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Poster presentation

Civil Registration and National Identity System All under one Roof; Uganda’s fastest path to the revitalization of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics System for Africa

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Abstract

With the transfer of births, deaths and adoption orders registration from Uganda Registration Services Bureau (URSB) to National Identification and Registration Authority (NIRA), it is expected that civil registration and national identity systems will take a shorter time to be effectively developed in Uganda. Having the two systems under one umbrella is likely to make Uganda a model country in service delivery using the two systems. The Mobile Vital Registration System (MVRS) should be strengthened including on the registration of deaths in Uganda. With a deliberate move to increase the demand for civil registration documents and National identity by both the government and private sector, service delivery will be improved immensely in Uganda in the long run.

Key words: demand, interlink, biometric identity & burial permits

1. Background

1.1 Introduction

Given the current wave of promoting national identity system and civil registration system in Africa, an increasing need to document best practices and challenges being faced in these systems has become important. This paper aims at showing the practicability of having both civil registration and national Identity systems all under one roof. The paper further explains the demand trends of a combined civil registration and national identity system in Uganda. The current business model adopted by Uganda promises a smooth interlink between national identity

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system and civil registration. However, a deliberate production of vital statistics is required even if the data collected so far is inadequate.

### 1.2 Background to the paper

Effective 1\textsuperscript{st} January 2016, the transfer of births, deaths and adoption orders registration was effected from Uganda Registration Services Bureau (URSB) to National Identification and Registration Authority (NIRA) according to a joint press release. Only Marriage (URSB Mandate) and divorce registration (Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs) have remained outside the mandate of NIRA as per the Registration of Persons Act 2015. This implies that the major stakeholder in Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) is the Ministry of Internal Affairs (that houses NIRA). Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs is the secondary stakeholder since it is still responsible for Marriage (it is a line ministry under which URSB-semi-autonomous government agency operates) and Divorce.

However, it is also important to indicate that Vital Statistics from Civil Registration is still a mandate of Uganda Bureau of Statistics of which Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development (MoFPED) is the line ministry-this is the 3\textsuperscript{rd} secondary CRVS stakeholder. The CRVS business model is very promising for Uganda to achieve 100% birth and death registration completion rate as illustrated in Figure 1.

**Figure 1: The New Uganda Civil Registration and Vital Statistics System Business Model**

![Business Model Diagram](source)

**Source:** NIRA., 2017
2. Methods

Meta data analysis through review of literature including exploring reports from Uganda Registration Services Bureau, the National Identification Registration Authority (NIRA), the constitution of Uganda act 18, registration of persons act 2015, the Statistics Act 1998 (UBOS, 1998), United Nations documents, research institutions reports, country reports and journal articles. Websites for URSB, NIRA and UNECA were accessed in order to inform the study.

3. Results

3.1 Global and regional context

The national identity document (ID) systems has been initiated or upgraded in many countries in both developed and developing countries. Biometric identity system is more predominant in developed countries although developing countries are increasing adopting it including Uganda. National IDs has tangible advantage over birth certificates given the fact that they are portable and difficult to counterfeit hence explaining their popularity. National ID systems are often more advanced than civil Registration and Vital Statistics System hence better to integrate the two systems (Unicef., 2013).

In Africa, 2 in 3 countries have introduced or are in the process of introducing a new ID system. They account for more than 80% (more than 800 million) of Africans. This investment is estimated at US$ 5 billion (GoS., 2014). Uganda is among the many African countries (Rwanda, Kenya, South Sudan, Sudan, Tunisia, Egypt, Angola, Botswana, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, South Africa, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Nigeria and Senegal among others) that have implemented the national ID project alongside having a civil registration and vital statistics system.

In Uganda, the National Identification project is a statutory requirement under the East African Common Market Protocol. This Protocol requires all member states of the East African Community namely; Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, Kenya and Tanzania to process National Identity Cards for their Nationals. The National ID is a document that would facilitate easy movement among the member states of the East African Community. Many countries have processed and issued these cards.

According to the Uganda Registration Services Bureau annual report 2013/2014, Uganda is one of the East African countries with the lowest birth registration rates for the underfive children as shown in Figure 2. Rwanda is on the right path to having a complete 100% birth registration. It should be noted that the figures presented majorly came from the Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) and not generated from the Civil Registration and Vital Statistics System hence indicating the need to urgently begin processing Vital Statistics data in Uganda.
3.2 National Identity has already won public support in Uganda
The National Identification and Registration Authority (NIRA) has already won public confidence and it has full political support given the fact that they were able to successful register all the Ugandans aged 16 years and above in 2014 for the national Identity Card(ID). The national ID is issued free of charge but in case it is misplaced or spoilt, the owner is charged an appropriate fee. The national ID system collected biometric information for the card holders and was designed with an expiry date making it valid for 10 years.

Source: Authors., 2017
In Uganda, the national ID system was successfully used to generate voters register for the February 18th 2016 general elections. The Independent Electoral Commission for Uganda asked voters to present their national ID in order to be given ballot paper to vote. Besides, all presidential and Members of parliament aspirants were asked to present their national identity cards as a requirement for nomination. The candidates who never presented the identity card were disqualified from contesting for elective political positions in the government of Uganda.

Ugandans are already using this same national ID to travel within the East African region (Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda, Burundi and now South Sudan) in lieu of travel documents or passport. Today, the government of Uganda has announced that all public servants should present their national IDs before their salaries are processed. This has created demand for the national ID among the citizens of Uganda. The national Identity system is envisaged to benefit the citizens of Uganda in numerous ways as presented in Figure 4.

**Figure 4: Benefits of merging Civil Registration with National Identity Systems in Uganda**

![Diagram](image)

Source: NIRA, 2017
3.3 Uganda’s legal Framework

According to article 18 for the 1995 Constitution of the Republic of Uganda, “The State shall register every birth, marriage and death occurring in Uganda” (GoU, 1995). What about the rest of the vital events e.g adoptions, legitimation, divorce etc...? Are they backed by laws of Uganda? This question is now answered by the new Registration of Persons’ Act, 2015 states that “The National Identification and Registration Authority (NIRA) is an autonomous statutory body with the mandate to carry out all registrations of persons required in Uganda.

To date, the current registration areas include; government, missionary and industrial hospitals, 1350 sub-counties, Town Councils, Municipalities and 5 Divisions of Kampala city. Apparently, 67 sub counties have been equipped with mobile phone based birth registration and this has brought about tremendous increment in birth registration in Uganda.

The Mobile Vital Registration System (MVRS) in Birth Registration within Uganda has been quite successful especially using mobile phones and internet. Today the system has been rolled out in 135 Government, missionary and industrial hospitals countrywide to record births, 67 selected sub counties in 33 districts; and 5 divisions within Kampala Capital City Authority to record births in communities. This is only covering 33 out of 112 districts of Uganda (URSB., 2015b).

The children in Uganda are issued with short birth certificates and this has greatly increased the coverage of birth registration in the recent passed with 60,000-100,000 births registered every month under MVRS system (URSB, 2015a). Figure 5 presents the birth registration in Uganda by region. However this platform has not incorporated death registration and notification or even reporting of other vital events module hence need for different strategies to ensure fully functioning CRVS system in Uganda.

Figure 5: Birth registration coverage in Uganda by region

Source: URSB., 2015
4. Discussions

4.1 When will Uganda begin producing vital Statistics?
Uganda’s civil registration is still undeveloped like most of the African countries perhaps due to inadequate funding among other reasons. Uganda is among the African countries that do not produce periodic vital statistics due to low civil registration rates. According to the Uganda Demographic and Health survey of 2011, birth registration for children under five years was recorded at 30% (UBOS and ICF International Inc., 2012). This data was generated by asking a question to women aged 15-49 on whether their children were registered at birth or had a birth certificate. Vital statistics (from birth registration, death registration, and marriage and divorce information) cannot be computed using the current Uganda Civil Registration and Vital Statistics system due to inadequate data which is not even representative of the country situation.

It is conventional known especially among demographers that CRVS system is the best means to provide information for National IDs among African countries (UNDESA., 2014). Given the fact that Civil registration has not been used to generate vital statistics to guide policy making in Uganda, there is need for a concerted effort to begin production of vital statistics as mandated by Uganda Bureau of Statistics according to the Statistics Act 1998(UBOS, 1998). Results will easily be generated especially when the interlinkage of CRVS system with the National ID system is implemented under NIRA. This will bring about increased data production and meaningful decision making. Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS) is mandated to process and produce vital statistics generated from civil registration. Apparently, no vital statistics have ever been produced including on the causes of death according to a report published by the World Health Organization (Mathers, Fat, Rao and Lopez., 2005).

4.2 Is there need for a deliberate move to increase demand for Civil Registration documents?
Although there are current efforts on the registration of births below five years especially in hospitals, it should be noted that there are so many citizens of Uganda that have never registered births or deaths. This fact is even recognized in the recent Uganda CRVS comprehensive assessment as reported by the civil registrar thus, “I have been working here as a sub county chief for two years. I have registered births on daily basis but no one time have I registered a newly born child ….this person is 50 years old but he came to register for a birth certificate” (URSB.,2015b).

As a way of increasing demand for civil registration and the national Identity recording, Mobile Vital Registration System, registration during immunization exercises as well as demand of Civil registration documents for instance while enrolling for school as well as issuing of burial permits should be intensified.

The demand for Civil Registration documents early in life is very important because it is associated with accurate recording than if it is late in the life of a person. This could be applied in the short run and then in the long run, CRVS system should be strengthened so that vital events are registered to enable a person get his or her national ID after reaching 16 years of age, all this done under NIRA. Figure 6 shows an example late birth registration in Uganda in which the author himself registered a birth in 2005 after 21 years of occurrence. This happened because it
was a requirement while applying for University education and no penalty was levied on late birth registration.

**Figure 6: Late Birth registration in Uganda**

![Birth Certificate Image]

*Source: Authors, 2017*
REFERENCES


