledge of local agents processing registration requests, as well as a high turnover of agents in charge of vital registration, civil registration services remain largely inefficient. Indeed, agents

are faced with broken computers and missing registry booklets and lack general awareness of standard procedures, resulting in incorrect registration. The Government of Guinea, the European Union and UNICEF Country Office signed a cooperation agreement to support the modernization of the civil registration system, covering the period June 2016 to March 2019. This project revolved around a package of activities aimed at improving the efficiency of the Guinean CRVS system and modernizing its procedures in accordance with international standards.

Improving the operational capacities was also a priority laid out in the 2018 National CRVS Strategy. To this end, the Strategy has sought to provide civil registration centres with new equipment and material. It also provided equipment specifically to archive documents in order to build permanent records.

Additionally, civil agents processing registration events are largely local volunteers or retirees in rural areas. Their services, although supportive, often undermine the reliability and credibility of the civil registration documents. To address this issue, the National CRVS Strategy's objective has been to increase financial resources to train agents and increase human capacity to ensure a rigorous and harmonized registration process. Qualified and trained personnel contribute to providing continuous services, while the opening of new registration centres in more remote areas is an opportunity to reach the most vulnerable populations. The Strategy was first implemented in the pilot region of N'Zérékoré and with financial support, training and computerization provided by the Italian Development Cooperation.

### Promoting digitization by strengthening technological capacities

Guinea's CRVS system is still largely paper-based, although there have been a few attempts to introduce innovative solutions to the registration process. These initiatives have often been led by international development partners, such as

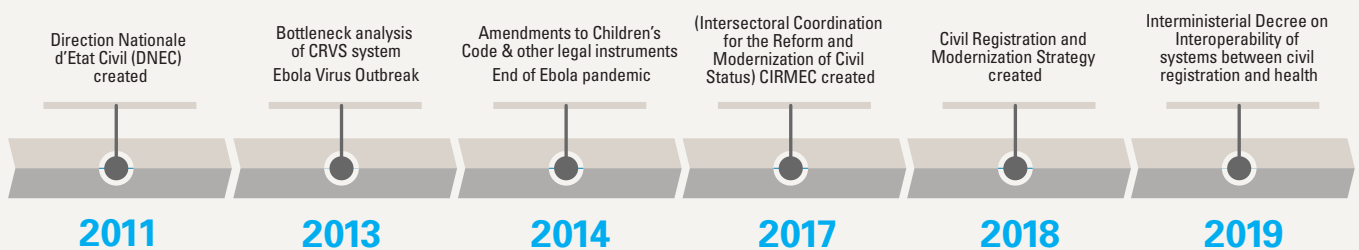
UNICEF with RapidPro or the World Bank with the WURI project. The 10-year project focuses on the creation of a unique identification number that may potentially enable linkages between a digitized civil registration system and a population registry.

The Government of Guinea recognizes the crucial role digitization plays in keeping permanent records, preventing duplication, preventing errors, and contributing to building a reliable, continuous and permanent system. The National CRVS Strategy has included digitization as part of its overall strategy up to 2022. The digitization process requires the MATD to establish a collaboration with the Ministry of Posts, Telecommunications and the Digital Economy for the use of the national communications and other infrastructures essential to the establishment of a national data centre. As such, an inter-operability protocol has been envisioned as laid out in the Strategy with these ministries to better define the conditions of this collaboration, but there is no evidence the process has yet been initiated. Today, serious challenges exist in terms of shifting to digitization, in particular with regard to training of agents on innovation, as well as proper IT equipment and personnel with IT skills to ensure proper use of the tools.

### Supporting advocacy and communications for development initiatives

Guinea experiences many bottlenecks linked to the demand for services. Supporting advocacy and building social mobilization around birth registration thus constitutes a major challenge for the government. So far, ad hoc advocacy initiatives have been led by development partners but lack coordination. The Government of Guinea, through its National CRVS Strategy, provides strategies to address this challenge. It has planned to establish a communication for development strategy which would integrate advocacy efforts. Advocacy would generate more commitment from the authorities to the issue. It also aims to mobilize populations who may be unaware of the procedures and importance of registering vital events. Awareness campaigns, involving decision-making authorities such as religious leaders, local and political figures or traditional mentors are initiatives that aim to promote social mobilization and advocacy for the registration of vital events.

**Figure 6:** Key milestones





## 2.4 Mapping of planned and attained products

While political dialogue about strengthening the CRVS system was initiated around 2010, recent identifiable changes are a direct consequence of the implementation of the National CRVS Strategy. Since its implementation began in 2018, most planned products have either not yet been initiated, are currently being implemented, or have not yet been fully achieved. Thus, the contributions of such products are not yet measurable. There is no currently available reporting on the status of the Strategy's implementation.

### Improving legislative frameworks and institutions

There is a legal obligation in Guinea to register vital events – births, marriages and deaths. The birth of a child must be registered within six months (Children's Code, art 157) and is processed manually. By law, birth registration in Guinea is free of charge, which is not the case for marriage, divorce and death registration. However, in practice, evidence from key informant interviews shows instances where families need to pay a fee directly associated with registering the birth of a child, the amount of the fee depending on the village.

While legislation regarding the registration of vital events existed, it wasn't until 2011 that a mechanism to implement government policies was put in place. Hence the Direction Nationale d'Etat Civil (DNEC) was created that year. In 2013, Guinea completed a civil registration situation assessment to generate recommendations for the government, with the aim of defining the National CRVS Strategy. In 2016, the proposed update of the Children's Code, as well as 1,045 articles of that Code and the recently adopted Penal Code were reviewed and finalized to ensure it adhered to international standards set out in international instruments ratified by Guinea and particularly the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The National CRVS Strategy also called for a revision of the Civil Code. In 2017, the Intersectoral

Coordination for the Reform and Modernization of Civil Status (CIRMEC) was created to set up an institutional framework for coordination and decision-making in CRVS. In 2018, the National CRVS Strategy was developed and pilot-tested in N'Zérékoré. As it yielded positive results in the pilot region, the National CRVS Strategy was subsequently adopted by the government. Secondary legislation such as the interministerial decree pertaining to the inter-operability between the health and civil registration systems was developed as part of the National CRVS Strategy and was implemented in 113 out of 342 municipalities.

### Reinforcing capacity development of local actors to improve service delivery

In 2016 the Government of Guinea, the European Union and the UNICEF Country Office signed a cooperation agreement to support the modernization of the civil registration system. The EU provided financial support for the process with an allocated amount of €1,411,765. This cooperation resulted in the adoption of the National CRVS Strategy, an Action Plan and Budget. Logistical support (office supplies, registries) and technical expertise contributed to increased operational capacities. Health initiatives, through the interoperability of systems, offered packages that included civil registration services. Intersectoral cooperation at the local and national levels made it possible to mobilize stakeholders around the issue and prevented further bottlenecks.

The National CRVS Strategy recognizes the need to take actionable steps to reinforce operational capacities. It emphasizes supplying material and equipment needed for civil registration centres, computers and backup systems for better archiving of documents. The increase on the supply side is shared between local and national actors, from local registration centres to the DNEC and law courts.

In 2019 and as part of the EU agreement, 1,237 national health and civil registration workers were equipped in 145 municipalities, including 40 of them



in the pilot-tested region, to help increase the rates of children registered. Training courses for health workers and civil registration officials were made possible through the donation of office supplies and equipment. Civil registration booklets and declaration sheets were given to 58 civil registration and 60 health centres. Consequently, in 2019, 138,255 children, including 62,715 girls, were registered compared to 102,473 children within the legal time frame and 7,478 for retroactive registration in 2018. This represents 35 per cent more children registered in 2019 compared to 2018.<sup>15</sup> Further, as a result of the pilot project in N'Zérékoré, the EU granted budgetary support of €38 million to Guinea to support implementation of the National CRVS strategy and action plan across the country.

Additionally, UNFPA contributed to strengthen the national capacity for production and dissemination of quality disaggregated data on population and development issues that allows for mapping of demographic disparities. UNFPA Guinea's programme activities for 2019 included demographic intelligence (for a total spending of US\$289,670) and a national population data system (for a total spending of US\$284,862).

### Promoting digitization by strengthening innovative solutions

Registration of vital events and recording of vital statistics in Guinea is currently done on paper. The government is in the process of modernizing its systems with the support of the European Union and UNICEF. However, the computers received through the pilot project are stand-alone machines and the records stored locally are not linked to a central database at the DNEC.<sup>16</sup> There are about 40 additional civil registration centres in the process of acquiring computers for registration activities. There is a plan to provide these centres with local servers for the backup of recorded data and with external media in the near future. This approach would

facilitate the transfer of data to the DNEC and could allow for broader digitization of vital records.

In 2017, with the support of UNICEF, an open source and mobile-based platform called RapidPro was implemented in more than 400 health centres. It was meant to provide real-time data on maternal and child mortality as well as integrating the birth registration component. This had beneficial results for the registration of events. The platform was meant to be deployed throughout the entire country, but this has not happened. This is in part because Guinea lacks the appropriate infrastructure, resources and know-how to maintain an innovative tool such as RapidPro across the entire country.

Regarding development partners, in 2018 the World Bank launched a 10-year project (US\$49.7 million dedicated to Guinea) which focuses on the creation of a unique identification number, which may enable linkages between a digitized civil registration system and a population registry. Known as the 'West Africa Unique Identification for Regional Integration and Inclusion (WURI)' programme, it was first deployed in Côte d'Ivoire and in Guinea, covering approximately 22.5 and 12.5 million people, respectively, by 2024. Each country is expected to implement its own foundational ID platforms – which use a minimal set of attributes to uniquely and exclusively describe an individual – independently and according to their needs.

### Supporting advocacy and communications for development initiatives

UNICEF has been one of the main players in supporting advocacy and communications for development initiatives in Guinea. Regarding CRVS, the government planned to disseminate the National CRVS Strategy broadly with the objective of reaching the most people possible. To this end, awareness campaigns and radio and TV spots have

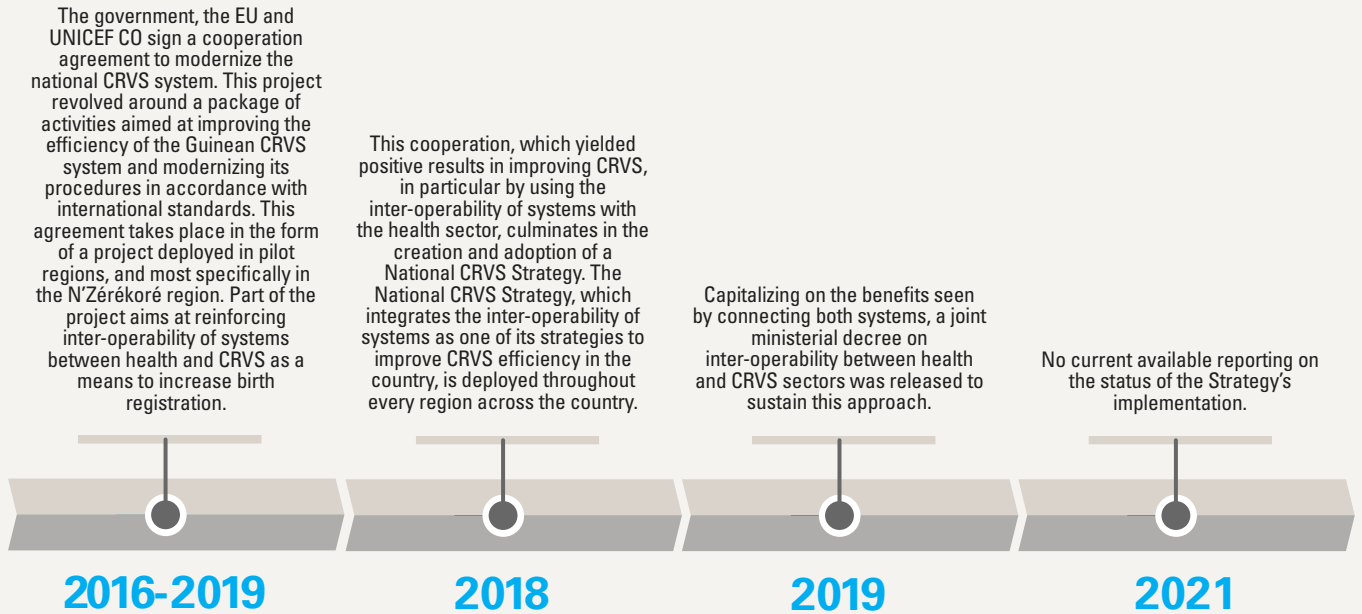
<sup>15</sup> COAR Guinea 2019.

<sup>16</sup> International Development Research Centre, Snapshot of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems of Guinea, 2019.

been planned and religious leaders were asked to be involved to inform the local populations. Registration campaigns and late registration campaigns have

also been planned as a means to reach the most vulnerable populations but there is no evidence to show whether they have been implemented yet.

**Figure 7: Timeline in introducing the National CRVS Strategy**





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

## 3.1 Programming

Registering a child's birth is seen as the first step towards safeguarding lifelong protection, and it has been a key component of UNICEF's programming since the late 1990s. Since then, the focus has broadened to contextualize birth registration within other forms of civil registration and within legal identity management. The UNICEF Strategic Plan for 2014–2017 placed birth registration within the context of child protection systems strengthening and 'Access to Justice'. The emphasis was on supporting national service provision and improving access to social services. To further strengthen CRVS systems, UNICEF's Strategic Plan 2018–2021 proposed a combined approach to addressing the specific needs of children while making investments in strengthening national child protection systems. For CRVS, systems strengthening would require improving service delivery mechanisms, workforce capacity-building, and strengthening legal and policy frameworks and guidelines.

UNICEF's Country Programme (2013–2017) for Guinea focused on the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children and fit into the general framework of the 2018–2022 United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), the five-year plan and the 2013 Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP). The programme was built around three main strategies: influencing the political dialogue in order to strengthen programmes and investments that promote accessible, equitable and quality basic social services; strengthening the management system between the central

level and the sub-prefectures; and strengthening and improving the delivery and use of services at the community level, as well as the adoption of key norms and behaviours in areas with the highest inequality indicators. With regard to CRVS and BR, the programme's strategies translated into reinforcing operational capacities of local actors to improve service delivery as well as advocacy work at the top level of government to strengthen the legal CRVS framework.

For UNICEF's subsequent Country Programme (2018–2022), the programmatic context was heavily influenced by the country's experience with Ebola. It also drew lessons from the previous country programme to include the importance of strengthening national systems, particularly in relation to skills and motivation of human resources and focusing on national policy reforms and effective implementation. UNICEF's approach to CRVS and BR focused on improving the legal framework for CRVS through a National CRVS Strategy and interministerial decree on interoperability of systems. At the operational level, UNICEF models a child-friendly communities approach in which all programme components are coordinated, integrated and monitored in 40 rural communities with the highest disparities and worst child development indicators.

In the framework of 'Delivering as one', close collaboration and joint programming with other United Nations agencies was planned, as seen in the N'Zérékoré region. UNICEF built on ongoing joint action plans with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and World Health Organization (WHO). UNICEF



also strengthened its field presence in the most underserved regions.

### 3.2 Measurable contributions

The observed period coincided with the Ebola outbreak up until 2017, and thus much of the work was tailored to respond to this emergency. Still, UNICEF played a leading role in social mobilizations in a quite challenging environment both in terms of operational capacity and technical expertise. The country office explored ways to reach out to children in remote areas and/or those with limited access to conventional media outlets. The C4D supported protection programme activities focused on birth registration and initiatives for the abandonment of female genital mutilation. In 2015, an annual community and media campaign was organized to sensitize families and provide free birth registration to children from 0–17 years.

In order to reinforce the Equity approach and bring services closer to the remotest and most vulnerable users, UNICEF created three zonal offices (ZOs) that cover all eight regions of the country and are closely involved with partners at regional level, in planning exercises (including the development of biannual and annual workplans), implementation and programme reviews.

To support public advocacy, in 2017 UNICEF participated in several public events, targeting audiences such as the general population, the government and international partners. On International Migrants Day the office covered public communication and advocacy initiatives as a contribution to the regional initiative on 'Voice of Children on the Move in West and Central Africa'. During the 'Child Month', UNICEF raised awareness on issues related to childhood including birth registration, in collaboration with the Ministry of Social Action and Promotion of Women and Children (MASPFE). On the 'Day of the African Child', the focus was on child marriage, in line with the African Union's campaign to eradicate child marriage. For 'World Children Day', UNICEF promoted a media week, with themes on TV and

radio programmes targeting women, children, young people and policymakers. The emphasis was on increasing the budget for education, nutrition, child protection and health. All of the events mentioned above included a component of birth registration in their programme.

UNICEF also engaged in communication for development initiatives, with a focus on birth registration as well as cross-cutting issues. UNICEF implemented mechanisms to disseminate its articles and success stories on medium.com and social networks (Facebook and Twitter), along with videos, TV reports, a photo album on Flickr and the CO's monthly newsletter sent to donors, the government and NGOs.

A taskforce, under the leadership of the Office of the Human Rights Commission for Human Rights (OHCHR), was set up to deal with difficult and sensitive human rights issues in the country and met on a monthly basis. The taskforce compiled reported cases of violation of human rights and followed up with the government to ensure appropriate actions were taken for the victims. UNICEF was particularly attentive to reported cases of female genital mutilation/cutting and birth registration issues.

In 2017, a strategic move was for the programme to build intersectoral approaches with key sectors that have an important role in child protection: the health sector, for example, to address the medicalization of female genital mutilation, and to improve their contribution to birth registration; and the education sector to reach children with key messages on child protection. Youth and women's groups, community radio and local NGOs had their capacity strengthened on ways of promoting community dialogue on essential family practices, positive social norms and behaviours. Communities were empowered to play a leading role in the prevention of female genital mutilation, child marriage and sexual violence against young girls and children.

In 2019, child protection interventions contributed significantly to strengthening the legal and institutional framework as well as the immediate environment for vulnerable girls and boys. The



Children's Code, revised by the National Assembly following strong advocacy and technical and financial support from UNICEF in collaboration with the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Social Action and the Promotion of Women and Children (MASPFE), reinforces legal instruments already in place to ensure the well-being of children. This impacted the issue of CRVS as CRVS advocacy work takes place within the wider effort to address child rights.

## Financial resources

Figure 8 was elaborated based on the WBS/PIBD codes retrieved from the Results Assessment Module (RAM) report for Guinea. Weighting calculations were done depending on the activity and its implication in CRVS/BR matters.

**Figure 8:** UNICEF funding overview, 2014–2020 (in USD)

UNICEF Mali							
2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	TOTAL
429,109	1,322,178	1,188,264	613,872	175,381	788,321	149,094	4,666,219

Source: UNICEF, Vision funds utilization reports, own elaboration

## 3.3 Outputs and strategies

### 1 Provide every child with a certificate upon birth

In Guinea, UNICEF's support was mostly demonstrated by strengthening the legal framework and institutional mechanisms. In 2014, UNICEF focused its work on supporting equitable and quality social services and developed a multidimensional analysis on privations for children 0–17 years of age, based on the DHS 2012. This analysis was presented to members of the Government of Guinea, highlighting the multiple privations children of Guinea were facing and the weakest social indicators. Following this analysis, a Memorandum of Engagement to fight against child poverty was signed by the Government of Guinea, promoting 12 engagements to address child poverty in the country. Subsequently, the government decided to create an intersectoral plan

to tackle the engagements over the years 2014–2017. UNICEF supported the government in the organization of regional and national workshops to devise an operational plan.

That same year, UNICEF developed an intersectoral approach between the Health, Education, WASH, and Protection clusters to help increase access to basic social services and provide social protection for the most vulnerable children. Following an analysis of civil registration bottlenecks, a road map for the strategy was developed with international expert technical assistance. The analysis recommended that a political, legal and institutional framework be set up to progressively integrate national identification, intersectoral programmatic plans between the health and civil registration sectors, and a better monitoring and reporting system for CRVS.

From 2013 to 2015, 13 research studies were carried out by the government with UNICEF's support, intended to guide UNICEF's advocacy's



strategies, including a 2014 bottleneck analysis of the civil registration system.

While the primary focus of the programme was birth registration, UNICEF supported the validation in 2013 of the EDS-MICS 2012 survey, as well as the elaboration of a national database through DevInfo with the objective of reinforcing the national statistical system in the production of quality data.

In 2016, UNICEF contributed to strengthen the legal framework by supporting the review and finalization of the proposed update of the Children's Code to ensure it adhered to international standards. UNICEF supported the government to set up a pool of experts from the government, civil society and from UN organizations, including UNICEF, to review each of the 1,045 articles of the Children's Code to ensure it is fully in line with international standards and the recently adopted penal code.

With the objective that all children of Guinea have access to birth registration, UNICEF and partners focused their interventions on supporting the establishment of the reform and modernization of the CRVS system. In collaboration with the MATD, through a project funded by the European Union, a National CRVS strategy was developed and the interoperability component was pilot tested in the region of N'Zérékoré in 2018. This initiative in the pilot region led to an increase in birth registration in that area. Showing positive results, the National CRVS Strategy was validated by the government. Thanks to UNICEF's continued support and due to positive results from the pilot region of N'Zérékoré, a joint ministerial decree on interoperability between health and civil registration nationwide was released in May 2019. The Ministry of Territorial Administration and Decentralization with support from UNICEF provided 1,237 health workers and civil registration workers with equipment for civil registration in 145 municipalities.

UNICEF also worked towards building the knowledge of professionals involved in registration of vital events on understanding their legal obligation for birth registration. The aim was

to increase knowledge about the process and their own roles and responsibilities to register birth, collect, manage and report on birth registration data. A set of national procedures and tools for birth registration and CRVS-related training (such as manuals) were developed and used to ensure harmonization and quality child protection services. These tools were used during training of 40,183 actors in charge of child protection on prevention and response. These trainings reached specifically 2,030 community volunteers, around 200 peer educators and peace operators, community and religious leaders from at least 2,695 child protection community structures, 2,229 health professionals, media and traditional communicators, 1,200 police, agents and gendarmes, 600 child protection professionals and 120 social workers. Twelve high-level authorities and professionals attended international events on child protection. About 2,000 restructured child protection structures are functioning. Over three years, a total of 634,838 children 0–17 years were provided with a birth certificate, including 513,076 children aged 0–6 months.

In line with its strategy to address the critical needs of deprived populations in disadvantaged districts, UNICEF provided technical support for the development of an investment case for maternal, newborn and child health (MNCH), including birth registration. The process involved the training of 30 mid-level managers on equity analysis and micro-planning activities at the health facilities to increase the likelihood that each child would be reached. In 2018, state agents (such as civil registrar workers, health workers, community leaders, teachers) who were legally mandated to notify or register births received training on birth notification or registration.

## 2 Link birth registration to social services

In the field of CVRS, intersectoral approaches have proved to be effective in strengthening CRVS systems. The health sector plays an important role in the CRVS process because of its involvement in the vital events of births. In Guinea, the Ebola



virus disease (EVD) epidemic that ended in June 2016 worsened the country's health indicators. UNICEF fostered multisector collaboration and complementarity to improve children's health, development, well-being and rights in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

UNICEF streamlined programmatic visits and annual partnership reviews to ensure an accountability framework focusing on results. One key recommendation was to move toward integrated and convergent programming. UNICEF supported integration and cross-sectoral linkages, working with the government at the central and the decentralized levels, the UN agencies, and partners. As a result, UNICEF developed an innovative approach known as 'Communes Amies des Enfants' that targeted 10 of the most vulnerable and deprived communes for a holistic, universal and qualitative service delivery package for health, nutrition, water and sanitation and hygiene (WASH), child protection including birth registration, and education programmes. The approach empowered communities to plan child-sensitive interventions and to increase ownership to sustain UNICEF interventions. UNICEF shared its approach and experience with other UN agencies, UNDP and UNFPA particularly, and the results helped inform the 2018–2022 Country Programme Document. In agreement with the government, the approach was planned to be extended to 30 additional communes. UNICEF continued its strategy to build intersectoral approaches with the health sector to improve their contribution to birth registration.

The National Programme for Convergence Municipalities (Programme National d'Appui aux Communes de Convergence, PNACC) was launched with the financial and logistical support of UNICEF. The key objectives were to strengthen women's and children's access to basic social services and improve technical capacities in local governance. The programme is also linked to an ongoing decentralization process, whereby responsibilities are transferred

from the central government to the local level. To that end, a multisectoral pool of 36 trainers from various sectors (health, justice, statistics, civil registration, religious) was established. They received training that they subsequently rolled out to 318 key stakeholders involved in civil registration in N'Zérékoré Region. In 2018, 102,473 children (including 50,077 girls) were registered within the legal timeline, including 70,942 children in UNICEF's priority intervention areas (N'Zérékoré, Labé, Conakry regions and 40 communes of convergence). In collaboration with the MATD, UNICEF also facilitated the elaboration and printing of new registries for the three vital events. A total of 7,478 children were registered retroactively after the legal deadline. With UNICEF support, in the N'Zérékoré Region, birth registration increased from 27 per cent in 2017 to 57 per cent in 2018.<sup>17</sup>

In line with its programme objectives, UNICEF influenced the institutionalization and implementation of the National Community Health Worker Programme, as part of the National Programme of Communes of Convergence. With funding from the GAVI Alliance and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and in collaboration with WHO, UNFPA and the World Bank, the pilot community health programme which began in 2018 is a holistic approach that integrates local governance, community health, immunization, vitamin supplementation, malnutrition, birth registration, education, hygiene promotion and youth engagement. Fifteen communes of convergence developed a protocol between the health and civil registration services, which contributed to strengthening the inter-operability between the sectors and led to improved birth registration.

On an operational level, UNICEF has developed routine birth registration services through health and immunization platforms and communities, including community health workers, in the region of N'Zérékoré. Both newborns and children coming for vaccination during the first six months

<sup>17</sup> COAR Guinea 2019



(legal delay) have been successfully captured in government records and had their births registered.

With technical and financial support from the European Union, in 2018 a joint vaccination and birth registration campaign and awareness-raising on birth registration was successfully carried out in N'Zérékoré Region during social mobilization activities for nutrition. With the support of UNICEF, 25 out of the 40 communes of convergence registered more than 50 per cent of expected births. The EU has also been involved in financing and providing technical expertise for the process of decentralizing civil registration services to local authorities.

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

In 2017, UNICEF supported the deployment of an open source and mobile-based platform called RapidPro. The tool was implemented in more than 400 health centres. It was meant to provide data on maternal and child mortality in real time, as well as integrating the birth registration component. Initially intended to be deployed throughout the entire country, it remained restricted to a few regions because of issues with the infrastructure, resources and know-how to maintain such an innovative tool across the entire country.

### 4 Engage communities to demand investment in safe and innovative technological solutions to facilitate birth registration

Following a bottleneck analysis, UNICEF's programmatic strategy was reinforced to focus not only on an intersectoral approach, but also on the fostering of community-based approaches. At the start of the observed period, 69,498 community, youth and religious leaders and associations had informed communities on the importance of civil

registration. 166 out of 343 communes benefited from a birth registration campaign, and 1,075 districts and villages had initiated activities on the importance of birth registration.

The focus of communication for development (C4D) interventions has been on strengthening the capacity of the 40 convergence municipalities in promoting community engagement as well as the demand for and use of social services. In this regard, emphasis was laid on strengthening transformative partnerships with youth associations and platforms to improve community dialogue on immunization, birth registration, etc. To this end, 128 youth associations/platforms have been identified and/or trained. A total of 23,000 people attended community dialogue sessions. Eighty young volunteers were engaged and empowered to promote community health, youth and adolescent participation and engagement in local development. A total of 240 members of youth associations and platforms and 1,319 frontline health workers were trained in interpersonal communication techniques and on immunization, birth registration, education, etc. Moreover, at least one annual community and media campaign was organized with the support of UNICEF to sensitize families and provide free birth registration to numbers of children from 0–17 years. This improved the level and quality of dialogue with the population on immunization, birth registration and other key family practices.

Institutional C4D and advocacy activities at the local level targeting mayors and local leaders helped raise awareness about issues related to children and young people's rights, including birth registration. Regular dialogue sessions and knowledge-sharing between mayors, through exchange visits within local councils and across the country, helped sensitize the mayors on the crucial role of local government in achieving results for children and youth.



# 4 KEY OBSERVATIONS

## 4.1 Relevance

UNICEF clearly identified the need to support the government to overcome the identified key bottlenecks that impede the realization of the rights of children, girls, women and young people and to reach underserved communities. Quality service delivery and capacity development have therefore remained the cornerstones of the country programme, supported by policy dialogue, evidence-based advocacy, results-based management, cross-sectoral linkages and strong strategic partnerships built around the SDGs. These efforts directly contribute to the country's post-Ebola recovery plan and the 2018–2022 United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) outcomes. Programme priorities, which are in the spirit of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, focus on the universal mandate of UNICEF under both the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Sustainable Development Goals (particularly Goals 1, 2, 4, 5, 6 and 16), as well as the call to 'leave no child behind'. UNICEF's work towards closing the gap of the 38 per cent unreached children has thus proven to be relevant in the context of providing equitable access to quality services and rights.

UNICEF clearly understood the need to place birth registration within the context of child protection systems strengthening. As such, UNICEF and partners have made a significant contribution to an improved and more focused national strategy with supporting programmes being developed and implemented, in particular those focusing on quality service delivery and improved access to CRVS services. Yet, the efficiency and sustainability of these programmes remain a

challenge, as evidenced by continuing errors in registration and lack of access to birth certificates and the services they unlock.

## 4.2 Effectiveness

UNICEF has been a key player in CRVS systems strengthening in the country, in a challenging economic, political, social and development context. The Ebola crisis highlighted and exacerbated persistent vulnerabilities at the national level, in particular for the CRVS and health systems, which did not have the capacity to respond and maintain the provision of essential services.

At the onset of the 2014–2017 Country Programme, major bottlenecks were preventing the country from implementing effective CRVS strategies. Additionally, the EVD outbreak emergency response had been given the utmost priority, and it wasn't until 2016 that the Programme transitioned to a development approach. At the end of the EVD crisis resources allocated were scarce, making it challenging to pursue strategic interventions initiated as part of the emergency response to the Ebola crisis.

Despite this, UNICEF has been successful in providing leadership and coordination to the Government of Guinea in its strategy to strengthen the CRVS system. Until the adoption of the national strategy on CRVS, many of the initiatives were based on an unclear, decentralized and ad hoc service delivery approach without a global strategy to reach vulnerable populations. When in 2017 Guinea initiated the process to reform its civil registration system, UNICEF



was the main partner in assisting governmental institutions through regional and national workshops and technical support to elaborate an operational plan. UNICEF's advocacy and support to governmental institutions was an important strategic decision to generate political commitment. Indeed, the government's capacity to reform legislation is constrained by a lack of qualified professionals and technical expertise, and insufficient financial and human resources. UNICEF's support was essential in pushing the CRVS agenda forward and paving the way to modernize Guinea's CRVS system in accordance with international standards.

Understanding the need to reach the most hard-to-reach populations, UNICEF adapted its strategies to ensure vulnerable groups are not left behind. UNICEF broadened its support on national service provision and improving access to social services to a more holistic approach which addresses the needs of children while investing in a sustainable CRVS system. Well-documented evidence has shown that social service offerings are an effective means of registering vital events, especially births, while a comprehensive CRVS leads to better data on the beneficiaries of these services. This ultimately allows the government to better plan and invest in development programmes. Thus, initiatives included elaborating an intersectoral approach with the Health, WASH, Education and Protection clusters, targeting two of the poorest regions in the country, to reach a broader range of at-risk groups and facilitate access to social services for those most in need.

One of UNICEF's key achievements with regard to reaching the most vulnerable populations was UNICEF's high-level advocacy to prioritize the inter-operability of systems between the health and CRVS sectors. Inter-operability with the health system increases timely registration of births and enables greater access to remote populations, which are often the most vulnerable groups. UNICEF supported the development of multisectoral strategies and elaborated the 'child-friendly communes' initiative and the

implementation of key initiatives in a few districts. However, the inter-operability of systems was not brought to scale nationwide, thus not showing a full impact on birth registration rates nationally. UNICEF's positive contributions could have been enhanced through continuous advocacy for scaling inter-operable service delivery in the entire country to reach a higher rate of registration.

UNICEF successfully assisted the government with its decentralization approach of service delivery to communal levels. Decentralization reduces obstacles arising from travelling long distances to registration offices to complete the registration process. UNICEF was able to build on a network to foster community engagement on social mobilization and provide CRVS training to local workers, who were able to disseminate knowledge at a local level.

UNICEF's contribution to building strong coalitions and partnerships has been limited, in particular with international and private partners. Notably, the World Bank WURI project may be an opportunity to pursue potential linkages between a digitized civil registration system and a population registry. UNICEF's success in fostering innovative partnerships with civil society or the private sector has been modest, although there have been community outreach initiatives for improving child-friendly practices within communities that were successful in registering births.

UNICEF's efforts to support the digitization of vital events or promoting innovative platforms for CRVS has shown modest results. The RapidPro initiative did not lead to the expected results because of technical and resource issues. Although the government mentioned its priority of modernizing its CRVS system, no information could be found on the specifics of the implementation of such process.

### 4.3 Coherence

UNICEF worked from the beginning with government institutions towards achieving universal birth registration. It organized national and regional workshops which ultimately led to



the Civil Registration Reform and Modernization Strategy for the years 2018–2022. UNICEF has been consistent in pursuing partnerships that aim at achieving the strategy’s global objective of CRVS system strengthening. Concretely, UNICEF is cooperating closely with the government on different levels. At the institutional level to strengthen the legal framework so as to align with international standards, and at a decentralized level to deploy its strategy within the country, and to a lesser extent at an operational level to create synergies between sectors. As the strategy was deployed only recently, UNICEF should remain a main player throughout its period of implementation. UNICEF also engaged in a strategic partnership with the EU on the implementation of initiatives within designated regions, where it has been instrumental in providing support to strengthen the process. These effective partnerships have led to an increase in birth registration, particularly in the years 2018 and 2019, as 35 per cent more children were registered in 2019 compared to the previous year.<sup>18</sup> However, strengthened partnerships could be pursued, especially with other development partners and private sector actors operating in the country. For example, there could be synergies to be explored with the World Bank’s WURI project, and coordination could be reinforced between the government and CRVS actors. This would be an opportunity for UNICEF to lead stronger coordination among the stakeholders as it already holds a leadership role at the government level.

#### 4.4 Innovation

Guinea’s National CRVS Strategy highlights linking CRVS to biometrics as one of its main challenges. It certainly is, because Guinea’s current system isn’t linked to any digitized ID management, electoral or social system. Initiatives which introduce innovative solutions to improve the quality and quantity of birth registration have been rare. Guinea lacks the basic infrastructure, equipment, human capacity and financial resources to establish and maintain

a sustainable innovative approach on a big scheme. UNICEF did support a regional initiative to equip CRVS registration centres with computers. However, the computers are not linked to a central database at the DNEC and records are only kept locally. These constraints limit the reach of such an initiative. A plan to provide external media such as USB key and external drive for backup of recorded data is being discussed.

RapidPro, an open source platform, was also introduced with the support of UNICEF in more than 400 health centres in Guinea with the objective of providing real-time data on maternal and child mortality and had beneficial results for the registration of events. However, UNICEF did not roll out the initiative to the entire country.

Furthermore, the World Bank has launched a project for the creation of a unique identification number. According to available information, UNICEF’s initiatives on CRVS have not been included in this project. Synergies between the World Bank and UNICEF or other CRVS partners would be an opportunity to open the dialogue for linkages of CRVS systems and create momentum behind digitization as a long-term objective.

Additionally, it was not possible for UNICEF CO to demonstrate an increase in death and marriage registration coverage, partly because the government’s strategy has focused mainly on the registration of births. Statistics on deaths are unavailable as there isn’t an adequate system to register them. Yet, readily available data from such systems would be critical for planning and monitoring purposes. Strengthening death registration would allow for a more sustainable CRVS system.

Moving towards digitization is a process that would necessitate coordination at the highest level between branches of the government, international partners and private stakeholders. With the current status of the CRVS service delivery, prerequisites need to be fulfilled before moving to this stage. Continued efforts from UNICEF to adequately improve the supply side will help lay the ground for digitization.

<sup>18</sup> COAR Guinea 2019



# 5 CONCLUSIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS

Reforms of the CRVS system in Guinea from 2014 to 2020 (pre-COVID-19) include new legislation aligned with international norms; an Intersectoral Coordination for the Reform and Modernization of Civil Status (CIRMEC) to coordinate national mechanisms; and the development of a Civil Registration Reform and Modernization Strategy. The purpose of this case study was to look into the **importance of establishing a legal framework for CRVS in line with international standards** as a foundation to implement effective strategies for a resilient CRVS system, and whether the implementation of these reforms contributed to increasing birth registration coverage in the country.

The Guinea case study provides the opportunity to assess the extent of UNICEF's contributions to the successful development and implementation of these reforms. To strengthen Guinea's CRVS system, UNICEF shared knowledge at the institutional level, and provided technical expertise at the communal level. UNICEF supported the set-up of multisectoral coordination mechanisms within the government. It also shared knowledge to build the capacity of professionals involved in the registration of vital events. The objective was for them to gain a better understanding of the process and their own roles and responsibilities within the CRVS system.

Furthermore, the example of Guinea also provides an opportunity to examine a case where UNICEF activities were reprioritized to address an unpredictable emergency, namely the Ebola virus disease outbreak. This case study showcases **UNICEF's support to lay the foundations for a strengthened national CRVS system** as

well as draw on factors that influenced the implementation of programmes and achievement of results.

## 5.1 Limitations of this case study

This case study is a result of desk review of UNICEF's CRVS programme documents supplemented by review of other available documents of government and non-government stakeholders in Guinea. The main limitations of this case study are i) the inability to meet key interlocutors on the ground, and ii) the information gaps in certain areas of the evaluation.

### i. Inability to meet key interlocutors

The case study was mainly elaborated based on a desk review and analysis of secondary documentation available, supplemented by key informant interviews through phone discussions to validate or nuance findings. As a result, this study is lacking the component of an on-site consultation with key interlocutors and therefore some aspects described in this case study lack additional perspectives that would otherwise come as result of in-person interviews with the relevant stakeholders.

Guinea has undergone CRVS reforms since the mid-2010s, but the National CRVS Strategy was implemented in 2018 and is only beginning to produce positive results in that area. The opportunity to consult more closely with key interlocutors, and at an earlier stage in the evaluation process, would have made it possible to examine in greater detail the progress achieved during the National CRVS strategy. Concretely,



it would have been useful to better highlight obstacles to the realization of certain outputs and strategies laid out in the strategy, in particular related to the inter-operability of systems with sectors other than health; the implementation of a national communication strategy and issues related to digitization and the use of ICT. Closer contact with development partners would also have given a deeper insight on ongoing and planned partnerships around CRVS. Finally, in-person discussions from the Country Office would have provided more context related to the Ebola crisis and its measurable consequences for the birth registration component of UNICEF's programmes.

#### ii. information gaps in certain areas of the evaluation

The data points used in this analysis stem from three sources: DHS 2012 to provide context of the situation at the start of the observed period; and MICS 2016 and DHS 2018 to track and compare changes in rates and draw conclusions on the trend observed during 2014–2020. The data points on marriage, divorce and death registration are not available – thus an assessment of the trend in these areas was not possible. Similarly, while DHS 2018 reported data points on wealth quintile, making it possible to observe differences in birth registration based on socioeconomic status, it was impossible to understand the dynamics of change in birth registration rates between 2014 and 2020 because the information was not available in previous data sets.

Further, scarce information was available for human and financial resources on CRVS, in particular during the early years of the observed time period (pre-2017). This is in part due to the fact that the Ebola pandemic was the utmost priority for the country office and most resources were being allocated to fight the outbreak.

## 5.2 Lessons learned and good practices

**Stimulating demand AND ensuring quality service delivery go hand in hand to successfully turn people's engagement into increased registration rates.** In the years 2017–2020, UNICEF's efforts were targeted towards continuous advocacy to raise the importance of civil registration at the central level and increase public awareness within local communities. This was reflected through technical support provided to the government during the elaboration of the Civil Registration and Modernization Strategy and local initiatives. Although it has produced results, it is still a challenge to create momentum and mobilize the necessary resources for a sustainable CRVS system. The low level of accountability at the top level and weak governance have been obstacles to legitimize the importance of CRVS in accessing rights and services. Additionally, awareness raising was only partially effective considering the service offered is inadequate to respond to the demand. A lesson learned is that stimulating demand goes hand in hand with ensuring quality service delivery to transform the engagement of the populations into increased registration rates.

**Strategy implementation should be backed by sufficient funding and investment to produce the best results.** UNICEF supported the government with the elaboration of its strategy and more recently its implementation. The strategy revolves around six core areas: reinforcing laws and policies in relation to CRVS, building operational capacity and increasing financial and technical resources, increasing technical knowledge, raising public awareness and advocacy, monitoring activities, and strengthening vital statistics. UNICEF has been instrumental and a key partner in pushing this strategy forward. Nonetheless, insufficient funding from the government geared towards capacity-building, financial and technical support, access to technological resources and infrastructure has hampered the planning, implementation and sustainability of service delivery.



**An integrated, cross-sectoral approach to CRVS at the decentralized level contributes to reaching the most hard-to-reach populations.** Advocacy outreach towards youth, religious and community leaders led to an increase on the demand side, in particular for the most vulnerable. UNICEF helped strengthen the capacities of the government at the community and regional levels by applying an integrated and cross-sectoral approach. Through the roll-out of the ‘Communes Amies des Enfants’ initiative, UNICEF was able to support the provision of service delivery; access to registration in remote regions was reinforced and birth registration rates increased.

**Building coalitions with a variety of stakeholders and strengthening partnerships is a successful means of placing the most marginalized populations at the centre of the political dialogue.**

In addition to supporting the access and quality of services, as seen with the coalition between the EU and UNICEF, the lack of awareness of child rights and accountability of duty bearers are contributing factors to a weak CRVS system. Reinforcing laws and policies that are currently not effective enough to protect and grant the same rights to all children is an efficient way to reach the most vulnerable. To this end, UNICEF strengthened the legal framework by supporting the review of 1,045 articles of the Children’s Code to ensure its alignment with international standards. This support was possible by bringing together experts from different ministries within the government, UN organizations, international actors and civil society to be fully involved in the review and decision-making process. In this case, building coalitions has been successful in creating change at an institutional level for otherwise excluded children.

**Integration and cross-sectoral linkages empower communities to plan child-sensitive interventions and increase ownership to sustain UNICEF interventions.** Data show a direct link between UNICEF’s investments in facilitating birth registration by health workers and increased registration rates. Post-Ebola, UNICEF focused its efforts on linking health with registration services with the aim of increasing the registration of births.

UNICEF had committed to achieving, by the end of 2019, the goal of 100,000 children 0–6 years old having their birth registered and receiving a birth certificate. In 2019, 138,255 had their birth registered. This approach has proved to be one of the most successful efforts led by UNICEF in recent years. At the central level, UNICEF supported integration and cross-sectoral linkages, in particular with the Health Ministry, working with the government and sub-prefectures, the UN agencies, and international partners. To further push these linkages forward, an interministerial decree was passed on the mechanism for inter-operability between civil status and health. On an operational level, UNICEF developed routine birth registration services through local health services, including the community of health workers registering newborns in the region of N’Zérékoré. Moreover, an initiative called ‘Communes Amies des Enfants’ was set up, which provided a universal service delivery package for WASH, Child Protection and Education programmes. Building intersectoral approaches with the health sector was crucial to contributing to an increase in birth registration rates, to the extent that this approach helped inform the 2018–2022 Country Programme Document.

While cross-sectoral linkages with the health system achieved positive results, the same cannot be said with other sectors. For example, no information related to the collaboration between the WURI World Bank project on ID management and the CRVS system was found, leading us to conclude that this type of collaboration has yet to be explored. Multisectoral collaboration in this area would make it possible to take advantage of identification records of the population with an ID to merge the data into CRVS records. A missed opportunity includes building a population register that could be used as source of legal identity data for population and other institutional stakeholders.

**Adequate legal framework and sound infrastructure are prerequisites to moving towards a digitized CRVS system.** Over the years, UNICEF has built a strong partnership with the government on CRVS matters and is one of the main players in helping pave the way for a stronger CRVS



system. Leveraging partnerships and increasing intergovernmental coordination is key to building an effective CRVS system. Given the existing bottlenecks, Guinea has not yet been successful in moving towards digitization of CRVS processes and data collection. Thus, UNICEF's involvement in innovative solutions has been minimal. Initiatives include the use of the open platform RapidPro and the computerization of civil registry centres in pilot regions. While there is a commitment to modernize the national CRVS system, there is still a need to strengthen the legal framework with regard to ICT, to partner with key stakeholders and improve infrastructure before adequate technology-oriented tools and solutions can be effective in increasing birth registration services.

**A strengthened CRVS system contributes to fight a health crisis.** In the first half of the observed time period, the Ebola crisis was a main concern and UNICEF engaged in an emergency response, shifting most of its resources to address the epidemic. In times of a health crisis, CRVS matters may be relegated to the background to deal with pressing needs. However, considering the highest rates of death which occurred during that time frame, a functioning CRVS system would make it possible to process death registration and gather accurate data.

### 5.3 Issues for future investigation

Guinea is determined to modernize its CRVS systems, as has been demonstrated by the recent changes in the institutional framework and political commitment, notably through the Civil Registration Reform and Modernization Strategy: 2018–2022. To this end, the support and commitment of UNICEF has been notable. CRVS systems require not only a collaborative environment but also a strong national structure for the management and coordination of the civil registration system. Furthermore, a sustainable CRVS system is only possible by ensuring universal, high-quality service delivery to meet the demand. While Guinea is on the right track to improving CRVS in the country, some major challenges remain that might limit the effectiveness of interventions. These include organizational bottlenecks that are detrimental to the quality of service delivery, inter-operability bottlenecks due to limited collaboration between the health and CRVS sectors, and the lack of integration of CRVS into other identification systems. Thus, it will be necessary to strengthen these areas to achieve enhanced results to achieve a modernized CRVS system.





## Annex 1 Data for Evidence Story

### Birth registration among children 0–4 years old

	2012		2018	
	% of children with births registered	No. of children	% of children with births registered	No. of children
<b>Age</b>				
Less than 2 years	58.1	2,825	59.9	2,879
2–4 years	57.8	4,248	63.2	4,898
<b>Sex</b>				
Male	58.4	3,606	62.4	3,969
Female	57.4	3,467	61.5	3,808
<b>Residence</b>				
Urban	82.6	1,909	80.8	2,313
Rural	48.8	5,164	54.0	5,464
<b>Province</b>				
Boké	51.8	682	42.5	791
Conakry	86.4	1,034	78.6	915
Faranah	42.9	711	48.2	810
Kankan	62.2	1,184	67.5	1,357
Kindia	56.2	1,077	58.5	1,196
Labé	38.3	635	57.7	882
Mamou	39.0	471	66.6	604
N'Zérékoré	60.7	1,280	69.4	1,222
<b>Wealth Quintiles</b>				
Lowest	n/a	n/a	43.2	1,817
Second	n/a	n/a	54.7	1,668
Third	n/a	n/a	63.6	1,577
Fourth	n/a	n/a	74.9	1,488
Highest	n/a	n/a	81.9	1,227
<b>Total</b>	<b>57.9</b>	<b>7,073</b>	<b>62.0</b>	<b>7,777</b>

NOTE: Data extracted from: Guinea DHS 2012 and Guinea DHS 2018.



## Annex 2 List of documents reviewed

Government of Guinea	Stratégie Nationale de la Réforme et de la Modernisation de l'Etat Civil en Guinée 2018–2022
Government of Guinea/ UNICEF	Towards Universal Birth Registration in Guinea
IDRC Centre of Excellence for CRVS Systems	A Snapshot of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems of Guinea
UNICEF	Strategic Plan 2018–2021 Executive Plan
UNICEF	A Passport to Protection: Guide to Birth Registration Programming
UNICEF	Country Office Annual Report 2014
UNICEF	Country Office Annual Report 2015
UNICEF	Country Office Annual Report 2016
UNICEF	Country Office Annual Report 2017
UNICEF	Country Office Annual Report 2018
UNICEF	Country Office Annual Report 2019
UNICEF	Country Programme Document 2018–2022
UNICEF	Country Programme Document 2013–2017
UNICEF	Rapport Final du Projet d'Appui à la Modernisation du Système d'Etat Civil en Guinée 2019
UNICEF	Analyse de Situation des Enfants en Guinée 2015
UNICEF	Guinea RAM 2017–2020
UNICEF	2015 RAM analytical statement of progress
UNICEF	Output Ratings with latest progress, 2018
World Bank	The State of Identification Systems in Africa, Country Briefs, 2017
World Bank	ID4D Country Diagnostic: Guinea, 2016
World Bank	The State of Identification Systems in Africa, Country Briefs, 2017
World Bank	ID4D Country Diagnostic: Mali, 2016



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