



## DIRECTORATE OF INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION

Press Release No: /2020

Date: 30 June 2021

Venue: Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

### PRESS RELEASE

#### **The “No Name Campaign”: a game-changer in ensuring all African children acquire their legal identity.**

In June 2020, the African Union and UNICEF launched the [No Name Campaign](#), an initiative aimed at promoting the right for every child in Africa to a legal identity, and therefore to justice. With barely half of the children under 5 years living on the continent registered at birth, thereby denying millions of others the ability to enjoy their human rights, the No Name Campaign calls on Governments and relevant stakeholders to accelerate measures that have proven efficient to provide children with a legal identity.

The COVID-19 pandemic still poses a challenge to the access to basic services such as birth registration. However some countries have recorded progress in ensuring birth registration services are still accessible even during the pandemic, an indication of the effectiveness of good and sustainable practices advocated for and supported by the African Union Commission and UNICEF to enable the realization of the vision for universal birth registration in Africa by 2030. In a joint AU-UNICEF [Editorial](#) published on June 2021, the No Name Campaign continues to advocate for acceleration of progresses on civil registration systems.

The **No Name Campaign ‘For Every Child a Legal Identity, For Every Child Access to Justice’**, identifies birth registration as a key element for the access to child friendly justice with the birth certificate as a critical document for every person to prove legal identity, and a basis upon which children can establish a nationality, avoid the risk of statelessness and seek protection from violence and exploitation. “Birth registration plays a critical role to prove a child’s entitlement to access justice. The ideals in Africa’s Agenda 2063 and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, will not be achieved without securing, protecting, and promoting the rights of children as the drivers of Africa’s renaissance” declared H.E. Amira el Fadhil,

Commissioner of Health, Humanitarian Affairs and Social Department during the Ministerial Meeting in November 2020.

A birth certificate may also be required to access social service systems, including health, education and justice. For instance, [meet this 9 years' old girl, Ada](#), whose dreams of becoming a medical doctor is threatened by the lack of legal identity which means she cannot sit for primary school exams. However, with decentralized accessible and affordable birth registration services, Ada and millions of other such children have an opportunity to sit for examination, graduate, and pursue their dreams. The campaign also advocates for leveraging birth registration by using schools as a platform to identify non-registered children and building on social and child protection systems with a reach to the most vulnerable children to help reach universal coverage.

Proof of age is needed to help prevent child labour, child marriage and underage recruitment into the armed forces. Among the challenges identified that continue to hamper the realization for universal birth registration in Africa is the weak prioritization of civil registration in national plans and budgets, and the lack of strong commitment from governments.

Birth registration is not free-of-charge in most countries. Most parents face the challenge of affording to pay the direct and indirect fees. In addition, in most Francophone countries, late and delayed registration are subject to fines. Such is the case for [Jabari and Ebele, the parents of Izegbe](#), a newborn who needs to be registered at birth. The parents, however, recall too well the past experiences and difficulties in the registration of their other child. The story of Jabari underscores the need for modernization of the civil registration system to allow for digital and mobile devices, applications and platforms to get more simple and systematic registration and reporting processes.

COVID-19 recovery plans offer an opportunity to invest in modern but contextualized digital birth registration to transform the largely paper-based systems to a digital system, thereby improving efficiency, recommends the No Name Campaign. To accelerate birth registration there is urgency to invest in context-specific digital solutions as the means for effective, safe and affordable birth registration. The digital shift of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics systems need technical and financial resources thus the need for solid coordination mechanisms to be put in place – both inter-governmental and with development partners. Such is the story captured in this [animation](#) on the significance of inter-operability between civil registration, health and immunization systems; the important role of the education sector plays; and the criticality of digitization of systems and decentralization of services to the very local level.

Though improvements have been noted over the years, in many countries in Africa, Civil Registration and Vital Statistics systems are largely dominated by isolated project-based and ad hoc exercises with no link to national development frameworks or policy guidance. African Union Commissioner for Economic Development, Trade, Industry and Mining, Amb. Albert Muchanga underscores the need for functional civil registration systems as the vehicles through which a legal identity for all can be achieved for all African children. "The African Digital Transformation Strategy (DTS) 2020-2030 makes import on civil registration systems that are operating effectively, and that vital event of every citizen is registered and information collected, compiled, produced and disseminated in a regular and continuous manner to guide policy and planning, to inform decisions and enable all stakeholders to track progress and make the necessary adjustments to ensure transparency and mutual accountability in all development related matters", he observes.

"Birth registration should be decentralized through health and vaccination services and education, says Marie-Pierre Poirier, UNICEF Regional Director for West and Central Africa. The process should be simple, free of charge, digitized and accessible at local level. In many countries in Africa, Governments are accelerating birth registration, making the COVID-19 pandemic push for digitalization an opportunity so that no child is left behind."

Interoperability with the health service is instrumental also to advance decentralization of services, illustrated by countries like Cote d'Ivoire, where birth registration is currently linked with over 90 per cent of the country's immunization services. In Tanzania, even though COVID-19 challenged access to services for the first two months, thanks to decentralized and integrated services at health facilities that offer one-stop services for both registration and certification spontaneously, the target number for registration and certification for 2020 was met.

"We advocate for governments to revise their laws and policies and working with communities to shift attitudes and behaviors demonstrating the value and benefits of birth registration, create a demand for it and make birth registration free and accessible for all. We need to invest and commit to achieving universal birth registration by 2030." Dr. Edward Addai, UNICEF Representative to the African Union and UNECA.

In 2020, most of the member states in Africa rallied on the No Name Campaign culminating in the adoption of a [Declaration](#) in a High-level virtual Dialogue convened in November 2020 that calls for the implementation of the three game changers - interoperability, digitization and decentralization. "In order to ensure business continuity during COVID-19 and other emergencies, Civil Registration should be taken as an essential service and AU Member States need to put in place strategies to ensure business continuity and modernize their systems to facilitate its accessibility and effectiveness. This can be done by linking the health sector with the Civil Registration

system and the National Statistics Offices and also by digitizing services as a means for effective, safe and affordable registration services and quality, timely and reliable vital statistics sources.” Declared Prof Victor Harison, the former African Union Commissioner for Economic Affairs, during his speech of the Ministerial Conference on November 2020.

While continuing to pursue accelerating practices, the African Union Commission and UNICEF continue to rally for more commitment and action, and recommend to the Member states:

1. To ensure the provision of legal identity for all with priority to marginalized, deprived and vulnerable communities.
2. To consider Civil Registration as an essential service and to ensure continuity of service delivery despite lockdowns,
3. Increase financing of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics systems
4. To remove fees for late registration
5. To extend or waive deadlines for late registration  
To simplify procedures for registration and establish waivers for missing documents
6. To enhance implementation of innovative service delivery models based on the model of Integration and interoperability, Digitization and Decentralization of CRVS services.
7. To train auxiliary registrars and expand notification.

A review of the implementation of the No Name Campaign, as well as the adopted recommendations will be presented at the 6th Conference of Ministers in Mozambique in October 2021.

Learn more on the No Name Campaign on [here](#).

**For further information, please contact:**

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