



APAI-CRVS
Everyone visible in Africa



**Decade for Repositioning
of Civil Registration and
Vital Statistics in Africa
2017-2026**

Building Inclusive National Identity Systems - Interlinking digital identity and legal identity.

On Tuesday, 20th February 2024, The African Centre for Statistics (ACS) at UNECA convened its 12th StatsTalk-Africa monthly webinar series that provide a space for dialogue about data, statistics, and innovative tools with data experts and users. This particular webinar was intended to demystify concepts, processes, divergences and developments in digital identity and legal identity systems.

The Director-ACS- Oliver Chinganya noted that ECA as the secretariat of the regional Africa Programme for Accelerated Improvement for Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (APAI-CRVS) aims to provide management and programmatic guidance to the African agenda of reforming and improving CRVS systems. The APAI-CRVS programme provides guidance on the institutional and operational linkages, workflows, and results management mechanisms in a more comprehensive and holistic manner, encompassing the inter-disciplinary and inter-sectoral interfaces of CRVS systems. The APAI-CRVS programme has a digitalization working group whose role to ensure digitization of civil registration as well as legal identity.

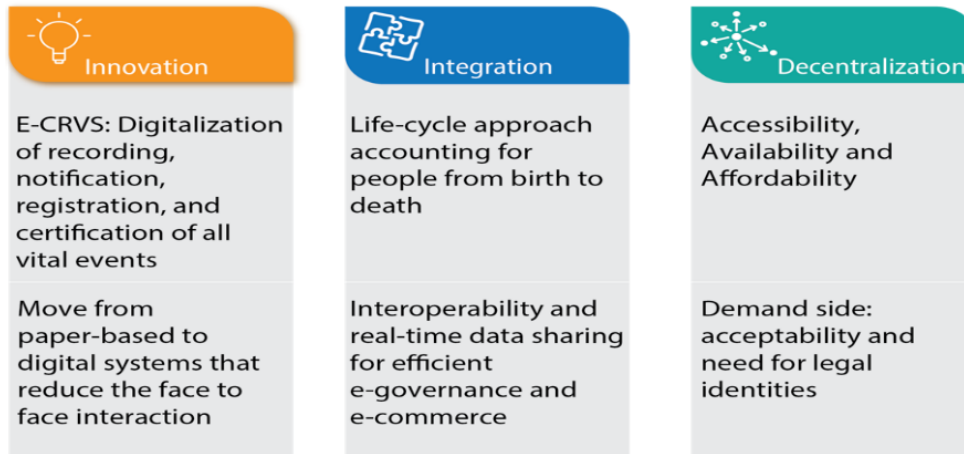
Relatedly, he also informed participants that ECA coordinates the implementation of the United Nations Legal Identity Agenda in Africa, that is aimed at establishing a mechanism for conferring legal identity to all in a continuous, universal, and inclusive manner, from birth to death. Currently, the work of the APAI-CRVS programme has been extended to include National Population Registers, which incorporate records of all residents in the

country, together with their basic demographic information, and updates for births, deaths, changes of marital status, and international migration.

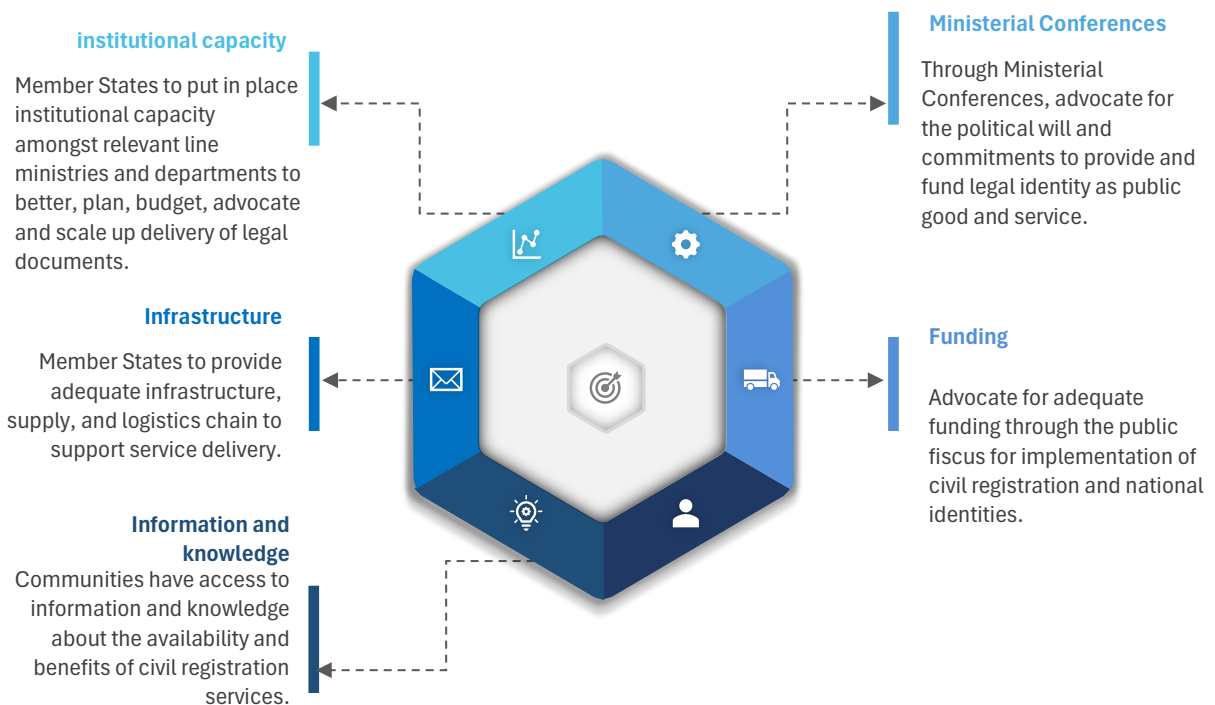
Legal Identity in Africa

The United Nations Legal Identity Agenda defines legal identity as the holistic approach to civil registration of all vital events, production of vital statistics, the establishment and maintenance of population registers and identity management apparatus from birth to death, with full interoperability between these functions in a simultaneous manner, according to international standards and recommendations and in compliance with human rights of all people concerned, including the right to privacy.

The Chief- Demographics and Social statistics, William Muhwava at UNECA stressed that there is need to develop CRVS & identity (ID) systems that are fit for purpose by moving away from systems that are rigid, slow, complex, passive, reactive and standalone to systems that flexible, agile, simplified, resilient, proactive, and interoperable. He also accentuated that the APAI-CRVS core group has developed technical resources to improve CRVS & ID Management in Africa. He emphasized that the key pillars to increase civil registration coverage are innovation through e-CRVS, integration with other services and decentralization of services.



Way forward: The APAI-CRVS programme will contribute to increasing civil registration and ID coverage through the following ways.



Digital Identity: Empowering the Future

The Chief- Technology & Innovation at UNECA, Mactar Seck articulated the definition of a digital ID as an identity verified and authenticated to a high degree of assurance over digital channels, is unique, and established with individual consent. Unlike a

paper-based ID, a digital ID can be authenticated remotely over digital channels. He pointed out that nearly 40% of the adult population (aged 15+) in low-income countries do not have an ID coupled with existence of income and gender gaps that make low-income people and women less likely to have an ID. For the estimated one billion people globally, who lack any form of legally recognized identification, digital ID represents a path to

rapid inclusion by helping to provide access to critical government and economic services that they may currently be denied.

Digital ID looks to digitize paper-based legal / civil and functional IDs by assigning a unique identifying number (UIN) to an individual (whether they are citizens, foreigners, or child) and link information across various databases. A significant part of the digital ID is removal of duplicates, which may have been caused by recycling of ID numbers over time, weak identity proofing procedures, allowance of multiple enrollments of the same person.

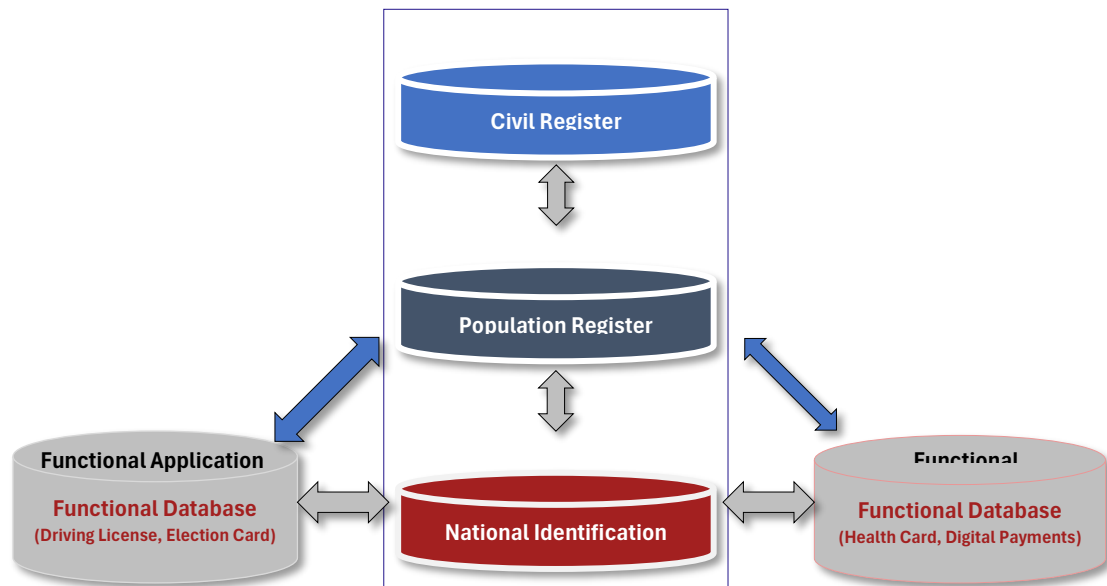
Digital ID benefits a wide range of individuals, from those who lack ID to those who have ID but cannot use it effectively in the digital world. Digital ID allows for the use of a common legally identifiable unique ID to be used commonly across applications and systems among others

enabling a linkage with birth registration and automation of CRVS benefits.

He noted the value creation in Gambia, where a digital foundational ID system will help unlock the digital economy and enable other functional registries like - CRVS - Birth Registration, Health, Education, Digital Payment, Mobile Wallet, to be subsets of the Digital ID registry. With the interoperability platform in place, the Gambian government can develop other platforms built on the digital National ID system.

He noted that civil registration is the centre of an ID ecosystem or vice versa with involvement of multiple stakeholders. There are substantial benefits through integration of civil registration and ID programs because update of the ID register leverages on births and deaths registered in civil registration system.

Diagrammatic illustration of CRVS and Digital ID Linkage



Challenges in Implementing Digital IDs in Africa include:



Limited **infrastructure**











Low digital **literacy**



Lack of **trust** in government institutions

Critical Success Factors for creation of digital IDs in Africa include:

Mactar Seck pointed out factors that members states need to put in place and how ECA can support the process as shown below:

| Member States | ECA |
|---|--|
|  Need strong political will in place with government commitment and resource allocation. | Can embark on public policy launches with politicians at regional and country level. |
|  Create public awareness through advocacy and education campaigns about digital ID benefits | To carry out advocacy in African countries, initially targeting 'non-e-Ready' countries followed by 'e-Ready' countries later. |
|  Strengthen legal & regulatory frameworks through establishment of clear guidelines to protect citizens' privacy & personal data. | Can engage with National Planning Commissions and parliaments. |
|  Strengthen stakeholder engagements through collaboration with civil society, private sector, and marginalized communities. | Tailor approaches to each country's context. |
|  Ensure interoperable systems through scalability and compatibility with various sectors such as Education, Agriculture, Health, Trade, immigration, company registration, ... etc. | To convince governments to invest in interoperable digital infrastructures. |
|  Ensure inclusivity of all citizens regardless of socioeconomic status, gender, or ethnicity by ensuring no exclusion of marginalized groups, increase accessibility eg. via mobile phones and increasing access to educational platforms. | Advocate for no exclusion of marginalized groups and leave no one behind. |
|  Ensure capacity building for inclusion of traditional / local government structures. | To lead persuasion of African governments to invest in stakeholder training programs on implementing digital ID systems. |
|  Strengthen partnership through leveraging on the private sector, development community, traditional systems, and philanthropic individuals. | Should be aimed at enabling local expertise, technology, and resources from within African Member States. |

Mactar Seck then concluded that ECA is poised to lead with strategic initiatives and partnerships given that interoperable data and trust frameworks are key for building inclusive, transparent, and responsive E-government systems. Collaboration and commitment between governments, international organizations, and the private sector is essential for successful implementation of Digital ID Frameworks. In moving forward, it is crucial to consider the local context, ensuring that digital ID systems are tailored to the unique needs and challenges of specific regions within Africa. More emphasis on inclusivity, accessibility, and ongoing capacity building will contribute to the sustained success of digital ID initiatives. The successful implementation of digital ID systems requires a comprehensive and collaborative approach, considering the specific needs and challenges of each African country. Regular assessments and adjustments based on feedback and changing circumstances will contribute to the long-term success of the initiative.

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