

# The Life-cycle of Legal Identity



Presented by: Kristen Wenz, Global Technical Lead for  
Civil Registration & Legal Identity, UNICEF

ID4Africa 19 June, 2019 Johannesburg, South Africa

**Legal identity: Where do we start?**

**The age old question.....**

**WHAT CAME FIRST?**



**THE CHICKEN**

**-OR-**



**THE EGG**

# How Digital Technology is **DISRUPTING**

## *Chicken & Eggs*



**Civil registration: Birth**

*Nutrition, Protection*

**Health system:**  
*Immunization  
and child health  
services*



BIRTH



CHILDHOOD



SCHOOL

*Education*

*Higher-Education*



UNIVERSITY



WORK



FAMILY

**Civil registration**  
Marriage/Divorce  
*Inheritance, land  
ownership*

**Civil registration**  
Identity of your own  
children including  
adoption



CHILDREN

*Employment, taxes,  
bank account*



WORK-HOME



OLD AGE

**Civil registration: Death**  
*Health  
information  
cause of death*

**Adult identity:** National ID, driver license, voter ID

# Civil Registration Systems

Legal proof of family ties (parents, spouse, children) to claim:

- Inheritance
- Land
- Nationality
- Custody of children

How can we prove a child is a child so they can enjoy their rights?

- To healthcare
- To go to school
- To receive social support
- Not be married before age 18
- Not be recruited into armed forces child
- Not be forced into harmful labor

# Without a birth to death approach to identity....

- How to authenticate identity and eligibility teenagers/adults registering for adult ID schemes?
- How do you avoid fraud and multiple “identities”?
- How to ‘retire’ identities upon death?
- Unverified entries, multiple registrations, exclusion errors, inclusion errors, fake identities, and dead voters

Linkage between the national identification database and the civil registration system

**29 countries have a national identification database, but only 13 is linked to the civil registration**

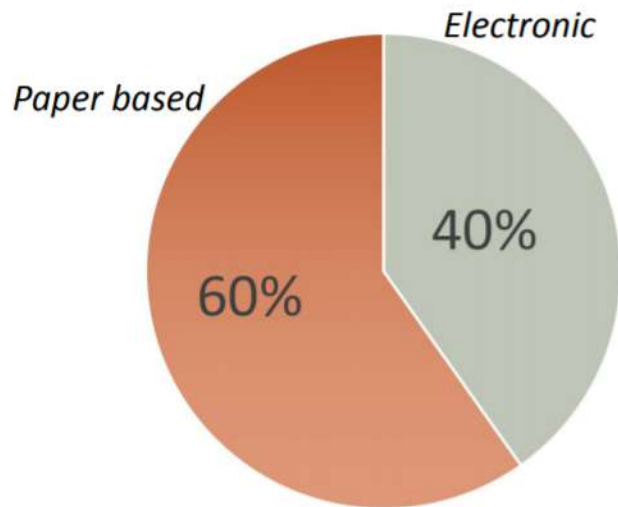
**Information from the birth certificate is the primary source for issuing national ID in 33 countries, and passports in 35**

\*Based on responses obtained from 39 countries out of the 54 member States.

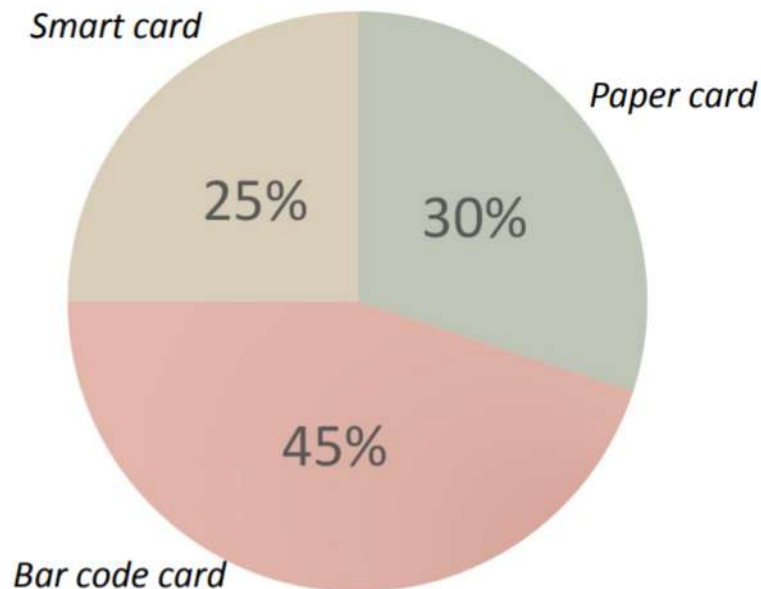
# Use of technology in African identification systems:

*Paper-based still dominates BR, less so for NID*

MOST BIRTH REGISTRATION PROCESSES ARE  
STILL LARGELY PAPER BASED...



...WHEREAS NID SYSTEMS HAVE MORE  
SOPHISTICATED SOLUTIONS





In 2000 about 40 %  
of Africa's children  
under age 5 were  
registered...

*this figure  
remains  
unchanged  
today.*



**In sub-Saharan Africa, only 25% of newborns have a birth certificate**


Over 20 million do not have their births registered

28 million do not have a birth certificate.

**80 per cent of children U5 do not have birth certificates in the east and southern Africa region**





The background of the entire slide is a close-up photograph of two newborn babies. They are being held by hands, with their heads resting against the palms. The babies have dark skin and hair. They are wrapped in a colorful, patterned cloth with orange, blue, and black designs. The lighting is warm and soft.

Evidence shows, better civil  
registration leads to better  
health outcomes

10 countries in Africa require  
a birth certificate to access  
public health or immunization

Children living in poverty are 1.5 less likely to have their birth registered compared to children living in wealthier households

1 NO POVERTY



28 countries in Africa require a birth certificate to access social support



**Children without birth certificates face major obstacles enrolling in education services and completing school**

**4** QUALITY  
EDUCATION



**39 countries in Africa require a birth certificate for education**

Without a birth certificate,  
by age of National ID  
children may be excluded  
from:

- Health & immunization services
- Childhood nutrition & development
- School enrollment or completion
- Social support systems

**1** NO  
POVERTY



**4** QUALITY  
EDUCATION



**2** ZERO  
HUNGER



**3** GOOD HEALTH  
AND WELL-BEING



# The Sustainable Solution: Integrated Civil Registration and National ID Systems



- Cost Savings
- Reduces barriers for access to identity systems
- Avoids duplicative/fragmented identity systems
- Lowers risk for identity fraud
- Can assign a unique identity number from birth
- More accurate population coverage rates
- Enables accurate and timely demographic data generated by vital statistics systems
- Greater inclusion
- Better health outcomes
- Increased educational attainment
- Reduction in poverty





THANK YOU!

Kristen Wenz: [Kwenz@unicef.org](mailto:Kwenz@unicef.org)

*Global Technical Lead on Civil Registration and  
Legal Identity*

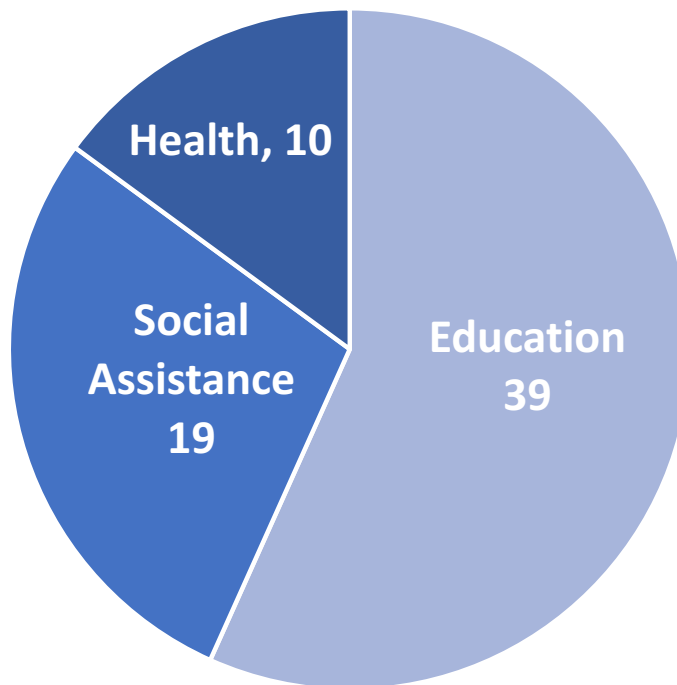
UNICEF Headquarters, New York, New York



- Digital technologies provide a unique opportunity to expand reach through mobile phones, leverage functional systems like health information systems to increase birth and deaths.
- HOWEVER, they can not leapfrog civil registration systems



## Number of countries in Africa which require a birth certificate to access the following services



There is a direct inverse relationship between birth registration and voter ID coverage between low and high income economies.

