THE UGANDA PARLIAMENTARY FORUM ON SOCIAL PROTECTION

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POLICY BRIEF

Increasing Access and Demand for National IDs for Effective Delivery of Social Protection

Introduction

The Uganda government is making identification and registration more and more necessary for people to get social benefits, healthcare, and other types of government assistance. The registration processes may inadvertently prevent some population groups from receiving an ID and, as a result, from using the vital resources to which they are legally entitled.[1] Many times, presenting a National ID is required in order to gain access to social protection services (such as social security and Social Care and Support).[2]

The process of obtaining a National ID is frequently fraught with discriminatory designs, red tape, and technological hiccups. People may face particular risks and concerns even after receiving an ID since it might not correctly reflect who they are.

Social Protection is a human right and must be accessible to all without discrimination. Due to the demand on digitisation, a number of Social Protection programmes have made it a requirement for their beneficiaries to have National IDs in order to access benefits.

This has therefore left certain categories of vulnerable individuals excluded since they do not have or may not be able to access the IDs locked out from accessing these benefits.

This brief therefore sets out to make the case for the expansion of access and demand for the National IDs by looking at the limitations to access by the Mandated Institution, its exclusionary effect on three selected programmes, the challenges faced in accessing the National IDs by beneficiaries of these programmes, the upside of using the National ID system and recommendations and reforms that can be under taken to ensure expansion of access and inclusion.

National Identification and Registration Authority's Mandate

NIRA is a government agency under the Ministry of Internal Affairs charged with the responsibility of registering and issuing identity cards to Ugandans. NIRA is mandated to offer identification services, policy, planning and support; increase transparency and eliminate corruption in the delivery of services, as well as strengthen the capacity of Uganda's statistical system to generate data.

In 2015, the Registration of Persons Act (ROPA) brought civil registration and national ID under one organization. A new national ID was successfully issued to over 70.2% of Ugandans 16 years and older.

Limitations that NIRA faces in scaling up National ID access.

NIRA is present in 112 districts out of 146 districts in Uganda. The implication here is that persons in districts without NIRA offices have to go to their parent districts which has a cost implication for persons who are mostly vulnerable.

NIRA is grossly understaffed with average of 2 staff per district. On top of not penetrating all the districts, NIRA is understaffed with reports of up to 7 districts having only one staff to carry out all the processes.

It has a 10-year-old technology which is now obsolete. Its productivity has dropped from enrolling 21 people a day to 8-10 a day. This compounded with the fact that the current technology is vendor locked and the support and maintenance contract with Government broke down in 2019.

There is also limited funding. The ED of NIRA asserts that each of the 112 districts receives about 300 liters of fuel every quarter to cover a radius of approximately 200km.

1 (My ID, my identity? The impact of ID systems on transgender people in Argentina, France and the Philippines, n.d.)

2 (Government to give drugs to only patients with national IDs, 2018)

Lotis Towers. Plot 16 Mackinnon rd. Floor 8 P. O. Box 7178, Kampala, Uganda
communications@upfsp.org/info@upfsp.org 0777557387, 0701928084, 0702594392 @upfsp The Uganda Parliamentary Forum on Social Protection

This limits the ability of NIRA to effectively reach people at the grassroots levels.

Overview of the National ID use in select social protection interventions

Senior Citizens Grant

The Senior Citizens Grant is the largest Social Protection Programme in Uganda targeting older persons 80 years and above. The older persons in this category receive a stipend of 25,000 shillings as a form of social security. Enrolment on to the programme is on the basis of meeting the age eligibility and having a National ID.

From a survey done by the Expanding Social Protection Programme, it was established that about **53,857** eligible beneficiaries were excluded from the SCG beneficiary lists. These categories included **12,389** Older Persons who have never registered for National IDs and **41,468** Older Persons who had understated dates of birth.

Development Response to Displacement Impact Project

Development Response to Displacement Impact Project commonly referred to as DRDIP is a Labour-Intensive Public Works Programme providing direct income support to the poor and vulnerable within 15 refugee hosting districts.

The community LIWP beneficiaries are given UGX 5,500 for each day worked up to a maximum of 54 days, with UGX 1,500 deducted as mandatory savings from the daily income and UGX 4,000 paid every ten working days. A total of UGX 40,000 shillings would be distributed to the recipients. The signatories of the account, the Community Project Management Committee (C/P, Secretary, and Treasurer), write a requisition and submit it to the DRDIP desk officer for approval. The committee then withdraws the monies from the bank and distributes the payments to DRDIP beneficiaries based on the number of days worked from the work attendance list. Therefore, in the DRDIP case, the Community Project Management Committee **are required to have National Identification Cards as a pre-requisite for opening up the bank account**

NutriCash

NutriCash is a component of the Child Sensitive Social Protection Programme implemented in 8 Refugee Hosting Districts of West Nile. Nutri Cash recognizes the need for social protection interventions to generate and sustain improvements in **nutritional outcomes** with a focus **on Pregnant and Lactating Women (PLW) and Children under two years of age.**

The **project leverages existing DRDIP LIPW structures** to target participating households with a pregnant member in the 8 Refugee Hosting Districts.

The entry point to the Project is the first and or second trimester of pregnancy as the Project seeks to enhance early access to health services during pregnancy. Targeting is undertaken through the **DRDIP Community Facilitators with pregnancy verification** at a health facility (ANC Card) before enrolment and registration.

Enrolled mothers with NIDs are paid through the digital payment option which is Equity Bank and those without NIDS are paid through Cash on Wheels which is Post Bank. From data compiled by WFP, up to **41% of the Nutri Cash beneficiaries** do not have National IDs.

The Problem: National ID system as a requirement to Access Social Protection benefits

37% of Uganda's population still remain unregistered, compared to 63% who are registered and have National Identification Numbers. National IDs might serve as several grounds for exclusion. Access and usage of NID may be hampered at several points along the way, from enrollment and registration to authentication and verification.

Several social protection programs have adopted the National Identification System as a requirement for their beneficiaries to access social protection benefits, which has invariably limited or restricted access to some population groups that are not enrolled. Considering it is a tool that was meant to lift them out of anonymity, this tool has prevented many vulnerable populations from ending the cycle of poverty as they are denied social protection benefits.[3]

Without a National ID, it is practically impossible to engage in modern life in Uganda. People are prohibited from exercising their rights and taking part in civic activities without a National ID, and they are also denied access to the schools, healthcare, and other social protection benefits for which they would otherwise qualify. Their access to the formal sector is also limited including banking services like credit. Many people in society are marginalized as a result.

There is no doubting that access to fundamental rights, benefits, and services should not be restricted in the absence of the National ID, despite the ongoing debate over its significance.

Challenges arising from the use of the National Identification Card for Delivering Social Protection interventions

Social Protection is a human right which is supposed to be accessible all. Therefore, exclusion on the basis of a lack of National ID is a human rights violation.

Registering for and obtaining of a National ID is difficult for the poor and vulnerable population groups i.e older persons, women and children. This in many cases

3 UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs. World Social Report 2020.

is compounded by the distance to the NIRA service points which has a cost implication for these persons who are vulnerable.

Inhibitive costs; it costs sh50,000 (about $13) to for ID replacement. Considering that majority of those targeted under social protection programmes are already vulnerable, this is a cost they cannot afford. On the other hand, the requirements for correcting errors that include;

a. a statutory declaration that is registered by the Uganda Registration Services Bureau (URSB),

b. a test report from the Directorate of Government Analytical Laboratory based on the scientific means of establishing correct age and,

c. either academic documents, birth certificates or a Baptism card.

Delay in accessing NIDs after registration. From a focused group discussions with councilors in the West Nile Region, it was noted that the waiting time after application for a NID is between 6 months to 3 years instead of the NIRA recommended time of 3 months.

Lack of awareness of the relevance of IDs, for instance in Yumbe some Women are reported to have presented their husbands' NIDs in order to be enrolled in to the Nutri Cash programme.

The importance of Identity

The right to a name and to a birth certificate were recognized by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which was ratified by the UN General Assembly in 1989.[4] The United Nations defines civil registrations, which the National ID Systems fall under, as the continuous, permanent, universal, and obligatory recording of the occurrence and characteristics of life-changing events affecting the population, as provided by decree or regulation in accordance with the legal requirements in each country, with full respect for the regulations governing the protection and privacy of individualized information.[5]

SDG 16.9 also calls for "legal identity for all, including birth registration" by 2030. The world over has come to recognize the importance of a National Identification System. A legal identity is in fact a precondition for sustainable development. The necessity for personal and legal identification has increased on a global scale.

Birth registration is the first step in civil registrations, which have become increasingly important in modern life as a way to establish one's legal identity and acquire access to benefits and services. The late Archbishop Desmond Tutu said in a 2005 speech at a news conference in New York, "**The unregistered child is a nonentity. There is no unregistered child. How can we go on knowing that we could have changed things?**"[6] This statement shaded light on the value of early birth registration and the impact it has on a person throughout the course of their life. Identity is a question of belonging and of accessing societal benefits and obligations.

Benefits of a National ID system to Social Protection Programmes

1. The NID system makes it possible to integrate program registries in order to generate an overview of who is receiving what, coordinate interventions, make planning easier, and also combines M&E data across programs. This therefore prevents program duplication and double dipping of the beneficiaries.[7]

2. The system helps combine targeting procedures created to support various social security transfers, sometimes with different eligibility requirements. The justification for this is to maximize coverage of the target groups by minimizing errors of exclusion, minimize leakages to the non-target categories by minimizing errors of inclusion, guaranteeing that more resources are allocated to the intended beneficiaries. This ultimately promotes transparency and lowers fraud.

3. NID system helps reduce duplication of effort in data collecting for program targeting and increase links to complementing institutional structures.

Policy implications

From a policy perspective, it is clear that achieving the expansion of access and demand for National IDs is an issue that requires coordination and political will rather than a technical fix. Exclusion on the basis of lack of a National ID is a condition that continues to affect multitudes through various aspects of their lives. This comes at a startling cost to society, since the poor have limited opportunities to improve their economic or social standing without access to healthcare, education, or employment possibilities in the formal labour market and social protection.

Government recognizes the need for the National ID system because it provides timely vital statistics for planning, budgeting, and fiscal control for distribution of services and benefits.[8] The cost of budgeting and planning without proper information is tremendous from the standpoint of the government. The impact may be seen in the inequality gap

4 OHCHR | Report on Birth Registration and the Right of Everyone to Recognition Everywhere as a Person before the Law

5 United Nations. (n.d.). *UNSD - demographic and social statistics.*

6 Tutu Calls for Child Registration

7 Valentina and Richard 2014

8 Mikkelson, Lene et al. 2015. Why Birth and Death Registration Really Are "Vital" Statistics for Development. UN Development Programme

that is generated since highly unequal societies are usually less effective at decreasing poverty, grow slowly, and make it harder for people to break out of the cycle of poverty.[9] Since the prospective beneficiaries are invisible without the NID, the benefits and services cannot be directed toward those who need them the most.

Conclusion

In order to accomplish the aim of legal identification for everyone, there are no simple fixes, and there is no special model that will end the cycle of exclusion for the most vulnerable people, guarantee access to social security, and assure the fair and equal distribution of benefits. However, some measures can be implemented to guarantee increased access and inclusiveness.

Key Recommendations

- Political champions and coordinators are required to ensure a unified vision and a system that is helpful to a variety of stakeholders due to the high exclusionary rates in accessing NIDs. The political champions will see to it that the funding is timely appropriated in order to expand access to National IDs.

- Intensive sensitization campaigns are necessary to create awareness amongst the public. These campaigns must also include conveniently accessible grievance resolution methods, which are essential for decreasing exclusion and boosting confidence in the system.

- In order to guarantee that everyone has access to the NID system, purposeful strategies must be created to ensure that no one is left behind. This could involve modifying policies and procedures to eliminate discriminatory elements, outreach to particular groups that face greater obstacles to obtaining NIDs.

- Considerable adaptation of the technology to local, social and cultural context is extremely important. Rather than being technology-focused, the design and application of NIDs should be user-centered.

- Partnerships building with key stakeholders to achieve continuous universal registration and coverage. Without strong connections with local government and community-based organizations, NIRA is unable to carry out the duty of Birth and Death Registration on their own. NIRA therefore needs to decentralize and scale up Birth and Death registration to the districts through these partnerships.

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9 World social report 2020 inequality in a rapidly changing world