"Implementation of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) In Bangladesh: Concerns and Challenges"

By

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MPPG 11th Batch

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South Asian Institute of Policy and Governance (SIPG)

North South University, Dhaka, Bangladesh

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Declaration

I declare that the dissertation entitled "Implementation of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) In Bangladesh: Concerns and Challenges" submitted to the South Asian Institute of Policy and Governance (SIPG) of North South University, Bangladesh, for the Degree of Master in Public Policy and Governance (MPPG) is an original work of mine. No part of it, in any form, has been copied from other sources without acknowledgment or submitted to any other university or institute for any degree or diploma. Views and expressions of the thesis bear the responsibility of mine with the exclusion of SIPG for any errors and omissions to it.

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Acknowledgment

Abstract

Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) is essential for ensuring governance, promoting human rights, and formulating evidence-based policy for the nation. This is also critical for providing legal identity, universal inclusion, and accurate data generation to achieve sustainable development goals. In recent years, Bangladesh has recognized its importance and taken some significant steps to strengthen the system. Despite substantial national efforts, implementing an integrated and comprehensive CRVS system faces persistent challenges. This study explores the concerns and challenges to effective CRVS implementation in Bangladesh and evaluates its effectiveness with global principles.

The research utilizes Winter's Integrated Implementation Model to analyze key factors influencing CRVS implementation, including policy design, organizational and inter-organizational behavior, management practices, and target group behavior. A mixed-methods approach was adopted, integrating primary data through interviews with government officials and citizens as well as secondary data from existing literature, policy documents, government reports, and academic studies.

This research concludes that a significant obstacle is the fragmented institutional framework, where multiple agencies operate independently without sufficient coordination or shared protocols, leading to duplication of efforts and inefficiencies. The legal framework also shows significant gaps, such as the absence of a law for adoption registration and the lack of a legal basis for generating vital statistics from civil registration data. Marriage registration laws are inconsistent. There is no legal provision for Buddhists and Ethnic People to register their marriages, reflecting an exclusionary framework. Moreover, marriage registration is not mandatory for all religions. The study also highlights organizational and technological challenges, including lack of coordination and inadequate data interoperability between government agencies. From a management perspective, dual responsibilities assigned to registrars—such as combining their roles with other administrative duties without additional incentives—result in limited focus on registration tasks. Registrars often lack technical skill, reliable digital infrastructure, and proper incentives, further undermining data quality and service delivery. On the societal side, low public

awareness significantly impacts registration rates. Many citizens consider registration processes unnecessary unless immediate administrative needs arise, such as school enrolment or inheritance claims. Death registration, in particular, is largely neglected due to a lack of perceived benefits. Religious and cultural attitudes further contribute to gaps in marriage registration and adoption practices.

This research also explores how Bangladesh's Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) system aligns with the UN CRVS Principles and the WHO CRVS IS Design Principles. The analysis discovers a mixed outcome. However, notable advancements have been made in compulsory birth and death registration and the implementation of standardized PIN (Unique Identification Number); significant challenges persist in achieving universal coverage, compulsory registration of all vital events by law, and ensuring smooth data integration.

Recommendations include revising the legal framework for compulsory registration processes, introducing adoption registration laws, and integrating vital statistics production into the system. A centralized population register needs to be introduced. Strengthening inter-agency data interoperability, providing incentives and training for registrars, and investing in digital infrastructure are also critical. Finally, public awareness campaigns are needed to address cultural and social barriers. By addressing these challenges, Bangladesh can create a more inclusive and effective CRVS system, empowering marginalized populations, enhancing governance, and ensuring universal legal identity for sustainable development.

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List of Abbreviations

BANBEIS   Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics

BBS   Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics

BRIS   Birth Registration Information System

BDRIS   Birth and Death Registration Information System

BRN   Birth Registration Number

CHT   Chittagong Hill Tracts

CPR   Central Population Register

COD   Cause of Death

CR   Civil Registration

CRVS   Civil Registration and Vital Statistics

CRVS++   Civil Registration and Vital Statistics and Beyond

CRVSID   Civil Registration and Vital Statistics and Identity Management

DDLG   Deputy Director of Local Government

DGFP   Directorate General of Family Planning

DGHS   Directorate General of Health Services

DPE   Directorate Of Primary Education

DR   District Registrar

EC   Election Commission

ESCAP   Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

IS   Information System

MoHFW   Ministry of Health and Family Welfare

MoLGRD   Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives

NID   National Identification Number

ORG   Office of the Registrar General

PIN   Personal Identification Number

SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SVRS	Sample Vital Registration System
UID	Unique Identification Number
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UNO	Upazila Nirbahi Officer
VA	Verbal Autopsy
VS	Vital Statistics
WHO	World Health Organization

Chapter

1   Introduction

1.1   Background of the Research

CRVS system has two components- one is Civil Registration (CR), and another one is Vital Statistics (VS). "Civil registration is the continuous, permanent, compulsory and universal recording of the occurrence and characteristics of vital events (births, deaths, marriages, adoption, divorces) of the population in accordance with the law whereas Vital statistics constitute the collection of statistics on vital events in a lifetime of a person as well as relevant characteristics of the events" (United Nations, 2001). Civil Registration(CR) is essential for individuals to secure their legal identity, and Vital Statistics (VS) offers vital insights into the demographics and health of the population, enabling policies to be more effective and aligned with societal needs (World Health Organization, 2013). CRVS (Civil Registration and Vital Statistics) is crucial for any country as it helps governments plan and allocate resources effectively by ensuring legal identity and rights for individuals. Strengthening the CRVS system is essential for achieving national development goals, promoting human rights, ensuring social inclusion, enhancing governance, facilitating economic growth, improving public health outcomes, and advancing the well-being of its diverse population (Cabinet Division, n.d.).

It provides essential legal proof of identity, family relationships, and nationality, safeguarding individual rights and preventing statelessness. It is especially vital for marginalized groups—such as people with low incomes, migrants, and minorities—who often lack documentation, ensuring their inclusion and protection in society. This documentation is crucial for accessing public services, including healthcare, education, and social welfare. Legal identity also enables participation in the economy, allowing individuals to seek jobs, vote, inherit property, open bank accounts, access credit, and obtain passports or driving licenses (Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific , 2012).

Civil registration systems generate administrative data used to produce vital statistics essential for multiple sectors. They provide the most reliable and efficient source of vital statistics by recording events such as births, deaths, marriages, divorces, and adoptions. Unlike censuses or household surveys, civil registration systems enable timely and accurate reporting, offering continuous data on population dynamics and health indicators at national and local levels, supporting effective planning and decision-making. Well-functioning CRVS systems contribute to evidence-based policymaking, efficient resource allocation, and sustainable development, enhancing the credibility of national statistics (Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific , 2012).

In addition, the core principles of CRVS align with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as it emphasizes good governance and inclusion. Investment for strengthening CRVS systems significantly contributes toward advancing global sustainable development. Data from well-functioning CRVS systems can measure 67 indicators of 12 Sustainable Development Goals. Some targets are Directly linked to Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (e.g., the proportion of children under 5 years whose births have been registered), and some targets like are best measured using data from good-quality CRVS (Mills, Abouzahr, Kim, Rassekh, & Sarpong, 2017).

According to WHO, the objectives of a well-functioning CRVS system are:

- "Secure individuals with recognition of their legal identity and ensure rights of access to public services, social protection, and human rights;
- generate statistics on population dynamics and health indicators on a continuous basis for the country as a whole and at a local level for its administrative subdivisions;
- generate essential statistical information that decision-makers depend on for policy formulation, planning and implementation, monitoring, and
- permit the understanding of the prevalence, distribution, and causes of mortality, as well as identify health inequalities and priorities" (World Health Organization, n.d.).

The lack of a comprehensive and integrated civil registration system remains a significant obstacle to development. It hinders countries from enhancing the efficiency of public services and producing the reliable data required for Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) initiatives or combating diseases like HIV/AIDS. Accurate and timely statistics on fertility, mortality, and causes of death is some prerequisites for achieving these goals. These vital statistics, derived from complete and permanent registration of life events, explain the importance of the link between civil registration systems and national statistical institutes (UNICEF, 2019).

In 2014, Bangladesh attended the 1st Ministerial Conference on CRVS in Asia and the Pacific, where the attendees issued a Ministerial Declaration to ensure inclusive and responsive CRVS systems. According to the declaration, Asia and Pacific countries, including Bangladesh, declared the 'Asian and Pacific CRVS Decade' for 2015-2024 and aimed to ensure 100% birth registration within 2024. The theme of this declaration is "Get everyone in the picture".

Bangladesh recognizes that to utilize the full potential of its population, it is essential to ensure that everyone is counted by improving the Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) system (Bangladesh Implementation Working Group, 2018). The country has an ambition to formulate a strong CRVS system through a Unique ID (UID) framework, integrating it with service delivery mechanisms defined as CRVS and Beyond or CRVS++ (Cabinet Division, n.d.). However, whether the system is fully functioning is still a question.

This research aims to identify and analyze the concerns and challenges of effective implementation of the Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) system in Bangladesh.

1.2   Statement of the Problem

The Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) system is a cornerstone for effective governance, social inclusion, and sustainable development. However, the country faces significant challenges in fully implementing an effective and integrated CRVS system. Despite international commitments, such as the "Asian and Pacific CRVS Decade" (2015-2024) and the goal of achieving 100% birth registration by 2024, the

country faces various obstacles in implementing an efficient CRVS system. These challenges hinder the ability of the government to record vital events and generate timely and reliable vital statistics.

Although Bangladesh has made efforts to improve its CRVS system through initiatives like the Online Birth and Death Registration and Unique ID (UID) framework, the effectiveness of the current policies and initiatives remains uncertain. There is insufficient understanding of the key challenges in implementing the CRVS system and what factors affect its functionality and effectiveness.

This research aims to identify these obstacles and assess the effectiveness of existing strategies of the CRVS system in Bangladesh.

1.3   Research Question and Objective of the Research

The research question of the research is:

What is the current state of implementation of CRVS in Bangladesh?

The following are the objectives of the study:

- To identify the key challenges of implementing the CRVS system in Bangladesh.
- To assess the effectiveness of the existing policies and initiatives of the CRVS system.

1.4   Scope and Justification of the Study

This research aims to comprehensively explore the concerns and challenges of CRVS implementation in Bangladesh. Addressing these issues is crucial for ensuring the country's ability to provide reliable data for development planning, strengthen governance, and promote all citizens' social inclusion and protection. By identifying the key challenges and analyzing their impact, this research will contribute to strengthening the CRVS system in Bangladesh.

Chapter

2 Conceptual Discussion and Literature Review

2.1 Policy Formulation and Implementation

2.1.1 Key Concept of Implementation

According to the founding fathers of implementation, Pressman and Wildavsky, Policy implementation involves setting clear goals and actions to achieve them (Pressman and Wildavsky, 1984). It encompasses efforts by public and private actors to execute the objectives of policy decisions, whether through one-time initiatives or continuous adjustments to meet both significant and minor mandates (Van Meter and Van Horn, 1975). According to Mazmanian and Sabatier (1983), implementation is the process of executing a fundamental policy decision, typically established in statutes but also through executive orders or court rulings. This process begins with an authoritative decision and involves key actors such as politicians and top-level bureaucrats who are pivotal in achieving desired outcomes. They categorize the success of implementation into three variables: the complexity of the problem, the statute's capacity to support the implementation process, and the influence of political factors on achieving objectives.

O'Toole (2003) describes policy implementation as the interaction between governmental intention and outcomes. It connects the expression of political will to the practical results. Howlett and Ramesh (2003) further argue that policy implementation is a crucial phase of the policy cycle where governments operationalize their intentions.

For effective implementation, Elmore (1978) identifies four essential elements: clearly defined objectives that reflect the policy's intention, a structured management plan assigning tasks and performance standards, objective performance measurement tools, and accountability mechanisms. Maitland (1995) told that successful implementation requires compliance with policy, measurable indicators of success, and improving the surrounding political environment.

Giacchino and Kakabadse (2003) emphasize the importance of political responsibility, strong project management, and commitment to initiatives for effective implementation. They also highlight the significance of local capacity and the motivation of implementers, which are influenced by socio-political factors such as competing priorities, institutional pressures, and stability. This explains the role of individual and institutional will, which often outweigh external policy features, especially at lower levels of implementation.

Implementation can be understood as a process involving a series of actions to enact authoritative decisions, as an output, measuring the extent to which program goals are achieved, and as an outcome, signifying measurable changes targeted by the policy (Lester et al., 1995).

2.1.2 Policy Formulation and Implementation in Bangladesh

(Aminuzzaman, 2013) explored the institutional framework and key determinants for policymaking in Bangladesh. Part II of the Constitution outlines the fundamental principles of state policy, comprising 25 articles that guide public policy and development goals. The National Economic Council (NEC) serves as the highest authority for approving economic policies and long-term development strategies, while the Planning Commission formulates macroeconomic and microeconomic plans with the help of sector specialists. As the highest policymaking body, the Cabinet has ultimate authority over all significant policy decisions, including legislation, when ministries take on implementation and coordination roles. Ministries often form task forces to draft policy documents, which are then reviewed by relevant bodies like the Ministry of Law and the Ministry of Finance before cabinet approval.

The policymaking process involves a variety of stakeholders, including parliament, political parties, bureaucracy, NGOs, the private sector, informal pressure groups, and international donors. Parliament's role is mainly approving policies. Bureaucracy is central in policy formulation and implementation. However, resistance to change and inefficiencies often impede policy progress in Bangladesh.

NGOs fill gaps the state leaves, particularly in social policy, leveraging donor funding and technical expertise. The private sector heavily influences fiscal and industrial

policies. Informal pressure groups and donors have a significant influence. Donor agencies try to influence policies through conditionality and technical assistance.

In summary, Political will and donor influence are the most significant determinants of policymaking in Bangladesh. Policy implementation in the country faces challenges such as a lack of continuity in leadership, Absence of institutional memory due to frequent transfer of government officials, and Resistance to change within the bureaucracy (Aminuzzaman, 2013).

The policymaking process in Bangladesh is characterized by weak institutional performance, limited internal ownership, and significant external influence. Strengthening the roles of parliament, reducing donor dependency, and fostering stakeholder collaboration are essential to improving policy outcomes. The existing framework needs reform to ensure that policymaking serves national interests and achieves long-term development goals (Aminuzzaman, 2013).

2.2   Key Concepts of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS)

2.2.1   CRVS System

"A system of civil registration includes all institutional, legal and technical settings needed for the performance of civil registration functions in a technical, sound, coordinated and standardized manner throughout the country, considering the cultural and social circumstances particular to that country" (United Nations, 2014).

The components of a vital statistics system are as follows: (a) legal registration, (b) statistical reporting, and (c) the collection, compilation, and dissemination of statistics related to vital events, as shown in Figure 1 below.
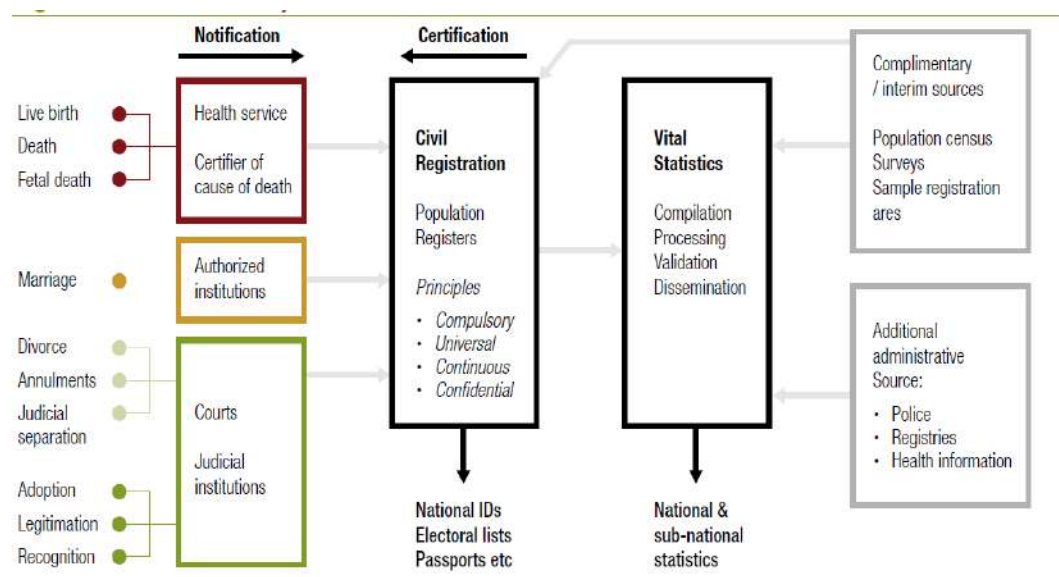
Figure 1: The CRVS System

Source: United Nations, 2014

2.2.2 Vital Events Considered for Registration

According to the UN, the vital events that are recommended for a civil registration system are the following:

Live Births: All live-born infants must be registered and counted as live-born, regardless of gestational age or whether they are alive or deceased at the time of registration. Additionally, if they pass away at any point after birth, they should be registered and counted as deaths.

Deaths: The permanent loss of all signs of life at any point after a live birth has occurred.

Foetal Deaths: This is separated from death. Foetal Death occurring before the complete expulsion or extraction of a product of conception from the mother, regardless of the pregnancy's duration. This is indicated by the absence of any signs of life, such as breathing, heartbeats, pulsation of the umbilical cord, or any distinct voluntary movement, after the separation.

Marriages: The act, ceremony or process by which the legal relationship of spouses is constituted.

Divorces: The final legal dissolution of a marriage, which is the separation of spouses that grants both parties the right to remarry, as per civil, religious, and/or other legal provisions by the laws of each country.

Annulments: The annulment or voiding of a marriage by a competent authority, per the laws of each country, which grants the parties the status of having never been married to each other.

Separation (Judicial): The legal separation of married individuals, as defined by the laws of each country, without granting the parties the right to remarry.

Adoption: The legal and voluntary process of accepting and treating a child born to other parents as one's own, in accordance with the laws of each country.

Legitimation: The formal process of granting a person the status and rights of a child born within wedlock, as provided by the laws of each country.

Recognition: The legal acknowledgment, either voluntarily or compulsorily, of the paternity of a child born outside of wedlock.

Not all countries record or publish statistics for all vital events. Some lack resources or do not feel the importance of registering every type of event. To improve civil registration systems, priorities are given to following vital events: live births, deaths, fetal deaths, marriages, and divorces. Top priority should always be given to registering live births and deaths, as these are fundamental for tracking population dynamics and planning essential services (UNICEF, 2019).

2.2.3 Principles of the Civil Registration System

According to UN, compulsory, universal, continuous, and confidential—are essential principals for an effective and inclusive civil registration system, which are described as below:

a)   **Compulsory:** A civil registration system must be compulsory to ensure smooth and effective operation. While establishing a legal mandate for registration is essential, such a law alone does not guarantee compliance. Failure to register should be legally punishable to improve the reporting of vital events. Penalties can be introduced for late registration. However, penalties should not deter participation;

instead, they should be backed by a robust legal framework to ensure compliance without fear of stigmatization. Notably, the compulsory nature of registration must respect child rights. For example, in cases where registering a birth, marriage, or death may harm a child's interests or expose them to discrimination, safeguards should be in place. UNICEF advocates for compulsory registration only when supported by principles and practices that prevent harm or inequity.

b)   **Universal Coverage:** Civil registration systems must apply to the entire population, regardless of geographical location, demographic, or citizenship status. Ensuring universal registration requires services to be accessible across all regions and for all groups, including non-citizens. Several UN bodies advocate for free registration as a critical measure to maximize inclusivity.

c)   **Continuous and Permanent Operations:** The system must be managed by an agency with administrative stability to ensure its continuous and permanent operation. A stable framework ensures the consistent collection and maintenance of vital statistics, which are essential for tracking trends and producing meaningful analyses. Permanence is critical for building a reliable database that provides long-term insights into demographic and social patterns.

d)   **Confidentiality of Data:** Civil registration involves the collection of sensitive personal information, necessitating strict controls on data access. In regions with conflict or ethnic tensions, mistrust over confidentiality can discourage registration. Addressing these concerns requires reviewing the system's structure, governing legislation, and data-handling protocols to ensure data security. Birth certificates, for instance, should include minimal personal information to protect individuals from unnecessary risks. Guaranteeing confidentiality fosters trust and encourages greater participation in the registration process.

2.2.4   Vital Statistics from the Civil Registration

Civil registration is the primary source of reliable, continuous, and high-quality vital statistics for population analysis and planning. It forms the foundation for population statistics and helps monitor health, population programs, and social indicators like life expectancy and infant mortality rates. Vital statistics from civil registration enable population estimates, projections, and studies of mortality, fertility, and marriage patterns. They also support the creation of life tables, which are crucial for measuring

developmental progress (UNICEF, 2019). Vital statistics derived from civil registration are essential in shaping effective, evidence-based policies across various sectors. It is also needed to foster inclusive and sustainable development, efficient resource allocation, and effective evaluation and monitoring. (Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific , 2012)

Civil Registration systems can provide accurate, timely, and comprehensive data on vital events, including annual flow statistics at local levels, which other data collection methods cannot match. These statistics are vital for planning, monitoring, and evaluating public health initiatives, maternal and child health programs, and other government policies (UNICEF, 2019). Well-functioning Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) systems, particularly those that report data promptly and accurately to national statistics systems, strengthen the credibility of both national and local authorities. This enables them to identify service needs better (for example planning public housing, school facility, teacher training) and allocate resources accordingly (Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific , 2012).

2.3   CRVS and Its Interface with SDG

An effective CRVS system is essential for achieving the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). in four ways. At first, the system can contribute directly as strengthening CRVS system which is one of the targets of Sustainable Development Goals (SDG target 16.9 and SDG target 17.19). Secondly, it will contribute to empowering individuals by providing universal health coverage and preventing early marriage, abuse, exploitation, trafficking, and all forms of violence against children (SDG 5.3, and SDG Target 16.2). Third, it can act as a reliable source of information for policies, which will be helpful to achieve SDG targets like 3.2. Finally, a well-functioning CRVS is a must for tracking the progress made toward achieving SDG targets (IDRC, n.d.).

Table 1: Sustainable Development Indicators directly linked with CRVS Data

Target	Indicators	Link with CRVS
3.1 By 2030, reduce the global maternal mortality ratio to less than 70 per 100,000 live births	3.1.1 Maternal mortality ratio	Cause of Death Data
3.2 By 2030, end preventable deaths of newborns and children under 5 years of age, with all countries aiming to reduce neonatal mortality to at least as low as 12 per 1,000 live births and under-5 mortality to at least as low as 25 per 1,000 live births	3.2.1 Under-five mortality rate 3.2.2 Neonatal mortality rate	Cause of Death Data
3.4 By 2030, reduce premature mortality from non-communicable diseases by one-third through prevention and treatment and promote	3.4.1 Mortality rate attributed to cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes or chronic respiratory disease 3.4.2 Suicide mortality rate	Cause of Death Data
3.6 By 2020, halve the number of global deaths and injuries from road traffic accidents	3.6.1 Death rate due to road traffic injuries	Cause of Death Data
3.7 By 2030, ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health-care services, including for family planning, information and education, and the integration of reproductive health into national strategies and programmes	3.7.2 Adolescent birth rate (aged 10–14 years; aged 15–19 years) per 1,000 women in that age group	Birth Registration Data
3.9 By 2030, substantially reduce the number of deaths and illnesses from hazardous chemicals and air, water, and soil pollution and contamination	3.9.1 Mortality rate attributed to household and ambient air pollution 3.9.2 Mortality rate attributed to unsafe water, unsafe sanitation and lack of hygiene 3.9.3 Mortality rate attributed to unintentional poisoning	Cause of Death Data
5.3 Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation	Proportion of women aged 20–24 years who were married or in a union before age 15 and before age 18	Marriage Registration Data
16.1 Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere	16.1.1 Number of victims of intentional homicide per 100,000 population, by sex and age 16.1.2 Conflict-related deaths per 100,000 populations, by sex, age	Cause of Death Data

Target	Indicators	Link with CRVS
	and cause	
16.9 By 2030, provide legal identity for all, including birth registration	16.9.1 Proportion of children under 5 years of age whose births have been registered with a civil authority, by age	Birth Registration Data
17.19 By 2030, build on existing initiatives to develop measurements of progress on sustainable development that complement gross domestic product, and support statistical capacity-building in developing countries	17.19.2 Proportion of countries that (a) have conducted at least one population and housing census in the last 10 years; and (b) have achieved 100 percent birth registration and 80 per cent death registration	Birth and Death Registration Data

Source: (Mills, Abouzahr, Kim, Rassekh, & Sarpong, 2017)

2.4 CRVS Information Systems

According to WHO, "CRVS information systems (CRVS IS) may be paper based or increasingly technology-driven, and incorporate multiple business processes including: recording of all details related to the vital event, for example a birth or a death; notification of the event to the authorities; registration of the event; and generation of VS." World Health Organization summarized that an Ideal CRVS IS should have following characteristics:

a)   **Centralized Database (CPR):** A centralized Civil Population Registry (CPR) managed by a single agency ensures quality assurance, accountability, and streamlined control over data access and accuracy.

b)   **Accessible Infrastructure**: Robust and readily available infrastructure facilitates seamless electronic information exchange between the CPR and other agencies within CRVS framework. This enhances efficiency and data reliability.

c)   **Standardized and Legally Mandated PIN**: The CRVS system relies on a standardized, legally mandated Personal Identification Number (PIN) at the national level, serving as a unique identifier for individuals.

d)   **Institutionalized Practices for PIN Use**: Public and private sectors use the PIN for various operations, such as issuing passports, opening bank accounts, and other essential services, ensuring consistency and interoperability.

e)   **CPR as the Master Registry**: The CPR acts as the authoritative source for personal information, maintaining and updating critical data such as births, deaths, and changes of address, which are reflected across all connected systems.

f)   **Free and Open Data Access**: Providing open access to data incentivizes usage, encourages accurate reporting, and supports maintaining high-quality, up-to-date information, benefiting all stakeholders.

(World Health Organization, 2013) formulated five design principles for a modern Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Information System (CRVS IS), which are:

a) **Establish CRVS as a Public Good**

Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) systems should be recognized as a public good, benefiting all members of society irrespective of their direct contribution. Public goods enhance connections between citizens, private organizations, and government entities. However, the practice of restricting access to Civil Population Registries (CPR) by public entities for exclusive use undermines their value for society. To maximize the benefits and ensure sustainability, CRVS must prioritize accessibility and inclusiveness.

b) **Create Institutional Incentives for Updated and High-Quality CRVS**

Maintaining a robust CRVS Information System (IS) requires incentives for citizens, private organizations, and public institutions to participate actively. For example, for citizen, the information can be mandatory for accessing different types of social services. This mandatory use of registration act as incentives for them. At the same time, the use of the CPR as the primary register by public entities will promote better reporting and ensure that those responsible for managing the CPR maintain data accuracy.

c) **Adopt a Holistic Approach to CRVS Design**

A well-designed CRVS IS should encompass all vital events—births, deaths, marriages, divorces—and integrate them within a unified framework. This approach requires harmonizing input and output systems, supported by legislation ensuring data privacy and accessibility. Legal frameworks should balance citizen privacy with the need for data-sharing across public and private entities for broader societal benefits. CRVS

design must not only be based on existing institutional structures, current laws, and practices.

d) Define Business Relationships for Information Flows

The CRVS system must define how information in the CPR is updated and utilized by various stakeholders, including citizens, government agencies, and private entities. Ensuring smooth and consistent information flows is essential to generate reliable data. CRVS reforms must be designed to enhance these flows, ensuring that updates are efficiently propagated and data quality remains high across all users. Establishing these business relationships is key to ensuring the sustainability and reliability of the system.

e) Develop a Technical Approach for Integration and Interoperability

The technical foundation of a CRVS IS must prioritizes integrating independent systems with the CPR for efficient data sharing and updating. A unique Personal Identification Number (PIN) is essential for linking CRVS data with other public and private systems. This integration enables seamless information exchange and ensures consistency across registries. Legal and policy frameworks must align with technical solutions to promote interoperability, fostering a cohesive environment for effectively managing vital statistics and population data.

2.5   Literature Review

(Lopez, McLaughlin, & Richards, 2020) discussed the importance of death registration with causes of death for formulating health policies. The most critical evidence for improving population health lies in understanding the leading causes of death and how they evolve over time. They concluded that proper action is required for better systems and procedures to notify the fact of death so that its cause can be diagnosed to provide information about the population's health. In Bangladesh, "The Kaliganj Model" was formulated to ensure death registration with the cause of death. (Uddin, et al., 2019) concluded that properly trained, community-based health workers can contribute to registering a death with causes. (Tahsina, et al., 2022) A pilot study was also conducted to understand the importance of notification in improving the birth

and death registration rate. Notifications for births and deaths were recorded by service providers, community health workers, local authorities, and key informants using mobile technology–based platform. Verification was conducted through household visits, and a household survey assessed notification accuracy. The system collected 13,377 notifications, verifying 92% of births and 93% of deaths. It captured over 87% of survey-identified births, with health assistants as key contributors. Another research on improving the coverage of death registration done by (Haider, Alam, Bashar, & Helleringer, 2021) used primary data to explore reasons for registering or not registering deaths. Their study found that only 17% of adult deaths (26% male, 5% female) were registered over three years. The study concluded that lack of knowledge about CRVS and not perceiving the benefits of death registration are the main implementation challenges for death registration in the country. They suggested that information campaigns and more substantial incentives can contribute to an increase in death registration.

Together, these studies underscore the importance of proper registration systems and the role of community health workers, technology, and public awareness in improving death registration rates and the quality of health data.

2.6   Research Gap

There are some researches on Birth and Death Registration Challenges whose primary focus is health perspective. However, the significant concerns and challenges of the whole Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) system have not been analyzed in detail. This is what this study aims to do.

2.7   Analytical Framework

The research used policy implementation theory for analysis. Policy implementation theories aim to explain how policies, once formulated, are carried out and what factors influence their success or failure.

(Pressman & Wildavasky, 1973) analyzed a federal jobs program in their book "Implementation," the first structured study on Policy Implementation. By 1975, this growing attention had firmly established implementation as a key area of policy studies. Policy implementation research has had three generations: the top-down, the

bottom-up, and the third generation. First-generation research on Policy implementation focused on the down approach. Researchers of this generation assumed that policies, once formally and authoritatively established, would naturally lead to their intended outcomes without significant obstacles or deviations during implementation (Najam, 1995). Key contributors to the top-down approach include (Pressman & Wildavasky, 1973), (Van Meter & Van Horn, 1975), and (Mazmanian & Sabatier, 1983). (Van Meter and Van Horn, 1975) model identifies six key factors influencing policy implementation. policy standards and objectives; policy resources; inter-organizational communication and enforcement activities; characteristics of the implementing agencies; economic, social, and political conditions; and the disposition of implementers. Sabatier and Mazmanian's model of policy implementation focuses on the factors that influence the successful execution of policies. They identify three main categories: the tractability of the problem, the ability of statutes to structure implementation, and the impact of external factors on implementation over time. The model emphasizes the importance of clear and consistent objectives, adequate resources, supportive implementing agencies, and commitment from stakeholders. Additionally, it highlights the role of external variables such as economic conditions and public opinion. Their approach underscores the dynamic nature of implementation, requiring continuous alignment between policy goals, actors, and contextual factors. (Matland, 1995) identifies three main criticisms of the top-down approach. First, it overlooks the importance of earlier actions in the policy-making process. Second, it treats policy implementation as purely administrative, ignoring its political dimensions, which can lead to policy failure. Third, it prioritizes statute framers as key actors, disregarding the expertise of local service deliverers, who better understand real-world problems and can propose more effective solutions. These critiques highlight the limitations of a top-down perspective in addressing the complexities of policy implementation.

The second generation approaches in Policy Implementation Theories is bottom up approaches. Bottom-up theorists believed that the local level or target groups and service deliverers, are key players in policy implementation (Matland, 1995; Hill & Hupe, 2002). Key contributors of these generations are (Berman, 1978; Hjern & Porter,

1981; Hjern & Hull, 1982) and Lipsky, 1980). Paul Berman's (1978) implementation theory emphasizes the distinction between macro and micro-implementation. Macro-implementation focuses on high-level policy directives and structures, while micro-implementation examines how local actors adapt policies to fit contextual realities. Berman highlights the importance of flexibility, local discretion, and iterative processes for successful policy outcomes. Hjern and colleagues (Hjern & Hull, 1982; Hjern & Porter, 1981,1993) significantly advanced the bottom-up perspective through their network methodology. This approach emphasizes the perceptions and qualities of actors within a network, suggesting that local-level differences explain variations in actions, though within boundaries set by centrally determined policies. They propose studying policy implementation using social network analysis to explore the relationship between network structure, organizational capabilities, and policy performance. Unlike top-down theorists, bottom-uppers recognize that micro-level implementers form their own opinions, adapt programs, and adjust tasks to suit real-world conditions effectively. (Lipsky, 1980) argued that public policy is shaped by front-line workers, or "street-level bureaucrats," who directly interact with citizens. Their discretion, coping strategies, and daily routines effectively transform policies, often leading to significant deviations from original directives due to conflicts, ambiguities, and work pressures. These bureaucrats' decisions and actions become the practical embodiment of public policies, highlighting their critical role in policy implementation. occur within a context of central control. However, this approach has got some criticism, too. First, street level bureaucrats have a great discretion in their interactions with clients, and are likely to abdicate the goals of their clients and ascend their own in their place (Linder & Peters, 1987). Second, it undermines policymakers' authority, essential in democratic theory. policy implementers is not derived from the electorate. In a democratic system, policy control should be exercised by actors whose power is derived from their accountability to sovereign voters through their elected representatives. Given the challenge, decentralization should Therefore, flexibility and autonomy involved in bottom-up models might be appropriate when the goals of the policy formulators and implementers are the same but if they differ greatly, it leads to poor implementation and performance on official goals (Matland, 1995).

Third-generation policy implementation theory emerged as a response to the limitations of earlier top-down and bottom-up approaches, aiming to integrate their insights. previous two in its approach to the study of policy implementation. (Goggin et al., 1990); (Goggin, 1986) and (Lester et al., 1987) models contribute to this approaches. Other key contributors are (Sabatier, 1991), (Scharpf, 1978), (Windhoff-Héritier, 1980), (Ripley and Franklin, 1982), and (Winter, 1990). However, this approach needs more research. Though much more has been achieved still a lot remains to be done in this field of research (O'Toole,2000; Winter, 2012; Mugambwa et.al., 2018). (Mugambwa et.al., 2018) suggested four areas in relation to policy implementation; Implementation Science; Network Management; Internationalism, Multilateralism and Regionalism; and Governance and Institutional analysis.

Winter's Integrated Implementation Model (Figure 1) is used to build an analytical framework for the research. Winter first launched the model in 1990 but later developed it. It provides a comprehensive framework for analyzing implementation processes and outcomes. It synthesizes critical factors that influence the success of policy implementation, mainly focusing on the connection between the formulation of policies and their eventual execution. The model is relatively canonized in the scientific literature and – for example, used to introduce policy implementation research in the International Encyclopedia of Political Science (Winter, 2015) and in the SAGE Handbook of Public Administration (Winter, 2012).

This model has been chosen as it is not a model of a strict set of factors but a framework of analysis that focuses on factors as well as mechanisms. This third-generation implementation model emphasizes problems in the policy formulation stage. According to this model, implementation result depends on policy design, implementation structure, and process, and lastly, target group (Winter, 2012).
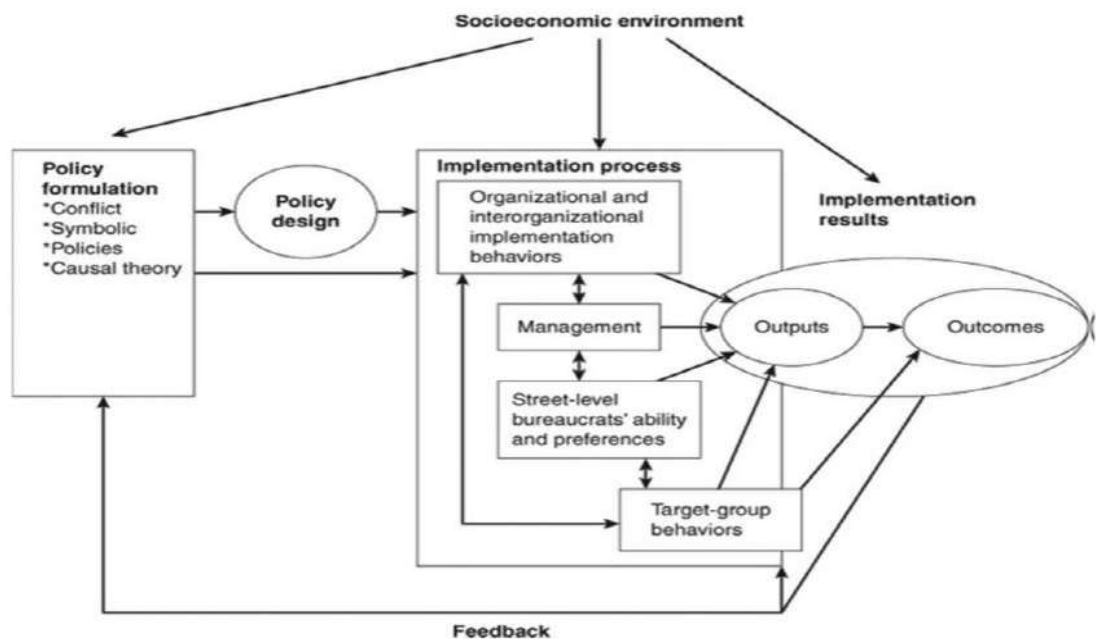
Figure 2: Winter's Integrated Implementation Model

According to this model, Implementation result depends On

a) **Policy Design**: A significant insight from the model is that policy formulation and design are crucial in determining the success or failure of implementation. Many implementation issues are mistakenly attributed solely to the execution phase, neglecting the fact that policy design itself can cause implementation problems. Conflicts or ambiguities during the policy formulation stage can lead to unclear goals and weak links between objectives and the methods proposed to achieve them. Additionally, policies may sometimes be symbolic, offering no practical means to achieve the stated objectives. Policy design, which includes defining goals, selecting instruments, and allocating resources, is essential for guiding the implementation process. Despite substantial research on policy instruments, such as mandates, economic incentives, and informational strategies, no definitive typology of instruments has emerged. Moreover, the choice of instruments influences both the effectiveness of implementation and the structure of the organization responsible for carrying out the policy. For instance, mandates may require dedicated enforcement

20

teams, while economic incentives like taxes may need fewer resources for administration.

However, policy design is not simply a technical or knowledge-driven process; it is inherently political. Political actors shape policy design to maximize their interests, including determining which organizational structures best suit their goals. This political dimension complicates the design process, as policy choices often reflect broader political conflicts and compromises rather than purely technical solutions.

b) **Organizational and Inter-Organizational Behavior:** The model also examines the implementation process itself, emphasizing the importance of organizational and interorganizational behaviors. Successful implementation is often hindered by the complexity of joint actions, where multiple actors with diverse interests must cooperate. This complexity increases with the number of decision points and veto powers involved. Research by O'Toole challenges this notion, suggesting that successful implementation can occur even in complex settings if early agreements on basic understandings are reached, which foster cooperation in later stages. The structure of resource dependencies between organizations further affects implementation. For example, if one organization depends on another's outputs, sequential dependencies can create bottlenecks, while reciprocal relationships may encourage cooperation to avoid delays.

c) **Management:** Management practices also play a crucial role in shaping the behavior of street-level bureaucrats. However, studies on the direct impact of management on outcomes are limited. Research suggests that management practices can influence bureaucratic behavior indirectly by shaping attitudes and providing organizational structures that facilitate coordination and goal achievement. Effective management may depend on the visibility of bureaucratic practices and the extent to which local policies support or contradict national ones. Additionally, street-level bureaucrats' expertise, motivation, and perceptions influence how management interventions affect their performance.

d) **Bureaucratic Will at the Street Level:** Another central aspect of implementation is the role of street-level bureaucrats, who make discretionary decisions in direct contact with citizens. These individuals play a critical role in shaping how policies are perceived and delivered. As Lipsky (1980) pointed out, these bureaucrats often have to deal with

high demand and limited resources, leading them to prioritize cases and modify policy goals based on practical constraints. While Lipsky's theory sheds light on the challenges faced by street-level bureaucrats, it lacks clear explanations for why different bureaucrats behave differently in similar contexts. Winter (2002) suggests that more nuanced theories are needed to account for the variability in these behaviors. Moreover, the effects of these bureaucratic practices can differ depending on the type of policy—social policies may face different challenges compared to regulatory policies with more substantial target groups.

e) **Target Group Behavior:** Finally, citizens or target groups of policies also affect implementation outcomes. Through their interactions with street-level bureaucrats, citizens can either support or hinder the successful execution of policies. Citizens' actions, whether cooperative or obstructive, can influence how policies are implemented, often co-producing the public services they receive.

f) **Socio-economic Context:** Additionally, broader socio-economic contexts, such as business cycles, can shape the effectiveness of policies, especially in areas like employment and training programs.

In conclusion, the Integrated Implementation Model presents a holistic framework emphasizing the interconnectedness of policy design, the implementation process, street-level bureaucratic behavior, and the socio-political context.

Based on this model, the following analytical framework has been constructed:

Independent Variables

- Policy Design
- Organizational and Inter-Organizational Behavior
- Management
- Target Group Behavior

Dependent Variables

Implementation of CRVS in Bangladesh
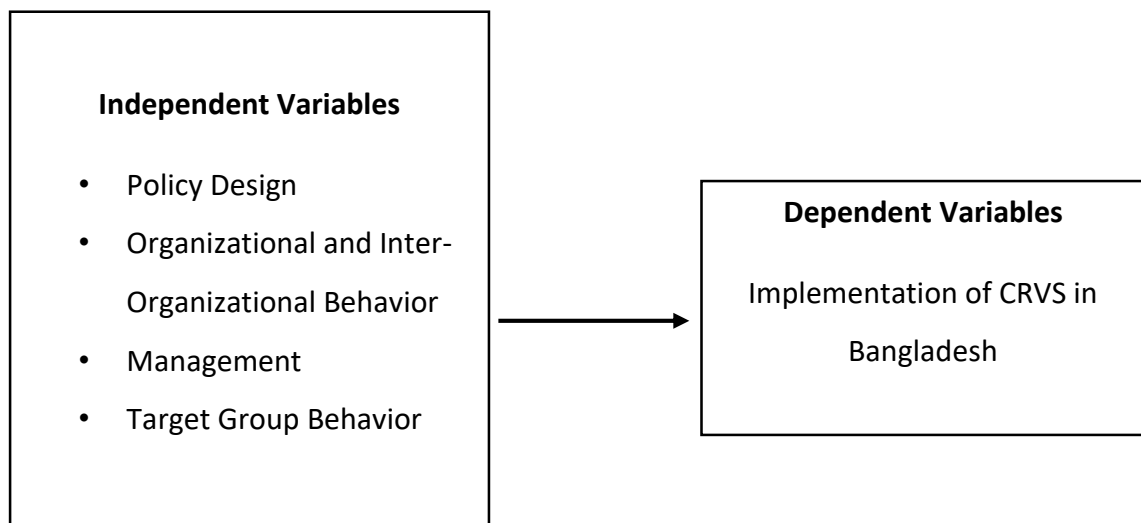
Figure 3:Analytical Framework

The independent variables can be explained as below:

- **Policy Design:** Roots of implementation problems can often be found in the prior policy formulation process. The existing policy will be analyzed to understand whether there is not appropriate direction or guidelines on how to implement it that is creating challenges for implementation of the policy.

- **Organizational and Inter-Organizational Behavior:** Referring to the number and kind of agencies/organizations involved, program-related rules and procedures, task interdependencies, different degrees of commitment and coordination, resources etc.

- **Management:** recruiting with better fit, incentives of the worker etc. are also some determinants that can affect the implementation of CRVS system.

- **Target Group Behavior:** needs and behavior of the target groups is another indicator to understand the implementation challenges.

Chapter

3 Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The methodology for this study is designed to explore the Implementation Challenges of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) in Bangladesh. It aims to determine whether the existing policies, strategies, institutional arrangements, and initiatives effectively support the CRVS system and to identify the barriers to its successful implementation as well as to assess the effectiveness of the CRVS system in Bangladesh. This study uses Winter's Integrated Implementation Model framework for analysis. The dependent variable of this study is the Implementation of CRVS in Bangladesh, and the independent variables are Policy Design, Organizational and Inter-Organizational Behavior, Management, and Target Group Behavior.

3.2 Research Design

This study adopts a mixed, quantitative, and qualitative research approach to gain an in-depth understanding of the concern and challenges regarding the implementation of the CRVS system in Bangladesh and assess the effectiveness of the existing policies, strategies, and initiatives of the CRVS system.

3.3 Data Collection Methods

3.3.1 Primary Data

Primary data were collected through key informant interviews (KIIs) with stakeholders directly involved in the CRVS system in Bangladesh. These stakeholders included government officials, and local practitioners. The KIIs aimed to gather insights on: The effectiveness of existing policies and strategies, challenges encountered during the implementation process, and recommendations for improving the CRVS system.

3.3.2 Secondary Data

Secondary data were obtained from existing literature, policy documents, government reports, and international standards related to the CRVS system in

Bangladesh and other comparable contexts. These sources provided background information and a basis for triangulating findings from the primary data.

3.4   Sampling Strategy

3.4.1   Target Population

The target population for this study comprised individuals and organizations involved in the design, implementation, and monitoring of the CRVS system in Bangladesh as well as the beneficiary of the system i.e. the country's population. This included representatives from government departments and citizens.

3.4.2   Sampling Method

A purposive sampling technique was employed to select participants with direct experience or knowledge of the CRVS system. This method ensured the inclusion of diverse perspectives while focusing on individuals who could provide rich and relevant information.

The purposive Random Sampling technique was employed to select citizens so that citizens from different religions and educational backgrounds could be interviewed. Areas are selected at the researcher's convenience.

3.4.3   Sample Size

The study conducted 10 Key Informant interviews, balancing the need for comprehensive data with the feasibility of in-depth analysis. Total of 10 households (40 participants) were interviewed. Among them, 8 households are Muslim, and 2 are Hindu. 5 are from Urban (Dhaka and Chittagong City), and 5 are from Rural areas (Anowara and Bashkhali Upazila of Chittagong District). Interviews were conducted to collect primary data from key stakeholders, including government officials and service users (citizens). The following people were considered as informants:

Table 1: Informants for Data Collection

Informants	Role in CRVS System	Number
Representative of Office of the Registrar General	Central Agency for Birth and Death Registration	2
Deputy Director of Local Government/Upazila Nirbahi Officer	Responsible for correction of Birth and Death Registration	2
Secretary of Union Parishad	Registrar appointed to register births and deaths by law	1
Upazila Education Officer	Responsible for making student profile according to UID	1
Upazila Election Officer	Responsible for Collecting Information for NID	1
Representative of Election Commission	Responsible for providing UID	1
Representative of CRVS Secretariat	Role as a Coordinator to create CRVS in Bangladesh	2
Citizen	User/Beneficiary	40
Total		**50**

3.5 Data Collection Procedure

3.5.1 Interview

A semi-structured interview guide was developed to facilitate the KIIs. The guide included open-ended questions aligned with the research objectives and analytical framework. This format allowed for flexibility to gain deeper information on specific issues.

3.5.2 Questionnaire Survey

A questionnaire survey was conducted with 40 participants to gather data and insights on the subject matter. Questionnaire was designed with close ended question with very few open ended question for gaining in depth information.

3.5.3 Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was obtained from the relevant institutional review board. Informed consent was secured from all participants, ensuring they knew the study's purpose, procedures, and rights to confidentiality and withdrawal. Data were anonymized to protect their identities.

3.6 Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was used to analyze the qualitative data. This approach involved: Coding the data to identify significant themes and patterns. Grouping codes into broader categories aligned with the research objectives and analytical framework. Reviewing and refining themes to ensure they accurately represent the data. Synthesizing findings to draw conclusions and implications.

Quantitative analysis was done using Microsoft Excel.

To enhance the credibility and reliability of the findings, triangulation was employed by comparing insights from primary and secondary data sources.

3.7 Challenges

While the qualitative approach provides rich, contextual insights, it has certain limitations. These include:

- Potential biases in participant responses, influenced by their roles and experiences.
- Limited generalizability of findings due to the small, purposive sample size.
- Challenges in accessing specific stakeholders

3.8 Conclusion

This methodology outlines a systematic approach to examining the implementation of the CRVS system in Bangladesh. By integrating the Winter's Integration Model, employing mixed methods, and ensuring ethical rigor, the study aims to provide insights into the concerns and challenges of Implementation of the CRVS system and its effectiveness in Bangladesh. The findings are expected to contribute to policy development and implementation strategies, ultimately enhancing the functionality and impact of the CRVS system in Bangladesh.

Chapter

4 Overview of the Present CRVS System in Bangladesh

4.1 Introduction

Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) systems are fundamental for documenting key life events, ensuring legal identity, and generating data for governance and policymaking. In Bangladesh, the CRVS system consists of the following six vital events:

1) Birth
2) Death
3) Cause of Death
4) Adoption
5) Marriage
6) Divorce

Each of these events plays a critical role in defining an individual's legal and social status and contributes to creating accurate and comprehensive population statistics. However, the processes and frameworks for registering these events vary significantly regarding legal mandates, operational mechanisms, and institutional arrangements.

This chapter explores how these six vital events are registered in Bangladesh and gives an overview on the evolution of the CRVS system over time. It examines the legal provisions and administrative processes of the registration of vital events in Bangladesh. By analyzing the current state and historical development of the CRVS system, the chapter provides a comprehensive understanding of CRVS system in Bangladesh.

4.2 Registration of the Vital Events

4.2.1 Birth and Death Registration

In 1873, the Birth and Death Registration Act was enacted under British rule of the subcontinent titled "The Bengal Births and Deaths Registration Act, 1873". In British period there was another act named "Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Act, 1886". During that time, the District Administration was responsible for registering Birth and Death. However, very few people are brought under birth and death

registration by these laws. Due to political, geographical, and legal changes, the laws needed to be updated.

From 2001 to 2006, with the assistance of UNICEF Bangladesh, a pilot project was initiated to restart birth registration in 28 districts and 4 city corporations. At that time, the government repealed the 1873 and 1886 laws and introduced the Birth and Death Registration Act, 2004 (Act No. 29 of 2004) on December 7, 2004. This law came into effect on July 3, 2006. The Births and Deaths Registration Rules, 2006 were enacted for clarification and proper implementation of the law. Later, the Birth and Death Registration Rules of 2018 were enacted through various amendments. This is the latest amended Birth and Death Registration Rules published in the official gazette on 08 March 2018.

After the pilot project ended in June 2006, the Birth and Death Registration Project (Phase 2) began in 2007 and concluded in June 2012. The third phase of the project started in July 2012 and ended in June 2016. When the project ends, to ensure the continuity and permanent database of birth and death records, the Office of Registrar General, Birth and Death Registration, was established under the Local Government Division on September 01, 2016.

Bangladesh achieved a significant milestone in February 2014 by completing 100 million birth registrations through the online Birth Registration Information System (BRIS) as part of the Birth and Death Registration Project led by the Local Government Division (LGD). WHO supports This effort under the auspices of the Prime Minister's Office, with leadership from crucial ministries, including Health, Local Government, Statistics, and the Election Commission, along with technical support from the Access to Information Programme (World Health Organization, 2014).

Following are the key characteristics of Birth and Death Registration Act, 2004:

Table 2: Registrar for Birth and Death Registration

Types of location where a person born, deceased, or Reside	Registrar
City Corporation	City Corporation Mayor/Administrator/ or any officer or councilor authorized by them
Paurashava	*Paurashava* Mayor/ Administrator/ or any officer or councilor authorized by them
Union Parishad	*Union Parishad* Chairman or any officer or member authorized by the government
Cantonment area	Cantonment Board Executive Officer or any officer authorized by them
Abroad	Any officer authorized by the Ambassador of the relevant Bangladesh Embassy

4.2.1.2 Persons Responsible for Providing Birth and Death Information

The father, mother, guardian, or designated person of a child shall be obligated to provide birth-related information to the registrar within 45 (forty-five) days of the birth. In case if death, the son, daughter, guardian, or designated person of a deceased individual shall be obligated to provide death-related information to the registrar within 45 (forty-five) days of the death.

4.2.2 Cause of Death Registration

Cause of Death Registration was not previously incorporated into the death registration certificate. Now, it has been incorporated with death registration. Verbal Autopsy has been introduced in hospitals to ensure the registration of Causes of Death.

4.2.3 Adoption Registration

In Bangladesh, adoption is largely conducted through informal means, relying heavily on personal or social contact, as there is no formalized legal framework or designated agency to regulate the process. This absence of a structured system leads to significant challenges, including the lack of proper documentation, potential legal ambiguities,

and insufficient safeguards to protect the rights of children, biological parents, and adoptive families. Without standardized procedures, there is a risk of unethical practices, such as child trafficking or exploitation. Establishing a formal legal structure and a centralized adoption authority could ensure transparency, accountability, and the best interests of the children involved.

4.2.4 Marriage and Divorce Registration

The country has an Office of Inspector General of Registration under the supervision of the Directorate of Registration, Law and Justice Division for Marriage and Divorce Registration. Marriage and Divorce Registration are done under the supervision of the District Registrar in 61 districts and the Deputy Commissioner in 3 CHT districts (the Deputy Commissioner is the District Registrar of these 3 districts). The deputy commissioner is not directly supervised by the Law and Justice Division but by the Cabinet Division. So, various organizations and ministries are responsible for marriage and divorce registration based on the locality. Besides, marriage registration laws and procedures are different for different religions of the bride and groom. In the country, Marriage and Divorce Registrations are done according to the following laws:

Table 3: Legal Provision and Registrar for Marriage and Divorce in Bangladesh

Name of the Law	Applicable for Whom	Marriage Registrar
The Muslim Marriages and Divorces (Registration) Act, 1974 Muslim Family Law Ordinance, 1961	When the Bride and Groom both are Muslim	Nikah Registrar
Hindu Marriages Registration Act, 2012 The Hindu Married Women's Right to Separate Residence and Maintenance Act, 1946 The Family Courts Ordinance, 1985	When the Bride and Groom are both Hindu	Hindu Marriage Registrar
The Christian Marriage Act, 1872 Divorce Act, 1869	When the Bride and Groom both are Christian	Father of the Church
The Special Marriage Act, 1872	When Bride and Groom both are from different religions	Registrar

4.2.5 CRVS and Identity Management (CRVSID)

In Bangladesh, the issuance of National Identity (NID) cards is governed by the National Identity Registration Act of 2010. The Election Commission (EC) is responsible for overseeing the process. Citizens aged 16 and above are eligible for an NID card as legal proof of identity. The process involves collecting biometric and demographic data through voter registration drives or dedicated registration centers. Verification ensures accuracy and prevents duplication. The NID card is crucial for accessing government services, voting, and financial transactions. Any falsification or misuse is punishable under the law, ensuring integrity in the NID issuance system.

Now, the Election Commission (EC) provides a 10-digit Unique Identification (UID) number as part of the National Identity (NID) system to ensure a streamlined and secure identification process. The earlier 17-digit NID card will be replaced gradually. This 10-digit number is randomly selected where the first 9 digits are random, and the last digit is a digit checksum. Some exceptional numbers will not be used, like numbers leading with "0" or all the same digits (999 999 9999).

123 187 289 2

9 Digit Random Number

1 Digit Checksum
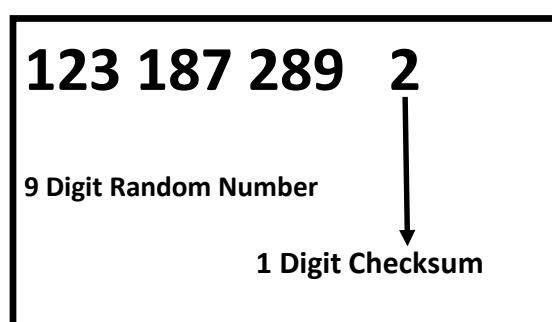
Figure 4: Generation of 10-digit UID

All CR and service providing agencies (for example BRN, Education, Passport) can have their own IDs for their documentation and information system but the person will be recognized by the UID and it will be linked with other IDs. In Bangladesh, an agreement between the Election Commission (EC) and the Office of the Registrar General, Birth and Death Registration, facilitates the integration of the Unique Identification Number (UID) swith the Birth Registration Number (BRN). This contract establishes a framework for data sharing and collaboration, ensuring BRN is linked to a UID. The Ministry of Education is also creating student profiles according to UID.

4.3   Vital Statistics

In Bangladesh, vital statistics are produced by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS), primarily through surveys and censuses rather than civil registration data. The country's civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) system, which records births, deaths, and causes of death, is not used in producing VS. BBS uses the Sample Vital Registration System (SVRS) to estimate vital statistics like birth, mortality, and fertility rates. This reliance on surveys instead of official civil registration data limits the accuracy and timeliness of the statistics, highlighting the need to strengthen the CRVS system for better data quality.

4.4   Evolution of CRVS in Bangladesh

The government of Bangladesh is committed to achieving the Goals formulated by ESCAP which are,

- "Goal 1: Universal civil registration of births, deaths and other vital events;

- Goal 2: All individuals are provided with legal documentation of civil registration of births, deaths and other vital events, as necessary, in order to claim the identity, civil status and ensuing rights;

- Goal 3: Accurate, complete, and timely vital statistics (including on causes of death), based on registration records, are produced and disseminated."

To achieve these goals, the country has made various efforts since 2010. In 2010, the Government of Bangladesh set the groundwork to examine existing databases with the aim of developing a comprehensive Population Register. In 2013 when a comprehensive assessment was done. The assessment aimed to analyze the existing systems, identify gaps, and explore opportunities for the development of a reliable and efficient register. The assessment highlighted the fragmented nature of data management where multiple government entities maintained separate databases with little to no integration. This redundancy often led to inefficiencies, inaccuracies, and challenges in governance. The findings suggested the urgent need for a unified system to consolidate vital information while maintaining data accuracy, security, and accessibility.

Responding to the recommendations from the assessment, the government took a significant step in 2014 by forming the Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) Steering Committee, supervised by the Cabinet Division. The Cabinet Secretary chairs the committee. This committee was responsible for building an integrated Civil Registration and Vital Statistics management system. Besides, the Cabinet Division introduced a coordination mechanism to integrate the fragmented system.

In 2015, the Cabinet Division established "CRVS Secretariat". As the central authority, the Cabinet Division facilitated collaboration among government agencies, ensuring the initiative received the necessary support and guidelines. Its involvement also helped establish a policy framework for integrating civil registration and vital statistics systems in Bangladesh. Bangladesh has adopted a comprehensive 'whole-of-government' strategy to ensure integration and coordination among these organizations.

A landmark achievement in this journey occurred in 2016 with the establishment of the Office of the Registrar General. This institution is the centralized authority responsible for implementing, monitoring, and improving the birth and death registration process. The establishment of this office marked a significant institutional step toward the systematic registration of birth and death. It created a foundation for ensuring the Birth and Death Registration Data.

The notable advancement came in 2020 when Online Birth and Death Registration System (BDRIS) was introduced. This system represented a technological leap forward in the management of Birth and Death Registration. By integrating digital tools into the civil registration process.

In conclusion, though the country need some improvement, the development in modernizing civil registration and vital statistics management in Bangladesh has achieved a lot.
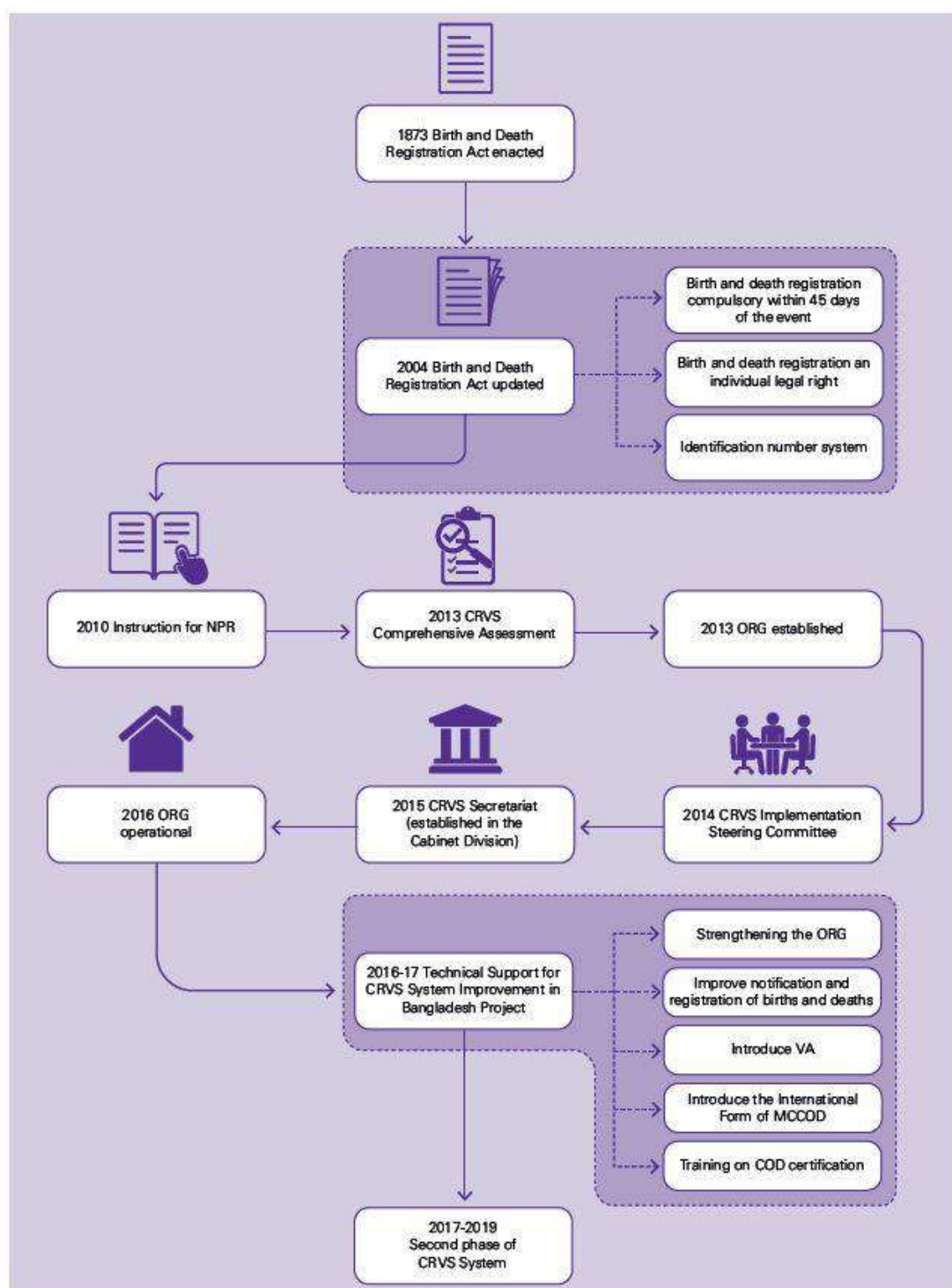
COD = cause of death; CRVS = civil registration and vital statistics; MCCOD = medical certificate of cause of death; NPR = national population register; ORG = organisation

Figure 5: Evolution of CRVS in Bangladesh

Source: (World Health Organization, 2014)

4.5   Emergence of CRVS++

Figure 6: CRVS++ Model of Bangladesh

Source: Cabinet Division

Bangladesh's ambition is to formulate a CRVS system through a Unique ID (UID) framework, integrating it with service delivery mechanisms. The system not only wants to register vital events such as births, deaths, marriages, divorces, adoptions, and causes of death but also expand its scope to include educational enrollment and migration records. The goal is to connect these components with the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics for vital statistics generation and to align them with service delivery frameworks, particularly Social Protection Programs. This comprehensive approach is termed the CRVS++ model (Cabinet Division, n.d.).

In 2019, the Cabinet Division formulated "CRVS and Beyond (CRVS++..) Implementation Instructions". According to this instruction, the integrated process of CRVS++.. is described as:
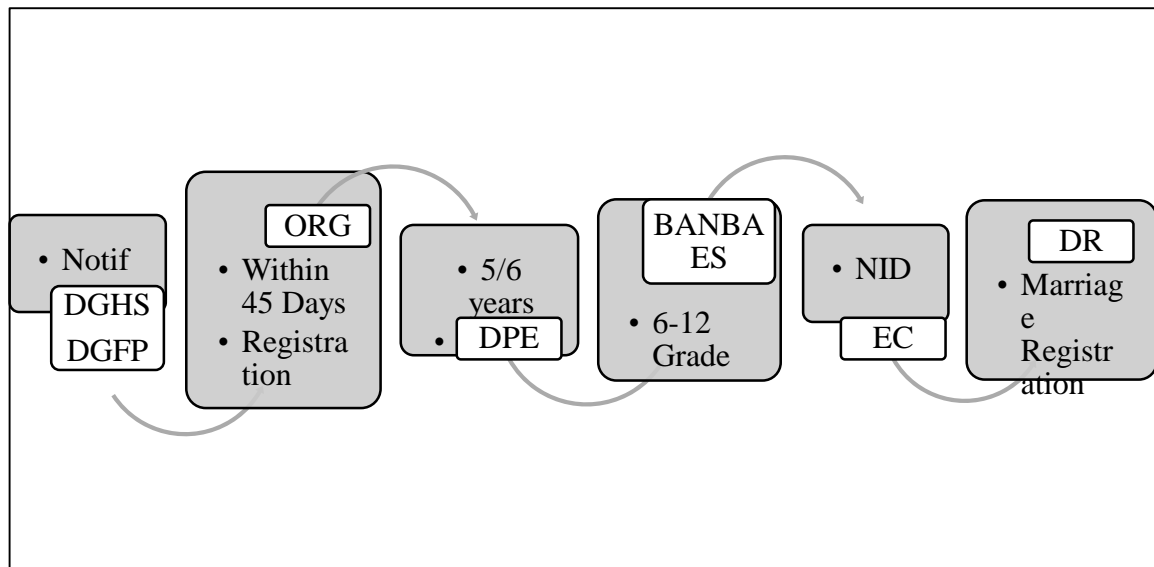
Figure 7: Integrated Process of CRVS++

4.6   Conclusion

Following table depicts an Overview of Civil Registration System in Bangladesh:

Table 4: Overview of Civil Registration System in Bangladesh

Name of Vital Event	Law	Registration Authority
1. Birth 2. Death 3. Cause of Death	• Birth and Death Registration Act, 2004	Office of the Registrar General, Birth and Death Registration, Local Government Division
4. Adoption	No law	No Authority
5. Marriage 6. Divorce	• The Muslim Marriages and Divorces (Registration) Act, 1974 • Hindu Marriages Registration Act, 2012 • The Christian Marriage Act, 1872 • The Special Marriage Act, 1872	Directorate of Registration, Law and Justice Division

The registration of six vital events—birth, death, cause of death, adoption, marriage, and divorce—is central to the effectiveness of Bangladesh's CRVS system. This chapter highlighted how the registration processes for these events have evolved over time. While the registration of births, deaths, and causes of death has been advanced significantly, registration of adoption, marriage and divorce is not yet modernized.

Like many other low- and middle-income countries, CRVS (Civil Registration and Vital Statistics) systems in Bangladesh operated in a fragmented manner. Systems were designed to address isolated aspects of the broader CRVS process, such as birth registration or marriage certification, without considering integration or interconnectivity. However, this lack of coordination poses significant challenges to both the coverage and quality of CRVS data, limiting their effectiveness for planning and policymaking.

Chapter

5 Implementation Challenges of the CRVS System in Bangladesh

5.1 Introduction

An effective CRVS system ensures the registration of vital events, such as births, deaths, marriages, and adoptions, and serves as the backbone for producing accurate vital statistics. In Bangladesh, the CRVS system faces many challenges that hinder its functioning as a comprehensive and integrated system. This chapter explores the implementation challenges of the CRVS system in Bangladesh through the lens of the Winter Integration Model, which provides a structured framework for analyzing the interplay between policy design, institutional behavior, management, and target group dynamics. Both Quantitative and Quantitative approaches have been used to analyze how policy design, organizational behavior, management, and target group behavior affect the implementation of the CRVS system.

5.2 Policy Design

5.2.1 Fragmented Institutional Framework

The policy design is complex to be implemented. Many organizations are responsible for completing different parts of the CRVS in the country. The multi-sectoral nature of CRVS systems creates significant institutional challenges in effective implementation. Various entities related to the CRVS system operate independently, with little coordination or shared protocols, resulting in fragmented data and duplication of efforts. Before the CRVS was introduced, different organizations did birth, death and marriage registration separately. However, when the country recognized the importance of the integrated CRVS system, all the organizations could be reorganized under one central organization. But the policy was designed keeping the organizations in former setup each of which had differing priorities, mandates, and resources. Now all of the organizations regarding CRVS system are independent and even their ministries are not same results in complicated coordination mechanism. Effective integration requires cooperation and agreements between various departments and ministries, which is not designed clearly. As a result, the chances of duplication and harassment have increased. The policy could suggest a single platform for all types of

registration. But at present, different online systems are working (ORG uses BDRIS for Birth and Death Registration, whereas EC uses another system for giving UID), and some registrations are not being done online (Marriage and Divorce Registration is fully paper-based). Due to this, a lack of data interoperability prevails when registering different events. Multiplication of ID systems causes harassment of citizens, wastes human and financial resources, and sometimes creates issues among the organizations.

5.2.2 Complexity

The policy was designed to keep the organizations in the former setup, each of which had differing priorities, mandates, and resources, resulting in creating complexity to be implemented. For example, UID is not generated with Birth Registration. ORG asked for it from EC.

Birth Registration is conducted by the Office of the Registrar General (ORG), responsible for maintaining records of vital events such as births and deaths. A person should be given their identity at birth. However, during the birth registration process, the Universal Identification Number (UID) is not generated automatically. ORG asked for it from EC. EC then provides a UID against BRN. The lack of a Universal Identification (UID) generated alongside birth registration highlights a gap in Bangladesh's Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) system. Fragmentation leads to inefficiencies and delays in assigning a unique identifier for individuals. Generating a UID at the time of birth registration could serve as the foundation for an individual's legal identity, reducing the need for separate processes later. The additional step of asking the EC to generate a UID for registered births creates duplication of work. The absence of UID generation with birth registration represents a missed opportunity to streamline identity management in Bangladesh.

5.2.3 Gaps in Legal Basis

The legal provision for registering all events is not complete. Birth and Death Registration is compulsory according to law. However, there is a lack of clarification in some sections, such as who will correct certificates. The Birth and Death Registration Act, 2004 establishes birth and death registration as a legal requirement in Bangladesh. However, the law does not outline specific consequences or penalties for

non-compliance, leaving a gray area in enforcement. Without legal implications for non-compliance, individuals and families may not feel obligated to register births, particularly in rural or underserved areas where awareness and access are limited. Local authorities lack the power or mandate to enforce registration effectively. Institutions responsible for birth registration, such as the *Union Parishad*, cannot hold citizens accountable for failing to register.

There is no Law for Adoption in the country. Adoption registration is crucial for strengthening the Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) system in Bangladesh. Proper registration ensures that adopted children are formally recognized. It also creates gaps in national data, hindering effective policy-making and resource allocation. Establishing an adoption registration mechanism would promote accountability, protect children's rights, and support the integrity of the CRVS system, benefiting both individuals and society. This step is vital to safeguarding children's rights and supporting the nation's developmental goals.

Bangladesh's marriage registration laws are primarily segmented by religious practices, leaving specific groups unaccounted for. For instance, there is no legal provision allowing Buddhists and Ethnic People to register their marriages, reflecting an exclusionary framework. Besides, Marriage registration is not compulsory for all religions (Hindu and Ethnic people's marriage registration is not compulsory by law). This gap indicates the gap in the legal system to accommodate marriage registration for all citizens uniformly.

Furthermore, the country has no Legal Framework for Producing Vital Statistics from Civil Registration. In Bangladesh, while the Birth and Death Registration Act of 2004 and related rules focus on the legal obligation for registering vital events, there is no specific law mandating the systematic production and use of vital statistics derived from these registrations. Existing laws, such as the Birth and Death Registration Act of 2004, do not specify the production of vital statistics as a function of civil registration. At present, Vital Statistics is produced by BBS. Data from civil registration systems are not systematically shared with the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) for demographic analysis. A dedicated law to mandate the systematic production, analysis, and dissemination of vital statistics from civil registration data hinders the

effectiveness of CRVS system of Bangladesh. By enacting appropriate legislation and integrating registration systems with statistical agencies, Bangladesh can unlock the potential of its CRVS system to generate reliable, comprehensive, and timely vital statistics.

5.3 Organizational and Inter-Organizational Behavior

5.3.1 Lack of data interoperability

Integrating different CRVS components is a complex technical issue, requiring the adoption of common standards, protocols, and infrastructure to enable seamless data exchange. Different systems often operate using incompatible technologies, leading to difficulties in ensuring interoperability. Differences in data formats, database structures, and communication protocols hinder the effective sharing and synchronization of information across various components of the CRVS system.

For example, when an individual applies for a new NID, the Election Commission requires a birth certificate as a mandatory document. While the birth registration system in Bangladesh is digitized and accessible online, the Election Commission does not utilize the existing online data for verification. Instead, it manually re-enters the birth-related information provided by the applicant into its own system. Human and financial resources are spent on a task that could be automated if the EC were to integrate its database with the online birth registration system. Addressing these technical barriers requires proper planning in modernized infrastructure and the adoption of international standards for data exchange and interoperability.

5.3.2 Coordination among the Institutions

The functionality of a CRVS system involves multiple sectors. Various Registration practices are not harmonized in the country which is one of the main challenges in implementation of CRVS system in Bangladesh.

Differences in data collection methods and accuracy across organizations may reduce confidence in shared data. For example, there is no formal contract between ORG and BBS or between Inspector General of Registration and BBS for producing Vital statistics from Civil Registration Data. Besides, to ensure the authenticity of the marriage registration process, marriage registrars require individuals to present their National

Identification (NID) cards. However, they cannot verify the accuracy and authenticity of the. There is no formal contract between EC and the Inspector General of Registration to verify NID. This indicates the lack of coordination among the CRVS institutions in Bangladesh.

Establishing governance and strong coordination mechanisms is essential. A proper framework for collaboration, defining roles and responsibilities, and fostering communication among stakeholders is needed.

5.3.3 Poor Data Quality and Lack of Trust

The registration rates for births and deaths in Bangladesh remain significantly lower than ideal, posing challenges to establishing an effective and comprehensive Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) system. While progress has been made in raising awareness about the importance of registering vital events, several barriers continue to contribute to low registration rates. Bangladesh's birth registration rate has improved over the years but still lags in full coverage, especially for newborns. Death registration rates remain particularly low, exacerbating issues in generating accurate vital statistics. One of the government officials responded,

> *"There is a lack of trust among the organizations implementing CRVS*
> *system. This is one of the reasons for not producing vital statistics from*
> *CR Data in Bangladesh."*

It is evident that not all citizens in the country have birth certificates. 80% of the respondents have Birth Certificates. The total Population of the Country is 16.98 crore, whereas the total number of Birth certificates is more than 22 crore, which indicates duplication of the Birth Registration. 8% of the respondents had to correct their birth certificate, and 5% of the respondents had to apply for NID correction indicates the poor data quality.

5.4 Management

5.4.1 Dual Responsibilities and lack of incentives

The most important part of the CRVS is Birth and Death Registration. The policy is designed as birth will be notified by the health department to the registrar. But there is no dedicated person for this task. In some hospitals, a nurse is usually assigned for

this task who will perform the task in addition to his/her regular work. He/she will not get any remuneration for this. Moreover, all hospitals are not being under this criterion. That's why birth happening outside these hospitals are not being notified.

Also, the appointed registrars for birth and death registration are mainly the local government representatives. They also do not get any remuneration for this job. Furthermore, Government servants who work in the Registrar's office are also not employed only for birth and death registration work. They are performing this duty in addition to the work they were doing before the enactment of the Birth and Death Registration Act. UNO/DDLG, who correct the Birth and Death Certificates, are also not employees of ORG. They are performing this duty in addition to their other work and without incentives. Dual responsibilities and lack of incentives may result in poor performance results in lower effectiveness of the CRVS system.

5.4.2   Capacity

Many registrars lack the technical skills required to operate the software effectively. Many officials receive little formal training on how to use the BDRIS system, leaving them unable to navigate its features. Some registrars, particularly those with limited prior exposure to digital tools, may find it challenging to transition from manual to computerized systems. it has been found from the interview that some birth and death registrars do not use BDRIS software as they are not capable of operating it. They give the ID and password to Entrepreneurs of the Union Pariashad and they use it on behalf of the birth and deth registrars (*Union Parishad* Chairman). As the Entrepreneurs are not local level representatives or government employee they are not accountable. Besides, Registrars in remote areas often face issues with outdated hardware, unreliable internet connectivity, and insufficient technical support, further complicating their ability to use the software.

Most marriage registrars or "Kazi" are not familiar with basic computer operations, let alone specialized software systems.

5.4.3   Technology

Good connectivity is crucial for the Birth and Death Registration Information System (BDRIS) to maintain accurate, timely, and efficient records of birth and death.

However, from the interview, it has been explored that using BDRIS faces some technological issues like server downtime, upgradation of BDRIS and local network issues. One of the government employee who uses BDRIS told that,

> *"We cannot login and use the software because of connectivity issue.*
> *This is one of the reasons that affects the effective birth and death*
> *registration system in the country."*

Connectivity affects the ability of the system to function smoothly, ensuring that data is entered, processed, and accessed without delays.

5.5   Target Group Behavior

5.5.1   Lack of public awareness

The country's people are not aware of the importance of the Birth and Death Registration. For this, delayed registration occurs. According to the Birth and Death Registration Act, 2004, Birth and Death Registration is compulsory within 45 days. people do not do it until the registration card is needed. Only 5% of the respondents registered their birth within 45 days. Birth registration is done mainly for school enrolment as it has become compulsory.

Death registration is rarer as it is needed mainly for inheritance purposes. Death registrations are largely ignored unless needed for inheritance claims. 33.33% of the Respondents did not register their family member's Death. One of the respondents said,

> *"I did not register my father's death. Because he transferred all of his*
> *property to me and my sister when he was alive and his death certificate*
> *is not needed for anything.*

The situation is almost the same in Marriage Registration. Hindu, Buddhist or ethnic People think that they do not have issues with "Kabin," so there is no need to register it. 100% of Hindu Respondents did not register their marriage. Ethnic People also think like that.

Among the respondents, 92% of adults have a National ID (NID), which indicates people are more aware of issuing NID though it is not compulsory by law. One of the Respondents said,

> *"I do not have Birth Certificate but NID. Even we cannot register our sim without it. It is needed in many sectors."*

5.5.2 Cultural and social barriers to registration

In Bangladesh, cultural and religious beliefs play a significant role in shaping attitudes toward marriage registration and adoption. Many communities prioritize traditional and religious practices over formal legal requirements. This has created specific challenges in marriage and adoption registration.

Hindu communities in Bangladesh often view marriage as a sacred bond of devotion rather than a contractual relationship. Ethnic communities in Bangladesh usually share similar beliefs with Hindu populations regarding marriage. From the survey, it has been found that 100% of Hindu Respondents did not register their marriage. One Hindu married respondent said,

> *"My sister-in-law registered her marriage because she did her marriage without the permission of her parents. For this reason, she needed a legal document of her marriage. Usually, we Hindu people do not register our marriage if it is not needed in a case like my sister-in-law. Even I had to submit proof of my marriage to update my passport, and I submitted an Affidavit, not a marriage registration certificate."*

Another Hindu married respondent said,

> *"We don't have issues of kabin or divorce. According to our religion, our marriage cannot be dissolved. That's why we do not think we need a marriage registration certificate. "*

Moreover, adoption, as it is commonly understood in Western cultures, is not recognized in Islam. Instead, Islamic law emphasizes principles like *Kafalah*, which allows individuals or families to care for orphaned or abandoned children without altering their biological identity. Under Islamic law, adopted children do not

automatically inherit from their adoptive or foster parents. The inheritance system in Islam is governed by fixed shares (known as fara'id) prescribed in the Qur'an. These shares are allocated to specific family members, including parents, spouses, children, and siblings, based on their blood relation to the deceased. Since adopted children are excluded from the automatic distribution of an adoptive parent's estate. The lack of alignment between Islamic principles and modern adoption laws has limited the development of comprehensive legal frameworks for adoption in Bangladesh, a Muslim-majority country. This has implications for the rights and welfare of children, particularly in cases where formal adoption could provide them with stability and security.

5.5.3 Tendency of Providing False Information

People's common tendency to provide false information is another challenge to effectively implementing the CRVS system in Bangladesh. One of the most common reasons for falsifying birth registration information is to alter a child's age to meet school enrollment criteria. In Bangladesh, as in many other countries, children must meet specific age requirements to enroll in primary or secondary schools. Parents or guardians sometimes adjust the date of birth on registration documents to enroll their child earlier or allow them to continue in school beyond the age limit. A common tendency is lowering the actual age of children.

Birth registration certificates are also essential for acquiring important documents such as passports, driving licenses, and national identification cards. False information, particularly regarding date of birth or parental details, is sometimes provided to meet age requirements or hide prior inconsistencies in other documents. From the Interview, it has been explored that people sometimes want to increase their age to obtain a driving license or for marriage registration. Moreover, individuals seeking jobs abroad may manipulate their age to appear eligible for specific roles or avoid restrictions imposed on certain age groups. Sometimes, they reissue another birth certificate using false information. This has led to poor data quality and duplication. One Upazila Nirbahi Officer responded that,

> *"Sometimes, individuals attempt to correct their birth certificates to*
>
> *increase their age by 2 or 3 years, which is unrealistic. If they are unable*

to correct the original certificate, they issue a new one with a slight alteration to their name, resulting in duplicate records. They can then use the new certificate to obtain a passport or other official documents, while the original certificate remains active. This type of information falsification is difficult to address. However, system for verification in issuing new birth certificate need to be introduced. Strict enforcement of Penalties for providing false information is also essential."

The practice of providing false information during birth registration undermines the integrity of civil registration systems and has far-reaching consequences for individuals, families, and governments.

5.6   Conclusion

Implementing the Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) system in Bangladesh faces some challenges that hinder the system's ability to provide comprehensive and accurate registration and statistical outputs. First, the involvement of multiple institutions and actors in the CRVS system creates challenges for building an effective CRVS system. In summary, the CRVS system in Bangladesh suffers from systemic fragmentation, weak legal frameworks, organizational inefficiencies, capacity constraints, and socio-cultural barriers. These challenges collectively limit its ability to serve as a reliable foundation for civil registration and vital statistics, impacting its role in governance and development.

Chapter

6   Effectiveness of CRVS in Bangladesh

6.1   Introduction

This chapter addresses the second objective of the research, focusing on the effectiveness of the existing policies, strategies, and initiatives of CRVS system. The CRVS system is a cornerstone for documenting vital events, ensuring legal identity, and generating accurate statistics for governance and policymaking. However, the system in Bangladesh faces challenges in achieving full compliance with these international standards. The chapter begins by examining the alignment of Bangladesh's CRVS system with the UN CRVS Principles, which emphasize compulsory registration, universal coverage, continuous operations, and confidentiality. The chapter then analyzes the CRVS system in Bangladesh against the WHO CRVS IS Design Principles, focusing on Standardized Personal Identification Numbers (PINs) and their institutionalized use across sectors like education and healthcare, centralized population register (CPR), and data accessibility.

Using a comparative framework, this chapter evaluates the strengths and weaknesses of the CRVS system in Bangladesh, highlighting its progress and the areas that require attention. The analysis provides insights into how the system's existing structure aligns with global standards and identifies the key barriers preventing its full potential from being realized.

6.2   Civil Registration System in Bangladesh and UN CRVS Principle

6.2.1   Compulsory Registration of Vital Events

Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) systems are essential for documenting and managing the vital events that occur throughout an individual's life. The following table evaluates the alignment of these vital events with the UN CRVS Principles based on four core aspects: Compulsory Registration, Universal Coverage, Continuous and Permanent Operations, and Confidentiality.

Table 5: Civil Registration System in Bangladesh and UN CRVS Principal

	UN CRVS Principle

Name of Vital Event	Compulsory	Universal Coverage	Continuous and Permanent Operations	Confidentiality
Birth	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Death	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Cause of Death	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Adoption	No	No	No	No
Marriage	Partially	No	Partially	Yes
Divorce	No	No	Partially	Yes

Compulsory registration of vital events— births, deaths, cause of death, adoption, marriages, and divorces—is an essential aspect of a well-functioning civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) system.

In Bangladesh, Birth and Death Registration Act, 2004 and the Birth and Death Registration Rules, 2013 mandate the registration of birth and death, though there remain gaps in implementation and compliance.

In the context of marriage and divorce, registration obligations depend on religious and customary practices. Muslim and Christian Marriage and Divorce Registration is compulsory according to law. But Hindu marriage registration is not compulsory. Moreover, Hindu beliefs does not allow the concept of Divorce.

There is no law which mandate the registration of adoptions. This absence leaves a gap in the documentation of legal guardianship, which can create challenges for minors and foster parents.

6.2.2   Universal Coverage

Birth and Death Registration Act, 2004 and the Birth and Death Registration Rules, 2013 encompasses individuals born, deceased, or residing in Bangladesh, as well as Bangladeshi citizens living abroad. In case of Birth and Death Registration the country has ensured universal coverage.

However, there is no legal provision allowing Buddhists and Tribal People to register their marriages. Not all marriages are covered due to variations in cultural and religious practices. Adoption registration is also not happening in formal way. Thus marriage, divorce and adoption registration do not have universal coverage.

6.2.3   Continuous and Permanent Operations

In Bangladesh, the Birth and Death Registration Act, 2004 establishes the legal foundation for registering these vital events, assigning responsibilities to specific local government entities. Birth and Death Registration is continuous and permanent. Marriage registration is partially Continuous and Permanent as Marriage registration systems exist but not operate seamlessly in all regions.

Adoption registration is not being done.

6.2.4   Confidentiality

Confidentiality of collected information is a fundamental principle that ensures individuals feel secure in providing their personal details, knowing that the data will be used solely for purposes outlined by law or presented in an aggregated form where individual identities remain anonymous. In Bangladesh, there is no specific law dedicated to protecting personal data or addressing confidentiality concerns within the civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) framework. Strengthening these aspects through clear legal provisions would ensure the secure handling of personal data and build public trust in the system.

6.2.5   Conclusion

Under the UN CRVS Principles, birth, death, and cause of death registrations demonstrate strong compliance in areas such as legal mandates, universal coverage, and confidentiality. However, marriage, divorce, and adoption registrations lag significantly due to fragmented legal frameworks, cultural barriers, and the lack of a centralized approach. Adoption registration, in particular, remains entirely absent, leaving critical gaps in the documentation of legal guardianship.

6.3   CRVS System in Bangladesh and WHO CRVS IS Principle

The following table compares the World Health Organization's (WHO) Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) Information Systems (IS) Design Principles with

the current state of Bangladesh's CRVS system. This analysis highlights the strengths and weaknesses of the system in Bangladesh while providing insights into areas of improvement.

Table 6: CRVS System in Bangladesh and WHO CRVS IS Design Principal

WHO CRVS IS Design Principal	CRVS System in Bangladesh	Comments
Centralized Database (CPR)	No	Fragmented databases.
Accessible Infrastructure	Partially	Digital systems improving.
Standardized and Legally Mandated PIN	Yes	Linked to UID and BRN.
Institutionalized Practices for PIN Use	Yes	Used across sectors.
CPR as the Master Registry	No	No centralized system.
Free and Open Data Access	Partially	Limited public access.

6.3.1 Centralized Database (CPR)

A centralized population register (CPR) is a vital component for a functional CRVS system. It consolidates data about all vital events—births, deaths, marriages, and divorces—in a single repository, ensuring efficiency and preventing duplication.

In Bangladesh, there is no centralized database for CRVS system. Instead, various government agencies manage fragmented databases.

This lack of centralization creates significant inefficiencies. Duplication of efforts, data inconsistencies, and challenges in interagency coordination are common. A centralized CPR would allow seamless data sharing among stakeholders and provide a single source of truth for population statistics.

6.3.2 Accessible Infrastructure

Accessible infrastructure ensures that the CRVS system is available to all citizens, regardless of their location or socio-economic status. It should be supported by digital tools to make registration convenient and efficient.

Bangladesh has partially achieved this goal. For birth and death registration the country has more than 5000 registration points.

6.3.3 Standardized and Legally Mandated PIN

Using a standardized and legally mandated Personal Identification Number (PIN) ensures uniformity and facilitates data integration across sectors such as health, education, and social services. Bangladesh has successfully implemented a PIN system termed as Unique Identification (UID). This standardized PIN ensures that individuals can be uniquely identified across various sectors, such as healthcare, education, and financial services. This is a significant achievement for Bangladesh, as it ensures uniformity in recordkeeping and allows for efficient service delivery. The legally mandated PIN serves as a foundation for future integration of the CRVS system with other databases.

6.3.4 Institutionalized Practices for PIN Use

PINs must be systematically used across sectors to ensure that data integration is institutionalized. This practice supports the efficient management of records and enhances service delivery by linking individual records from various databases.

Bangladesh has successfully institutionalized the use of the PIN across multiple sectors. For example, student profiles are creating according to their UIDs.

The consistent use of the PIN across sectors is a major strength of Bangladesh's CRVS system. It enables better tracking of individuals throughout their lifecycle and simplifies administrative processes. Expanding the application of PINs to additional sectors could further enhance the system's effectiveness.

6.3.5 CPR as the Master Registry

The CPR should serve as the master registry for all vital events, acting as a comprehensive source of data for various administrative and statistical purposes.

Currently, Bangladesh does not have a CPR functioning as the master registry. Instead, vital events are recorded in separate databases managed by different agencies, such as the Ministry of Local Government for birth and death registration and the Ministry of Law for marriage registration.

The absence of a master registry limits the ability to consolidate data for national planning and policy development. Establishing a CPR as the master registry would eliminate redundancies and ensure a single, authoritative source of population data.

6.3.6 Free and Open Data Access

The CRVS system should allow free and open access to anonymized and aggregated data to promote transparency and enable evidence-based policymaking.

Data access in Bangladesh's CRVS system is limited. While government agencies can access specific datasets, the public and researchers face restrictions. Aggregated and anonymized data are not easily available for academic, statistical, or policy-related use.

Restricted access to vital statistics limits the system's potential for informing public policy and fostering accountability. Expanding access to aggregated CRVS data—while maintaining strict confidentiality protocols—would enhance the utility of the system and support evidence-based decision-making.

6.3.7 Conclusion

The CRVS system in Bangladesh has achieved significant milestones, especially in standardizing PIN usage and institutionalizing its application. However, the lack of a centralized database, uneven accessibility, and limited data-sharing practices are significant barriers to realizing the full potential of the system. By addressing these gaps, Bangladesh can create a more efficient and comprehensive CRVS system, aligning it with WHO's design principles and contributing to improved governance, service delivery, and policy formulation.

This chapter examined the alignment of Bangladesh's Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) system with the UN CRVS Principles and WHO CRVS IS Design Principles. The analysis revealed a mixed picture: while significant progress has been made in areas like compulsory birth and death registration and the institutionalization of standardized PINs, significant gaps remain in achieving universal coverage, ensuring data integration, and enhancing accessibility.

Chapter

7   Conclusion and Way Forward

An effective CRVS system ensures the registration of vital events—births, deaths, marriages, divorces, and adoptions—and provides essential data for population analysis and evidence-based policymaking. CRVS systems also contribute to achieving multiple SDG targets by providing reliable data for monitoring health, education, and social welfare indicators. For instance, birth and death registration data are instrumental in tracking neonatal and maternal mortality rates, while marriage registration data support efforts to eliminate child marriage. By strengthening the CRVS system, Bangladesh can enhance its capacity to fulfill its development agenda. The country is trying to boost the CRVS system to achieve its international goal. However, despite its recognized importance and various efforts over the years, Bangladesh's integrated and functional CRVS system faces significant challenges. The research aimed to discover the key challenges of implementing the CRVS system in Bangladesh and understand the effectiveness of the present CRVS system.

One of the key findings of this reasearch highlights the fragmented nature of Bangladesh's CRVS framework. Multiple organizations with distinct operational procedures result in a lack of coordination and data interoperability. The CRVS system in Bangladesh has made notable progress in some areas, particularly in the use of standardized PIN (Unique Identification Number) and their institutionalized application. However, the absence of a centralized population register is a concern for ensuring effective CRVS system. A fragmented Database leads to restrictive data-sharing practices that reduce the system's potential for evidence-based public policy formulation.

The study also concluded that the inadequacies in legal provision as a critical impediment to CRVS implementation. Existing laws related to vital event registration are not fully comprehensive and, in some cases, exclusionary. For example, while birth and death registrations are legally obligated, there is no provision for adoption registration. Similarly, marriage registration laws are fragmented and fail to

encompass certain religious and cultural groups, such as Buddhists and Ethnic communities.

Another notable challenge lies in the area of organizational and inter-organizational behavior. The lack of data interoperability between agencies hampers the seamless exchange of information. Technological incompatibilities, coupled with inconsistent data standards, further complicate integration efforts. Moreover, insufficient coordination mechanisms among stakeholders are also prevails in the system. Addressing these barriers requires a robust governance framework and a concerted effort to align organizational goals and practices.

Management-related issues also play a significant role in impeding CRVS implementation. The study identifies resource constraints as major obstacles, including inadequate staffing, training, and financial support. Many registrars and personnel involved in CRVS processes must perform these duties alongside their primary responsibilities, often without additional compensation. This not only affects the quality of data collection but also demotivates employees, compromising the system's overall effectiveness.

The behavior and awareness of the target group—the general population—further influence the success of CRVS implementation. Despite being compulsory, many citizens remain unaware of the importance of timely registration of vital events. For instance, birth registrations are often delayed until they are required for practical purposes, such as school enrollment, while death registrations are largely ignored unless needed for inheritance claims. This lack of awareness reflects broader societal attitudes and highlights the need for targeted information campaigns and incentives to promote compliance. Cultural and social barriers are also influential factors that creates difficulties in implementation of the effective CRVS system.

To overcome these challenges, a holistic and multi-faceted approach is essential. Investments in modernizing infrastructure is needed. Equally important is establishing clear legal frameworks that address existing gaps and promote inclusivity. Institutional reforms are also imperative. Strengthening inter-ministerial coordination through governance structures like the CRVS Steering Committee can foster collaboration and

accountability. Establishing a centralized coordination body can facilitate collaboration, prevent duplication of efforts, and ensure alignment with national priorities. Developing legislation to facilitate interagency data sharing and integration within the CRVS framework is also necessary. Policy formulation is needed to allow free and open access to aggregated CRVS data for research, planning, and policymaking.

Updating the legal and policy framework to align with international standards is crucial. Comprehensive legislation should clearly define registration requirements, streamline processes, and establish accountability mechanisms. Enforcement mechanisms, such as penalties for non-registration or incentives for timely registration, can encourage compliance. Establishing clear jurisdictional boundaries and roles for different agencies can also minimize overlap and confusion.

A unified population register would integrate data from different agencies, eliminate redundancies, and improve data reliability. A centralized CPR is a must for a well-functioning CRVS system.

Investing in modern infrastructure, including digital registration systems, can significantly improve the efficiency and reliability of the CRVS system. Expanding digital infrastructure and introducing mobile registration units to improve access in rural and underserved regions can improve data coverage. Training programs for registration personnel should focus on building technical skills, enhancing data management capabilities, and fostering a customer-centric approach. Capacity-building initiatives, including specialized training for registrars and other personnel, will improve the quality of data collection and management. Furthermore, incentives for employees and citizens can drive greater engagement and compliance. Mobile teams equipped with digital tools can travel to hard-to-reach areas to register vital events on-site, reducing the burden on individuals to travel long distances.

Public awareness campaigns in demographic groups can play a vital role in increasing registration rates. These campaigns should emphasize the benefits of registration, such as access to legal identity, public services, and social protection. Community leaders, local media, and social networks can increase the effectiveness of these

campaigns. Community leaders, local level representatives, civil society, NGO etc. can help address cultural and social barriers to registration.

Government commitment to allocating sufficient budgetary resources is essential. Cost-effective solutions, such as leveraging existing infrastructure and resources, should also be considered to maximize impact within budget constraints.

In conclusion, while significant progress has been made in advancing CRVS in Bangladesh, much work remains to be done. A comprehensive and integrated approach that combines technical solutions with institutional and societal reforms is essential for overcoming existing challenges. By prioritizing inclusivity, efficiency, and sustainability, Bangladesh can establish a robust CRVS system that not only fulfills its developmental aspirations but also ensures the rights and well-being of its citizens.

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Appendix-I: Approval of Research Protocol

NORTH SOUTH UNIVERSITY
Institutional Review Board/ Ethics Review Committee (IRB/ERC)

NPM 635, Plot- 15, Block- B
Bashundhara, Dhaka-1229,
Bangladesh.
PABX: 88-02-55668200, Ext: 6165

Memorandum
2024/OR-NSU/IRB/1006

Date:	20 October 2024
To:	Masuma Begum Student Department of SIPG
	Dr. Salahuddin M Aminuzzaman [Supervisor] Professor Department of SIPG
From:	Dr. Dipak Kumar Mitra Chairman NSU Institutional Review Board/ Ethics Review Committee
Subject:	Approval of Research Protocol #2024/OR-NSU/IRB/1006

Chairman 2 2 OCT 2024
NSU Institutional Review Board/
Ethics Review Committee (IRB/ERC)

Dear Masuma Begum,

Thank you for your application requesting for approval of your research protocol #2024/OR-NSU/IRB/1006, titled "Implementation of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) In Bangladesh: Concerns and Challenges". I am glad to inform you that the committee has approved your research protocol. You will be required to observe the following terms and conditions in implementing the research protocol:

1. As principal investigator, the ultimate responsibility for scientific and ethical conduct including the protection of the rights and welfare of study participants vest upon you. You shall also be responsible for ensuring competence, integrity, and ethical conduct of other investigators and staff directly involved in the research protocol.

2. You shall conduct the activity in accordance with the IRB-approved protocol and shall fully comply with any subsequent determinations by IRB.

3. You shall obtain prior approval from the IRB for any modification in the approved research protocol and/or approved consent form(s), except in case of emergency to safeguard/eliminate apparent immediate hazards to study participants. Such changes must immediately be reported to the IRB Chairman.

4. You shall recruit/enroll participants for the study strictly adhering to the criteria mentioned in the approved research protocol.

5. You shall obtain legally effective informed consent (i.e. consent should be free from coercion or undue influence) from the selected study participants or their legally responsible representative, as approved in the protocol, using the approved consent forms prior to their enrollment in the study. Before obtaining consent, all prospective study participants must be adequately informed about the purpose(s) of the study, its methods and procedures, and also what would be done if they agree and

NORTH SOUTH UNIVERSITY
Institutional Review Board/ Ethics Review Committee
(IRB/ERC)

ADM 625, Plot: 15, Block: B,
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PABX: +88-02-55668200, Ext: 6465

also if they do not agree to participate in the study. They must be informed that their participation in the study is voluntary and that they can withdraw their participation any time without prejudice. Used consent form should be preserved for a period of at least three years following official termination of the study.

6. You shall promptly report the occurrence of any Adverse Event or Serious Adverse Event or unanticipated problems of potential risk to the study participants or others to the ERC in writing within 24 hours of such occurrences.

7. Any significant new findings, developing during the course of this study that might affect the risks and benefits and thus influence either participation in the study or continuation of participation should be reported in writing to the participants and the IRB.

8. Data and/or samples should be collected, as specified in the IRB-approved protocol, and confidentiality must be maintained. Data/samples must be protected by reasonable security, safeguarding against risks as their loss or unauthorized access, destruction, used by others, and modification or disclosure of data. Data/samples should not be disclosed, made available to or use for purposes other than those specified in the protocol, and shall be preserved for a period, as specified under NSU policy/practices.

9. You shall promptly and fully comply with the decision of IRB to suspend or withdraw its approval for the research protocol.

10. You shall report progress of research to the IRB on annual basis.

I wish you success in running the above-mentioned study.

cc: 1. Recording Secretary, NSU IRB/ERC

Appendix-II: Questionnaire for Government Officials

Questionnaire for Government Official

(Only for Academic Purpose)

Name: Mobile/Email:

Designation   Organization

Thesis Title: Implementation of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) In Bangladesh: Concerns and Challenges

1. In your opinion, what are the biggest barriers preventing people from registering vital events (Birth, Death, Cause of Death, Adoption, Marriage, Divorce)?

2. What is your opinion on the current policy framework governing the CRVS system?

3. How would you assess the current infrastructure supporting the CRVS system in terms of registration centers, technology, and human resources?

4. Do you think behavior of target group people can affect the functioning of CRVS system in Bangladesh?

5. How well do different government departments and agencies collaborate in the implementation of the CRVS system?

6. How do you assess current CRVS system in the country? Is it fully functioning?

7. What are the main challenges in Implementing CRVS in Bangladesh?

Appendix-III: Questionnaire for Citizen

Questionnaire for Citizen

(Only for Academic Purpose)

Thesis Title: Implementation of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) In Bangladesh: Concerns and Challenges

1. Name:………………………………………………………………………
2. Address:…………………………………………………………………………
3. Mobile Number/Email:……………………………………
4. Please Provide following Information

Member		Head of the Family	Member 2
Age			
Gender		a) Male b) Female c) Other	a) Male b) Female c) Other
Education Level		a) No Formal Education b) Know how to write name c) Primary d) Secondary e) Higher Secondary f) Graduate g) Other (Please Specify)	a) No Formal Education b) Know how to write name c) Primary d) Secondary e) Higher Secondary f) Graduate g) Other (Please Specify)
Occupation		a) Private Service Holder (Please Specify) b) Govt. Service Holder (Please Specify) c) Homemaker d) Business e) Student f) Other	a) Private Service Holder (Please Specify) b) Govt. Service Holder (Please Specify c) Homemaker d) Business e) Student f) Other
Status of Civil Registration	Online Birth Certificate	a) Yes b) No	a) Yes b) No
	Reasons for Having/Not Having BRN		
	National ID Card	b) Yes b) No	b) Yes b) No

	Reasons for Having/Not Having NID		
	Marriage Registration	c) Yes b) No	c) Yes b) No
	Reasons for Having/Not Doing Marriage Registration		
	Do these registration have same information (If No, Please Mention What will your next step regarding this)		

Member		Member 3	Member 4
Age			
Gender		a) Male b) Female c) Other	a) Male b) Female c) Other
Education Level		h) No Formal Education i) Know how to write name j) Primary k) Secondary l) Higher Secondary m) Graduate n) Other (Please Specify)	h) No Formal Education i) Know how to write name j) Primary k) Secondary l) Higher Secondary m) Graduate n) Other (Please Specify)
Occupation		g) Private Service Holder (Please Specify) h) Govt. Service Holder (Please Specify) i) Homemaker j) Business k) Student l) Other	g) Private Service Holder (Please Specify) h) Govt. Service Holder (Please Specify i) Homemaker j) Business k) Student l) Other
Sta	Online Birth Certificate	d) Yes b) No	d) Yes b) No

Reasons for Having/Not Having BRN		
National ID Card	e) Yes b) No	e) Yes b) No
Reasons for Having/Not Having NID		
Marriage Registration	f) Yes b) No	f) Yes b) No
Reasons for Having/Not Doing Marriage Registration		
Do these registration have same information (If No, Please Mention What will your next step regarding this)		

Member	Member 5	Member 6
Age		
Gender	a) Male b) Female c) Other	a) Male b) Female c) Other
Education Level	o) No Formal Education p) Know how to write name q) Primary r) Secondary s) Higher Secondary t) Graduate u) Other (Please Specify)	o) No Formal Education p) Know how to write name q) Primary r) Secondary s) Higher Secondary t) Graduate u) Other (Please Specify)
Occupation	m) Private Service Holder (Please Specify) n) Govt. Service Holder (Please Specify) o) Homemaker p) Business q) Student r) Other	m) Private Service Holder (Please Specify) n) Govt. Service Holder (Please Specify o) Homemaker p) Business q) Student r) Other

Status of Civil Registration	Online Birth Certificate	g) Yes b) No	g) Yes b) No
	Reasons for Having/Not Having BRN		
	National ID Card	h) Yes b) No	h) Yes b) No
	Reasons for Having/Not Having NID		
	Marriage Registration	i) Yes b) No	i) Yes b) No
	Reasons for Having/Not Doing Marriage Registration		
	Do these registration have same information (If No, Please Mention What will your next step regarding this)		

5. Are you aware of the Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) system?

   - ☐ Yes
   - ☐ No
   - ☐ Somewhat

6. If you are a parent, have you registered your child's birth within 45 days?
   - ☐ Yes
   - ☐ No
   - ☐ Not applicable

7. If applicable, what was the main reason for the delay in registration?

- ☐ Lack of information
- ☐ Inconvenient process
- ☐ Did not require it within 45 days
- ☐ Not aware of the deadline
- ☐ Other: _____

8. Have you registered any death of your family member within 45 days?
   - ☐ Yes
   - ☐ No
   - ☐ Not applicable

9. If applicable, what was the main reason for the delay in registration?
   - ☐ Lack of information
   - ☐ Inconvenient process
   - ☐ Did not require it within 45 days
   - ☐ Not aware of the deadline
   - ☐ Other: _____

11. How satisfied are you with the current CRVS system?
   - ☐ Very satisfied
   - ☐ Satisfied
   - ☐ Neutral
   - ☐ Dissatisfied
   - ☐ Very dissatisfied

12. Describe the challenges you face during civil registration (if any)
   …………………………………………………………………………………
   …………………………………………………………………………………
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Thank you for your time!