

## Legal Identity for All by 2030: How Will We Know? (Draft)

Note prepared for a workshop of the Open Society Justice Initiative (OSJI), with support from Civil Registration Centre for Development (CRC4D)

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### Abstract

One of the remaining tasks in preparation of the Post—2015 Global Development Agenda is the selection and specification of indicators needed to measure goal achievement. This paper reviews progress made so far with the determination of indicators for one of the targets, 16.9: “By 2030 provide legal identity for all including birth registration”, of Sustainable Development Goal 16: “Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels”. Among these institutions the rule of law figures prominently. For the first time in the history of the formulation of global development programs legal identity for all has been identified as a required target within this context. This paper critically reviews proposed indicators for this target, raises serious questions about the degree of preparedness and makes recommendations for the measurement of a legal identity for all as well as for an institutional rethink for delivery.

### Introduction

The “High Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Development of the Post—2015 Development Agenda” has formulated goals and targets in close coordination with the “Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals” to guide worldwide efforts for development in the 2015—2030 period. The High Level Panel agreed on what would be the attributes of lasting and self-reliant social development accomplishment by 2030, and, importantly, the panel included goals for good governance. Scholarly work on the link between institutions and development, *inter alia* conducted by The World Bank and Daron Acemoglu *c.s.*, has singled out well-functioning institutions as, arguably, the single-most important factor for successful development.<sup>1</sup>

Work on the formulation of indicators for measuring progress of the 2015—2030 Sustainable Development Goals has started in earnest. After preparations that took place early 2015, several proposals for the indicators for the SDG (Sustainable Development Goal) 16.9 target have made it to the official list of proposed indicators. The High Level Panel stated in its 2013 report that indicators should reflect “the exact metric by which we will know if the target has been met.” The Panel did not put forward

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. *inter alia*, Acemoglu, Daron, Simon Johnson and James A. Robinson. The colonial origins of comparative development. An empirical investigation. (2000), and Kaufmann, Daniel, Aart Kraay and Pablo Zoido-Lobaton. Governance matters. The World Bank. Policy research working paper 2196. Washington (1999).

a set of specific indicators, but recommended that indicators be disaggregated to allow targets to be measured in various dimensions, by gender, geography, age, and ethnicity, for example. Averages “conceal more than they reveal”, the Panel stated. “The more disaggregated the indicator, the easier it is to identify trends and anomalies.” The Panel clarified the terminology with the figure below.

Figure 1

Term	How it is Used in this Report	Example from MDGs
<b>Goal</b>	Expresses an ambitious, but specific, commitment. Always starts with a verb/action.	Reduce child mortality
<b>Targets</b>	Quantified sub-components that will contribute in a major way to achievement of goal. Should be an outcome variable.	Reduce by two-thirds, between 1990 and 2015, the under-five mortality rate
<b>Indicators</b>	Precise metric from identified databases to assess if target is being met (often multiple indicators are used).	Under-5 mortality rate  Infant mortality rate  Proportion of 1-year olds immunised against measles

The UN Member States require the indicators to satisfy the following: they must directly respond to the goals and targets agreed upon in the “Open Working Group on SDGs” and their level of ambition; must not undermine or re-interpret the targets; must cover all targets, including targets on means of implementation; must give equal weight to all targets and maintain the balance achieved; and should not introduce any new or contentious issues. There was also consensus that the number of global indicators should be limited and include multi-purpose indicators that address several targets at the same time.<sup>2</sup>

The first meeting of the Interagency Expert Group (IAEG), to whom the responsibility for the selection and specification of indicators falls, was convened in New York in June 2015. The United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD), which serves under the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA), acts as the Secretariat for the IAEG. The June meeting was largely devoted to the discussion of process issues;

<sup>2</sup> <http://sd.iisd.org/news/sdg-group-discusses-indicator-selection-way-forward/>.

little time was left to discuss the substance of the indicators. The indicators are due by March 2016 in their final form.

The High-Level Panel and the Open Working Group produced somewhat different statements on target 16.9. The High-Level Panel (in 2013) chose<sup>3</sup> for **“Provide free and universal legal identity, such as birth registrations”**, while the Open Working Group (in 2014) used<sup>4</sup> **“By 2030 provide legal identity for all including birth registration.”** The only material difference between the two formulations is that the adjective “free” was removed.

In this paper the various indicator proposals for Sustainable Development Goal Target 16.9 that have emerged are reviewed and recommendations for amendments are made to improve the efficacy of the indicators. This paper will also touch on the institutional arrangements required for adequate measurement. Advancing legal identity for all is not achieved by adequate measurement, but programming effectiveness depends on adequate measurement while the directions programming will take determines what needs to be measured. Measurement and programming are interdependent. Hence, this paper will address programming and how identity management in countries is evolving.

## **Indicator proposals for SDG 16.9**

Members of the Interagency Expert Group (IAEG) for the SDGs are the 28 UN Member States that have been selected by their respective regional statistical bodies. Others present at IAEG meetings have observer status. That implies that the proposals of organisations, e.g. those submitted by the World Bank or UNICEF, are not binding. Member State representatives, usually from the country’s national statistics office, have the real sway in the IAEG. That is not unimportant to the process. Given also the High-Level Panel’s implication (see the table above) that precise metrics be used from “identified databases” this could put statisticians at odds with domain experts. Firstly, identified databases may not produce precise or timely metrics, and, secondly, domain experts may consider such available metrics not adequate indicators for the target. The SDGs encompass such a broad spectrum of sectors and disciplines that the statisticians in the IAEG themselves would lack the necessary expertise (which can be addressed by consultation of colleagues or experts within their offices). However, the statisticians have also concluded that there are often no “identified databases” for the targets that have been selected (see next section).

At the June 2015 IAEG meeting, complaints about the lack of clarity caused by the

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<sup>3</sup> Cf. High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda. A new global partnership. Eradicate poverty and transform economies through sustainable development. New York (30 May 2013)

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Open Working Group, Outcome Document, 19 July 2014

circulation of various versions of lists of indicators were raised by many, to the extent that the June meeting resolved that a new and definitive list of indicator proposals be made. What, then, was the status prior to this first IAEG meeting? We identified and will review five (sets of) proposals for the SDG 16.9 indicators, each of which we have given a label:

A) A “Bureau of the Statistical Commission priority indicator”

B) A “Selected priority indicator”

C) An “Agency proposed indicator set”

D) The “African Group proposed indicators”, and

E) The “SPC proposed indicator”.

We will also present the indicators developed and proposed by the “The Hague Colloquium Collective”:

F) The “THCC proposed indicators.”<sup>5</sup>

In this section the various target indicator proposals will be presented, while in the next section the merits of these indicators are evaluated.

### ***A—Bureau of the Statistical Commission priority indicator***

On the eve of the first IAEG meeting (29 May 2015) the United Nations Statistics Division issued a “first list of proposed priority indicators”.<sup>6</sup> The list references the technical report of the Bureau of the Statistical Commission, presented to the March session of the intergovernmental negotiations.<sup>7</sup> That report shows the following for target 16.9 (figure 2).

Figure 2

Target 16.9	By 2030, provide legal identity for all, including birth registration	
Indicator 16.9.1	Percentage of children under 5 whose births have been registered with civil authority	AAA

<sup>5</sup> Cf. The Hague Colloquium Collective. Challenges in measuring SDG 16.9: Legal identity and birth registration. Provisional position paper. The Hague (2015)

<sup>6</sup> Cf.

<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/broaderprogress/pdf/technical%20report%20of%20the%20unsc%20bureau%20%28final%29.pdf>

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[http://unstats.un.org/unsd/broaderprogress/pdf/technical%20report%20of%20the%20unsc%20bureau%20\(final\).pdf](http://unstats.un.org/unsd/broaderprogress/pdf/technical%20report%20of%20the%20unsc%20bureau%20(final).pdf)

Note that this version of the proposed indicator is the result of an “initial assessment of “proposed provisional indicators”. The “AAA” rating given to the birth registration indicator means that for the criteria “feasibility”, “suitability” and “relevance” the proposed provisional indicator was by at least of 60% of “assessors” rated as: 1<sup>st</sup> A—feasibility: “Easily feasible” (methodology exists and data is available); 2<sup>nd</sup> A—suitability: “We support this indicator”, and 3<sup>rd</sup> A—relevance: “Very relevant”. The assessors were the national statistics offices of no less than 70 (or, actually, 81) countries.<sup>8</sup> The AAA rating was only given to 50 out of 304, i.e. to only one in six proposed indicators. Statisticians thus seem to be rather comfortable about the measurement of target 16.9, but is their comfort justified?

**This under—5 birth registration rate proposed by statisticians from 81 countries is somewhat surprising, since it obviously does not measure registration completeness on an annual basis as is administrative convention.<sup>9</sup> Currently countries have at their disposal population projections and statistics on birth and death rates, either developed locally or by United Nations or World Bank, from which expected numbers of births and deaths can be derived. Countries as different as Sierra Leone, Yemen and India use these numbers as denominators for the calculation of birth- and death registration rates. This, however, seems not to have found its way into the recommended indicator. In stead, the statisticians may have chosen for the under—5 birth registration rates that are produced through households surveys (see below) as “identified database”.**

### ***B—Selected priority indicator***

As mentioned before, on the eve of the first IAEG meeting (29 May 2015) the United Nations Statistics Division issued a “first list of proposed priority indicators”. The first proposed priority indicator list was intended to summarize the pre-meeting state of discussion on indicators on individual targets and would be the focus of the discussions at the first meeting of the “IAEG-SDGs” held 1—2 June 2015. Below is what this list shows for SDG 16.9 (Figure 3 next page). The indicator selected for each target was rated for its stage of development according to a three—tier system: a first tier for an indicator for which an established methodology exists and data are already widely available; a second tier for an indicator for which a methodology has been established but for which data are not easily available; and a third for an indicator for which an internationally agreed methodology has not yet been developed.

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<sup>8</sup> The number of 70 includes the Secretariat of the Pacific Community, which represented 12 Pacific countries, i.e. in fact not 70 but 81 countries put the under-5 registration rate forward.

<sup>9</sup> An under-five birth registration rate measured by mid 2015, for example, in fact measures the birth registration rates over the period from mid 2010 through mid 2015, as well as late and delayed registration. Besides the availability of an “identified database” (the UNICEF-supported Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey or “MICS”, and the USAID-supported Demographic and Health Survey or “DHS”), another reason for the choice of the under—5 metric might have been that no clear and practical UNSD guidance for measuring registration completeness is provided.

Figure 3

Label	Description	Name and description of selected priority indicator	Provide data source/s	Name of entity responsible for global monitoring (if available). Indicate for how many countries data are available (if known)	Rate the Tier of the Indicator <sup>1</sup>	Indicate target(s) for which this indicator is also relevant (multi-purpose indicator)
Target 16.9	By 2030, provide legal identity for all, including birth registration	Percentage of children under 1 whose births have been registered with civil authority	Household surveys and vital registration systems.		Tier I	

UNSD explained the process towards identification of the “priority indicators” as follows: “In preparation of the first meeting of the IAEG-SDGs (1–2 June 2015), agencies were requested to provide inputs on the indicators for global monitoring within their area of work and expertise based on the list of indicators compiled earlier in the year and already assessed by countries. The list was also included in the technical report that the Bureau of the Statistical Commission presented to the March session of the intergovernmental negotiations [..].<sup>10</sup> As part of the current exercise, agencies were also requested to provide any available metadata on the proposed indicators, according to the guidelines provided. The deadline for sending inputs was 15 May 2015, although inputs received later were also incorporated to the extent possible. The earlier (March) list of indicators contained a maximum of two indicator proposals per target (with the exception of target 3.3). With this second round of consultations, agencies were asked to indicate their priority indicator under each target. They were also asked to provide additional specifications to the proposed indicator from that earlier list and/or propose an alternative (new) or modified indicator as the preferred indicator for the target. In addition, agencies were requested to provide for their proposed indicators the possible data source and the name of the entity that would be responsible for global monitoring (if available), indicate for how many countries data are available, and describe any inter-linkages with other targets. UNSD consolidated these inputs into the list of proposals contained in this document. **Directly below each target, this list presents the proposed priority indicator for that target** (bold font and underscore: CRC4D) which is rated according to a three-tier system: a first tier for which an established methodology exists and data are already widely available; a second tier for which a methodology has been established but for which data are not easily available; and a third for which an internationally agreed methodology has not yet been developed.”

**It is unclear how and why the AAA-rated *under-five* birth registration rate indicator morphed into a tier—1 *under-one* birth registration rate “priority indicator”. Note that the priority indicator here is birth registration for under—one year of age children, and the “tier” is 1, i.e. methodology established and the data already widely available. In fact, not all household surveys that generate under—5 birth registration rates include disaggregated data that present under-one birth registration rates.<sup>11</sup>**

<sup>10</sup> See footnote 6.

<sup>11</sup> Though not “already widely available” the base data of MICS- and DHS surveys will generally allow to also produce the under—1 birth registration rates.

## C—Agency proposed indicators

As can be read from the quote in the previous section, in preparation of the IAEG meeting “agencies” were requested to provide inputs on the indicators for global monitoring within their area of work and expertise, based on the list of indicators compiled earlier in the year and already assessed by countries.<sup>12</sup> The agency proposals are shown in figure 4 below. The Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC)—although also an agency—will be shown separately. It was categorised as a “regional agency” (representing twelve Pacific countries), and their contribution is shown later.

Figure 4

Target 16.9 By 2030, provide legal identity for all, including birth registration							
	Contributor Name	Specification	Source	Entity	Tier	Priority	Interlinkages
Proposed Priority Indicator		Percentage of children under 1 whose births have been registered with civil authority	Household surveys and vital registration systems.		Tier I		
Indicator 16.9.1	Percentage of children under 5 whose births have been registered with civil authority ( AAA )						
	PBSO	Retain this indicator. Disaggregate by age, sex, region and population group, displacement and migratory status (including statelessness).	Household surveys such as MICS and vital registration systems.	UNICEF. Rationale: Unicef maintains a global database on the issue since 2003. Comparable data are available for more than 160 countries		1	This indicator also relates to target 4.1 and 4.2.
	UNICEF	<u>Percentage of children under 5 whose births have been registered with civil authority</u>	Household surveys such as MICS and vital registration systems.	UNICEF. Rationale: Unicef maintains a global database on the issue since 2003. Comparable data are available for more than 160 countries		1	
	UNWOMEN	UN Women calls for this indicator to be disaggregated by sex.					
	WB	The proposed indicator 16.9.1 - Percentage of children under 5 whose births have been registered with civil authority - is not in line with the Global CRVS investment plan which the World Bank developed in consultation with several agencies and countries last year. <a href="http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/health/publication/global-civil-registration-vital-statistics-scaling-up-investment">http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/health/publication/global-civil-registration-vital-statistics-scaling-up-investment</a> . We propose <u>Percentage of children under 1 whose births have been registered with civil authority which is in line with national laws/guidelines</u> . The UN Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System states that birth registration should be “immediate” (where defined, this is usually 7-30 days); up to 12 months is viewed as “late registration” and beyond 12 months is “delayed registration.” Many countries are using this to define their own laws. Measurement of implementation should be consistent with this.					
	Global Migration WG		NBI Disaggregate by migratory status				

The top of the figure is a little confusing, since it shows (in the blue colored part) the (Tier-1) “proposed priority indicator” and its “specification”: the “Percentage of children under 1 whose births have been registered with the civil authority”. Right thereunder (in the grey colored part) indicator 16.9.1 is given and formulated as the (AAA-rated): “Percentage of children under 5 whose births have been registered with civil authority”; this was the “Bureau of the Statistical Commission priority indicator” discussed in the previous section. Figure 4 can be read to mean that the under—1 birth registration rate

<sup>12</sup> Link to the agency list: <https://docs.google.com/a/crc4d.com/file/d/0B8n3WhOaTbGVbElZOHHlamxSZ3M/view>

has resulted as the consensus indicator following agency discussion and input.

The acronyms in the table stand for PBSO—UN Peace-building Support Office and WB—The World Bank. The PBSO contribution, while perhaps somewhat unexpected, is informative when looking at the “metadata” that PBSO provided. PBSO actually stated that the birth registration rate for all children under 18 ought to be measured. This seems to be confusing a legal identity for all (which would have to include adults) with the right of children to be registered (at birth, Article 7 Convention on the Rights of the Child), especially so because PBSO does not propose an indicator for the adult population (as none of the agencies did according to this UNSD table).<sup>13</sup> However, if national IDs would be used to measure legal identity for adults the PBSO proposal would be sensible. We will return to this later. Besides that, though, and given the lack of clarity which indicator PBSO wants to retain, a document from the so-called “technical support team”<sup>14</sup> helps to clarify this (from the “PBSO Metadata”, figure 5).

Figure 5

Disaggregation	The indicator should be disaggregated by sex of the child and <u>age at the time of registration</u> geographic location, <u>age</u>
Comments and limitations	<p>While this indicator measures, and current data availability is concentrated on, children under 5 whose birth have been registered, there is emerging consensus that the collection should <u>allow for disaggregation to identify birth registration of children under 1 as well as overall rates of registration for under 5</u>.</p> <p>Data availability is limited for children over the age of 5, but measuring this indicator for all children is an important element of measuring progress in increasing birth registration, as well as ensuring that older children are not left behind.</p> <p>In order to reduce the total number of global indicators, this indicator is proposed to monitor targets 4.1, 4.2 (universal access to education), and 16.9 (legal identity for all).</p>
Gender equality issues	
Data for global and regional monitoring	UNICEF maintains a global database on the issue since 2003. Comparable data are available for more than 160 countries. <a href="http://data.unicef.org/child-protection/birth-registration">http://data.unicef.org/child-protection/birth-registration</a>
Supplementary information	<a href="http://data.unicef.org/child-protection/birth-registration">http://data.unicef.org/child-protection/birth-registration</a>
References	<a href="http://data.unicef.org/child-protection/birth-registration">http://data.unicef.org/child-protection/birth-registration</a>

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**Comment [1]:** UNICEF and most civil registration authorities only disaggregate by (A) Sex, and (b) Age at time of registration. Guidance issued by UNICEF, UN DESA and civil society actually advocates *against* requiring civil registration authorities asking information related to the ethnic, religious etc. Identity for the child or parents unless this is held in a form separate to and anonymised from the registration itself as this information could be retained by the CR and later used inappropriately. See UNICEF, *Passport to Protection*, 2013 pp. 122-126 with guidance on which data should be collected in different records.

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**Deleted:** religion, migratory or displacement status, statelessness, minority or indigenous status, disability, sexual orientation and gender identity of the parent(s) or guardian(s) registering the child

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I.e., PBSO, while familiar with the use of the under-five indicator, observed “the emerging consensus that the collection should focus on birth registration under 1”, which The World Bank illustrates through its comments.

UNICEF shows it would like to preserve the under—five measure while accepting the under—1 measure too. UNICEF deserves credit for the Multiple Indicator Cluster surveys (MICS), the annual publication of under—5 birth registration rates in its annual publication *The State of the World's Children* since 2004 (with data from surveys going

<sup>13</sup> See the interesting information for Côte d'Ivoire for birth registration rates for the 5—18 years old below in this paper.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. <https://docs.google.com/a/crc4d.com/file/d/0B8n3WhOaTbGVZlhxVnR2azlDM28/view>



back to 1999). However, the convention of measuring the registration rate of children under five was never based on consideration of relevant civil registration convention, but rather followed from the fact that the sub-sample of under—5 children was already an established aspect of MICS and DHS (for example for measuring child mortality).

The World Bank reportedly is a proponent of two indicators, adding another indicator besides birth registration for alternative evidence of legal identity (similar to the African Group below), although this is not shown in the above spreadsheet.<sup>15</sup>

**The agency proposed indicators show the difference between agencies in positions for their preferred legal identity indicator. From the UNSD explanation with this figure we deduct that the under—1 birth registration rate is the consensus priority indicator.**

### ***D—“The African Group” proposed indicators***

Two other sets of proposals have emerged and do matter: one from the Secretariat of Pacific Nations (which represents 11 countries, see below) and another from the so-called “African Group”.<sup>16</sup> The views of the African countries are especially important because they have the most serious challenge ahead in achieving universal legal identity. The data available, whether that for under—5 birth registration rates from surveys or the UNSD-published civil registration coverage data, clearly indicates that Africa has the largest distance to travel towards achieving SDG 16.9.1.

The “African Group” of UN Member States in the IAEG, which as a group has suggested indicators for SDG 16.9, consists of seven countries: Algeria, Botswana, Cape Verde, Cameroon, Senegal, Tanzania, and Uganda. All these countries were represented in the June 1—2, 2015 IAEG indicator meeting by staff from their national statistics offices. The African Group in the IAEG does consult with the whole family of African nations, and has brought to the IAEG meeting proposals that were discussed in two continental meetings, the first of which was from 13 through 17 April 2015 and hosted by Statistics South Africa, in collaboration with the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the African Union Commission (AUC) and the African Development Bank (AfDB). In attendance were representatives of national statistical offices from Algeria, Angola, Botswana, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, Gabon, Lesotho, Mozambique, Senegal, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia. Building on the outcomes of the Pretoria meeting, ECA, AUC, United Nations Development Programme's Regional Bureau for Africa and AfDB co-organized a second Expert Group Meeting meeting in Algiers, Algeria, from 5 through 8 May 2015 to review and finalize the indicators developed in South Africa. Over 140 representatives from African National Statistics Offices, National

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<sup>15</sup> Information Mariana Dahan, ID4D, The World Bank.

<sup>16</sup> The African Group proposal was an agenda item for the June meeting of IAEG, cf. <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B8n3WhOaTbGVRHpTa1hEaW9sVVk/view>.

Planning Offices along with representatives of Civil Society Organisations, the private sector and “African Negotiators” attended. The African statisticians and other stakeholders will convene again before March 2016 to fine-tune their proposed set of indicators and strategise on how to get them accepted at the global level.<sup>17</sup> The African Group’s consensus for the specification of SDG 16.9 indicators rendered at the two meetings is somewhat surprising (see figure 6):

Figure 6

Goal	Target	Indicator	Qualitative or Quantitative	Indicator Tier I, 2 or 3 (See note)	Indicator Level	Dissaggregation (needed or available)		
					International, Regional, National (See note below)	Geographic Rural/Urban, Sub-national	Sex (S), Ethnicity (E), Income, expenditure or wealth (I), Disabled (D), Others (specify)	
	16.9 By 2030, provide legal identity for all, including birth registration	16.9.1: Percentage of children under 5 whose births have been registered with civil authority	Quantitative	2				
		16.9.2: Percentage of the adult population possessing a national identity document	Quantitative	2				

The group’s choice of the under—5 birth registration indicator deviates from statements urging the use of an under—1 indicator made at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Meeting of African Ministers Responsible for Civil Registration (9—13 February, 2015, Yamousoukro, Côte d’Ivoire), and surprises because primary source registration completeness is geared towards a focus on current registration, generally within a very short period of time from birth. However, according to the now available information on priority indicators, and the rule that two priority indicators are allowed for one target, the African Group appears to have not got what it wanted on both counts.<sup>18</sup>

The group’s proposal to measure national ID coverage reflects a new African (and global) reality. Since 2011 more than two in three African countries accounting for 85% of the African population and over 90% of African Gross National Product have embarked on a process of first introduction or upgrade of their national ID. Economic communities such as the East African Community and the Economic Community of West African States have agreed that all their countries will introduce biometric IDs for travel within their common areas, as part of what is called the African Integration Agenda.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Cf. <http://allafrica.com/stories/201505040589.html>, and <http://allafrica.com/stories/201505220546.html>

<sup>18</sup> According to one of the members of the so-called “Core Group” of the African Programme for Acceleration of Improvement of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (APAI-CRVS), the under—1 birth registration rate is also the indicator of choice for this group. The Core Group brings together key regional and international development partners comprising Statistics South Africa, the Economic Commission of Africa, the African Union Commission, the African Development Bank, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Health Metrics Network (HMN).

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Van der Straaten, Jaap. The economics of civil identity in Africa. The Hague (2015).

## E—The SPG Indicator<sup>20</sup>

Figure 7

Please indicate your name and email address: SPC Statistics for Development, Gerald Haberkorn (geraldH@spc.int)							
Label	Description	Rating	Fully specify currently proposed Indicator/ Describe a proposed alternative (new) or modified indicator that would replace the proposed indicator, providing full specification (provide justification in your supplementary technical materials)	Provide data source/s	Name of entity responsible for global monitoring (if available). Indicate for how many countries data are available.	Indicate which indicators should be given priority for the target (1=top priority; 2=second priority)	Indicate target(s) for which this indicator is also relevant (multi-purpose indicator)
Goal 16	Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels						
Target 16.9	By 2030, provide legal identity for all, including birth registration						
Indicator 16.9.1	Percentage of children under 5 whose births have been registered with civil authority	AAA / (BAA)	<b>Supporting comments:</b> long overdue, for a variety of obvious reasons, but mission-critical to monitor progress in the current decade of CRVS. <b>Proposed modification:</b> to refer to "under 1", which is in line with national law in many (most?) countries, as well as with UN Principles and Recommendations for Vital statistics. (PSIDS Ranking: 2)			1	

The Secretariat for the Pacific Community's rationale for their proposed modification of the indicator from under—5 to under—1 birth registration is similar to the reasoning of The World Bank (cf. "C— Agency Indicator"), and—as for now—SPC's position coincides with the consensus priority indicator.

Until March 2016 the IAEG can still have a discussion of all indicator proposals, and adopt or ignore suggestions as it sees fit. The group will have another meeting in October 2015 in Bangkok. It is plausible that what the African Group and other Member State representatives (including the Pacific countries) in the IAEG suggest may have the most clout.

## F—The THCC proposed indicators

Prior to the June IAEG meeting the "The Hague Colloquium Collective"<sup>21</sup> developed a provisional position paper on SDG 16.9 and suggested a proposed indicator set:

1. Proposed as principal measure of the coverage of a country's population by official legal identity is birth registration by gender within the standard legal timeframe and within the country's grace period, or, if unavailable, birth registration within a year from birth measured universally or by survey method.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. <https://drive.google.com/a/crc4d.com/file/d/0B8n3WhOaTbGVMGJ5STNjdB1REU/view>

<sup>21</sup> Cf. <http://wiser.wits.ac.za/Hague-Colloquium-People>

2. As secondary measures of the coverage of a country's population by official legal identity are proposed: 1) coverage in terms of possession of the birth certificate by age class and gender, and 2) coverage in terms of possession of a legal national ID by age class and gender. "Possession" needs to be established by actual verification of the birth certificate and ID.

The paper explains: "UNICEF's wish for data for the under-5 birth registration rate can be satisfied by a continuation of the present convention in the MICS (Multi-Indicator Cluster Survey, UNICEF-supported) and DHS (Demographic and Health Survey, USAID supported) surveys, while alignment with official convention is possible when the under-1 birth registration rate is consistently generated as well, for which in a limited number of surveys sample size may need to be adjusted upward."

THCC's position is that ideally primary and secondary source data on civil registration are defined in such a way that the technical difference between them is as small as possible. Since primary source statistics are primarily and predominantly defined per calendar year the preference would be for a secondary source measure obtained from a survey that is also defined for a calendar year, or for a period as long as a year. The birth registration for children under one year old as measured by MICS or DHS survey comes close. However, as explained later, the primary and secondary source indicators for birth registration need to adequately take into account, and disaggregate for, late registration, and capture delayed registration as well.

For the national identification indicator the paper suggests: "Coverage data on official identity documentation accepted as evidence of legal identity other than the birth certificate—besides any government-collected data—could be generated through an additional question in MICS- and DHS-surveys, or through other surveys."

The THCC position was developed independently, and without reference to the other proposals, which at the time of developing the THCC position were only partially and tentatively known. The birth certificate indicator is a proposed secondary indicator since there is a substantial gap between the number of children that have been registered and the number of children for which a birth certificate can be shown. Not having a birth certificate can be virtually equivalent to not having been registered at all when a duplicate is difficult to obtain procedure-wise or when registration offices may not be able to locate the birth record entry in the register. The same applies to national IDs.

## **Data quality**

### ***Introduction***

In this section the current state of data availability and data quality will be examined. This is done against the background of the historic and ambitious decision to achieve legal identity for all by 2030. This is a decision that can be called ambitious considering the rather patchy progress in improving coverage of birth- and death registration in the developing world which has given rise to initiatives to start continental CRVS (civil registration and vital statistics) processes involving responsible ministers in Africa (from 2010) and the Asia-Pacific Region (from 2012).<sup>22</sup> These processes heavily lean towards the vital statistics generation function of civil registration and are driven with much influence of the national statistics offices of South Africa and Australia respectively, as well as the statistics offices of the regional economic commissions and the World Health Organisation. We could label this as the CRVS pathway towards legal identity for all. On the CRVS pathway little of no attention is given to other identity management systems than the civil registration system. Within the World Bank and its Identity for Development (ID4D) initiative, and within the Centre of Global Development, an alternative civil identification pathway is now being propagated.<sup>23</sup> For this pathway it is assumed that “the biometrics revolution” offers countries an alternative pathway that will allow countries to “leapfrog” and close their “identity gap”. While the CRVS pathway was (erroneously as it turned out) based on the assumption that no progress was visible in registration coverage, the civil identification pathway was, rather, correctly informed by the reality of substantial country investments in modern identity systems from the start of the late 2000s. There is, however, a third view, which maintains that civil registration, old as it might be, cannot be replaced by civil identification but will remain, in modernized form, the necessary bedrock for civil identification systems, not in the least because of cost reasons.<sup>24</sup> This third view is one of integrated civil registration and identification.

While in developed countries with complete civil registration systems the measurement of the extent to which citizens have a legal identity can be easily obtained from primary source data, and their veracity can and will be cross-checked in various ways, this is not the case in developing countries with incomplete civil registration systems. And while such developing countries may have introduced modern identification systems,

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<sup>22</sup> Cf. AbouZahr, Carla, Don de Savigny, Lene Mikkelsen et al. Counting births and deaths 1. Civil registration and vital statistics. Progress in the data revolution for counting and accountability. The Lancet (2015), p.6. The Eastern Mediterranean Region (22 countries) has started a similar process (from 2013). Latin America has followed a rather different route, which started much earlier.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Gelb, Alan and Julia Clark. Identification for development. The biometrics revolution. Center for Global Development. Working Paper 315, Washington D.C. January 2013; The World Bank. Digital identity toolkit. A guide for stakeholders in Africa. Washington (2014)

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Van der Straaten, Jaap. The economics of civil identity in Africa. The Hague (2015)

especially national identity documents (“national IDs”), these systems are not geared towards producing statistics. Deceased persons (or those who have migrated) may not have been cleared from national ID databases (this is, for example, the case for the world’s largest data base, *Aadhaar*, in India). However, while civil registration coverage may be low, e.g. in Pakistan, national ID coverage—in Pakistan from adulthood—can be substantial: 98% according to one source.<sup>25</sup> Given the importance of national ID systems in some countries with weak civil registration systems (other examples besides India and Pakistan are Indonesia and Viet Nam) and of biometric voter registration, and their growing importance in most countries, they should inform the measurement of legal identity for all. More on this will be said in the sub-sections below.

### ***Primary source data***

One could wonder why the World Bank and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community with their proposed under—1 indicator seemingly do not have a following amongst the African IAEC group of member nations, while UNICEF with its proposed under—5 birth registration rate has. The answer to that question may partly lie in the fact that in many countries, including the seven African countries in the IAEG, e.g. Cameroon, Senegal, Tanzania and Uganda, there is a collaboration track record for work with UNICEF on birth registration. To just cite one example: UNICEF Tanzania only recently won a Can\$ 10 million grant for a project especially focusing on the under—5. In a locally developed amendment proposal of Tanzanian civil registration law the under—5 group is even mentioned.<sup>26</sup> But there is another reason as well: national statistics offices may not as yet have produced primary source registration statistics before, or may have done so only in a rudimentary way. For the past fifteen years the UNICEF under—5 birth registration rates have been like “the only show in town.”

The dominance of MICS- and DHS birth registration statistics (“secondary source data”) over “primary source data”—the data generated from the registration records of the country’s registration authority—can be understood when examining the state of country reporting of primary source birth- and death registration rates to the United Nations Population Division. “Primary source data” stands for registration statistics produced by the civil registration authority on the basis of their records, rather than produced through a DHS- or MICS survey (called “secondary source data” by UNSD).<sup>27</sup> Before they were updated by UNSD in December 2014, the primary source birth

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<sup>25</sup> Malik, Tariq. Technology in the service of development. The NADRA story. Essay. Center for Global Development. Washington (2014)

<sup>26</sup> In fact many countries that have (had) support from UNICEF (and Plan International) have embarked on birth registration promotion projects for the under-five. Obviously such projects do not just focus on timely registration but also on late and delayed registration, in contravention of best practice in civil registration as well as of Article 7 of the Convention of the Rights of the Child which asks for immediate birth registration. Such projects can create expectations among the population that late and delayed registration is permissible and will be offered some day (this is very much in evidence in Haiti where regular “caravans” are conducted).

<sup>27</sup> Cf. [http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/CRVS/CR\\_coverage.htm](http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/CRVS/CR_coverage.htm).

registration rates of the seven countries of the African Group representing Africa in the IAEG were *more than 16 years old on average*.<sup>28</sup> Realistically, few African statisticians (only few of whom are vital statistics experts) may have ever seen civil registration statistics being published by their office. Table 1 shows the state of reporting of “primary source” data on civil registration coverage in the world.

Table 1

Coverage of civil registration system (United Nations Statistics Division)	Last updated: December 2014		Last updated: February 2010	
	Average Time Lag (years)	Percentage of countries with data	Average Time Lag (years)	Percentage of countries with data
World	10.9	88%	8.5	89%
Africa	15.1	76%	12.2	77%
Asia and Oceania	13.0	87%	9.8	87%
North America ex Canada, Greenland and USA	10.1	96%	8.2	96%
South America	11.8	100%	8.6	100%
Europe, Canada, Greenland and USA	5.1	96%	3.8	96%

Source: [http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/CRVs/CR\\_coverage.htm](http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/CRVs/CR_coverage.htm)

The data in the table shows that there has been significant “aging” of data: the average age was more than 10 years for primary source data, and Africa’s data were over 15 years old on average when they were last updated in December 2014. I.e., if this were the degree of timeliness of data one had to work with, one would have to wait until 2045 before the result for target 16.9.1 will be known! Worse still, only 50% of the coverage data is “precise”.<sup>29</sup> The other 50% of data points is in the form of a range (30-35%, 50-74%, 75-89%, “less than 50%”, “less than 90%”) and includes countries that have no data or have not reported data.

**Hence, the quality of “primary source” data for civil registration coverage is deficient to the extent that they cannot be used. The country statisticians’ rating of this data as “AAA” and “Tier-1” (if this was the data they assessed) is erroneous.**

The trend in aging of primary source data shown in the table is disappointing and worrying at the same time. Note that in Africa the African Programme for Acceleration of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems (“APAI-CRVs”) has been in place since 2010 (the Asian equivalent started a few years later), and since then a substantial number of meetings of ministers, experts and statisticians has been held. This notwithstanding, the average age of primary source data from Africa has gone up from

<sup>28</sup> Before the most recent (December 2014) update of UNSD birth- and death registration statistics Tanzania’s and Uganda’s previous birth registration rates dated from 1994, and Botswana’s dated from 2008. In 2014 MICS and DHS data for the seven countries were on average 4.5 years old. Algeria’s latest reported birth registration statistics date from 2001, Botswana’s from 2014, Cape Verde’s from 1998, Cameroon’s from 1995, Senegal’s from 1994, Tanzania’s from 2014 and Uganda’s from 2014. Cf. [http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/CRVs/CR\\_coverage.htm](http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/CRVs/CR_coverage.htm).

<sup>29</sup> “More than 90%”, which is considered as a state of “registration completeness”, is counted as precise.

12 to 15 years, rather than down. For this the countries and UNECA are especially responsible, but there is also a responsibility of the United Nations Statistics Division.

Concern about the efficacy of UNSD in improving civil registration around the world has been aired, although sparingly.<sup>30</sup> Wallman and Evanger (2008) write: “Given the competition for budgetary resources, producing and maintaining national registration systems for statistical purposes is not an appealing argument, particularly in less developed countries, since the system may not be considered cost effective if used only for statistics. Other forces in society will likely need to advocate for these systems. For example, civil registration systems provide the legal/reliable documentation on the identity of individuals. The improvement of existing registration systems is an area where statisticians do not have full control, given their role as data users rather than data producers.” AbouZahr et al. have stated that there is “momentum” on the CRVS pathway, but the quality of the coverage data don’t bear it out as yet.<sup>31</sup> Whether the momentum in “milestones”—which upon close examination are *inputs*—will also result in the desired *outcomes* remains to be seen.

It would have been logical if for the regional “ministerial processes” in Africa and Asia priority had been given to the measurement of their efficacy, for the purpose of which the weakness of civil registration coverage data should have been identified and addressed immediately.<sup>32</sup> It is inconceivable that ministers responsible for civil registration would not want and need to have this crucial management information at their fingertips. In the US, for example, “birth registration areas” and “death registration areas” gradually expanded as states one by one were admitted during the period 1915–1933 (for birth registration; 1880–1933 for death registration) as soon as they

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<sup>30</sup> E.g. Cleland, John. Demographic Data Collection in Less Developed Countries 1946-1996, Population Studies, 1996; Mahapatra, Prasanta, Kenji Shibuya, Alan D Lopez et al. Who counts—2. Civil registration systems and vital statistics: successes and missed opportunities. Vol. 370 November 10, 2007; Wallman, Katherine K. and Suzann K. Evanger. International standards for compilation of statistics. The gap between standards adoption and standards implementation. Washington (2008); AbouZahr, Carla, Don de Savigny, Lene Mikkelsen et al. Counting births and deaths 1. Civil registration and vital statistics. Progress in the data revolution for counting and accountability. The Lancet (2015).

<sup>31</sup> Cf. AbouZahr, Carla, Don de Savigny, Lene Mikkelsen et al. , op.cit., the authors present on pages 6 and 7 a panel of milestones. In AbouZahr, Carla, Don de Savigny, Lene Mikkelsen et al. Counting births and deaths 4. Towards universal civil registration and vital statistics systems. The time is now. Counting births and deaths. The Lancet (2015), p. 5. The authors present a figure showing the increase in peer-reviewed publications searched on the keywords civil registration and civil registration and vital statistics from 1969. However, Google trend data show that the keyword “civil registration” has been used minimally worldwide on the web within the category of government. Graphs of these Google trend data are shown in the main text. Since 2004 (the start date for this data) the mentioning of vital statistics has dropped in a secular fashion.

<sup>32</sup> In the Asia-Pacific region “results of quick assessments” have been published, but the results cannot be identified per country. Completeness data (collected for similar categories as in the UNSD questionnaire (cf. Figure 10), i.e. not precise) are hidden in an overall multi-criteria quality score. In September 2015 UNESCAP issued the agreed monitoring tools. They include indicators for birth- and death registration from primary and secondary sources, but leave the quantification of targets to the countries themselves. An under—5 birth registration rate is included, contradicting the consensus under—1 priority indicator of the Inter-Agency Expert Group discussed in the text. The proposed primary source birth- and death- registration indicators are date-of-registration statistics contradicting the most recent UNSD guidelines. These proposed Wallman and Evanger are a very good source to read why vital statistics need publication for international comparability, and what the consequences are when they are not.



achieved registration completeness (registration coverage >90%).<sup>33</sup> However, UNSD has failed to give clear and practical guidance in how to measure civil registration completeness. The terms “birth registration rate” or “death registration rate” are not mentioned in any of the UNSD handbooks.

**One of the probable reasons for the worrying status of reporting coverage data is that UNSD has not given a clear and easy to understand standard for the way primary source civil registration coverage should be measured.<sup>34</sup> This cannot continue to be the case for the monitoring of the Post—2015 Sustainable Development Agenda.<sup>35</sup>**

Wallman and Evanger may have the right end of the stick when they state that statistics may not be enough reason for governments to give civil registration investment priority. For decades registrars and statisticians have pointed at a lack of *political awareness* and *—will* as one of the central reasons underlying the underinvestment in civil registration and vital statistics systems. That *presumption* of causality underlies the regional “ministerial processes” in Africa, the Asia-Pacific region and the Eastern Mediterranean. It is impossible, though, to establish evidence for that causality. A lack of political awareness or political will presumes that decision-makers in government do not have their priorities right. What makes such a presumption for political decision-making questionable are two facts. Firstly, during the 2000s, birth registration coverage in the world actually did significantly improve, while the United Nations investments in civil registration were probably at their lowest point since the UN was established (see Table 2 below). Secondly, in the past 5—10 years, developing countries have invested billions of dollars in advanced identification systems (national IDs and biometric voter registration systems).<sup>36</sup> India’s new *Aadhaar* identification system alone carries a cost—

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<sup>33</sup> Cf. Hetzel, A.M. History and organisation of the vital statistics system. National Center for Health Statistics. Hyattsville Md. (1997). This comparison is not as odd as it may seem. In 1880 the US had a per capita income of USD 5,700 at 2013 prices. Africa’s per capita income, for example, is USD 7,700 at 2013 prices. While in 1880 the US had a population of 52 million only, Africa had 1.3 billion in 2013. I.e., in terms of total income, Africa has a resource pool 35 times as large as the US had in 1880 from which it can finance a functioning civil registration system. (Data sources: World Bank Development Indicators and <http://socialdemocracy21stcentury.blogspot.com.tr/2011/12/real-us-gnp-growth-rates-18701900.html>).

<sup>34</sup> The standard for measurement of registration completeness is not explicitly defined in any of the UNSD handbooks, but in an implicit way it is. The handbooks explain tabulation methods and the requirement that a report should include all the events that occurred (rather than were registered) over a chosen period (i.e. late and delayed registration should be included when the registration took place before a “cut-off date” that each country determines itself). The handbooks also speak of the use of data from other sources such as surveys and censuses to obtain “denominators” (e.g. population size) that allow computation of rates (like birth rate) and ratios (like a sex ratio). The term “registration rate” is not mentioned in any UNSD handbook; instead the term used is “coverage” which is expressed as the percentage of births in a reporting year that have been registered before the cut-off date. UNSD handbooks spend ample space to how the veracity of coverage could be verified, while nowhere the calculation of coverage is explained in simple terms.

<sup>35</sup> African as well as Asian governments have chosen to embark on a “2015-2024 CRVS Decade”. It is not clear why the country representatives (ministers) in the two regions chose to end up having two parallel programs for civil registration improvement (their CRVS decade and the Post-2015 legal identity for all agenda), which will be a source of confusion in the next 10—15 years. Asia was the first region to decide on the 2015-2024 period on 11 December 2013—more than half a year after the publication of the report of the High-Level Panel (published on 30 May 2013). Africa announced their CRVS decade in February 2015.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Van der Straaten, Jaap. The economics of civil identity management in Africa. The Hague (2015)

about US\$ 2 billion—equivalent to half of what has been estimated to be the *total* investment needed in civil registration in over 70 countries.<sup>37</sup> Since unit costs of ID systems in other countries are a multiple of the Indian cost per person the global investment is much larger: about US\$ 10 billion annually over the period 2015–2018, or about US\$ 40 billion in total and more than ten times the estimate (US\$ 3.8 billion) of CRVS investment over ten years.<sup>38</sup>

**Table 2—Birth registration rate improvement around the world from 2000**

	Around 2000	Latest
<b>Africa</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>North Africa</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>87</b>
<b>Sub-Saharan Africa</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>Western and Central Africa</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>Eastern and Southern Africa</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>CEE/CIS</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>98</b>
<b>Latin America and the Caribbean</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>92</b>
<b>Least developed countries</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>South Asia</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>71</b>
<b>East Asia and the Pacific</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>79</b>
<b>World</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>72</b>

Source: UNICEF. Every Child's Birth Right. Inequities and Trends in Birth Registration. New York (2013), Miscellaneous Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys ("MICS"), Demographic and Health Surveys and CRC4D processing of country data. Note that the large improvement in South Asia is largely due to a substantial correction (and improvement not earlier captured) of birth registration rates in India. Cf. UNICEF. State of the World's Children. New York (2014).

**There obviously is NO lack of political incentive to make investments in systems that aim to establish the legal identity of populations across the world. The ministerial processes in Africa, the Asia-Pacific region and the Eastern Mediterranean have failed to provide the required scope to their efforts.**

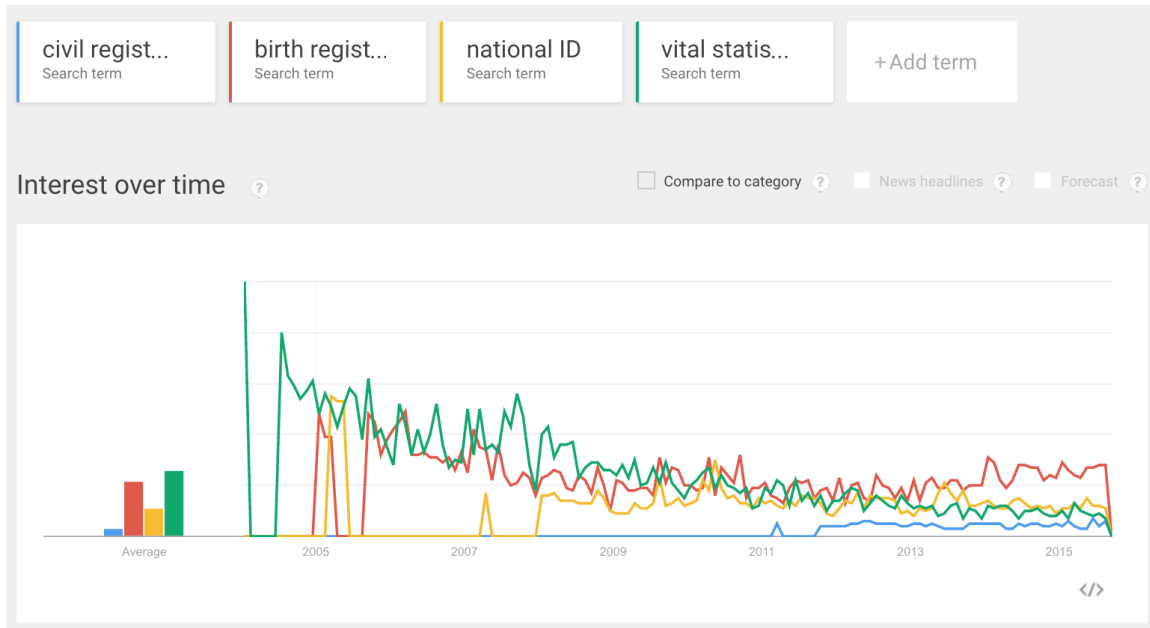
Google trend data also reveal this as the next figures show. Below are worldwide data for mentioning of terms on the web. The web search has been limited to the sector government. The data underlying Figure 8 reveals that in January 2004 the term “vital statistics” was mentioned 100 times, while “birth registration”, “civil registration” and “national ID” did not get mentioned. In September 2005, after Plan International had launched its birth registration advocacy campaign, birth registration was mentioned 48 times while vital statistics was mentioned 62 times. After publication of the landmark publication on CRVS “Who Counts” in November 2007 in “The Lancet”, the term vital statistics peaked at 43 times in February 2008, birth registration was mentioned 25

<sup>37</sup> Cf. The World Bank and World Health Organisation. Civil registration and vital statistics. Scaling up investment plan 2015-2024. Washington, Geneva (2014)

<sup>38</sup> [http://www.acuity-mi.com/GNeID\\_Report.php](http://www.acuity-mi.com/GNeID_Report.php)

times and national IDs were mentioned 15 times. After the May 2015 publication of a new series of articles in the Lancet on CRVS vital statistics were only mentioned 7 times, civil registration 6 times, birth registration 27 times and national ID 12 times.

Figure 8



The figure shows clear trends: a secular and serious *decline* in the mentioning of the term vital statistics and a minimal mentioning of the term civil registration. In contrast the mentioning of birth registration has been significant, robust and stable since 2005, and the mentioning—after an early uptick because of discussion of the Real ID in the USA and the national ID in the United Kingdom—of national IDs has established itself at a significant and robust level from 2008. We have avoided including the mentioning of the term birth certificate because of the “noise” caused by the discussion of US President Obama’s birth certificate.

As Wallman and Evanger suggest, the vital statistics that civil registration may generate may not be a sufficiently compelling argument for governments generally. Politicians have a short time horizon for what they can accomplish and desire to be associated with. As the Asian Development Bank correctly stated, when civil registration coverage is incomplete, the data cannot (or can hardly) be used for vital statistics.<sup>39</sup> It is only when that completeness state is reached, in the end, that vital statistics can be productively used.<sup>40</sup> And politicians, just like ordinary people, are showing behaviour that might be

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Asian Development Bank. Legal identity for inclusive development. Manila (2007), p. 10. This is also the opinion of Hans Rosling, cf. his April 2015 presentation at UNICEF: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6VU3nO9CXEo>, and [http://www.unicef.org/statistics/index\\_82893.html](http://www.unicef.org/statistics/index_82893.html).

<sup>40</sup> An example of this can be read from the title of this article: Chapalapati, Rao. Compiling mortality statistics from civil registration systems in Viet Nam. The long road ahead. Bulletin of the World Health Organisation. Geneva (2009).

captured well in this quote from an essay (1968) titled “The life you save may be your own” by a behavioural economist who was awarded the Nobel Prize for Economics, Thomas Schelling:

*‘Let a six-year old girl with brown hair need thousands of dollars for an operation that will prolong her life until Christmas, and the post office will be swamped with nickels and dimes to save her. But let it be reported that without sales tax the hospital facilities of Massachusetts will deteriorate and cause a barely perceptible increase in preventable deaths – not many will drop a tear or reach for their check books.’<sup>41</sup>*

Schelling, in his essay, coined the apt terms “identified life” (for the six-year old girl) and “statistical life”. It seems realistic to presume that governments across the world generally do have a keen interest in establishing the legal identity—the “identified lives”—of the population of their country. They also express their reasons for doing so: security, election integrity and economics e.g. in targeting of and avoiding pilferage in social protection programs are the predominant reasons mentioned. Of course, less transparency may be expected about more doubtful incentives that officials may have.

The very first UNSD publication, issued in 1953, stated: “The systematic recording of births and deaths **was initially a procedure for establishing a record solely for its legal value** (bold, underscore: CRC4D). Recognition of the value of these records as a source of statistics developed much later as the potential uses of vital statistics as administrative and research tools became evident.”<sup>42</sup> Over the course of its existence since 1946, in the implementation of its role as the custodian of civil registration, UNSD has, not surprisingly because of its nature, moved the emphasis towards the statistical role of civil registration—the “statistical lives”. Since 1953 three revised versions of the “Principles for a vital statistics system” handbook were issued, while for other aspects of civil registration, such as the legal framework for civil registration, computerization or the role of population registers (important for national IDs and voter registration), only once a publication saw the light of day over the past seven decades. In the latest UNSD publication only five pages out of 240 are devoted to the role population registers can

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According to this study the estimated completeness of death registration at ages older than 5 years was 32–51%. But from 2000 birth registration improved to 95% (cf. UNICEF. Every Child's Birth Right. Inequities and Trends in Birth Registration. New York, 2013). A serious discussion took place in parliament whether civil registration could be discontinued and instead the national ID system could be used, removing “duplication”. UNICEF, with support from CRC4D, avoided that this ill-advised step would have been taken. Cf.

<http://english.vietnamnet.vn/fms/government/114445/justice-ministry-steps-in-on-id-debate.html>.

<sup>41</sup> Schelling's important distinction could not have been driven home more clearly than by the case of Aylan Kurdi, a 3-year old Syrian refugee boy from Kobane whose lifeless body washed up on a Turkey beach, early September 2015. Prior reports of the numbers (thousands) of migrants and refugees losing their lives during the passage of the Mediterranean Sea got hardly any media coverage. The drowning of a single, identified boy did not only get unprecedented media coverage but it changed hearts and minds.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. United Nations. Department of Economic Affairs. Statistical Office. Principles for a vital statistics system. Statistical Papers. Series\_M19 en. New York (1953), p. 3. See also Hetzel, A.M. History and organisation of the vital statistics system. National Center for Health Statistics. Hyattsville Md. (1997) and Higgs, Edward. A cuckoo in the nest? The origins of civil registration and state medical statistics in England and Wales. Continuity and Change 11, 1996, pp. 115-134.

play for vital statistics—and not about their role as the repository of the records of citizens who have been issued a national ID as evidence of their legal identity.<sup>43</sup> UNSD also coined the acronym “CRVS” (civil registration and vital statistics) which has recently become very popular within the aid community, at the detriment of the visibility and positioning of the legal function of civil registration. A review of the reports of the meetings of the United Nations Statistical Commission shows that civil registration has been discussed only on very rare occasions.

What has driven the improvement of birth registration rates and civil registration in the 2000s (cf. Table 2—the increase from 58% to 72% in the global birth registration rate), when UNICEF, the INGO Plan (and WHO at a late stage) virtually alone occupied the field of international support and only limited international financial resources were available, appears to have been of a largely domestic rather than external origin. This may seem a paradox, but it is not unique for self-reliance to deliver the best results. This is important because national ID systems are only affordable and sustainable when they are built on a strong foundation of a well-functioning and sustained civil registration system.<sup>44</sup> In Africa, two out of three countries are in the process of introducing an ID or upgrading an existing ID at a total cost of USD 8 billion.<sup>45</sup> These countries account for 85% of the African population and over 90% of African GDP. Africa would save between USD 11 billion and USD 22 billion if it would develop integrated identity management systems. If it does not—and many African countries don’t—the huge investments done in national IDs will have to be written off within a short period of time, and the rebuilding of the civil registration and identification infrastructure will have to start anew. In the ministerial processes launched in Africa and Asia the importance of national identity systems has largely been ignored. The World Bank is on two tracks, one supporting CRVS and another supporting national ID systems, “ID4D”, instead of developing an integrated approach and presenting a unified vision. However, a global identity management conference held in Seoul in 2014 with support from the three regional development banks and the Government of South Korea has been a first, much needed attempt to establish common ground.<sup>46</sup> What is not well understood is whether the increase in civil registration coverage during the 2000s will prove to be a one-off, temporary increase that only preceded and has been replaced by the takeoff of modern identification systems, with a parallel rechanneling of domestic resources to national ID and biometric voter registration. I.e., we don’t know whether countries in effect have abandoned the CRVS pathway; the civil identification pathway may well have become their pathway of choice. Such a change in course may explain part of the problem of the rather dismal record countries have in reporting their primary source civil registration statistics.

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<sup>43</sup> Cf. United Nations Statistics Division. Department of Economic and Social Affairs. Principles and recommendations for a vital statistics system. Revision 3 (2013).

<sup>44</sup> Cf. Van der Straaten, Jaap. The economics of civil identity management in Africa. The Hague (2015).

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. <http://globalidm.org/>.

Although the civil identification pathway has become so much the preferred choice of countries it has not thus far resulted in an initiative in the statistics community to collect data on the coverage of other identity systems than civil registration. There is neither a global system of collecting coverage data of voter registration systems. Hence little can be said about the quality of primary source (and secondary source) data on the coverage of national ID or voter registration systems. India is an exception; the country publishes Aadhaar enrolment data online but these data include enrolment of persons who have deceased since enrolment.

### ***Secondary source data***

The under—5 birth registration rates are updated and published annually (in UNICEF's State of the World's Children publication) and are obtained from the MICS- and DHS surveys conducted on average every 6 years.<sup>47</sup> These "secondary source" data:

- Cover a great number of countries;
  - Produce a birth registration measure which on average is more than ten years more up-to-date than official statistics;
  - Are more precise (a primary source statistic can be in the form of "Less than 30%" or "75-89%");
  - Are uniform and well-defined (while for official statistics there are no binding rules for how countries define their registration rates) and comparable between countries;<sup>48</sup>
  - Are disaggregated as recommended by the High Level Panel of Eminent Persons;
  - Are affordable in terms of cost because the birth registration question in MICS and DHS is an addition to an already conducted survey, but:
- 
- Are based on a sample, hence the numbers are "probabilistic" though at an acceptable degree of accuracy;
  - Are obtained from surveys that are largely if not fully paid from international resources and hence may be less sustainable in the medium or longer term.

So why consider using anything else than the "secondary source" survey data?

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<sup>47</sup> For Africa the average was 2.3 reports per country with a civil registration system over the 1999-2014 period. The frequency of surveys has also increased; the average of 2.3 is partly based on the early period during which surveys with birth registration questions were done less frequently.

<sup>48</sup> This is a simplification. Countries do have influence on what their MICS or DHS will measure. There is variation between countries to some degree, and some of it is unfortunate as the examples of the DHS Namibia for 2013 and the MICS Malawi for 2013/14 (discussed in the text) illustrate.

## ***The downsides of using secondary source data***

In the points mentioned in the previous section in favour of the secondary source data on legal identity the important observation was made that MICS- and DHS-surveys are not “country-owned”. In fact they are largely made possible by international funding. It is these kinds of projects that provide national statistics offices and their staff with a lifeline while local budgets often only provide for a “minimum-wage-like” basic funding. This could not be continued in an era of sustainable development as the Post-2015 period is supposed to accomplish. Hence, creative solutions need to be found to continue to conduct these surveys—and even increase their frequency—while moving towards local financing and maintaining and further improving quality.

The second “downside” is the pervasive influence of UNICEF’s focus on under—5 birth registration, not just within UNICEF and among UNICEF staff but also to some extent within the registrar community. However, the under—5 measure also evokes irritation and sometimes even conflict between UNICEF and the civil registration authority. This is especially so when countries do not agree with the MICS- or DHS data. This has been the case with Zimbabwe a few years back. See the newspaper clipping below.

Figure 9

**Local News**

# Mudede scoffs at birth survey

**Herald Reporters**

THE Registrar-General's Department has dismissed statistics in the 2009 Zimbabwe Multiple Indicator Monitoring Survey indicating a low rate of birth registration in the country.

The Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency — in collaboration with Unicef — conducted the survey.

Registrar-General Mr Tobaiwa Mudede said his department was not involved in the survey and existing data on birth registration was not included.

“The topic touched on national registration, and things of national importance should be treated carefully with consideration that they are of national importance.

“This document is regretted by the Registrar-General's Department unreservedly,” he said.

Mr Mudede said they had already expressed their displeasure in the manner the survey was conducted to the Zimstat leadership.

“Why go for a survey when you can go for the actual data on the ground? We have that information but they used secondary data when the primary information is there.

“Maybe this was done to justify the donor funding they receive,” said Mr Mudede.

According to results of the survey, 37 percent of children under five years have birth certificates which do not show the sex of the child.

The report also said 55 percent of children under five in urban areas had birth certificates as compared to 30 percent in rural areas.

However, Harare Province registrar Mr Simon Muchemanyema said it was not possible to have a birth certificate that does not show the sex of the child.

“Our birth certificates are computer generated and the system we use does not allow one to have an incomplete birth certificate. It would be rejected,” he said.

The survey also said some respondents had cited costs and long distances to the Registrar-General's offices as reasons for not obtaining birth certificates.

“Birth certificates are obtained for free soon after the child is born up to six years,” said Mr Thomas Pasipamire, the director of human resources and policy in the RG's Department.

“We also used to have mobile registration exercises if funds permitted, but we have now set up 206 sub-offices throughout the country and at all district, provincial and central hospitals,” said Mr Pasipamire.

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India provides another example. UNICEF's landmark publication "Every Child's Birth Right" (2013) shows India with a 41% birth registration rate for 2005/06, measured through the National Family Health Survey (NFHS). The UNICEF publication shows, and "showcases", India as the country that accounts for the largest number of unregistered children under—5 (71 million). The Civil Registrar General's data shows a rate of 62.5% for 2005 and of 69% for 2006, or about 66% average for 2005/06.<sup>49</sup> If the Registrar's numbers were correct (and if they were comparable with the NFHS numbers) then the number of unregistered children would be "only" 40 million (not much higher than the UNICEF estimate for China). These large statistical discrepancies are very contentious, and wisely UNICEF has used the Registrar's General numbers in its most recent publication (*The State of the World's Children 2015*). In this case the Government of India did not dismiss the NFHS data but advised study of the differences and recommended appropriate action to reduce the variation in numbers.<sup>50</sup>

Countries, whether those with the clout of India or small, require UNICEF, USAID/ICF International and others to tread carefully and sensitively when they publish data on these countries, even while—or just because—there is a degree of rivalry or lack of coordination in the public sector of a country. The variation in primary and secondary source data should be as little as possible. If only for this reason the survey data for birth registration need to align as closely as possible with primary source data definitions.

There is another, serious side effect of using the UNICEF under—5 birth registration rate that should be a concern, also for UNICEF. As mentioned before, the grown familiarity with the under—5 measure has brought UNICEF, but also other organisations including governments and official donors, *to design and embark on programs for reduction of under—5 under-registration*. The earlier mentioned example of the Canadian grant for UNICEF Tanzania is just one out of quite a few. The registration authority in Tanzania, RITA, has introduced a waiver of fees for birth registration for the under—5, while applying a fee for the above five. In The Gambia UNICEF supported such a program, and the effect was an organisational focusing of the Ministry of Health on late and delayed registration (see explanation of these terms below). The Gambia was used as an example of good practice in a UNICEF working paper, but it lost its shine when birth registration rates declined after an initial increase.<sup>51</sup> Backlog campaigns are palliative and only under special circumstances they make sense. They are also in conflict with international good practice and with international and continental law that birth

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<sup>49</sup> Cf. Office of the Registrar General, India. Vital statistics of India based on the civil registration system 2011. New Delhi (2014).

<sup>50</sup> Cf. Government of India. Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. Report of the Committee on Strengthening of Civil Registration System. New Delhi (2012), p. 7.

<sup>51</sup> UNICEF. Good practices in integrating birth registration into health systems (2000-2009). Case studies Bangladesh, Brazil, The Gambia, Delhi India. New York (2010). The birth registration rate increased from 33% in 2000 to 55% in 2006, and then declined to 52.5% in 2010 (the 2010 data were not as yet available at the time of the publication of the working paper). In the DHS 2013 the birth registration rate measured was 72%.



registration should take place immediately after birth. These “elimination of backlog” campaigns can be good for government publicity (the “caravanes” organized in Haiti—basically late/delayed registration drives—are an example) but financially they are almost always unsustainable.

But what about data availability? Is it not clear that the “secondary source” data are superior to the “primary source” data? UNICEF has a database indeed (not from 2003 as the IAEG documentation suggests; the first round of birth registration data collection dates from 1999). While the data from 1999 through 2014 matter, what matters more is whether a baseline for 2015, or 2016, can be generated, and whether over the next 15 years data can be collected that provides a satisfactory yardstick of legal identity coverage, *for all*. It is in that respect that none of the proposed indicators are adequate or relevant—with the exception of the THCC proposed indicators, as will be set out in the next section. This is also where the guidelines to statisticians and relevant agencies for the SDG indicators have been wrong-footed. As Hans Rosling, with reference to the Sustainable Development Goals, told a UNICEF audience: “We should measure what we want to measure, not what we can measure or are measuring.”<sup>52</sup>

As mentioned before, secondary source data on national ID or voter registration coverage (or on coverage of other identity systems such as health cards, SIM cards) is not yet available on a global scale.

## **Identifying the best indicator(s)**

What is it that target 16.9 encompasses? The conflation of the terms “legal identity” and “birth registration” in the target complicates matters. It may well be that early during the genesis of target 16.9 the term “legal identity” was an, as yet undefined, “placeholder”, illustrated by “birth registration” as one, commonly known, way a state can providing a legal identity to a person. For our purpose here, there is a rather good description of legal identity that may well come close to the current formulation of the target “*provide legal identity to all, including birth registration, by 2030*.”<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6VU3nO9CXEo>.

<sup>53</sup> See Asian Development Bank. Legal identity for inclusive development. Manila (2007), p. vii.

**“Broadly speaking, “legal identity” refers to a human being’s legal (as opposed to physical) personality. Legal identity allows persons to enjoy the legal system’s protection and to enforce their rights or demand redress for violations by accessing state institutions such as courts and law enforcement agencies (bold font CRC4D).**

Proof of legal identity consists of official, government-issued and recognized identity documents—documents that include basic information attesting to the holder’s identity and age, status, and/or legal relationships. Without these proofs of one’s legal identity, persons find it difficult to exercise and enforce their rights, or obtain benefits and opportunities provided by the state. Consequently, “legal identity” can be construed narrowly to refer to official, government-issued identity documents that prove one’s status as a person who can exercise rights and demand protection under the law. Generally, birth certificates, administered through a civil registration system, are favored as the preferred standard in establishing legal identity. This is primarily because birth certificates have the advantage of documenting age, place of birth, and familial relationships from the very beginning of life. However, the study shows that in a number of instances, other identity documents, such as citizenship certificates or family and lodging books, proved to be more important than birth certificates in so far as access to benefits and opportunities are concerned.”

The Asian Development Bank study was based on case studies conducted in three countries: Bangladesh, Cambodia and Nepal. A few years after the ADB-study (in 2010), all three countries were in the process of introducing ID cards “for the first time or to replace cards no longer used”.<sup>54</sup> I.e., where the study came across the importance of other identity documents these were not (yet) national IDs. The “family and lodging books” are typical for countries in East Asia, including Thailand, Lao DPR, China and Indonesia—they fit in the population register strand of civil registration (e.g. “*hukou*” in China, the “*kartu keluarga*” in Indonesia, etc.). “Citizenship certificates” are typical for countries that do not confer nationality on the basis of civil registration alone. Thailand provides an example of this, while examples of this can be found in Africa as well (e.g. Côte d’Ivoire). Indeed, a birth certificate may not always be the critical document people need to prove their legal identity. While we propose an equally pragmatic approach to adapt SDG 16.9 to local circumstances, we believe that a focus on birth registration and national IDs is warranted because these are the most likely to be used for global measurement of legal identity.

### ***Indicator short-list***

In a forthcoming World Bank publication (the number of people without a recognized legal identity is estimated to be about one quarter of the world’s population, two-third

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<sup>54</sup> Greenleaf, Graham. National ID systems in Asia—Surveying a “growth area.” Kensington (2010), p. 3.

of which are adults and one-third of which are children.<sup>55</sup> One could take the pragmatic approach and pose the question which ID system—civil registration or civil identification (national ID), or a combination of both—would be most efficient and effective to use in order to expand legal identity to all as SDG 16.9 requires to be the case by 2030. There is very little research available to answer that question.<sup>56</sup> If research would be available and conclusive in identifying what pathway leads to achieving the 2030 target in the most cost-effective and efficient way, the indicator choice for how to measure progress could have been informed by such research. In the virtual absence of this clarity it is pragmatic to look at the indicators that have been proposed. They are:

- 1) Birth registration rate for under—5 children (UNICEF, UN Women, Global Migration Work Group, African Group)
- 2) Birth registration rate for under—1 children (The World Bank, PBSO, SPC, THCC)
- 3) National ID coverage of the adult population (African Group, The World Bank<sup>57</sup>, THCC)
- 4) Birth certificate coverage (THCC)

### ***Current, late and delayed registration***

Before embarking on a comparison of indicators it is necessary to say something about the timing of registration, which is of special importance when deciding which birth registration timeframe cut-off to choose for when defining a birth registration coverage indicator. The considerations of the World Bank and SPC to move from an under—5 birth registration rate towards a birth registration rate for the under—1 included reference to the “grace period” as well as to primary source convention to measure registration coverage for a one year period.

A legal timeframe for registration is established for a reason. In simple terms the legal time frame is, on the one hand, accommodating statistical preference for as short a period as possible, not just for timeliness of data but also because the accuracy (“content error”) and completeness (“coverage error”) of registration benefit from quick registration. On the other hand, it takes into account the need for a reasonable timeframe for the population to conduct the declaration of the birth. Physical access and cultural practices such as name giving can affect the time needed to register a newborn. In India the newborn’s given name can be registered without fee during one year, and for a fee for as long as the next fourteen years, for example, but more often legislation is not accommodating.

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<sup>55</sup> World Bank. Identification for Development (ID4D). Global Indicators: Data Collection and Analysis. Washington (forthcoming).

<sup>56</sup> One of the few attempts is: Van der Straaten, Jaap. The economics of civil identity management in Africa. The Hague (2015).

<sup>57</sup> Cf. footnote 15.

There is (only) an (old) international recommendation for the legal time frame for the registration of vital events:<sup>58</sup>

212. *Time allowed for current registration.*

“The maximum period to be allowed between the occurrence and the obligatory registration of a vital event should be determined with respect to all the contributory factors operating in the country and should be as short as is consistent with the facilitating of the current and accurate registration of all necessary facts.”

In the 1950s the data for 65 countries for the legal time period for birth registration (“current registration”) varied between a few days (mostly in developed countries) and 60 days, with only a few exceptions for countries allowing a longer period (Turkey 90 days, Cuba one year). More up-to-date information dates from the 1976–1979 period when a survey was done and information was obtained from 103 countries, of which 71 developing countries in Africa, the Americas, Asia and Oceania.<sup>59</sup> The legal timeframe for these 71 countries was 66% within one month, another 20% within two months, 6% from two to three months and the remaining 8% more than three months or (3 countries) no timeframe. There is a slight indication that the timeframe for current registration in some countries may have become longer since the first survey, but the absence of more recent information is another example of the dearth of essential civil registration data.

Contrary to the variation in time frame for current registration, over more than sixty years there has been one uniform recommendation for the “*grace period*”: one year following the vital event. Registration during the grace period will require a somewhat more demanding procedure than is the case for current registration. The terminology for registration after the legally specified time but within the grace period has changed. Currently it is called “late registration” while in the 1950s it used to be called “delayed registration”. The 1976–1979 survey did not include a question re the timeframe for late registration. India still uses the term “delayed registration” for all registration after the 21 days available for current registration. Old habits can be hard to eliminate.

Generally, after expiration of the grace period, the procedures for “delayed registration” become more demanding still, for example a court procedure (in countries once under French rule a “*jugement supplétif*”). The term “delayed registration” is now used for registration after the grace period has expired while in the 1950s this used to be called “declared registration”.

<sup>58</sup> Cf. United Nations. Statistical Office. Principles for a vital statistics system: recommendations for the improvement and standardization of vital statistics. New York (1953), pp. 8-9.

<sup>59</sup> United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Statistical Office. Handbook of Vital Statistics Systems and Methods. Volume 2. Review of national practices. Series F\_35v2E. New York (1991). The Americas data included the Canada, USA and Greenland, which could not be separated out.

## Primary source civil registration statistics

*What would be the standard, primary source (=data generated by the civil registration authority) measure of birth registration coverage?* Note that the UNSD's role is to enhance international comparability of statistics, hence the need for an international standard of civil registration coverage. The handbooks of UNSD do not provide such a standard, and the UNSD vital statistics questionnaire—see Figure 10 below—shows that UNSD leaves the completeness definition to the country.

Figure 10

II. Estimated completeness of registration	Live births	Deaths	Infant deaths	Late foetal deaths	Marriages	Divorces
90 per cent or more						
75-89 per cent						
50-74 per cent						
Under 50 per cent						
Please specify:						
(a) Year(s) to which completeness estimate refers						
(b) Basis of completeness estimate						
-Demographic analysis						
-Dual record check						
-Questions in population census						
-Questions in sample surveys						
-Other (specify)						
-No evaluation						
Please include any reports describing completeness of registration and methods used in arriving at estimated completeness:						

Source: <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/products/dyb/dybquest.htm>

What the UNSD handbooks—rather confusingly—mix up is the method to calculate the level of completeness of registration, and the *methods to verify to what extent those estimates are accurate*. Thus, in the most recent handbook,<sup>60</sup> the section on tabulations emphasizes the importance of including all events “by-date-of-occurrence” (rather than “by-date-of registration”), or in other words recommends to include all the events that occurred in year *t*, including those that were registered after year *t*, while leaving it to countries to determine when they will set their “cut-off date” as they have to or they would never report. Also, although the “estimated completeness” in the questionnaire shows possible answers such 75–89%, it leaves unanswered what the denominator is, and how it should be obtained. Under the heading “Basis of completeness estimate” methods are mentioned that are not methods to calculate completeness level, but they are in fact “*quality assessment methods*”<sup>61</sup>, i.e. *methods to verify whether the completeness level calculated is accurate*.

Both the handbook and the questionnaire are insufficiently clear for practical use, while also leaving much leeway for variation in definitions of registration completeness between countries, and hence hampering international comparability.

<sup>60</sup> Cf. United Nations Statistics Division. Department of Economic and Social Affairs. Principles and recommendations for a vital statistics system. Revision 3 (2013), p. 55

<sup>61</sup> Op. cit. p. 111.

A major country that has clearly defined its “level of registration” (“LOR”, = “registration completeness level”, or “registration rate”) is India. It defines its “LOR” as follows (and it provides this definition in every annual report).<sup>62</sup>

*“Level of Registration: The level of registration, defined as the percentage of registered births/deaths to the births/deaths estimated through SRS (the Sample Registration System), determines the performance level of a State/Union territory with regard to the functioning of its Civil Registration System. Level of Registration (LOR) = 100 times the number of events registered during the year (numerator), divided by the number of events during the year (denominator).”*

This is an example of a clear definition, although it is not in accordance with UNSD guidelines, because it uses the events registered in the reporting year as the numerator of level of registration, rather than the events that occurred during the reporting year and were registered before a cut-off date.<sup>63</sup> There are more countries that use this definition.<sup>64</sup> UNSD states: *“unless registration is timely and virtually complete, date-of-registration statistics are not a desirable substitute for those by date of occurrence.”* India’s 1969 act and current regulations on birth and death registration provide for current registration (within 21 days), two stages of late registration (21–30 days, and 30 days–1 year) and delayed registration (after more than a year). In the act (although dating from 1969, i.e. after the change of terminology) all registration after the 21-day timeframe for current registration is, erroneously, labeled as “delayed”.

The Indian 2012 data was published in March 2015. This time lag, we think, would allow all “delayed” registration of events that occurred in 2012 and were registered in 2013 to be included, i.e. to use date-of-occurrence registration statistics. The registration during 2012 of events that occurred before 2012 could be purged from the registration total for 2012. In this way a birth registration rate for India for 2012 could have been generated that aligns with the registration completeness level that conforms better with the intention of UNSD. Since we have seen that a grace period for delayed registration of one year from the occurrence of the event has been a global standard for at least the last sixty years, this justifies a standard way of calculating registration completeness that would enhance international comparability. Note that the data would allow to not only publish the registration rate within the grace period, but also the registration rate within 21 days and within a month from birth. This definition would mean an exclusion of delayed (as per UNSD definition) registration beyond one year *for the calculation of the standard (current plus late) registration rate*. But capturing delayed registration data is important as well, and needs to be collected, while the age structure of the persons

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<sup>62</sup> Cf. Office of the Registrar General, India. Vital statistics of India based on the civil registration system 2011. New Delhi (2014), p. xii.

<sup>63</sup> Cf. United Nations Statistics Division. Department of Economic and Social Affairs. Principles and recommendations for a vital statistics system. Revision 3 (2013), pp. 54-55 (“3. Time of reference”).

<sup>64</sup> Figure 10 shows that UNSD requests information about the method used, but generally response to this question is not being published. However, for India UNSD publishes civil registration statistics for 1994, obtained in 1998, which are from administrative, civil registration (“primary source”) records, rather than from the sample registration system (SRS) as is explained in a footnote.

being registered delayed is essential information too. The importance of clearer explanation and guidelines issued by UNSD can be illustrated by the recently issued indicators for the Asia-Pacific CRVS Decade, that show a consensus to use date-of-registration completeness statistics for birth- and death registration that UNSD has advised against.<sup>65</sup>

**UNSD should amend its handbook and vital statistics questionnaire to give clear guidance for the definition and derivation of date-of-occurrence completeness/coverage registration statistics, and recommend a global cut-off standard.**

UNICEF, in its State of the World's Children ("SOWC") 2015, has used 84% as the birth registration rate for India. This 84% is sourced from the Office of the Registrar General's 2011 data.<sup>66</sup> Most of the birth registration data in SOWC is survey data for children under—5. We will return to the comparability of the data from these two different sources. Here we would like to just point out that the 84% includes an unknown number of delayed (UNSD definition) registrations, which can and will include delayed registration of children, youth and adults over five years old. This is why above "the age structure of the persons being registered delayed is essential information too" was mentioned. If in India delayed registration of persons above five years old would be significant the use of the 84% of the Registrar General in the SOWC 2015 would be questionable.<sup>67</sup>

We haven't discussed the denominator used for the registration completeness level (LOR in the case of India). How do we know *how many births* there have been during the year? Usually the answer to that question is to use an estimate of the number of births based on a population projection model and the application of an estimated birth rate. The United Nations Population Division provides such demographic projections.<sup>68</sup>

An alternative method has been used in a study for Australia and can be used in countries where the health system covers (almost) all births. In Australia the Ministry of Health collects data on the number of births, which it shares with the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). Registration offices send their numbers of births registered to ABS as well. Statisticians can compute the birth registration rate by using the number of birth registrations in a year (numerator, from registration authorities) and dividing the total by the total of the number of births (denominator, from the Ministry of Health). In

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<sup>65</sup> Cf. UNESCAP. Guidelines for setting and monitoring the goals and targets of the Regional Action Framework on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific. Version 1. Bangkok (2015).

<sup>66</sup> Office of the Registrar General, Vital statistics of India based on the civil registration system 2011. New Delhi (2014)

<sup>67</sup> The use of the 84% has not yet brought UNICEF to adjust its widely quoted total of 230 million unregistered children, which is still based on the old India figure, to a figure closer to 200 million.

<sup>68</sup> Cf. United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2013). World Population Prospects: The 2012 Revision, DVD Edition.

Australia, the number of births according to the Ministry of Health data has been found to be systematically higher than the number of births registered.<sup>69</sup>

The study quoted here (for New South Wales, population about 30% of the Australian total) went a step further in analyzing this difference, by *linking* the records at the Ministry of Health and at ABS for each child. This is the “dual record check” mentioned in the UNSD questionnaire (cf. Figure 10) and implies that this study entails a *quality assessment* of the registration completeness data. Only through linkage of the records at the Ministry of Health and at the registration offices for each individual child is it possible to calculate an accurate birth registration rate for children born (or registered) in a certain period.<sup>70</sup> The findings, for the period 2001–2005, were that 17% of births had not been registered in the calendar year of birth, and 7% not (yet) in the first year from birth (declining to 5% in the fourth year after birth).<sup>71</sup> While the study mentions the Australian 60-day legal time frame for current birth registration, it did not generate results for the current registration rate. UNICEF, in its *Every Child's Birth Right* publication, shows a 100% birth registration rate for Australia (2012), a statistic obtained from UNSD (which will have obtained this from ABS). So, even in an advanced country such as Australia, producing a reliable birth registration rate is all but simple, and the results may be surprising when they contradict the general belief that a country such as Australia would, as a matter of course, have achieved registration completeness.

The methodology used in the Australian study is useful in this context in order to highlight some of the difficulties that one would not expect to encounter when defining the most basic of indicators. Below is a picture (Figure 11) of the impressive improvement in birth registration in India accomplished over recent years (although it doesn't get even a tiny fraction of the local and international media attention given to *Aadhaar*).<sup>72</sup>

*What cannot be ascertained from these birth registration rates is to what extent late- and delayed registration influence the level of and the upward trend in these rates. Even if all births would be registered within 21 days (“current registration”) there would still be birth registrations carrying over from one calendar year to the other, for which a correction would be necessary (unless the carry-over from the previous year and the*

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<sup>69</sup> Cf. Xu, Fenglian et al. Under-reporting of birth registrations in New South Wales, Australia BMC Pregnancy and Childbirth 2012 12-147.

<sup>70</sup> The methodology, a direct record matching method, is one among others recommended by the United Nations. Cf. United Nations Statistics Division. Department of Economic and Social Affairs. Principles and recommendations for a vital statistics system. Revision 3 (2013), pp. 111-112. The record of any birth can be in both sources, in one and not in the other, or vice versa, or not be in both. For the estimation of the number of records absent in both the “Chandrasekaran-Deming formula” can be used. While the Australian health numbers are higher than the civil registration numbers, the health records can also have missed some events.

<sup>71</sup> While registration problems are known to be disproportionately present among the Aborigine population this group is much too small to account for the North South Wales under-registration.

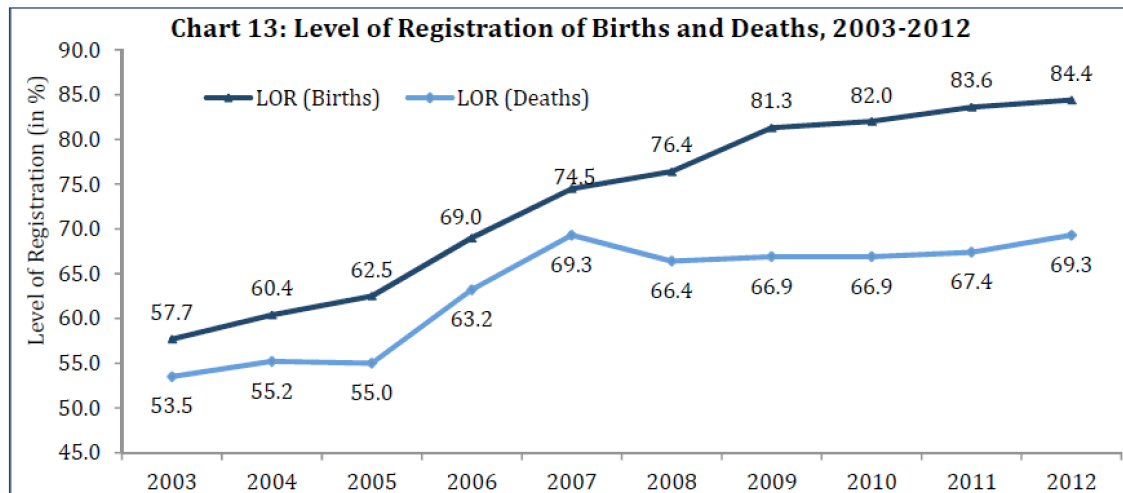
<sup>72</sup> The enrolment numbers of Aadhaar are looked upon with much admiration (from 2009 916 million), but when all Indians have been enrolled in the Aadhaar system the annual new enrolments of Aadhaar and the number of births registered will be about the same: approximately 20 million annually.



carry-over to the next year are equal).

For sub-country (state, regional, provincial, etc.) registration rates another complication arises. Civil registration systems can be based either on registration of vital events in the place of occurrence (most common and internationally recommended), or on registration of vital events in the place of residence of the person to whom the vital event occurs (e.g. the place of residence of the “pater familias” in Sudan). The aggregation of sub-country registration data in order to generate national statistics can contain errors of double counting or omission of vital events that can be difficult to trace and avoid or correct. The UNSD rule is that civil registration should be in the place of occurrence, but the data should be presented by place of usual residence (which UNSD further defines). For even the most advanced countries that implies a painstaking process, which it certainly was before civil registration became digital and electronic communication over the Internet was possible.

Figure 11



Source: Office of Civil Registrar General. Vital statistics of India based on the civil registration system 2012. New Delhi (2015), p. 32.

**The measurement of “primary source” birth registration rates generated from the civil registration system—while perhaps commonly seen as straightforward—is far from that and, rather, riddled with complications. International standards and clear and practical guidance for how such official birth registration completeness levels ought to be calculated are needed, and international comparability and timeliness needs to be enhanced. One way of reducing inter-country variation would be to establish a worldwide cut-off date adding one year in addition to the reporting year, in line with the 60-plus-year old UNSD recommended grace period for late registration.**

It is important to realize, still, that under the most positive of circumstances reliably measured birth registration completeness only provides us with a measure whether

new annual cohorts of the world population are all included in the civil registration system. It does not mean a legal identity for all. It just means that new cohorts at the bottom of the population pyramid with a legal identity replace cohorts at the top with incomplete legal identity coverage (assuming here that birth registration equates with full recognition as a national and citizen of a country). Given the reality that registration completeness will take time to be achieved, this improvement from the bottom up will not be sufficient to achieve complete coverage of the population in the next fifteen years of the Post—2015 development period. Either delayed birth registration needs expanding to cover all in the population or another identity system needs to take care of the under-registration of people not included in the civil registration system. South Africa successfully did both: for qualification for the child support grant both the child and the caregiver were required to have their birth registered, and adult caregivers were issued the national ID as well.

The possession of proof of registration (the birth certificate) has largely been ignored here. However, in developing countries free issuance of the first birth certificate and easy access to extra extracts or replacement of certificates is essential, since the birth certificate is an internationally recognized standard breeder document for other identity documents.

### ***Civil identification: National ID coverage as a primary source statistic***

In principle the methodology for the generation of statistics for the coverage of national ID systems would not be very different from the methodology used for calculating educational participation, labor force participation or voter registration coverage. However, the dual record linkage of the Australian child records example discussed above has illustrated how only a sophisticated methodology for verification can produce accuracy. Unlike the availability of children's birth records and birth registration records held in Australia by two authorities, there is no such twin of authorities keeping records of people who should be enrolled in an ID program.<sup>73</sup> *The only primary source for data on people who turn to the age of eligibility for the national ID is, in fact, the civil registration system.*<sup>74</sup> Thus, in the absence of a functioning civil registration system, there is a rather undetermined denominator. This is known as the "denominator problem" that could only be overcome by using estimates of the population by age class

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<sup>73</sup> Similarly "continuous voter registration" (continuous update of the electoral roll through the use of civil registration updates) is a rarity in developing countries, especially in Africa. In stead each election requires a new "census", an active search for eligible voters. Interestingly, Pakistan used a voter registration campaign to de-list deceased people from the NADRA ID database. Cf. Malik, Tariq. Technology in the service of development. The NADRA story. Center for Global Development. Washington (2014)

<sup>74</sup> There are countries, such as Uruguay, that issue their national ID at the same time as the birth certificate. These countries are still an exception to the rule. An increasing number of countries issues national identity numbers at birth. Currently biometrics used for national IDs only becomes stable from the age of five of children, which is the cut-off age in India for Aadhaar (the child is associated with the parent(s) of whom the biometrics are taken; a child's biometrics are taken again every five years until adulthood.

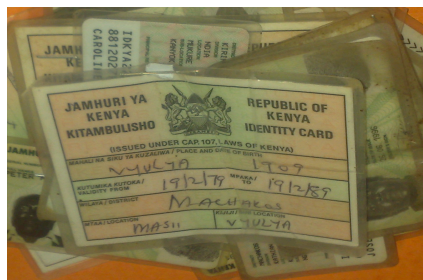
(e.g. those produced by United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division).<sup>75</sup>

A common problem with the numerator—the number of people having a national ID—taken from the ID database is what is known to occur in voter registration systems: the presence of “ghosts” in the system—decedents or emigrants that should have been removed from the system.<sup>76</sup> A national ID database will in the same way not very likely be purged from national ID holders who pass away or emigrate, unless a link would be possible with a well-functioning civil registration and border control system. Figure 12 shows what Kenya does to revoke national IDs from deceased persons. Sanctions for not reporting death to a national ID organisation will usually not be very effective in most developing countries. The Unique Identification Authority of India publishes up-to-date statistics on the number of enrolments; by the end of September 2015 the total was 916,661,819 (about 70% of the Indian population estimate for mid 2014). However, none of the people who were enrolled but were deceased by end of September 2015 were delisted from the database. For that reason the enrolments in Aadhaar could not be used as the numerator of a legal identity indicator (another reason is that Aadhaar is a resident database, i.e. it includes non-citizens).

The data in the national ID database will thus very likely overestimate the number of “legitimate” national ID holders (numerator), while the denominator can only be a rough estimate as well. There may also be an element of a conflict of interest: the authority responsible for the national ID may be biased towards reporting higher coverage than actual. And in some countries the denominator, the size of the population (or of a population group), may be considered sensitive information too, or there may be sensitivity for the use of estimates produced by an international organisation like the UN or the World Bank.

### Figure 12

In Kenya national IDs of a decedent is revoked before a death certificate is issued (which is required for a burial permit). Photo taken in the Machakos civil registration office)



<sup>75</sup> United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2013). World Population Prospects: The 2012 Revision, DVD Edition.

<sup>76</sup> The Mayor of Kampala, Uganda, was in the news showing two national IDs he had been able to obtain (cf. <http://globalvoicesonline.org/2015/05/07/ugandan-mayors-two-national-id-cards-doesnt-bode-well-for-national-elections/>). The author was told in Yemen by staff working at the national ID authority that many people owned more than one national ID. “De-duplicating” may not always be done, or be reliable.

An alternative way of measuring national ID coverage would be to use a household survey and include questions on national ID and birth certificate possession, i.e. the use of *secondary source* data. It does not seem realistic to assume that a dedicated survey to measure national ID coverage would be feasible. Finding “a home” in regular household surveys for a national ID question seems to be the most practicable way forward, but a “custodian” (such as UNICEF and USAID/ICF International<sup>77</sup> are for the birth registration data) is required too.

There is not yet a comparable body of experience, international guidelines, and research for national ID systems as has developed for civil registration. For example, statisticians have developed methods to assess the quality of registration completeness estimates (as mentioned before). For national IDs this is still very much an underdeveloped area. For the time being the expectation of governments and identification authorities appears to be that through the use of “sticks and carrots” all eligible for or mandated to have a national ID can be forced and/or persuaded to obtain the national ID.

The “African Group” of countries has rated this indicator “Tier 2”, i.e. a “methodology has been established but for which data are not easily available.” That a methodology would be available for measuring national ID coverage seems an error on the part of the statisticians, and certainly there is no statistical track record of the sort. The national ID indicator requires much work; there is no track record of measurement, and there is not yet a developed, generally accepted methodology. A further complication is that countries do not have uniform age standards for the possession of national IDs, which will make inter-country comparison and aggregation of data problematic. The African Group’s proposed national ID coverage for the adult population also raises questions about whether there is international consensus about the age of adulthood or majority; in fact, of course, the age of majority is a legally fixed age, concept, or statutory principle, which may differ depending on the jurisdiction. In the meantime there is a substantial number of countries that have, or will have, a national ID system which covers more people than civil registration or other systems do. See, for example, the data for Kenya in Table 3 below. There are, another example, countries that hardly have civil registration system coverage (Somalia, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Uganda, but also large population countries such as Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of Congo) that are phasing in national ID systems. Irrespective whether this is sound policy or not, capturing the coverage of the population with a national ID is of crucial importance. World Bank analysis<sup>78</sup> has shown that women experience more hurdles to obtain national IDs than men (while birth registration and birth certificate possession is gender-

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<sup>77</sup> Macro International is the predecessor organisation of ICF International.

<sup>78</sup> Cf. Dahan, Mariana and Lucia Hanmer. The identification for development (ID4D) agenda. Its potential for empowering women and girls. Washington (2015). Cf. also Buvinic, Mayra, Rebecca Furst-Nichols and Gayatri Koolwal. Mapping gender data gaps. Data2X. New York (2014). CRC4D has found this to be the case in Yemen, while this is also mentioned for Pakistan, cf. Malik, Tariq. Technology in the service of development. The NADRA story. Center for Global Development. Washington (2014)

neutral). Such inequity will likely also pertain to other segments of the population such as the poor, the less-educated etc. Inequity is likely more pronounced for national ID issuance, and hence it is of special importance that legal identity is not just measured through birth registration only.

Time to get to grips with the measurement of national ID coverage is of the essence, if only because there is no baseline as yet. Putting a group together to “fast-track” the definition and operationalization of a national ID coverage measure seems the logical thing to do, perhaps under World Bank aegis.<sup>79</sup>

**At best an indicator for national ID coverage would be of an experimental nature initially; accuracy may prove hard to achieve at first. The household survey variant seems to promise the best results possible, with the advantages of international comparability and probably also providing the best possible degree of objectivity.**

## ***Census***

For the measurement of birth registration- and national ID coverage it would be possible to generate numbers from a population census. However, because censuses generally are held only once every ten years, they are not suitable for the measurement required for the Post—2015 development period. They do, however, have the potential to be used for the quality assessment of legal identity coverage statistics that are collected on an ongoing basis. UNSD handbooks for civil registration and vital statistics describe how census data can be used for validation.

## ***Conflation of birth registration and national ID indicators***

When using two indicators in parallel, birth registration for the under—5 and national ID coverage for the adult population, there is no overlap (“incongruent conflation”). However, national ID coverage is just an approximate measure of legal identity for the adult population: persons whose births have been registered but are not included in the national ID system do have a legal identity as per the Asian Development Bank definition (or as per the African Group’s position), for example. National ID coverage is then underestimating the coverage of the adult population with a legal identity.

An interesting example is obtained from a recent survey conducted in Kenya commissioned by Open Society Justice Initiative. The survey was done in the largest

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<sup>79</sup> We note here that The World Bank has issued a report on surveys, see United Nations. Economic and Social Council. Report of the World Bank on improving household surveys in the Post-2015 development era. Issues and recommendations for a shared agenda. New York (2014). See also: UNICEF. Monitoring the situation of children and women for 20 years. The Multi-Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS) 1995-2015. New York (2015), p. 63 where a Collaborative Group is announced with USAID and The World Bank (for its Living Standards Measurement Study).

slum of Nairobi, Kibera, and includes 636 “Nubians” and 556 “non-Nubians”. See Table 3 below.<sup>80</sup> Assuming that both birth certificate and national ID are genuine and sufficient as evidence of a legal identity as Kenyan citizen, the survey shows that only 6 percent of the adult respondents does not have evidence of legal identity. Only 13 per cent has no ID. We use the qualification “only” for a reason. The primary source data on birth registration coverage provided by the Government of Kenya for 2014 put the birth registration completeness level at 58.4%.<sup>81</sup> The latest survey data for Kenya, for 2008–09, shows that birth registration completeness, *for the under—5*, measured then was 60%, i.e. the primary source measurement falls within the error margin of the secondary source measurement.<sup>82</sup> Also, as discussed before and illustrated by the India example, it is unclear how the primary source completeness data is calculated. The DHS survey data indicates that birth registration rates are hardly different for one-year age cohorts among the under—5; a phenomenon known in Kenya is a rush to delayed registration or acquisition of birth certificates required at the time students sit for their KCPE or KCSE (primary and secondary school exam certificates). The DHS survey shows a substantial difference between birth registration and possession of birth certificates: only 24% or 4 in ten registered children (38.5% in Nairobi, and 19% of children in the poorest quintile) of the under—5 has a birth certificate.

Table 3

Birth certificate and national ID coverage in Kibera, Nairobi, Kenya. Adults of 18 year and older, May 2015.			
	No Birth certificate	Birth certificate	Total
No ID	73	83	156
ID	395	636	1031
Total	468	719	1187
No ID	6%	7%	13%
ID	33%	54%	87%
Total	39%	61%	100%

Source: Oppenheim, Ben and Brenna Marea Powell. Legal Identity in the Post-2015 Framework. Lessons from Kibera, Kenya. New York/Stanford, 2015

The conclusion is that when children grow up in their years from 5 to 18 years old the coverage of birth certificate holders improves. If the Kibera data would be representative for Kenya at large, a birth certificate coverage level for the country of

<sup>80</sup> The Nubians are primarily the descendants of people from the Nuba Mountains in Sudan who arrived in Kenya in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century with the British. Their Kenyan citizenship has been the subject of controversy, and hence their access to Kenyan identity documents has been, and still is, problematic.

<sup>81</sup> Cf. [http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/CRV5/CR\\_coverage.htm](http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/CRV5/CR_coverage.htm)

<sup>82</sup> Cf. Kenya Bureau of Statistics. Demographic and Health Survey 2008-09. Nairobi 2010.

45% results.<sup>83</sup> The birth certificate coverage level for the 5 to 18 year old population would be about 33%. We saw that DHS data shows that birth *registration* completeness levels are substantially *higher* than birth certificate coverage: for country totals 60% versus 24% ONLY (2008–09). This means that among the 6% of respondents in the Kibera survey without a birth certificate and a national ID at least some will still be registered but lack proof that they are.

Birth certificates in England and Wales carry a text stating that the certificate is NOT evidence of identity. What is meant is that they are not *sufficient* evidence of identity because the person holding the certificate may not be the person whose birth was registered. An official photo or biometric ID (passport, national ID) would be needed to link the document and the person. It is important to observe that the 636 persons in the Kibera example having both a birth certificate and a national ID do have better evidence of their identity than the other people in the sample.

**It is important to note that the birth registration completeness level for the under—5 measured through MICS- or DHS surveys alone cannot be used as a proxy yardstick for legal identity coverage for the population at large.**

### ***Other primary source identity documentation***

Not all countries use birth registration or civil identification (national IDs) and when they do, not all citizens may have been registered or have a national ID. In some countries other identity systems are used, such as household registration. Other terminology may be in use. In Nigeria certificates of origin play an important role, while in other countries nationality papers may be used. In many countries voter IDs fulfill a role as the (only) identity document people have. The unparalleled penetration of mobile phones implies in many countries that SIMs have been obtained by a large segment of the population, based on the evidence of some kind of identification. It is important that these alternatives for the common birth certificate and national ID will be captured and evaluated for their role in serving to provide people with a legal identity, or serving at least as a “halfway house” towards official legal identity.

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<sup>83</sup> Calculation based on the age structure of the Kenyan population in the 2008-09 DHS survey, and the birth certificate possession rates for the age groups <2 years, 2-4 years and 18 and over (Kibera survey).

**The surprising ubiquity of breeder documents for Aadhaar<sup>84</sup>**

India's Aadhaar provides an interesting illustration of the potential of other databases than the civil register to source data for legal identity. The Unique Identification, or Aadhaar project, was started to solve the problem of not having a common identification system through which a person could prove his identity with certainty. The Strategy Overview of the UID<sup>85</sup> project, published in 2010, clearly states the objective of the project: "In India, an inability to prove identity is one of the biggest barriers preventing the poor from accessing benefits and subsidies. Public as well as private sector agencies across the country typically require proof of identity before providing individuals with services." There are two ways in which a resident can enrol oneself in Aadhaar. The first is by producing two existing valid IDs, and the second, specifically for people unable to produce such IDs, is by the 'introducer system'<sup>86</sup> through an introducer appointed by the Registrar. It now turns out that almost all the Aadhaar numbers issued till date—99.97 per cent—have been issued to people who already had at least two existing identification documents. Paradoxically, because Aadhaar still has no legal status, the breeder documents for Aadhaar used in virtually all applications may have more legal validity than the Aadhaar registration itself.

***Birth registration of the under—5 or under—1: secondary source data***

While the measurement of birth registration rates and national ID coverage through primary source government statistics as discussed before is likely rather complicated and yielding inaccurate results, and statistics may become available only after a long time lag, the measurement of birth registration through surveys is neither without its own problems.

Since 1999 MICS- and DHS household surveys have included a question on birth registration, starting with 61 countries and increasing to over one hundred countries in 2012. These household surveys are sample surveys, and their sample size is set to generate reliable estimates for most of the important variables. From their inception these surveys have had a focus on mothers and children, and especially the group of children below five years of age (i.e. 0—60 months old), for which therefore sample size has been set at an appropriate level to generate reliable results for this group. The question with regards to birth registration is about a simple dichotomy: having been registered or not, and having a birth certificate or not. Further disaggregation is generally given for age cohorts within the under-five age group, gender, urban/rural, educational level mother, wealth quintile and region of residence. The sample is a representative sample, i.e. outcomes can be viewed as valid for the country and population at large (the "universe"). The age of children is included in the survey. Below

<sup>84</sup> Cf. <http://thewire.in/2015/06/03/most-aadhar-cards-issued-to-those-who-already-have-ids-3108/>

<sup>85</sup> Cf. [https://uidai.gov.in/UID\\_PDF/Front\\_Page\\_Articles/Documents/Strategy\\_Overveiw-001.pdf](https://uidai.gov.in/UID_PDF/Front_Page_Articles/Documents/Strategy_Overveiw-001.pdf)

<sup>86</sup> <https://uidai.gov.in/faq.html?catid=36>



an example is shown of how the information on the children of a respondent mother is collected (MICS 2011 Ghana, see Figure 12).

Figure 12

INFANT/CHILD MORTALITY (cont'd)										CM	
CM11. JUST TO MAKE SURE THAT I HAVE THIS RIGHT, YOU HAVE HAD IN TOTAL (total number in CM10) LIVE BIRTHS DURING YOUR LIFE. IS THIS CORRECT?											
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes. Check below:											
<input type="checkbox"/> No live births → Go to ILLNESS SYMPTOMS Module											
<input type="checkbox"/> One or more live births → Continue with the BIRTH HISTORY module											
<input type="checkbox"/> No → Check responses to CM1-CM10 and make corrections as necessary before proceeding to the BIRTH HISTORY Module or ILLNESS SYMPTOMS Module											

BIRTH HISTORY										BH	
NOW I WOULD LIKE TO RECORD THE NAMES OF ALL OF YOUR BIRTHS, WHETHER STILL ALIVE OR NOT, STARTING WITH THE FIRST ONE YOU HAD. Record names of all of the births in BH1. Record twins and triplets on separate lines. If there are more than 14 births, use an additional questionnaire.											
BH Line No	BH1. WHAT NAME WAS GIVEN TO YOUR (first/next) BABY?	BH2. WERE ANY OF THESE BIRTHS TWINS?	BH3. IS (name) A BOY OR A GIRL?	BH4. IN WHAT MONTH AND YEAR WAS (name) BORN?	BH5. IS (name) STILL ALIVE?	BH6. HOW OLD WAS (name) AT HIS/HER LAST BIRTHDAY?	BH7. IS (name) LIVING WITH YOU?	BH8. Record household line number of child (from HL1)	BH9. If dead: HOW OLD WAS (name) WHEN HE/SHE DIED?	BH10. WERE THERE ANY OTHER LIVE BIRTHS BETWEEN (name of previous birth) AND (name), INCLUDING ANY CHILDREN WHO DIED AFTER BIRTH?	
		1 Single 2 Multiple	1 Boy 2 Girl	Probe: WHAT IS HIS/HER BIRTHDAY?	1 Yes 2 No	Record age in completed years.	1 Yes 2 No	Record "00" if child is not listed.	If "1 year", probe: HOW MANY MONTHS OLD WAS (name)?  Record days if less than 1 month; record months if less than 2 years; or years	1 Yes 2 No	
Line	Name	S M	B G	Month Year	Y N	Age	Y N	Line No	Unit	Number	Y N
01		1 2	1 2		1 2 BH9		1 2		Days 1 Months 2 Years 3		1 2 Add Next Birth Birth
02		1 2	1 2		1 2 BH9		1 2		Days 1 Months 2 Years 3		1 2 Add Next Birth Birth
03		1 2	1 2		1 2 BH9		1 2		Days 1 Months 2		1 2 Add Next

The question about birth registration is shown below in Figure 13. Because the information on month and year of birth of every child is collected it is possible to produce birth registration rates not just for the total of the under—5, but also for age sub-groups. The Ghana MICS survey provides registration rates for the 0—12 months old, 12—24 months old etc. See below. Ghana's overall birth registration rate for the under—5 of 62.5% is an average of the age bracket rates of 45.3% for the under—1 year olds and registration rates varying between 65.5% and 68.2% for children in the older age brackets. I.e., there is a noticeable element of delayed registration in Ghana, when children are older than one year. Almost one-third of newborns registered before their fifth birthday appears to be registered *after* their first birthday.<sup>87</sup> Cf. Table 4.

<sup>87</sup> "Appears" because one cannot be sure. The lower birth registration rate for the under—1 as compared to the 1-5 year old children could also be the result of a decline in registration rate in the last year preceding the survey, while registration rates were higher in the period of one to five years preceding the survey. This could, for example, be the result of a project coming to end that aimed to register under—5 children. Separating out the late and delayed registration is only possible when surveys are held with intervals less than five years long so that they overlap for cohorts within the 0—5 year old age groups, or when (as suggested in this paper) data on late and delayed registration is collected through these surveys.

This example of Ghana thus shows that MICS can produce under—5 registration rates but also registration rates for the under—1. The accuracy of the rates for the under—5 will undoubtedly be greater, and the inaccuracy margin will be narrower, than applies to the age cohort of 0—12 months, but as this case shows the number of children in that cohort in the sample is larger than 1,500. For opinion poll metrics a sample size of 1,000 is sufficient in most cases. For a qualitative variable for the dichotomy—“registered” or “not registered”—which is the key indicator, this ensures acceptable accuracy.

Figure 13

BIRTH REGISTRATION		BR	
BR1. DOES (NAME) HAVE A BIRTH CERTIFICATE?  If yes, ask: MAY I SEE IT?	Yes, seen	1	10BR2A
	Yes, not seen	2	20BR2A
	No	3	
	DK	8	
BR2 HAS (NAME)'S BIRTH BEEN REGISTERED WITH THE BIRTHS AND DEATHS REGISTRY?	Yes	1	
	No	2	20BR2B
	DK	8	80BR2B
BR2A. WAS (NAME)'S BIRTH REGISTERED WITHIN THE FIRST YEAR OF BIRTH?	Yes	1	10BR4
	No	2	20BR4
	DK	8	80BR4
BR2B. WHAT IS THE MAIN REASON WHY (NAME)'S BIRTH IS NOT REGISTERED?	Costs too much	1	
	Must travel too far	2	
	Did not know it should be registered	3	
	Did not want to pay fine	4	
	Did not find important	5	
	Do not know where to register	6	60BR4
	Other (specify)	7	
	DK	8	
BR3. DO YOU KNOW WHERE TO REGISTER YOUR CHILD'S BIRTH?	Yes	1	
	No	2	
BR4. HOW MUCH DOES IT COST TO REGISTER A CHILD WITH THE BIRTHS AND DEATHS REGISTRY IF THE CHILD IS UNDER 1 YEAR OLD?	Free	1	
	Less than GH¢10	2	
	GH¢10	3	
	More than GH¢10	4	
	DK	8	

Table 4

Table CP.1: Birth registration							
Percentage of children under age 5 by whether birth is registered and percentage of children not registered whose mothers/caretakers know how to register birth, Ghana, 2011							
Background Characteristics	Children under age 5 whose birth is registered with civil authorities				Number of children	Children under age 5 whose birth is not registered	
	Has birth certificate		No birth certificate	Total registered [1]		Percent of children whose mother/ caretaker knows how to register birth	Number of children without birth registration
	Seen	Not seen					
Age							
0-11	22.4	15.6	7.3	45.3	1543	69.8	843
12-23	39.4	24.1	4.1	67.5	1453	58.9	472
24-35	33.6	30.2	4.4	68.2	1553	66.9	493
36-47	32.1	30.2	3.9	66.3	1576	59.0	532
48-59	31.0	29.5	5.0	65.5	1426	56.9	492

An extremely important purpose of the MICS- and DHS surveys is the measurement of the mortality of children. The data generated are the neo-natal mortality (0–28 days from birth), the post-neo-natal mortality (29<sup>th</sup> day to one year), the infant mortality rate (0–1 year), the child mortality rate (from 1 year to 5 years of age) and the under-five mortality rate. It goes without saying that the design of the survey example is geared towards rendering satisfactory accuracy and reliability of these mortality estimates. Hence, what makes for reliable mortality estimates certainly ensures sufficiently reliable birth registration estimates. *What is also important about these mortality rates is that they measure how many children out of a 100 will die before they are 28 days old, one year old etc.* This uses the same methodology as used in the Australian quality assessment study for birth registration completeness. Moreover, the surveys not only generate these mortality rates for the children born in the five years before the survey, but also for the children born 5–9 years before the survey, and those born 10–14 years before the survey. Hence the development over time of all five mortality rates measures is shown as well. The disaggregation of under-five mortality in four other measures is similar to disaggregating birth registration in current registration, late registration and delayed registration. For mortality rates the birth history of mothers is queried, up to births 15 years before the survey. For birth registration the collected data is only for children born up to five years before the survey. That they are disaggregated in most surveys in five age groups implies that the link is made with the age of the children surveyed for birth registration. If not only the possession of birth certificates

would be queried, but also the birth date of the child and the date of registration, a more meaningful indicator for birth registration completeness could be generated. Below the sample size for children under-five is shown for the twelve most recent MICS- and 12 most recent DHS surveys. Table 5 shows that even at a sample size of 2,700 (Swaziland) and 3,500 (Guyana) the MICS survey generated all five mortality metrics. Note that the MICS- and DHS base data can be queried when no birth registration results were produced for the 0–12 months age group.

Measuring birth registration rates for the 0–12 months old generates a yardstick for registration that, as World Bank, PBSO and SPC have said, coincides with the grace period that is internationally recommended. The said advantage of using this indicator is that it would provide a compromise between what normally would be produced as primary source annual birth registration statistics and what will, for many countries and for years to come, be the only reliable statistic they would have, or the only benchmark they would have to compare their primary source statistics with. It would reduce the tension (cf. examples Zimbabwe, India) that survey data can cause. Survey data and civil registration generated data would not differ too much. The UN recommended grace period covers one year from birth. Even if a country would not have a grace period it would be generally advisable the country would introduce one.

However, it is important to explain that the under—1 secondary source survey registration rate is **not** generating the same rate as primary source birth registration completeness measured by inclusion of late and delayed registration within a one-year cut-off date, i.e. within the grace period. The under—1 registration rate as measured in MICS or DHS is the rate of births of children still alive when the survey is done that were registered in the year preceding the survey date as proportion of the children born within the year preceding the survey date. The under—1 registration rate does not include the registration of births that occurred in the year preceding the survey date but will be registered after the survey date, including those births that happened just before the survey date and will still be registered *within the legal timeframe* or *within the grace period* after the survey date. The MICS- and DHS under—1 survey birth registration rate is, rather, equivalent to the rate as mentioned in the Australian study, i.e. the birth registration rate for births registered during the calendar year (83% of births), with the only difference that “calendar year” is the “year preceding the survey date” in MICS and DHS. The under—1 MICS- or DHS birth registration rate thus underestimates registration completeness, in comparison to the primary source birth registration rate, for this reason. MICS- or DHS- registration rates for the under—1 also do not include the registration, or non-registration, of children who pass away in the year before the survey.

Table 5

Type of survey	Year	5 mortality numbers	Number of U-5 children in sample
MICS Surveys			
Benin	2014	✓	12,300
Cuba	2014	✗	5,700
Dominican Republic	2014	✓	20,000
El Salvador	2014	✓	7,700
Guinea Bissau	2014	✓	7,500
Guyana	2014	✓	3,500
Kyrgystan	2014	✓	4,600
Nepal	2014	✓	5,600
Serbia	2014	✗	2,800
Palestina	2014	✓	7,900
Sudan	2014	✓	14,800
Swaziland	2014	✓	2,700
DHS Surveys			
Egypt	2014	✓	14,900
Senegal	2014	✓	6,800
Zambia	2013/14	✓	13,700
Togo 1)	2013/14	✓	6,100
Dominican Republic	2013	✓	No Under-5
DR Congo	2013/14	✓	19,000
Gambia	2013	✓	8,800
Namibia 2)	2013	✓	5,700
Liberia	2013	✓	7,300
Philippines	2013	✓	6,800
Sierra Leone	2013	✓	12,300
Nigeria	2013	✓	9,300
1) For the Gambia survey the legal timeframe (45 days) was used to find the current registration rate, versus late registration.			
2) In Namibia a hospital card was classified as "registration with the civil authority", which it isn't.			

Here is an example that may clarify the difference between an under—1 and under—5 birth registration rate, cf. Table 6:

Table 6

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Number of births	100				
Number registered	72	15	3	1	1
Current registration	60	2			
Late registration	12	12			
Delayed registration		1	3	1	1

Secondary source measurement: The under—1 registration rate in year 1 (captured by survey method) will measure the birth registration rate as 72%, of which 60 percent point is current registration during year 1, and 12 percent point is late registration during year 1. Assuming that the grace period is one year no delayed registration could be captured by this method. MICS or DHS will not tell us the breakdown between current and late registration.

Primary source measurement: In an ongoing, stationary situation (meaning that subsequent age cohorts would be equally large and be registered with the same time delays)<sup>88</sup> the breakdown of birth registration as measured by the civil registration service would be as follows if the cut-off date would be by the end of year 5:

Table 7

	Year X
Number of births	<b>100</b>
Number registered	<b>92</b>
Current registration	<b>62</b>
Late registration	<b>24</b>
Delayed registration	<b>6</b>

On an ongoing basis the total birth registration rate for this cohort of the under—1 year old as measured by the civil registration authority is 92%, of which 62 percent point is current registration, 24 percent point is late registration, and 6 percent point is delayed registration. With the suggested international cut-off date at one year from the end of the reporting year the delayed registration in years 3, 4 and 5 would not be included, and the registration rate measured would be 87%. *However, the registration authority will capture and should report (though not include) during year 1 delayed registration of births that occurred prior to the reporting year.*

This example has been chosen intentionally as it is; the assumption is that in the end 8% of children will remain unregistered—after five years have passed.

*For the cohort of children of 48—60 months old all registration will have taken place by the time of the survey. Their registration rate will be 92%. Hence, in fact the registration rate for this cohort of 48—60 months old children (92%) may be more similar to what the registration authority measures (87%) than the registration rate for the under-one year old cohort (72%). Also, the average under—5 rate is 86.4% in this example, i.e. almost the same as the proposed primary source registration rate.<sup>89</sup> I.e., the choice of*

<sup>88</sup> This is less theoretical than it may seem. Birth rates are declining across the developing world and absolute numbers of births change little year-on-year in many countries.

<sup>89</sup> That the under-five secondary source (=survey) birth registration rate for the under—five is equal to the proposed primary source birth registration rate is a coincidental result. Note also that we assume that the denominators for both measures are the same, i.e. that the number of births associated with the number of children 0—1 years old in

*the under—1 MICS- or DHS-birth registration rate is NOT giving a result that is closer to the primary source measurement than the under—5 MICS- or DHS-birth registration rate; the opposite is the case.*

Note that the most recent DHS survey for Togo introduced, for the first time, a measurement of current birth registration (within the legal timeframe of 45 days). This is an important step in the right direction. Also note that the Côte d'Ivoire example discussed below—in which birth registration rates were also rendered for the 5—18 year old—shows that there delayed registration continues across children and youth in this higher age group until the age of majority is reached.

**The issue with regards to the secondary source, survey birth registration rate thus is not whether to choose the rate for the under—1 or the under—5. Rather, the sophistication of birth registration rates generated by the MICS- and DHS surveys should be stepped up for this post—2015 measurement of target 16.9 by introducing a new measure, the methodology for which is already applied to the measurement of mortality metrics (see page 43).**

In the meantime there is no reason for UNICEF to discontinue collecting birth registration data for the under—5, provided that the suggested sophistication would be introduced so that the survey data can provide measures that show current, late and delayed registration rates, which would be obtained by linking age and date of registration. In the discussion of the Kenya data above we saw that birth registration and birth certificate issuance does not stop after children reach their 5<sup>th</sup> birthday. In fact, UNICEF and USAID/ICF International may contemplate whether they would expand to include children and youth from 5 to 18 years old. This is what was done in Côte d'Ivoire in a mixed DHS-MICS survey for 2011/12 and produced extremely interesting results, cf. Table 8 below. While in this case only registration rates for the 0—24 months and the 24—60 months children were produced, they could just as well have been produced for the five cohorts under five. Sample size for Côte d'Ivoire (a country with 20.5 million inhabitants) is about as large as for Ghana, the example of which was discussed above (Ghana is a country with 26 million inhabitants).

**Most revealing is that the birth registration rates of older age groups (5—9, 10—14, 15—17) show that by the time children turn adult in Côte d'Ivoire almost all have been registered. The proportion without birth certificate drops very significantly as well. It should be kept in mind though that birth registration levels were relatively high (about 70%) for the under—5 in 2000; these are the cohort of 10—14 year old in 2011/12.**

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the sample and for the country (=universe) in the year before the survey date equates with the number of births used by the registration authority.

**Table 8**

**Tableau 19.1.1 Enregistrement des naissances d'enfants de moins de 18 ans à l'état civil**

Pourcentage d'enfants de moins de 18 ans (de droit) dont la naissance a été enregistrée à l'état civil selon certaines caractéristiques sociodémographiques, Côte d'Ivoire 2011-2012

Caractéristique sociodémographique	Enfants dont la naissance a été enregistrée			Effectif d'enfants
	Pourcentage ayant un acte de naissance	Pourcentage n'ayant pas d'acte de naissance	Pourcentage enregistré	
<b>Groupe d'âges</b>				
0-4	45,5	19,5	65,0	7 772
5-9	62,4	14,0	76,4	7 317
10-14	76,4	8,6	85,1	6 334
15-17	81,5	5,2	86,7	2 555
<b>Milieu de résidence</b>				
Urbain	83,9	6,0	89,9	9 913
Rural	47,7	18,6	66,3	14 066
<b>Région</b>				
Centre	55,6	11,5	67,1	1 836
Centre-Est	70,7	7,3	78,0	584
Centre-Nord	69,5	15,3	84,8	2 001
Centre-Ouest	60,0	14,0	74,0	3 965
Nord	46,7	20,5	67,2	1 344
Nord-Est	63,5	20,1	83,6	1 108
Nord-Ouest	46,8	22,2	69,0	1 221
Ouest	43,3	22,6	65,8	2 842
Sud	76,1	8,3	84,3	3 427
Sud-Ouest	43,6	10,7	54,3	1 994
Ville d'Abidjan	87,9	5,2	93,1	3 656
<b>Quintile de bien-être économique</b>				
Le plus pauvre	35,9	20,9	56,8	4 972
Pauvre	54,9	17,2	72,1	4 976
Moyen	60,1	14,9	75,0	5 027
Riche	77,1	8,5	85,6	4 679
Le plus riche	89,7	3,9	93,7	4 326
<b>Ensemble</b>	<b>62,7</b>	<b>13,4</b>	<b>76,1</b>	<b>23 979</b>

While Côte d'Ivoire might be a special case (there has been substantial international aid and pressure, especially because of the Ouagadougou agreement, to address the lack of documentation of Ivoirians), this still makes one curious how important delayed registration is in other countries.<sup>90</sup> The Kenya (Kibera) case showed the same. The example of India (text box, page 39) showed how widespread possession of identity documents accepted as breeder documents for Aadhaar is. Yet another example is provided by Pakistan. Its under-5 birth registration rate has not been measured since 2006-07 and was then 27%.<sup>91</sup> While this meant 17 million unregistered children under-5, the estimate for the under-18 was reported by a deputy-representative of UNICEF as

<sup>90</sup> Cf. Civil Registration Centre for Development. A post-conflict civil registration strategy for Côte d'Ivoire. Abidjan/The Hague (2012).

<sup>91</sup> Cf. UNICEF. Every Child's Birth Right. Inequities and Trends in Birth Registration. New York (2013.)



60 million.<sup>92</sup> However, NADRA appears to have covered 98% of the adult population with its national ID program.<sup>93</sup>

CRC4D assignments in other countries have shown that delayed registration can reduce under-registration after the age of five years, as is the case in Kenya.

In **Guinea**<sup>94</sup> in 2013, a small sample (n=84) taken in Kindia municipality showed that for every seven current registrations one delayed registration takes place (after 6 or 8 months). But children and youth among these delayed registrants make up only 21%. The under-five registration rate in Guinea in 2012 was 58%. I.e., in Guinea the registration rate at 18 years old would likely only be a few percent higher than the average for the under—5. Coverage of the national ID (from 15 years of age) is estimated at just 20%. In 1999 a birth registration rate for the under—5 of 67% was measured in Guinea; this group has now reached ID-age, but Guinea's ID-system is all but functioning; for the past three years a new ID has been said to be introduced shortly.<sup>95</sup> Birth certificates, and voter IDs for adults, are more important as identity document than the national ID in Guinea, still.

In a small sample (n=100) taken in Sana'a, the capital city of **Yemen**<sup>96</sup>, in 2013, just 26% of registered births was for children under 1, while 74% was delayed. The ratio of registration of the under—five versus the five and older was 60—40. The overall birth registration rate for the under-five in Yemen was 31% in 2013, while in Sana'a the rate was only half that (16%).<sup>97</sup> The Sana'a sample indicates that—strikingly similar as in Kenya—birth registration may be linked to school entry or school exams; 35% of registrations in the sample belonged to the 5—19 age group, and 5% to the 20 years and above group. While this would lift the registration coverage at the age of 18 to 52%, the average for the 0—18 year old would be well below 50%. The national ID, which is compulsory by age 16, is also often obtained later than at the mandatory age. Only by the age of 30 some 70% of Yemeni applicants have the national ID, but overall coverage is below 30% (there are about 3 million ID holders). One of the reasons for this low coverage in Yemen is that often men do not allow their spouse to have an ID. Table 8 below shows data for 2012 from the Civil Registration Authority of Yemen. The table shows a clear gender-inequity, especially in the issuance and renewal of national IDs, but also to some extent in birth registration. Similarly, in Egypt, in 2012 a campaign was

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<sup>92</sup> Cf. <http://www.dawn.com/2011/11/20/a-childs-first-right.html>.

<sup>93</sup> Cf. Malik, Tariq. Technology in the service of development. The NADRA story. Center for Global Development. Washington (2014).

<sup>94</sup> Cf. Civil Registration Centre for Development. Towards universal birth registration in Guinea. Conakry/The Hague (2013).

<sup>95</sup> Cf. <http://www.secureidnews.com/news-item/trub-to-provide-guinea-with-new-polycarbonate-id-cards/>

<sup>96</sup> Cf. Civil Registration Centre for Development. Towards universal birth registration in Yemen. Sana'a/The Hague (2013).

<sup>97</sup> Cf. Republic of Yemen. National health and demographic survey 2013. Sana'a (2015). The urban registration rate of 48% for Yemen will be largely due to the registration completeness in Aden (72%). Civil registration has traditionally been better in the south of Yemen than in the north of the country.

started to target an estimated 4 million women without national ID.<sup>98</sup>

Table 9  
Male-female inequity in ID Issuance and civil registration, Yemen, 2012

Summary CRA Production Sheet 2012				
<b>IDs</b>	New	ID New Male	279,846	74%
		ID New Female	99,354	26%
	Renewal	ID Renewal Male	27,606	82%
		ID Renewal Female	5,938	18%
<b>Family Cards</b>	New	Family Card New Male	51,997	98%
		Family Card New Female	1,098	2%
	Renewal	Family Card Renewal Male	2,798	78%
		Family Card Renewal Female	808	22%
<b>Births</b>	Birth Registration Male		175,127	56%
	Birth Registration Female		136,657	44%
	Replacement Birth Certificate		8,408	
	Birth Registration Non-Yemeni		2,902	
<b>Deaths</b>	Death Registration Male		26,938	79%
	Death Registration Female		7,010	21%
	Replacement Death Certificate		1,462	

Source: Civil Registration Authority Yemen

Some rather serious questions that are raised about DHS- and MICS surveys should also be mentioned. For example: how accurate is the information on the age of children when birth registration is incomplete and birth certificates are even more rare still? When birth registration rates are produced for the 0—11 months old etc., how do we actually know that they fall in this age category? Note that this would also apply to the veracity of the various mortality data derived from DHS and MICS. And another often heard criticism concerns the (lack of) clarity of the text of the birth registration question, which is phrased ambiguously with regards to by whom registration has taken place (e.g. “civil authority”, is that the village chief, the hospital?), or how diligent the verification of birth certificate possession is. Recent examples are the abridged MICS for Malawi in which church certificates and similar have been included as proof of birth registration, and the DHS for Namibia in which the same was the case with hospital records. This seriously undermines trust in these surveys. Improvements in these areas will be possible, and should ideally be effectuated in baseline surveys for the Post—2015 development period. On the other hand we have the most recent DHS survey for Togo that introduced, for the first time in any of the MICS and DHS surveys, the rates for current registration of births, i.e. those within the legal timeframe of 45 days, which is an exemplary practice.

<sup>98</sup> <http://thedailynewsegypt.com/human-a-civil-rights/campaign-aims-to-issue-national-ids-for-2-million-egyptian-women.html>

## **Governance**

Over the past decades experience has been gained with the collection and publication of data on legal identity. The custodians for this have been the United Nations Statistics Division (initially the United Nations Statistical Office) from 1947 for primary source data, while ICF International has collected secondary source data on birth registration with financial backing from USAID, and UNICEF has done so through its Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey. For DHS and MICS, ICF International and UNICEF respectively have worked in partnership with national statistical offices and ministries of government, from 1999.

In this paper the serious quality and timeliness problems of primary source data have been set out. While statisticians have not known or acknowledged them, these problems cannot be swept under the carpet. UNSD has also not recognized the importance that national IDs play in serving as evidence of people's identity in modern times and the need to broaden the scope of its work to adequately support countries with organisational advice and collecting and disseminating comparable statistics on national IDs. UNSD has only limited resources, which we believe results immediately from the fact that civil registration has been positioned as primarily a vehicle for vital statistics generation. UNSD has not been successful in tapping into the substantial resource pool countries have been willing to make available for national ID (and voter registration) systems.

In extension of this, the UN economic commissions in Asia and Africa have in a similar fashion maintained a focus on civil registration and vital statistics. The ministerial processes initiated on both continents have not only kept civil identification out of scope, but also costly processes have been set in motion that imply a duplication of the SDG Post—2015 process. Given dwindling international aid resources this may prove not sustainable, while organisationally it will prove to be too divorced from reality in the countries. The focus on civil registration and vital statistics negates the tremendously important investments that countries, often from domestic resources, already have committed to functional identification systems such as national IDs, voter registration, health cards and similar. A current example is Tanzania investing close to US\$ 400 million on national ID and biometric voter registration while international aid to the country has been suspended, and birth registration coverage was only 16% in 2010. An integrated effort of the public and private sector and the broadening to a scope that spans the gamut of civil registration, national ID-, voter registration- and other functional identity systems is needed. Only then can be achieved that national ID systems are set up with their required foundation in civil registration for operational and financial sustainability, or such a foundation is put in place with extraordinary priority (as happened successfully in South Africa). This is what we have labeled as the third way. If the current, disparate efforts continue, costly national ID systems may become dysfunctional in a short period of time. The integrity of elections may be affected in the

process, and political stability and the rule of law may come under pressure. No useable vital statistics and demographic data will result from such a development, and the most vulnerable in populations are likely to be most affected. A worst-case scenario is when national ID systems will garner the same damaged reputation as civil registration already has in the developing world; to some extent they already have. This should and can be addressed when stakeholders put the common interest above their special interest. A question is whether UNSD, and the statistical offices of the regional economic commissions, could be reasonably expected to deliver the organisational and technical support that is required going forward. This is a problem that cannot be ignored, but needs to be addressed. Coordination bureaucracies as have been created in Africa and the Asia-Pacific region are not the answer, and their industrious meeting activity should not be mistaken for accomplishment. Countries show in their ID projects that they can get by rather well. More creativity in developing new ways of nimble and highly effective, high quality, and holistic support to countries is needed.

The DHS- and MICS surveys with which secondary source data have been collected have been, by comparison to the primary source data generation, very successful. The World Bank, as we have noted before, has also provided advice with regards to the ongoing importance of surveys for the SDG measurement. However, the DHS- and MICS-surveys only cover birth registration for under-5 children, which is not sufficient as an indicator for a legal identity for all.<sup>99</sup> We believe that this is a crossroads moment for UNICEF and USAID. Ideally these surveys would capture birth registration coverage (current, late, delayed) of all children and youth from 0 to 18 years old, and verified possession of birth certificates. Quality improvements are possible (as discussed in this paper), and needed though. Countries have to be persuaded not to see these secondary source data as in competition with their primary source data, but rather as the creation of a “double record system” allowing one to be a check of the other. The financial sustainability and country ownership of these surveys should be creatively addressed.

The responsibility for the generation of statistics on legal identity requires a fresh rethink of its governance. A taskforce, perhaps under aegis of the UNICEF, USAID and World Bank Collaborative Group<sup>100</sup>, could be put together to develop standards for legal identity measures and formulate possible options for a new and effective institutional solution for the measurement of legal identity.

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<sup>99</sup> This point is also made in Dunning, Casey, Alan Gelb and Sneha Raghaven. Birth registration, legal identity and the Post-2015 Agenda. Washington (2014). The same source emphasizes the importance of monitoring progress, but does not address the current deficiency in primary source data (which it ignored) or the governance of data collection and dissemination.

<sup>100</sup> Cf. UNICEF. Monitoring the situation of children and women for 20 years. The Multi-Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS) 1995-2015. New York (2015), p. 64.

## **Conclusions**

For the indicators for SDG 16.9 four (merging the African Group and SPC) sets of proposals need to be reconciled. The IAEG has not been able to discuss these proposals in depth because of a lack of preparation for the June meeting. A new meeting has been proposed for 26—28 October 2015.

**It would seem necessary for stakeholders to 1) realize that current measures do NOT have the required coverage, quality and timeliness, 2) that more and urgent work is needed to define more precisely defined measures that will be applied in a uniform way internationally, and 3) that there is not as yet a “home” for effective generation of comprehensive data on legal identity.**

For primary source birth registration completeness measurement UNSD needs to give better guidance. It is proposed that, as international guideline, coverage data include late registration during an internationally agreed grace period of one year. Countries should strive to publish their registration completeness levels not later than during the second year after the year reported on. Data on delayed registration needs to be captured and reported as well.

For secondary source birth registration coverage this is a crossroads moment for UNICEF (MICS) and USAID/ICF International (DHS). Both would set a historic step by moving towards a focus (“must have”) on birth registration rates for current, late and delayed registration for children below one years of age, and (verified) birth certificate possession. Data for the under-five (“nice to have”) can as well be collected going forward, for example to know the registration rate of five year old children that will enter primary school soon after. However, measuring current and late registration rates for the under—1 (and capturing delayed registration) will better align with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, with civil registration convention and also will have the advantageous effect of nudging an alignment of UNICEF-supported (and other) birth registration program interventions towards structural civil registration reform focusing on current registration. This would align UNICEF’s position with The World Bank, SPC and PBSO positions, and, likely, with the civil registration community’s (amended) position, although these organisations need to better understand the limitations of the under—1 registration rate as it is derived currently from a secondary source such as MICS or DHS and illustrated in this paper. Better still, UNICEF and USAID/ICF International would include the birth registration rate of children and youth from 5 to 18 years of age. Countries should move towards self-reliance in conducting these surveys without concessions to quality, timeliness and international publication.

The national ID indicator requires much work; there is no track record of measurement, not yet a generally accepted methodology and there is no “custodian” such as both UNICEF and USAID/ICF International are for birth registration data collection. Finding “a home” in regular household surveys for a national ID question seems to be the most practicable way forward. Time is of the essence because there is no baseline as yet. A reliable primary source database would require that civil registration and identification are integrated, as they are in, for example, Sweden and South Africa. In those countries population registers fed by civil registers are the database for national IDs. They are the best practice examples of the “third pathway” towards a legal identity for all.

The African Group of Countries, ECA, AfDB and AUC seem to be a “house divided” still, sending mixed signals from the platforms of the “ministerial process” on the one hand (under—1), and the African SDG Expert Group platform (currently: under—5) on the other hand. This important group may want to review their stance with regards to the appropriateness of the under—5 birth registration indicator. The Asia-Pacific countries decision in their CRVS group for the under—5 birth registration indicator and primary source date-of-registration indicators is contradicting the global (IAEG) consensus and UNSD recommended good practice respectively. It is hard to see how vital statisticians and civil registrars would continue to support an under—5 birth registration metric going forward, which from a vital statistics point of view is an arbitrary group to collect the registration rate for, while it also is counter-productive for the civil registration practice to adopt measurement methodology that is not supported by UNSD (Asia-Pacific region).

The decision to announce “CRVS Decades” for the period 2015—2024 in Asia and Africa in the context of the so-called ministerial processes seems unfortunate and may need review. It will not be productive to have such processes in parallel to the SDG process that has an end date by 2030, and aims at a legal identity for all that goes well beyond civil registration alone. Duplication of efforts will likely prove not sustainable in a context in which international aid will be dwindling. Organisationally a separation of civil registration and civil identification is not sustainable going forward.

The governance of this important effort to achieve legal identity for all, and to measure progress along the way, is of eminent and imminent importance. Putting together a taskforce, perhaps under aegis of the UNICEF, USAID and World Bank Collaborative Group, to “fast track” the operationalization of a national ID coverage measure, improvement of the present primary and secondary source measures and the identification of an institutional home for comprehensive data generation and publication, seems an important and urgent step to make.

The Hague, September 2015