



United Nations
Economic Commission for Africa

Towards improving migration statistics and good legal identity for migrants in East Africa

Case study on Uganda



Towards improving migration statistics and good legal identity for migrants in East Africa

Case study on Uganda



To order copies of *Towards improving migration statistics and good legal identity for migrants in East Africa: Case study on Uganda* by the Economic Commission for Africa, please contact:

Publications and Conference Management Section
Economic Commission for Africa
P.O. Box 3001
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
Tel: +251 11 544-9900

E-mail: eca-info@un.org
Web: www.uneca.org

© 2026 Economic Commission for Africa
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
All rights reserved

First printing: May 2026

Material in this publication may be freely quoted or reprinted. Acknowledgement is requested, together with a copy of the publication.

The designations employed in this report and the material presented in it do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the Secretariat of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.

Designed and printed in Addis Ababa by the ECA Printing and Publishing Unit. ISO 14001:2015 certified.
Printed on chlorine free paper.

Contents

Definitions	v
I. Introduction	1
A. Uganda at a glance	1
B. Objective	5
C. Methodology	5
II. Civil registration system	6
A. Legal framework.....	6
B. Institutional frameworks.....	9
C. Civil registrations in Uganda	10
D. Interconnection between foundational and functional identity systems.....	13
III. Vital statistics system.....	14
IV. Digital identification system and status of interoperability with the civil registration and vital statistics system	16
A. National identification cards	16
B. Registration and identification process for migrants and refugees.....	18
C. Registration of foreign workers.....	19
D. Labour migrants and citizens in crises abroad	20
E. Interoperability of digital identity in Uganda	20
F. Regulatory and institutional landscape for digital identification in Uganda .	21
V. Challenges and lessons learned	23
A. Complexities of civil registration and identity documentation for migrants	23
B. Implications of non-comprehensive registration of minority groups.....	25
VI. Conclusions and recommendations	28
A. Conclusions.....	28
B. Policy recommendations to improve access to legal identity for migrants and refugees	28
VII. References	32

Definitions

Legal identity is defined as the basic characteristics of an individual's identity (e.g., name, sex, and place and date of birth) conferred through registration and the issuance of a certificate by an authorized civil registration authority, following the occurrence of birth (United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2014).

Civil registration is defined as the continuous, permanent, compulsory and universal recording of the occurrence and characteristics of vital events pertaining to the population, as provided through decree or regulation in accordance with the legal requirement in each country (ibid).

Civil registration system comprises the institutional, legal and technical settings established by a Government within which civil registration is conducted in a technically sound, coordinated and standardized manner throughout a country, taking into account cultural and social circumstances particular to that country (ibid).

Vital statistics constitute statistics on vital events in the lifetime of a person, as well as relevant characteristics of the events themselves and of the person and persons concerned (ibid).

Identity management refers to the issuance of a proof of legal identity to each individual by a government-authorized entity and the maintenance of systems for managing information and documents associated with such an identity (United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2022). Conceptually, identity management comprises verification, registration, management and conservation of personal data of citizens and non-citizens on the State territory, with the goal of establishing unique legal identity credentials issued by an identity management agency that serve as a basis for the verification of identity, such as a passport or national identification card (United Nations Legal Identity Expert Group, 2019 and 2020).

Foundational identification systems, such as civil registries, national identification systems and population registers, are created to serve as authoritative sources of legal identity information for the general population and to provide proof of identity for a variety of stakeholders in the public and private sectors (World Bank, 2019).

Functional identification systems are created to manage identities for specific sectors or uses, such as taxation, voter registration, social benefits and refugee status determination (ibid).

Vital statistics system is a set of interacting or independent components forming an integrated whole. In this case, components are the legal registration and statistical reporting of, and collection, compilation and dissemination of, statistics pertaining to vital events, which include live births, adoptions, legitimations, recognitions, deaths and fatal deaths, marriages, divorces, separations and annulments (United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2014).

Interoperability refers to the ability of different parties of the framework, such as digital identification systems and the systems of relying parties, to communicate and interface effectively at technical and semantic levels (African Union, 2022).

Digital identity systems are those that use digital technology throughout the identity life cycle, including for data capture, validation, storage and transfer; credential management; and identification verification and authentication (World Bank, 2019).

The report was prepared by Ronald Nsubuga, an external consultant on legal identity in East Africa at the Economic Commission for Africa.

I. Introduction

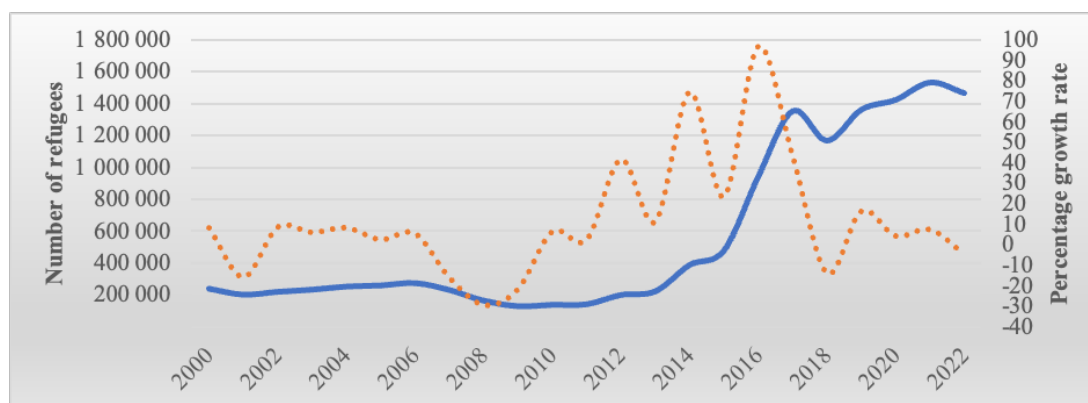
A. Uganda at a glance

Almost 1 billion people (approximately 13 per cent of the global population) do not have an official proof of identity (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, 2021). In Africa, around 500 million people are living without any form of legal identification, such as a birth certificate or national identification.

The task of establishing a legal identity for members of most minority vulnerable groups, especially migrants and refugees, can be an insurmountable challenge, as documents can easily be lost, damaged or stolen. In cases where migrants may have the necessary documents, the documents have often not been translated or have expired. Consequently, for those who have migrated irregularly, have been displaced or have fled because of an emergency, proving their identity is not only a matter of having the right documentation but also of that documentation being recognized by the relevant authority (International Organization for Migration (IOM) Development Fund, 2023).

The magnitude of the challenge escalates in the light of the fact that Africa has reported 36 million forcibly displaced persons, which represents 44 per cent of the global total (Africa Center for Strategic Studies, 2022). Uganda hosts the largest refugee population in Africa and the fourth largest in the world (European Commission, 2025). Figure I shows a 56 per cent growth in the refugee population, from 941,000 in 2016 to 1,464,000 in 2022.

Figure I: Refugee Statistics for the period 1961-2022 in Uganda



Source: Macrotrends (n.d.).

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) documented that the top three countries of origin of refugees in Uganda were South Sudan (65 per cent), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (31 per cent) and Somalia (3 per cent), with women and girls constituting 51 per cent of the refugee population in Uganda. Forced displacement is an outcome of conflict, violence and persecution, which then causes strain on surrounding communities and neighbouring countries that must absorb these sudden, unplanned population movements (Africa Center for Strategic Studies, 2022).

According to World Bank data on migrant stocks in Uganda, the large migrant outflows (see tables 1 and 3) and migrant inflows (see tables 2 and 3) show the need to include migrants in the country's legal identity frameworks. This is because, in most cases, migrants have a presence in the country as they interact with communities in their daily lives, including with regard to parenthood, marriage or their attempt to change nationality or become permanent residents, all of which require updating their civil and legal status in the country. The role of Uganda as a country of origin and destination and a strategic transit hub for irregular migrants moving within East Africa and beyond poses a vulnerability risk to migrants. In cases where migrants lack updated legal identity, including migrants without documents, they could be exposed to exploitation, discrimination, statelessness, smuggling and trafficking (Maastricht Graduate School of Governance, 2017).

Table 1: Outflow of migrants from Uganda to other African countries in 2020

Country of destination	Migrant outflow
Kenya	232 479
South Sudan	135 171
Rwanda	73 649
South Africa	5 610
Democratic Republic of the Congo	4 845
United Republic of Tanzania	3 461
Sudan	1 728
Eritrea	1 065
Burundi	846
Zambia	559
Namibia	403
Botswana	324
Lesotho	201
Ethiopia	162
Egypt	68
Eswatini	43
Seychelles	24

Source: World Bank, "Global bilateral migration", DataBank. Available at <https://databank.worldbank.org/source/global-bilateral-migration> (accessed on 29 February 2024).

Table 2: Inflow of migrants to Uganda from other African countries in 2020

Country of origin	Migrants inflows
South Sudan	914 931
Democratic Republic of the Congo	318 111
Rwanda	52 541
Sudan	50 136
Burundi	41 745
Somalia	30 368
Kenya	27 392
United Republic of Tanzania	16 351
Eritrea	11 599
Ethiopia	2 408
Côte d'Ivoire	42
Mozambique	19
Malawi	5
Zambia	4
Nigeria	2
Zimbabwe	1
Togo	1

Source: World Bank, "Global bilateral migration", DataBank. Available at <https://databank.worldbank.org/source/global-bilateral-migration> (accessed on 29 February 2024).

Table 3: International migrant flows to and from Uganda in 2020

Region	Inflow	Outflow
Africa	1 709 307	555 911
Asia	5 164	45 327
Europe	2 462	94 974
Latin America and the Caribbean	15	103
North America	1 027	80 645
Oceania	..	4 480

Source: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division. *International Migrant Stock 2020*.

Many refugees, asylum-seekers and irregular migrants find it difficult to prove their identity (Refugee Council of Australia, 2020). The lack of identity documents is a determining factor contributing to the exclusion of vulnerable and already marginalized persons, including foreigners, as it exposes them to the constant risk of crossing the boundary between legal and illegal status (Harbitz and Tamargo, 2009).

Uganda is a party to international and regional human rights legal instruments and, as such, is required to take all necessary measures to ensure the full, equal and effective enjoyment of all rights and freedoms for all, including the right to equal recognition and protection before the law. In order to do so, the authorities must ensure that everyone has a legal identity and the

means to prove their identity if necessary and to exercise their rights, for instance, through civil status documentation (UNHCR, 2010).

There are several international legal and regional frameworks that are aimed at facilitating the achievement of target 16.9 of the Sustainable Development Goals, which requires countries to provide legal identity for all, including birth registration, by 2030. The global frameworks include the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; the Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons; the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness; the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination; the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; the Convention on the Rights of the Child; the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families; the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration; and the Global Compact on Refugees.

The regional legal frameworks guiding the legal identity agenda in Africa include: the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights; the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child; the Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of the Refugee Problems in Africa; the Declaration of International Conference on the Great Lakes Region Member States on the Eradication of Statelessness; the Migration Policy Framework for Africa; the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa; and the Protocol to the Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community relating to Free Movement of Persons, Right of Residence and Right of Establishment.

Uganda has incorporated some of these regional legal frameworks into its national laws and standards, with a view to adopting a common regional approach to providing citizens, migrants and refugees with identification documents (see table 3).

Table 4: Incorporation of regional legal frameworks into the legislation of Uganda

Regional legal framework	Date of ratification	National legislation	Target groups
African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights	10 May 1986	The Human Rights (Enforcement) Act, of 2019 is focused on the enforcement of human rights within the borders of Uganda, including protections for both citizens and non-citizens residing in the country.	Citizens and minority groups (refugees, migrants and foreigners)
African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child	17 August 1994	The Children Act, of 1997, contains provisions that apply to all children within the jurisdiction of Uganda, including refugee or migrant children.	Citizens and minority groups (refugees, migrants and foreigners)
Organization of African Unity Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa	24 July 1987	The Refugees Act, of 2006, plays a crucial role in governing various aspects of refugee problems. It provides a legal framework for the protection and assistance of refugees within the borders of Uganda, in accordance with international standards and principles.	Refugees
Declaration of International Conference on the Great Lakes Region Member States on the Eradication of Statelessness	16 October 2017	The Registration of Persons Act, of 2015, contains provisions for the registration of citizens and non-citizens. The Refugees Act, of 2006, covers the registration of refugees and asylum-seekers.	Citizens and all minority groups (refugees, migrants and foreigners)

Regional legal framework	Date of ratification	National legislation	Target groups
Protocol to the Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community relating to Free Movement of Persons, Right of Residence and Right of Establishment	21 March 2018	The Uganda Citizenship and Immigration Control Act, of 1999, also contains provisions that support the free movement of persons, right of residence and right of establishment within the borders of Uganda, ensuring that both citizens and non-citizens are afforded certain rights and protections under the law.	Citizens and all minority groups (refugees, migrants and foreigners)

B. Objective

The present case study is set out in six chapters. An overview of the state of legal identity in Uganda is presented in chapter I, with a focus on the dynamics of the legal identity of foreigners identified as refugees, asylum-seekers and migrants in the identity management systems in Uganda. Chapter II contains a summary of the civil registration system, including institutional and regulatory frameworks for legal identity, while chapter III is focused on the use of the vital statistics system in Uganda.

In chapter IV, an analysis is provided of the digital identification system and status of interoperability with civil registration and vital statistics systems. In chapter V, the registration process for migrants, foreigners and other minority groups in Uganda is discussed, examining the identification registration process and the existing complexities in the registration of various groups of interest, as well as the implications for the well-being of minority groups.

To conclude, in chapter VI policy recommendations are offered to improve the registration process and make it more inclusive, as required under Sustainable Development Goal 16, which is to promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels. This comprehensive, cohesive and inclusive approach can facilitate the elimination of statelessness.

The present study is intended to gain valuable insights that will enable authorities in civil registration, identity management and national statistics offices to undertake relevant policy actions to achieve good legal identity for all and to enhance migration data in Uganda. It is against this backdrop that the case study has been developed.

C. Methodology

Both primary and secondary data were drawn on when conducting the present study. Primary data were collected through interviews with key informants knowledgeable about digital legal identity systems in Uganda. The IOM Legal Identity Toolkit was used as a guide for designing relevant interview questions.

Secondary data were collected through a desk review, which involved a review of multiple data sources available in the public domain, such as reports, journals, policy research papers and publications on the topic of the legal identity of migrants.

II. Civil registration system

The civil registration system in Uganda encompasses a registration method and the institutional, technical and legal settings associated with it. These are discussed in the following sections.

A. Legal framework

Uganda has ratified several regional and international instruments, including the Organization of African Unity Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa, which it ratified in 1987, and the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees, both of which Uganda ratified in 1976 and incorporated into its national laws on refugees, citizenship and identification (Sharpe and Namusobya, 2012).

The legal frameworks in force in Uganda that regulate the means of access to legal identity are discussed in the present section.

1. Constitution of Uganda

The Constitution of Uganda, adopted and enacted by the Constituent Assembly in 1995, sets forth the national objectives and principles of State policy. Citizenship in Uganda is defined in chapter 3 of the Constitution and is further elaborated in articles 10, 12, and 13, which deal with citizenship by birth, by registration and by naturalization, respectively. Article 18 stipulates that the State shall register every birth, marriage and death occurring in Uganda.

Under article 16 of the Constitution, the National Citizenship and Immigration Control Board was responsible for registering and issuing national identity cards to citizens and identity cards to foreigners – a function that has since been transferred to the National Identification and Registration Authority. The sixth schedule, established under article 189 of the Constitution, outlines the responsibilities of the Government, which include the administration of national identity cards, passports, refugee management, immigration, emigration, deportation and extradition, among other matters.

Notably, chapter 3, article 12, on citizenship by registration, states that persons born in Uganda by parents or grandparents with refugee status are excluded from such citizenship. Similarly, migrants born to parents or whose grandparents had diplomatic status in Uganda are also excluded. Children of migrants born in transit or in the destination country often face issues in gaining access to legal identity documentation, such as difficulties with the birth registration process or conflicts between applicable domestic laws (United Nations Legal Identity Expert Group, 2020).

2. Uganda Citizenship and Immigration Control Act

The Uganda Citizenship and Immigration Control Act, enacted by the Parliament in 1999, derives its authority from chapter 3 of the Constitution. Part III of the Act defines citizenship other than by birth (descent), while Part IV covers the registration of citizens and the issuance of national identification numbers and national identity cards.

The Act establishes procedures for the registration of migrants in Uganda. The Directorate of Citizenship and Immigration Control manages points of entry, including the issuance of visas

and entry permits. In addition, citizens of Uganda living abroad are required to register with the nearest embassy of Uganda (IOM, 2018).

Article 16 of the Uganda Citizenship and Immigration Control Act stipulates that a refugee in Uganda qualifies for citizenship by naturalization only after 20 years of stay in Uganda. The naturalization laws also present a significant gap with regard to children: if a parent has become a citizen of Uganda through naturalization, the child must also undergo the same process to acquire citizenship (Zakaryan, 2019).

Even though Uganda has a favourable refugee policy, the Refugees Act, as amended in 2015, explicitly identifies any person who is a subject or citizen of any country with which Uganda is at war as a prohibited immigrant, including children under 18 years of age and dependents.

3. Registration of Persons Act

The Registration of Persons Act was established under chapter 3 of the 1995 Constitution and enacted by the Parliament in 2015. Article 4 of the Act establishes the National Identification and Registration Authority, while article 28 assigns it the responsibility of ensuring the compulsory registration of all births. The Authority is mandated under article 62 to establish a national identification register and under article 69 to issue national identification cards with a unique identification number to all citizens of Uganda.

Articles 72 and 73 of the Act mandate the registration of foreigners in the country and establish that, upon the entering of a foreigner's information in the register, a unique identification number and identification card shall be allocated. A foreigner's identification card is *prima facie* proof of the particulars contained in it. This is in alignment with the international guidelines and frameworks concerning the provision by States of a legal identity to all persons on their territory, including: the United Nations Legal Identity Agenda; the Principles on Identification for Sustainable Development, issued by the World Bank; and the Legal Identity Toolkit, issued by IOM.

4. Refugees Act

The Constitution reaffirms the country's commitment to international humanitarian law, in particular article 189, which places refugees under the responsibility of the central Government. The Refugees Act entered into force in Uganda in 2008, and the regulations to operationalize it were finalized in 2010 (Sharpe and Namusobya, 2012).

The Act incorporates into national legislation the international conventions on refugees ratified by Uganda, namely, the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the Organization of African Unity Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa, which set minimum standards and rights for the treatment of refugees, including the provision of documentation for identity.

Under the Act, a refugee is entitled to be issued with an identity card in a prescribed form stating the refugee status of the holder, for purposes of identification and protection. In addition, the Act sets out privileges that may be granted under the laws of Uganda by any administrative agency or organ of the Government.

5. Legislation on children

According to article 7 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which was ratified by Uganda in 1990, the child shall be registered immediately after birth and shall have the right to a name and the right to acquire a nationality.

Under the Constitution, a child of 5 years of age or younger and whose parents are not known is presumed to be a citizen by birth (chap. 1, art. 11). In addition, chapter 1, article 11 states that a child is eligible for citizenship through registration if they are under 18 years of age and adopted by a citizen of Uganda.

6. Marriage regulations

Responsibility for the registration of marriages was transferred from the Uganda Registration Services Bureau to the National Identification and Registration Authority, which now conducts both the registration and issuance of marriage certificates. It is also responsible for licensing churches to celebrate marriages and solemnize civil marriages (Kamurungi, 2024a).

At present, the forms of marriages recognized in Uganda are religious marriages (Christian, Muslim and Hindu marriages), civil marriages and customary marriages. Marriage registration is mandated by the Marriage Act, of 1904, in the case of civil marriages, and by the Customary Marriage (Registration) Act, of 1973, the Marriage and Divorce of Mohammedans Act, of 1906, and the Hindu Marriage and Divorce Act, of 1961.

Notably, refugees and migrants who have intermarried with citizens of Uganda are allowed by law to apply for citizenship by naturalization after three years of a legal and subsisting marriage and payment of the requisite fees (UNHCR, 2016). There is, however, a gap in the legal framework, as there are no regulations on the registration of divorces or the issuance of divorce certificates. In instances where divorce is settled by the courts, there is no mechanism for the transmission of the divorce judgment for registration by the national registrar (Economic Commission for Africa, 2022).

7. Comprehensive refugee response framework

The comprehensive refugee response framework supports the implementation of the Global Compact on Refugees and promotes the inclusion of refugees in the third national development plan of Uganda, covering the period 2020/21–2024/25, which integrates refugees into development planning and national statistics, making their registration a matter of national importance (Uganda, Office of the Prime Minister, and others, 2023). The inclusion of refugees in the national development plan aligns with the principle of “leave no one behind”, in line with the commitment to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (Uganda, Office of the Prime Minister, 2018). The “Comprehensive refugee response framework annual report 2018” further emphasizes the importance of refugee registration data as a durable solutions tool to identify the skills of refugee populations in Uganda, with a view to actively advancing the social and economic inclusion of refugees, in line with the new and distinct durable solution outlined in the Global Compact on Refugees (Uganda, 2018).

UNHCR plays a catalytic role in mobilizing and coordinating support for the refugee response, with a particular focus on the engagement of development partners and the private sector. In addition, the Government has developed the *Jobs and Livelihoods Integrated Response Plan for Refugees and Host Communities in Uganda* to ensure secure, self-reliant and resilient

refugee and host community households within the refugee hosting districts. Ultimately, the Plan is intended to ensure that refugees and host communities are socially, economically and financially included in local development, in a sustainable manner, by 2025 (Uganda, Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, 2020).

B. Institutional frameworks

Countries are primarily responsible for registering legal identity and issuing identity documents. In this regard, the main purpose of civil registration is to establish a relationship between individuals and the State, and to ensure the rights that derive from this legal identity under the State's laws (IOM, 2021a).

1. Ministry of Internal Affairs

The mandate of the Ministry of Internal Affairs is to guarantee the internal security of Uganda and to ensure law and order, peace and stability, as well as citizen identification, protection and preservation.

The Ministry facilitates the legal and orderly movement of persons to and from Uganda. It regulates the residence of immigrants in the country, verifies and processes Uganda citizenship and enforces national and regional immigration laws for the development and security of the country. In addition, the Ministry supervises the National Identification and Registration Authority.

2. National Identification and Registration Authority

The National Identification and Registration Authority is a semi-autonomous organization established by the Registration of Persons Act. It has a mandate to establish and maintain a credible, secure and up-to-date register of all persons in Uganda for purposes of national security and socioeconomic development.

Some of the core functions of the National Identification and Registration Authority under section 54(1)(b) of the Registration of Persons Act include creating and maintaining the national identification register and registering and issuing citizens with national identification numbers and national identification cards (for citizens 16 years of age and above). The Authority is also tasked with legally registering resident foreigners and issuing them with identification numbers and cards, among other functions (National Identification and Registration Authority, 2021a).

It is noteworthy that the national identification numbers do not expire, which means that a person with an expired identification card can still have their applications processed for other functional identities, such as a passport or driving licence.

The various registration systems, such as the ones used by the National Identification and Registration Authority and by the Office of the Prime Minister, are not electronically linked, resulting in time-consuming registration processes for both citizens and migrants (International Development Research Centre, 2019a).

3. Uganda Registration Services Bureau

The Uganda Registration Services Bureau is an autonomous statutory body under the Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs, established by the Uganda Registration Services Bureau Act, of 1998. The main purpose of the Uganda Registration Services Bureau is to carry out

all registrations required under the relevant laws, to maintain registers, data and records on registrations affected by the Bureau, and to act as a clearing house for information and data on those registrations (Uganda, 2006). Ultimately, the Bureau is intended to provide accessible, reliable and innovative registration services for a formalized economy.

4. Office of the Prime Minister

The Office of the Prime Minister is empowered to coordinate the implementation of government policies, programmes and projects under a national institutional framework, including programmes that focus on refugees. Pursuant to article 8 of the Refugees Act, the Office of the Prime Minister is responsible for processing and managing refugees and asylum-seekers in Uganda, including their registration and identification, and for providing recommendations for conventional travel documents to refugees.

The Office also leads and strengthens the national response capacity to respond to refugee emergencies by advising the Government and other stakeholders on refugee matters and by receiving and granting asylum to refugees in accordance with both international and national legal frameworks.

The Office of the Prime Minister is responsible for coordinating the comprehensive refugee response framework, which incorporates the principles and objectives set out in the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants. The framework has enabled the Government to support refugees and the communities hosting them in a more cohesive and predictable approach (Uganda, Office of the Prime Minister, 2017).

For non-citizens, excluding refugees, identification documents are issued by the National Identification and Registration Authority.

Significant challenges have been identified at refugee reception centres, such as the one at the Uganda-South Sudan border, which has limited resources and insufficient staff for registration services. This has resulted in overwhelmed staff and failure to register many of the refugees bound for Uganda (Gumisiriza, 2019).

C. Civil registrations in Uganda

The civil registration system provides the basic building blocks of an identity system. Legal identity is typically managed by a country's foundational identification system, including civil registration, national identification and other similar systems.

The identity of a person is usually established using foundational documents, such as birth certificates or death certificates, which are often recorded in a civil registry.

1. Birth registration

Birth registration is free and compulsory in Uganda and must take place at least 30 days after a birth occurs (National Identification and Registration Authority, 2022a). When a child is born, the health facility at the place of birth notifies the National Identification and Registration Authority. If a child is born at home, the parent or a person present at the birth notifies the National Identification and Registration Authority. Village health teams also play an important role in notifying the Authority of a birth in the community. After a birth is registered, a parent or guardian may certify the birth or obtain a birth certificate.

The following documents are required for a birth certificate (for both citizens of Uganda and foreigners): a birth notification record issued by the medical facility, subcounty, town council or division where the birth occurred; a duly filled National Identification and Registration Authority form 3; a photocopy of the national identification of at least one of the parents; and proof of payment of the birth certificate fee. For citizens, the fee is Uganda shillings (U Sh) 5,000, which is approximately \$1.50, compared with \$40 plus additional bank charges for non-citizens, the expense of which may deter birth registration for non-citizens. As birth certificates are free for refugees born in Uganda, refugees must also present a photocopy of a valid attestation card or refugee identification card issued to at least one of the parents to be exempt from payment of the fee (National Identification and Registration Authority, 2019).

The most important benefit of birth registration and certification is that it is the first legal proof of a person's identity, their name, sex, parents' names, and date and place of birth, and it also serves to protect that person's human and civil rights as a member of society (United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2021). For example, a birth certificate is required to obtain a national identification card in all East African Community countries except South Sudan, which creates a barrier for marginalized groups, including migrants, who may not be able to afford the cost associated with obtaining late birth certificates (World Bank, 2018b). Despite some improvement in birth registration rates, which rose from 32 per cent in 2016 to 54 per cent in 2021 for citizens and non-citizens, this level still falls short of the required completeness level of 100 per cent (United Nations Children's Fund, 2022). In a study undertaken by the World Bank (2018b), it was reported that, in Uganda, at least one in five children under 5 years of age did not possess a birth certificate, and more than half were unregistered. Accordingly, civil registration completeness in Uganda still remains below global standards, including those set out in the *Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System*, issued by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, and in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the African Charter on the Rights and the Welfare of the Child, both of which Uganda has ratified.

The majority of citizens of Uganda and migrants live in the least accessible rural areas of the country, where civil registration and health services are scarce and births are often not attended to by qualified personnel in health facilities and therefore go unreported. In addition, most birth registration processes remain incomplete, owing to lengthy procedures, strict documentation requirements and limited public awareness. Consequently, parents often possess only birth notifications rather than birth certificates (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2023). Furthermore, those who miss timely birth registration are generally unaware of the late registration process, which is also time-consuming.

The Uganda Citizenship and Immigration Control Act stipulates that children whose parents are classified by the authorities as prohibited immigrants are themselves also prohibited in Uganda. Consequently, if they irregularly enter the country seeking safety, they face the risk of becoming stateless, as such individuals are not registered. This renders them invisible to the Government, thereby denying them the right to be recognized and included in national planning.

2. Death registration

A death notification record is a formal record that a death has occurred. It is obtained from a health facility or local administrative authority by the next of kin or relative of the deceased or

by a person present at the time of death. This record is compulsory and free of charge (National Identification and Registration Authority, 2022b).

To obtain a death certificate, applicants must present a death notification record, a copy of their national identification card, the deceased's national identification card, and a bank payment receipt in the name of the deceased for the amount of U Sh5,000 for citizens and \$40 for non-citizens. However, for refugees who die in Uganda, the death certificate is issued free of charge upon presentation of proof of refugee status (National Identification and Registration Authority, 2021b). The death registration rate in Uganda remains very low for both citizens and non-citizens, as many people perceive registration as being relevant only for obtaining letters of administration to facilitate inheritance processes.

While causes of deaths are registered in Uganda, with most attributed to diseases, data on the completeness of death registration and cause-of-death reporting are not readily available.

3. Marriage and divorce registration

The Registrar General serves as the registrar of marriages for Kampala, while all chief administrative officers act as registrars for their respective districts and are required to submit monthly reports of all registered marriages to the Registrar General. In Uganda, the recognized forms of marriage include Christian (church), Muslim, Hindu, civil and customary marriages. To file a marriage or divorce, applicants must provide a signed and stamped cover letter from the umbrella body under which the marriage was conducted, certified copies of the marriage or divorce certificate, photocopies of the couple's identification documents, and bank payment slips for the application fees of U Sh35,000 per copy for nationals and refugees or \$25 per copy for foreigners.

For citizens, the documentation required to register a marriage includes proof of citizenship (such as a passport or national identification card), one passport-size photograph of each party and a letter obtained through the Local Council 1 (LC1) platform clearly stating the duration of residence in the district in which the marriage is intended to be solemnized, which must not be less than 15 days.

To contract a civil marriage, refugees must provide the following: a refugee family attestation card or refugee identification, a letter obtained through the Local Council 1 (LC1) platform clearly stating the duration of residence in the district in which the marriage will be celebrated, two passport-size photographs, a marriage affidavit commissioned and registered with the Uganda Registration Services Bureau, a letter issued by the Office of the Prime Minister verifying the marital status of the parties, proof of payment of the prescribed fees to any bank, and a completed notice of marriage form (Uganda, 1904).

Foreigners are also required to present a letter from the civil registration or vital statistics office in their home country confirming that neither party is currently married. In addition, copies of valid visas issued upon entry into Uganda are required on the marriage date. If one party is a citizen of Uganda or a refugee, the total fee is U Sh260,000; if neither party is a citizen of Uganda or a refugee, the fee is \$210.

D. Interconnection between foundational and functional identity systems

Civil registration and national identity systems are recognized as foundational registers in Uganda. These registers provide information on legal identity as defined by the State. Uganda continues to invest in integrating siloed functional identity databases and government services with the central national foundational identity database to facilitate the sharing of identity-related data.

The data can then be used across government sectors, provided that access is regulated by law or specifically consented to by the individual whose identity information is being processed. For example, individuals are required to present a national identification card when applying for functional identification documents, such as driving licences, passports, voter identification, National Social Security Fund identification and employee identification.

This interconnected framework is currently being used by various stakeholders to verify individual identity before providing services, thereby mitigating risks of impersonation and fraud. For example, commercial banks can use the data when extending credit services to their customers. In addition, such government agencies as the National Social Security Fund and the Uganda Registration Services Bureau can enhance their functional databases through existing linkages to the central identification register.

III. Vital statistics system

The vital statistics system encompasses the collection, compilation and dissemination of vital statistics. The mandate of the Uganda Bureau of Statistics, under the Uganda Bureau of Statistics Act, of 1998, is to collect, compile and disseminate all forms of statistics, including vital statistics in Uganda.

Vital statistics in Uganda are primarily collected through decennial population censuses and household surveys, such as the demographic and health survey, which is carried out every five years. This is supplemented by monthly data collection from administrative units (local governments), which are supported by a mobile vital registration system. The latter is operational in 135 hospitals and enables the transmission of birth and death information via mobile devices to a centralized database or designated focal persons (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2021). Compilation and dissemination of the data are undertaken by the Uganda Bureau of Statistics through its monthly, quarterly and annual publications, such as the Statistical Abstract.

The civil registration system in Uganda is underdeveloped and is unable to generate reliable data on vital statistics, such as fertility and mortality levels, and to support the compilation of vital events and vital statistics, especially for migrants and refugees (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2016). The vital events of refugees are recorded in the biometric information management system operated by the Office of the Prime Minister and UNHCR; however, this system is not yet integrated with the National Identification and Registration Authority system. In short, existing registration systems lack the capacity to seamlessly connect registry offices with national identity databases and are not equipped to automate vital statistics.

Harnessing civil registration, identity systems and vital statistics for population data

Population growth in Uganda is driven by birth and immigration, while decreases result from death and emigration. Data from civil registration and identity systems can help to account for all individuals in the country at any given time. Ideally, fertility and mortality levels should be measured using data collected through a civil registration system, in accordance with the *Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System*, issued by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2016).

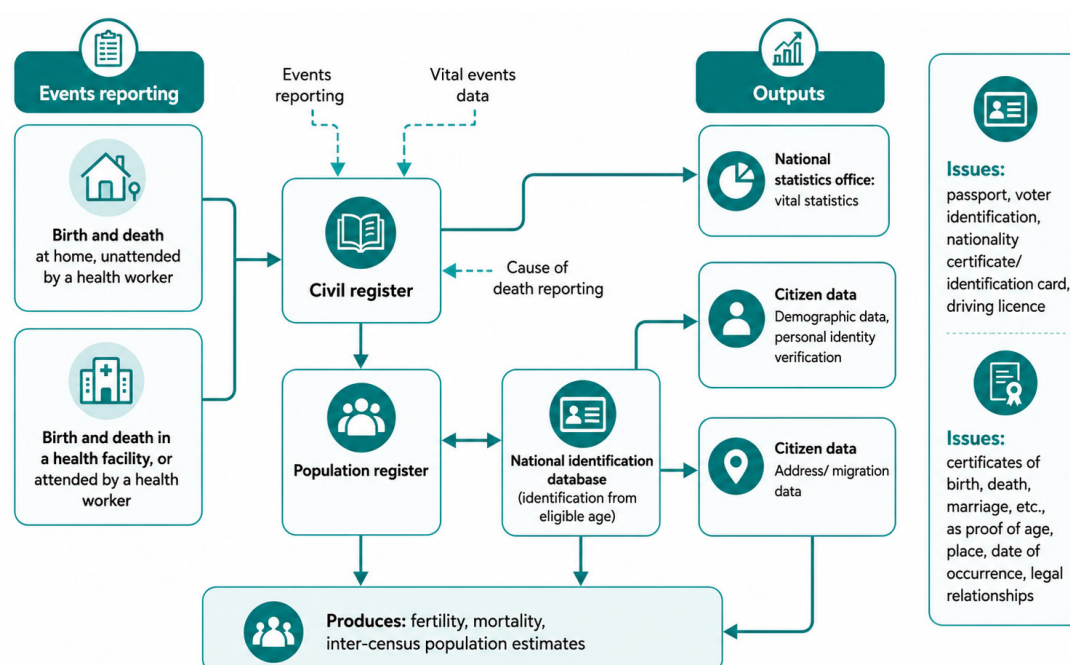
The civil registration and vital statistics systems in Uganda remain incomplete and in need of significant improvement. Consequently, the country continues to rely on population census and surveys for vital statistics. This incompleteness poses a major barrier to leveraging civil registries for timely and reliable data on citizens, refugees and migrants. Moreover, migration data in Uganda is fragmented, and this challenge extends across East Africa, leading to an underestimation of migration stocks and gaps in official statistics on civil registration events for migrants and refugees (IOM, 2021b).

The continuous nature of data collection through civil registration offers a more up-to-date and cost-effective approach to meeting population information needs compared with a population census conducted once every decade (Peters, 2016). Achieving 100 per cent completeness in civil registration would establish the foundation for developing a reliable

population register (see figure II). This system can be automated to generate vital statistics and, consequently, comprehensive population statistics, covering all civil events and relevant sustainable development indicators for all population groups in Uganda, including citizens, migrants, refugees and foreigners.

Timely and accurate knowledge of a country's population size and characteristics is essential for socioeconomic planning and informed decision-making (United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2014). In this context, Uganda requires reliable population statistics to accurately plan, design and implement social development programmes – such as public health measures, maternal care and childcare, family planning, social security, education, housing and economic development – to promote the well-being of all people within its territory (United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2021).

Figure II: Ideal connection between civil registration, identity systems and vital statistics



Source: Uganda, Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs (2012).

IV. Digital identification system and status of interoperability with the civil registration and vital statistics system

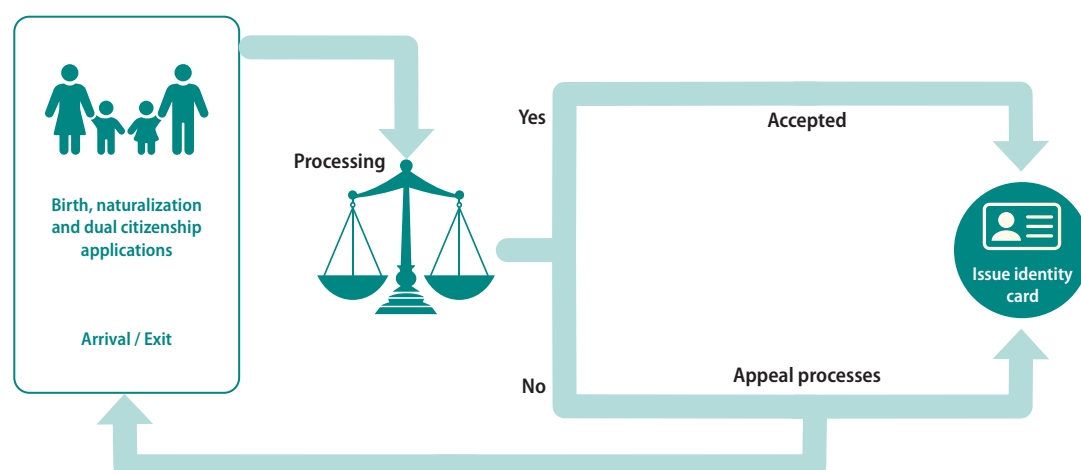
The roll-out of digital legal identity marked a transition from paper-based systems to digital systems (World Bank, 2019). This shift included the collection of biometric data to enhance security and reduce the risk of identity theft and fraud. The National Identification and Registration Authority is mandated to establish and maintain a national identification register, which serves as the backbone of the country's identity management system.

The present section contains an exploration of legal identity systems that serve the needs of citizens of Uganda – including those residing abroad, as well as refugees, migrants and foreigners residing in Uganda. The registration system is in alignment with international principles and standards, such as the IOM *Legal Identity Toolkit* and the United Nations Legal Identity Agenda, and is based on a people-centred, rights-based approach grounded in equality, non-discrimination and the “do no harm” principle for the protection of privacy and personal data.

In this regard, the digitalization of civil registration and identity management systems must be supported by appropriate infrastructure to ensure continuous, permanent, compulsory and universal registration of vital events, in accordance with the *Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System*, issued by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2014).

A. National identification cards

Article 54 of the Registration of Persons Act stipulates that all citizens of Uganda, both resident and non-resident, must register with the National Identification and Registration Authority. According to the Authority, every citizen of Uganda who is 16 years of age and above is eligible to obtain an identification card (Kamurungi, 2024a). Embassies of Uganda in foreign countries rely on the National Identification and Registration Authority to provide national identity card registration and civil registration services to citizens of Uganda in host countries. This service fulfils one of their consular functions, as stipulated in the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations. Figure III illustrates a conceptual framework of the national identification registration process.

Figure III: Conceptual framework of the national identification registration process

Source: Author.

For citizens by birth or descent, the registration requirements for obtaining a national identification card include a letter obtained through the Local Council 1 (LC1) platform, copies of the parents' national identification cards, a birth certificate and any other supporting documents. Individuals in this category generally qualify automatically for a national identification card.

For citizens by registration, additional requirements include a copy of their certificate of citizenship by naturalization or certificate of citizenship by registration, as applicable, issued by the National Citizenship and Immigration Control Board, copies of their parents' national identification cards (if available) and any other supporting documents. For dual citizens, the registration requirements for a national identification card include a copy of the certificate of dual citizenship issued by the Directorate of Citizenship and Immigration Control, the applicant's passport(s) and a copy of the parents' national identification card (if available) (National Identification and Registration Authority, 2021c).

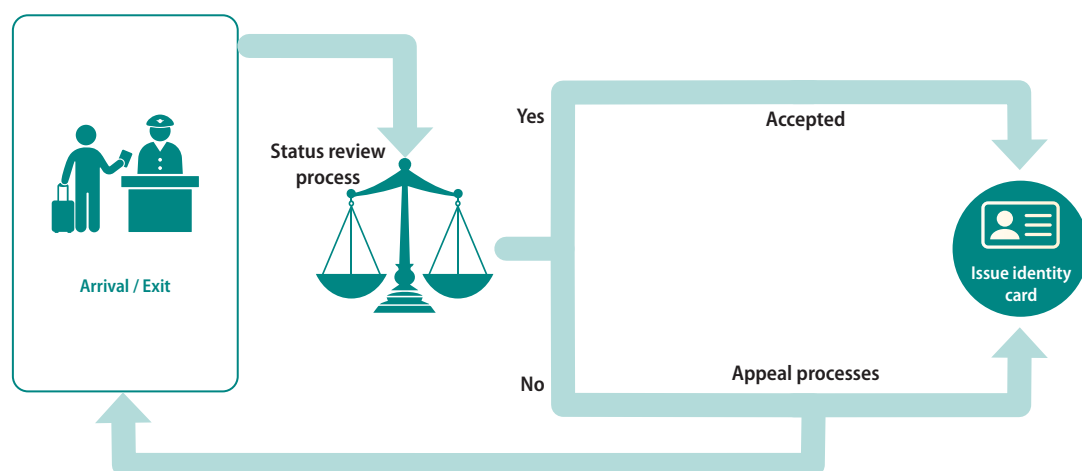
Once an application is submitted to the National Identification and Registration Authority, it undergoes processing, which includes collecting biographical data and corresponding biometric information – such as a photograph and a full set of fingerprints. These biometrics enable verification and de-duplication to ensure that each individual is assigned a single identity in the central register and is issued only one valid identity card (United Nations Children's Fund, 2019a).

If the application is approved, a national identification card is issued. If, however, the application is rejected – in particular in cases where citizenship is in doubt – the applicant may file an appeal within 30 days. Appeals can be submitted to the Citizen Verification Committees at the subcounty or district level, or to the National Appeals Committee established by the National Identification and Registration Authority. Only if the appeal is successful will the applicant be issued a national identification card. Otherwise, the law stipulates that the applicant must leave the country within 48 hours.

B. Registration and identification process for migrants and refugees

Uganda is working towards developing an inclusive legal identity system to enhance service delivery, strengthen security and improve access to various services. Figure IV illustrates the conceptual framework for registering non-citizens of Uganda in the identification register, as regulated by the Refugees Act, of 2006, and the Refugees Regulations, of 2010.

Figure IV: Conceptual framework of the refugee registration process



Source: Author.

Upon arrival in Uganda, refugees are received and transferred to officially designated locations for registration and settlement. In practice, refugees originating from the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo or from South Sudan who enter through designated border points are granted *prima facie* refugee status. This status is confirmed after a brief interview to verify the person's identity and nationality, following which a family refugee attestation document is issued (Norwegian Refugee Council, 2018).

Migrants who enter through ungazetted points of entry, however, must apply separately to the Refugee Eligibility Committee¹ under the Office of the Prime Minister. In addition, any individual with a different status who wishes to remain in Uganda as an asylum-seeker is required to register with the police within 30 days of arrival. This is followed by an interview conducted by an officer of UNHCR (Human Rights Watch, 2002).

The Refugee Eligibility Committee receives and processes applications from individuals seeking to change their status to refugee status. Applicants must properly identify themselves and provide fingerprints and photographs to the refugee reception officer. After this step, they are issued a temporary pass valid for 90 days as proof of having applied for refugee status. The applicant is then scheduled for an interview and awaits the Committee's final decision (Uganda, 2006). If the Committee approves the application, the individual is granted refugee status, issued a visa, and provided with a photo-bearing, biometric refugee identification

¹ The members of the Refugee Eligibility Committee include representatives of the Office of the Prime Minister (who is the Chair of the Committee), the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Solicitor General, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Local Government, the Internal Security Organization, the External Security Organization, the Uganda Police Force and the immigration authorities.

card and a family attestation form. This documentation allows the person to legally reside in Uganda (Anderson, Muhammad and Rusare, 2022; Canada, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 2009).

If the application is declined, the individual may lodge an appeal with the Refugee Appeals Board, which reviews decisions of the Refugee Eligibility Committee on questions of law and procedure. The Board has 60 days from the date of receiving the appeal to render a decision (NewVision, 2023). If the Refugee Appeals Board approves the application, the Refugee Eligibility Committee then reviews the case and grants refugee status. The individual is issued a visa and provided with a refugee identification card.

If the appeal is unsuccessful, the applicant may escalate the case to the courts of law, which review the decision made by the Refugee Appeals Board. If the court approves the application, the Refugee Eligibility Committee will grant refugee status, issue a visa and provide a refugee identification card to the individual. If the court upholds the rejection, the person is processed for deportation.

Every recognized refugee in Uganda has the right to freedom of movement and to work within the country. Refugees are also issued a Convention travel document, which is valid for travel to all countries except their country of origin and any countries where Uganda poses restrictions, in accordance with the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees.

C. Registration of foreign workers

The registration of foreigners in Uganda is conducted by the National Identification and Registration Authority, which is mandated to register and issue identity cards to foreigners. The Registration of Persons Act stipulates that the National Identification and Registration Authority shall issue a renewable identification number and card to all foreigners, and that such a number and card can be used to open a bank account and gain access to financial services, among other services. The Act explicitly does not apply to a refugee recognized by the Government and UNHCR under the Refugees Act.

All foreign nationals intending to work in Uganda are required to obtain the appropriate work permit issued by the Directorate of Citizenship and Immigration Control. Such permits are available in several categories, depending on the nature of the employment and the intended duration of stay. Typically, a work permit is valid for two years and can be renewed before its expiration. For short-term contracts, work permits are issued for a period of six months, while the duration of longer-term permits ranges from one year up to a maximum of three years (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2021).

The “ordinary resident” permit is intended for individuals who have a guaranteed income from sources outside Uganda and agree not to engage in any form of employment while residing in the country. This permit allows the holder to reside in Uganda for up to two years and can be renewed if necessary. Another category is the Class H permit, which is issued to persons who intend to reside in Uganda without undertaking any employment.

The Uganda Citizenship and Immigration Control Act, as amended in 2015, prohibits foreigners from engaging in any economic activity or employment in Uganda unless they hold a valid entry permit, a certificate of permanent residence or a pass issued under the Act. Any person who employs a foreigner without the necessary legal identification documents commits an offence

and is liable, upon conviction, to a fine not exceeding 150 currency points or imprisonment not exceeding two years, or both.

D. Labour migrants and citizens in crises abroad

The embassies and consulates of Uganda abroad play a vital role in identifying more than 150,000 vulnerable citizens of Uganda, such as undocumented migrant workers and individuals who are at risk of being treated as stateless or are otherwise in distress in foreign countries. Their efforts include implementing identification strategies, conducting outreach initiatives and collaborating with local and international organizations to provide support and protection.

These initiatives are aimed at addressing persistent complaints, such as those raised by migrant workers in the Middle East regarding the confiscation of their travel documents, including passports and return permits (URN, 2022). The confiscation of identity documents while abroad exposes migrants to heightened risks of exploitation, statelessness and human trafficking.

Embassies or consulates can issue temporary travel documents for undocumented or stateless individuals or facilitate identity verification for legal recognition. If migrants lack identification, consulates may conduct interviews, review birth records or use biometric data to confirm nationality. In extreme cases (e.g. cases involving child migrants or separated families), deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) testing or collaboration with other civil registries may be used to confirm identity.

E. Interoperability of digital identity in Uganda

The need to integrate legal identity and civil registration has become essential as Africa strives to ensure inclusiveness, visibility and the principle of leaving no one behind, as articulated in Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, of the African Union.

In Uganda, digital identification serves as a unique identifier within citizen-centric systems, enabling the integration of various government services. Interoperability requires assigning a unique identification number to every individual at birth, which is then used throughout the individual's lifetime as a link between civil registration and national identification systems (Mills, Lee and Rassekh, 2019). This process has been streamlined by consolidating civil registration and identity management functions – initially hosted in different government agencies – under the National Identification and Registration Authority, which now oversees the registration of births, deaths and persons and the issuance of identification documents. Initially, the Uganda Registration Services Bureau was responsible for the registration of marriages and divorces, creating a disconnect in civil event registration. However, this gap was addressed through a legislative amendment passed by Parliament in 2024, transferring the mandate for marriage registration to the National Identification and Registration Authority. As a result, all civil registration matters are now handled by a single agency (Kamurungi, 2024b).

Digital identifications issued in Uganda are recognized in other East African countries. To achieve interoperability within an East African regional identification system, five East African Community partner States have legally established national identification systems that meet specific functional requirements. These systems use biometric data to uniquely identify individuals. This biometric-based identity framework enables cross-border interoperability

through such mechanisms as online authentication via a web portal or smartcards that enable both online and offline authentication.

National identification cards issued by Uganda feature both a barcode and a machine readable zone. The United Republic of Tanzania already issues smartcards, the identification cards issued by Kenya include a machine readable zone, the cards issued by Rwanda have a barcode, and the cards issued by South Sudan incorporate both a barcode and a machine readable zone. This design leverages these existing features to accelerate mutual recognition of national identification cards issued by Uganda across other East African countries (World Bank, 2018b).

In line with the principle of variable geometry, and as an initiative of the Northern Corridor Integration Projects, Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda began recognizing each other's national identification cards as valid travel documents in 2014 (African Union, 2022). The digital legal identity framework of Uganda has been further strengthened by the enactment of the Data Protection and Privacy Act. The Act establishes the Personal Data Protection Office under the National Information Technology Authority, which is mandated to oversee the implementation and enforcement of the Act, receive and investigate complaints from data subjects, and establish and maintain a data protection and privacy register, among other functions (Grant Thornton, 2021). However, Uganda has yet to sign and ratify the 2014 African Union Convention on Cyber Security and Personal Data Protection, which is an important legal instrument for advancing digital identification across the continent (Bosman, 2023).

The mutual recognition of legal identification within the East African Community, coupled with interoperable identification systems capable of cross-checking or exchanging data, can help to prevent fraud, improve targeting and ensure identity portability. These capabilities create an enabling environment for a single digital market under the African Continental Free Trade Area, fostering intra-African trade, facilitating regular migration and driving socioeconomic transformation across the continent. Furthermore, they can boost regional economic activity through greater financial inclusion, including access to credit, which in turn stimulates growth even among such vulnerable groups as migrants and refugees, who often lack opportunities to participate in the economy (World Bank, 2018b).

F. Regulatory and institutional landscape for digital identification in Uganda

The digital identification system of Uganda, managed by the National Identification and Registration Authority, collects extensive personal data, including name, date of birth, gender, citizenship details, place of birth, parental information, clan, tribe, ethnicity, spouse details, education and tax information. This level of data collection conflicts with the principle of data minimization commonly associated with digital identification systems. It also raises concerns about the risk of ethnic profiling and surveillance (Bosman, 2023).

Digital identity systems also collect biometric data for additional security, which reduces the risk of identity theft and fraud. However, without the proper legal framework to guide their implementation, such programmes could significantly lead to the misuse of personal data and to the exclusion of minority groups, including migrants. Accordingly, a strong legal foundation for the protection of data and privacy of the bearer is crucial to the functioning of any digital identification system.

Uganda has a legal framework governing data privacy under article 27 of its Constitution. The Data Protection and Privacy Act, of 2019, and the Data Protection and Privacy Regulations, of 2021, place several restrictions on the collection, transfer and processing of personal data. Article 20 of the Data Protection and Privacy Act requires a data collector, processor or controller to maintain the integrity of data in their possession by adopting appropriate measures to prevent loss, damage or unauthorized destruction and unlawful access to or unauthorized processing of personal data.

The institutions mandated to implement and enforce these regulations include the National Identification and Registration Authority and the National Information Technology Authority, which is an autonomous statutory body established under the National Information Technology Authority, Uganda Act. The National Information Technology Authority is tasked with setting, monitoring and regulating standards for planning, acquisition, implementation, support, organization, risk management, data protection, security and contingency planning in relation to information technology. In addition, it regulates the electronic signature infrastructure and other related matters concerning electronic transactions in Uganda. The National Information Technology Authority provides first-level technical support and advice for critical government information technology systems, including managing the use of resources and infrastructure for centralized data centre facilities for large systems.

The Personal Data Protection Office, established under the National Information Technology Authority, is an independent office that is responsible for overseeing the implementation and enforcement of the Data Protection and Privacy Act. It is also responsible for monitoring, investigating and reporting on the observance of the right to privacy and the protection of personal data, as well as receiving and investigating complaints relating to infringements of data subjects' rights.

The Personal Data Protection Office maintains a data protection register with information on every person, institution or public body collecting or processing personal data and the purpose for which personal data are collected or processed, as mandated by article 29 of the Data Protection and Privacy Act. Individuals also have the right to request details or records of external parties that have gained access to their personal data.

V. Challenges and lessons learned

A. Complexities of civil registration and identity documentation for migrants

In 2014, Uganda introduced a national digital identification system aimed at promoting inclusion and enhancing security. Since its implementation, however, the country has faced significant challenges in achieving inclusivity. Various complexities – legislative, administrative, geographical and political – have emerged, affecting in particular minority groups. As a result, the system has fallen short of its promise of inclusivity (Center for Human Rights and Global Justice, 2021).

1. Legislative complexities

The legislation currently governing migration in Uganda is fragmented, and there is no comprehensive policy or framework driving migration governance. This lack of cohesion has resulted in gaps in rules and regulations pertaining to emigration and immigration in such areas as registration and identification.

For example, in Uganda, following the successful roll-out of national identity cards, some birth registrations have been halted when one of the parents is unable to present a national identity card. While this may be legally justified, the consequence is that the child remains unregistered and legally invisible (United Nations Children's Fund, 2019a). Another significant gap exists in the country's naturalization laws. If a child's parent becomes a citizen of Uganda through naturalization, the child must also undergo the same process to obtain citizenship, rather than automatically acquiring it (Zakaryan, 2019). In addition, there is a lack of clear guidelines and a regulatory framework for providing proof of identity to stateless persons within the country (see box text).

2. Administrative complexities

The centralized nature of the birth registration process requires parents and caregivers to travel long distances to subcounty or county offices to obtain birth certificates, which can be both time-consuming and costly (Plan International, 2020). In addition, members of marginalized groups often lack a birth certificate or other "breeder" documents required for an identification card to be issued (World Bank, 2018b).

Some local government bodies responsible for birth registration services have inadequate staffing. This challenge is compounded by personnel who lack sufficient awareness of their duties and often face shortages of registration materials (Anglophone Africa Workshop on Birth Registration, 2002).

It is estimated that only 4 per cent of all births are reported at the national level and just 1 per cent of the country's children receive a national birth certificate. This situation is largely attributed to the centralization of the national registration system (ibid). In addition, the World Bank (2018a) notes that many countries impose fees for registering a child or obtaining a birth

Statelessness

According to UNHCR, statelessness occurs when a person is not considered as a citizen by any State. In other words, stateless persons lack nationality and are not afforded basic rights by any Government, leaving them in conditions of extreme marginalization and exclusion.

In Uganda, as elsewhere in the world, nationality laws are based on a mix of *jus soli* – access to citizenship through birth in the territory – and *jus sanguinis* – access to citizenship based on descent. Both provisions, however, are based on ethnicity: the *jus soli* provision allows those born on the territory automatic access to citizenship only if they are a member of one of the indigenous communities listed in the third schedule of the 1995 Constitution. While this provision, on the one hand, provides for significant protection against statelessness, it places communities not included in the schedule at a higher risk of statelessness. This risk is further exacerbated by the limitation of the *jus sanguinis* provision to only the children of citizens by birth. The children of a naturalized citizen are therefore not eligible for citizenship, meaning that naturalization is not a sustainable solution for reducing the risk of statelessness.

Uganda has many groups at risk of statelessness, including the Benet people, returnee Indians, the Maragoli people and children born to refugee parents. Many of these individuals still lack legal identity documents and proof of citizenship. Some groups have remained stateless because they were not included in constitutional amendments, and the process of inclusion is lengthy, involving constitutional review procedures. For instance, during the first mass enrolment exercise carried out by the National Registration and Identification Authority, the national identification cards of the Maragoli people were withheld on the grounds that they were not entitled to citizenship. Their appeal to the Government took more than two years to resolve before they were finally issued national identification documents after registration.

UNHCR, along with other development partners, is working closely with the Government of Uganda and community leaders to eradicate statelessness in the country. Uganda ratified the Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons in 1965, with no reservations; however, it has yet to ratify the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, despite formally pledging to do so on the occasion of the sixtieth anniversary of UNHCR.

certificate. As a result, an estimated 65 million unregistered children under 5 years of age live in sub-Saharan African countries where such fees are required (United Nations Children's Fund, 2019b).

3. Geographical complexities

People living in rural and remote areas have limited access to civil registration services, owing to distance and inaccessibility, making it difficult and costly for families to travel to registration centres. The gap is even more pronounced in places where long distances coincide with a high concentration of minority groups (United Nations Children's Fund, 2008). In addition, people in remote areas often lack access to information and therefore have limited awareness of the importance of birth registrations (Graff, 2020).

Furthermore, cultural beliefs remain a significant barrier to birth registration. For example, the belief that children should not be counted for fear they might die creates challenges for child registration. Broader traditional values can also pose obstacles (Global System for Mobile Communications Association, 2019).

Porous borders complicate the accurate recording of such vital events as births and deaths, owing to unregulated cross-border movement. Communities often share historical heritage, family ties and property on both sides of the border, which can lead to individuals identifying

with more than one nationality in certain border regions. This creates a dilemma for Governments in managing civil registration and identity systems (United Nations Development Programme, 2023).

4. Political barriers

Conflict and violence have been increasing in Africa in recent years, with spillover effects across subregions. More than 250 million Africans are affected by fragility and conflict. Over the past two decades, approximately 469,000 people have lost their lives as a result of conflict and human insecurity (African Development Bank, 2022). In 2021 alone, the continent experienced more than 18,000 conflict incidents, and the number of refugees and internally displaced persons reached 32 million (ibid.). Recurrent conflicts, leading to forced displacement and temporary returns, pose a significant challenge to the registration of affected vulnerable populations.

B. Implications of non-comprehensive registration of minority groups

Registration and identity documents are essential for refugees and migrants, as they are a prerequisite for access to better livelihoods (Munyoka, 2023). Without these documents, individuals become vulnerable and face numerous challenges. The lack of comprehensive registration also hinders their potential contribution to socioeconomic transformation and development. Some of the problems encountered by minority groups are summarized in the following section.

Access to employment

Refugee participation in the labour force is significantly lower than that of the general population, with unemployment among refugees in Uganda estimated at 72 per cent (Lindrio, 2023). This can be attributed, in part, to the lack of proper documentation or legal status, which creates legal barriers that prevent them from obtaining formal employment. Similarly, employers might be reluctant to hire individuals without legal authorization because of concerns about potential legal repercussions or the lack of documentation required for employment (Zetter and Ruaudel, 2018).

Refugees are prohibited from owning freehold land in Uganda, pursuant to article 65(2) of the Refugees Regulations. In addition, unregistered refugees are not entitled to receive a plot of land from the Government of Uganda in a settlement for cultivation or grazing (International Labour Organization, 2023).

Many refugees are employed in the informal economy without an employment contract and typically lack a work permit (Japan International Cooperation Agency, 2022). This often leads to exploitation, with refugees working longer hours and earning wages that are 35–45 per cent lower than those of workers from Uganda (International Labour Organization, 2023).

Access to finance

Refugees often struggle to gain access to financial tools needed to manage their money because they lack proper identification, credit history or collateral (Agaya, 2021). This challenge is compounded by the reluctance of many financial institutions to serve refugees, who are perceived as high risk owing to concerns about flight risk and the absence of verifiable identity in the host country (Davie and Plaves, 2019).

Money laundering regulations require financial institutions to verify customers' identity using documents, data or information obtained from a reliable and independent source. This requirement prevents forcibly displaced persons from opening bank or mobile money accounts, thereby limiting their access to financial services in host countries. In addition, financial service providers may be slow to adapt to new rules, such as those permitting refugee identification documents as valid proof of identity (Pistelli, 2023).

Identification is the first entry point into the formal sector, as formal institutions prefer to engage with individuals they can identify and hold accountable (Lutwama and Banura, 2023). As a result, most refugees are able to gain access to financial services only through informal savings groups (BFA Global, 2020).

Access to social services

Unregistered refugees are often denied admission to public schools because they are unable to provide the required documentation, such as birth certificates or immunization cards (Munyoka, 2023). Without proof of residency, the enrolment of refugees in public schools becomes even more complicated.

The lack of identification can also make refugees ineligible for free basic education or other educational programmes available to citizens or documented residents (Mugerwa-Sekawabe, 2021). Without identification, refugees do not have access to public or private financial aid to support their enrolment in schools, universities, educational institutions or other learning facilities (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2019).

Irregular migrants are not eligible to receive welfare benefits, including healthcare, unless they are refugees or unaccompanied children (Raposo and Violante, 2021). Undocumented migrants are almost always excluded from enrolment in health schemes, as eligibility often depends on citizenship or legal immigration status (Legido-Quigley and others, 2019).

Undocumented migrants, especially women, are among the most vulnerable groups. Those who are not officially recognized as migrants or internally displaced persons are excluded from humanitarian assistance. Consequently, many resort to high-risk survival strategies, such as sex work. This increases their exposure to physical and sexual abuse, sexually transmitted diseases, and other serious risks (Maastricht Graduate School of Governance, 2017).

Limited safety and protection

Without legal documentation or authorization, refugees are extremely vulnerable to various forms of exploitation, including human trafficking, sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude and the removal of organs (Wilson, 2011). They are also vulnerable to discrimination, arbitrary arrests and forced evictions from villages (Yahya, Kassir and El-Hariri, 2018).

Furthermore, unregistered refugees, including minors, women and older individuals, are at risk of unlawful detention, forced return and family separation. Migration detention occurs when refugees and asylum-seekers are found without valid residency documents and charged with illegal stay, or when they are apprehended during irregular movements at entry or exit points (UNHCR, 2022).

Failure to register a child's birth creates immediate risks from the very start of the child's life. Unregistered children lack legal proof of parentage, which hinders family tracing and reunification in cases of separation caused by conflict or forced displacement (UNHCR, 2014). Moreover, poor identity management by Governments can fuel or exacerbate conflict within countries.

Denial of refugee status and statelessness

The denial of refugee status – along with the future prospect of permanent residence and eventual citizenship – creates an insurmountable divide between those who are legally registered and those who remain stateless (Chakraborty and Bhabha, 2021). Furthermore, the risk of statelessness, driven by refugees' lack of documentation and weakening ties to their country of origin, grows with each successive generation born in exile (International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, 2023).

Unlike refugees, stateless individuals generally do not receive protection or assistance from Governments, aid agencies or even the United Nations, despite the latter's mandate to support stateless persons (Frelick and Lynch, 2005). As a result, they are forced live unprotected and marginalized, without access to basic social safety nets (UNHCR, 2021a). For example, many refugees from South Sudan in Uganda, especially pregnant women, mothers with infants, unaccompanied children and older individuals, remain unregistered and without access to refugee services (Gumisiriza, 2019).

The lack of legal status often leads to marginalization and exclusion, preventing individuals from participating in public affairs and society in general (UNHCR, 2021b). Moreover, without proof of identity, migrants cannot pass through official checkpoints at international borders, forcing them to resort to more dangerous channels, such as smuggling (International Development Research Centre, 2019b).

VI. Conclusions and recommendations

A. Conclusions

A fundamental aspect of individual well-being is the legal and institutional connection between an individual and the State. This connection is established through civil registration and immigration systems, which provide individuals with an official identity recognized under a country's constitution. When people lack any form of identity, this disconnect creates significant vulnerabilities, both for the individuals and the State (IOM, n.d.).

Achieving inclusive registration and identification requires Governments to establish efficient, inclusive systems that encourage all individuals, including irregular migrants, to register and obtain legal identity. This ensures that they can be protected and properly included in national planning.

Accordingly, the country should recognize that 12 of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals and more than one third of the targets outlined in the 2030 Agenda rely directly or indirectly on data from civil registration and vital statistics systems. This underscores the urgent need for well-functioning civil registration and vital statistics systems and identity management systems, as both are crucial for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in Uganda through inclusive approaches. This commitment to inclusiveness is also echoed in Agenda 2063 as a prerequisite for the continent's growth and development.

In the light of the above, a summary of principal findings and policy recommendations is contained in the following section.

B. Policy recommendations to improve access to legal identity for migrants and refugees

In consideration of the findings of the present report with regard to the implementation of civil registration and vital statistics and legal identity systems in Uganda, the following policy recommendations include specific measures to address the inequities that migrants and refugees experience regarding their access to civil registration and legal identity. The recommendations also include measures to strengthen the country's legal identification system and align it with international standards and best practices, such as the United Nations Legal Identity Agenda, the IOM *Legal Identity Toolkit*, the World Bank Principles on Identification for Sustainable Development and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs *Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System*. These measures are aimed at closing gaps in access to civil registration and legal identity for migrants and refugees.

Recommendation 1

The Office of the Prime Minister, UNHCR and the National Identification and Registration Authority should work towards the integration of refugee registration into the national civil registration and identification system to enhance consistency, data-sharing, cohesion and

inclusiveness, and to mitigate any likelihood of discrimination. The relevant stakeholders should therefore fast-track and support the finalization of the draft civil registration and vital statistics and national identification policy, with a view to addressing the critical gaps in the registration and identification of persons.

This recommendation is in alignment with the plea made by UNHCR (2018) that refugee identification documents be issued by the National Identification and Registration Authority with the same design and specifications as identity documents issued to nationals. For refugees, especially in protracted situations, inclusion in the national civil registration and vital statistics and identification systems of host countries is often preferable if specific protection concerns are considered and addressed from the onset (United Nations Development Programme, 2020). Alternatively, the National Identification and Registration Authority and the Office of the Prime Minister should explore pathways to interoperability among existing civil registration and identity management systems that allow for data exchange, assignment of a unique identity number at birth through the identification and civil registration systems, and shared infrastructure.

Recommendation 2

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and relevant stakeholders should fast-track the finalization of the country's migration policy. The legislation currently governing migration in Uganda is fragmented, and, without a comprehensive policy or framework to guide migration governance, there will be limited transparency in rules and regulations pertaining to emigration and immigration. Existing legislation focused on the rights of citizens of Uganda working abroad should be strengthened to also address the rights of immigrants living in Uganda.

Recommendation 3

The Office of the Prime Minister, in coordination with development partners, should develop an effective communication strategy, which is crucial for improving refugee and migrant registration by increasing awareness, addressing barriers, building trust within migrant communities and ensuring that migrants understand the value of identity documents. In addition, development partners should support the National Identification and Registration Authority in scaling up community awareness-raising and behaviour-change campaigns focused on increasing demand for the civil registration of vital events (birth, death, marriage, divorce and certification services). For instance, to boost demand for birth registration, the process can be aligned with such cultural norms as naming a child after baptism.

Recommendation 4

The Office of the Prime Minister should fast-track the adoption of mobile registration services for refugees and migrants in remote or inaccessible areas. This will help to mitigate the risks faced by unregistered migrants by bringing service points closer to communities and using innovative solutions, such as technology and mobile services, to reduce travel costs, especially when the civil registry is centralized and district offices are located far from vulnerable communities.

Recommendation 5

The Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs and the Uganda Human Rights Commission should fast-track the ratification by Uganda of the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights Relating to the Specific Aspects of the Right to a Nationality and the Eradication of Statelessness in Africa.

Recommendation 6

The National Identification and Registration Authority and the National Information Technology Authority should strengthen the interoperability of civil registration, vital statistics and identity management systems through digitalization. Advancing the digitalization of the legal identity system increases the efficiency of the personal authentication process. Consideration should be given to the design of regulatory frameworks for data privacy and the deployment of strong security safeguards. In addition, the civil registration and national identification systems, both under the National Identification and Registration Authority, are not currently electronically linked. This linkage needs to be accomplished.

Recommendation 7

The Ministry of Internal Affairs should strengthen its collaboration with civil society organizations to further boost the uptake of civil registration in Uganda. A stronger partnership will enable the pooling of expertise, streamline processes, facilitate data collection and sharing, and enhance the effectiveness and inclusivity of identity management systems. Civil society should also increase its outreach campaigns to raise awareness about civil registration.

Recommendation 8

The Government and development partners should scale up capacity-building efforts to enhance the abilities of personnel involved in civil registration and vital statistics, in particular with regard to data-collection and management skills. With regard to improving civil registration and vital statistics systems, there is a need for capacity-building support to shift from a fragmented and ad hoc approach to a more holistic and integrated one. Capacity-building could take the form of train-the-trainer programmes targeting registration officials, including health officials (e.g., Ministry of Health registrars), to improve their ability to perform registration functions. Capacity-building should also be provided to all vital statistics personnel in the Uganda Bureau of Statistics. This effort could be complemented by supporting the country to budget for cascade training for at lower administrative levels.

Recommendation 9

The Government should adopt a people-centred and human rights-based approach to “leave no one behind”, especially vulnerable and irregular migrants, to ensure that everyone within the territory of Uganda has a legal identity and can enjoy their fundamental human rights, including access to services. In addition, the Government should strengthen existing frameworks for data protection to ensure appropriate safeguards in a domain intrinsically linked to data protection and fundamental freedoms and rights.

Recommendation 10

The Government should adopt a “do no harm” approach as the foundation for implementing an inclusive legal identity system and enhance the protection of privacy and personal data to

uphold the human dignity and well-being of migrants, avoiding their exposure to additional risks. The Government should reiterate its commitment to maintaining the confidentiality of civil registration and identity management data and ensure that this commitment to personal data confidentiality is embedded in civil registration law, with punitive measures for registration staff who fail to comply. A genuine assurance from the Government to uphold these commitments could improve the demand for registration services.

Recommendation 11

To advance reliable vital statistics, the Uganda Bureau of Statistics, in liaison with the National Identification and Registration Authority, should advocate, establish, operate and maintain a population register that is based on an unambiguous legal mandate, for administrative and statistical purposes. This effort can be strengthened through collaboration with relevant stakeholders to deploy innovative methods that enforce the mandatory requirement for universal recording of all vital events occurring in Uganda, primarily births and deaths.

Recommendation 12

International cooperation with such entities as the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, the East African Community, the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa and the Southern African Development Community is necessary to streamline the identities of persons within the borders of Uganda through formal agreements to trace and identify migrants, facilitate information-sharing among countries, and harness the interoperability of identity management systems within regional economic communities.

VII. References

Africa Center for Strategic Studies (2022). Record 36 million Africans forcibly displaced, 19 July.

African Development Bank (2022). Security, investment and development: a diagnostic assessment. Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire.

African Union (2022). AU interoperability framework for digital identification. Addis Ababa.

Agaya, Martin (2021). FI4R diaries round I insights: linking refugees to formal financial services. *Financial Sector Deepening-Uganda*, 31 March.

Anderson, Lezanne, Rashid Muhammad and Masiwa Rusare (2022). Enhancing identity verification for refugees in Uganda. *Cenfri*, 21 October.

Anglophone Africa Workshop on Birth Registration (2002). Revitalization of birth registration in Uganda: country paper. Kampala, 21–24 October. Available at https://unstats.un.org/wiki/download/attachments/106499699/Revitalization%20of%20Birth%20Registration_Uganda.pdf?api=v2.

BFA Global (2020). *Grit, Skills and Luck: Examining the Financial Lives of Refugees in Uganda*. Kampala: Financial Sector Deepening Uganda.

Bosman, Isabel (2023). Digital identification and biometrics in East Africa: opportunities and concerns. Briefing No. 282. Johannesburg, South Africa: South African Institute of International Affairs, Policy.

Canada, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (2009). The Ugandan refugee identity card, the rights and obligations of a holder of this card, whether possession of the card is evidence of refugee status whether the status granted by this card must be renewed or can be cancelled, whether the card allows a person to live permanently in Uganda, to exit and re-enter Uganda, to work, to study, and to access social services. Available at <https://webarchive.archive.unhcr.org/20230521083151/https://www.refworld.org/docid/4a7040a528.html>.

Center for Human Rights and Global Justice (2021). False promises and multiple exclusion: summary of our RightsCon event on Uganda's national digital ID system. Available at <https://chrj.org/2021-06-12-rightscon-event-uganda-national-digital-id-system/>.

Chakraborty, Roshni, and Jacqueline Bhabha (2021). Fault lines of refugee exclusion: statelessness, gender and COVID-19 in South Asia. *Health Human Rights*, vol. 23, No. 1 (June), pp. 237–250.

Davie, Matthew, and Lev Plaves (2019). How digital identity can help end the financial exclusion of refugees. Available at www.unhcr.org/idecosystem/wp-content/uploads/sites/69/2019/06/KIVA_-How-Digital-Identity-Can-Help-End-the-Financial-Exclusion-of-Refugees.pdf.

Economic Commission for Africa (2022). Progress made in the implementation of the recommendations made at the fifth session of the Conference of African Ministers Responsible for Civil Registration. Addis Ababa, 24–28 October.

European Commission (2025). European civil protection and humanitarian aid operations: Uganda. 14 April.

Frelick, Bill, and Maureen Lynch (2005). Statelessness: a forgotten human rights crisis. *Forced Migration Review*, No. 24 (November), pp. 65–66.

Graff, Anna (2020). Birth registration affects life. United Nations Development Programme, 5 February.

Grant Thornton (2021). Data protection and privacy act of Uganda, 2019: the implications to your organization. Available at www.gtuganda.co.ug/globalassets/1.-member-firms/uganda/media/pdf-documents/data-protection-and-privacy-act-of-uganda.pdf.

Global System for Mobile Communications Association (2019). Digital identity country profile: Uganda. Available at www.gsma.com/mobilefordevelopment/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Digital-Identity-Country-Report-Uganda.pdf.

Gumisiriza, Pius (2019). Challenges and emerging issues affecting the management of refugees in Uganda. *The Ugandan Journal Of Management And Public Policy Studies*, vol. 15 (No. 1), pp. 40–54.

Harbitz, Mia, and Maria del Carmen Tamargo (2009). The significance of legal identity in situations of poverty and social exclusion: the link between gender, ethnicity, and legal identity. Technical Note (November). Washington, D.C.: Inter-American Development Bank.

Human Rights Watch (2002). Refugee status determination in Uganda. Available at www.hrw.org/reports/2002/kenyugan/kenyugan1002%20ap%20alter-14.htm.

International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (2023). *Refugees from Generation to Generation: Preventing Statelessness by Advancing Durable Solutions in the Great Lakes Region*. Bujumbura, Burundi.

International Development Research Centre (2019a). Snapshot of civil registration and vital statistics systems of Uganda. Available at https://apai-crvs.uneca.org/sites/default/files/resourcefiles/CRVS_UgandaSnapshot_e.pdf.

_____(2019b). Refugees are more vulnerable without civil registration and Identification: how can we help? Available at <https://crvssystems.ca/blog/refugees-are-more-vulnerable-without-civil-registration-and-id-how-can-we-help>.

International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (2021). *Digital Identity: Enabling Dignified Access to Humanitarian Services in Migration*. Geneva.

International Labour Organization (2023). *Review of National Policy, Legislative and Regulatory Frameworks and Practice in Uganda: A Baseline Study on the Right to Work and Rights at Work for Refugees*. Geneva.

International Organization for Migration (2018). Migration governance snapshot: the Republic of Uganda. Available at www.migrationdataportal.org/sites/g/files/tmzbdl251/files/2018-05/MGI%20report%20Uganda_0.pdf.

_____(2021a). IOM institutional strategy on legal identity. Geneva.

_____(2021b). *Mapping of Migration Policies in the East and Horn of Africa*. Geneva.

_____(n.d.). Irregular migration and identity: more than just documents. Available at <https://rosanjose.iom.int/en/blogs/irregular-migration-and-identity-more-just-documents> (accessed on 14 March 2024).

International Organization for Migration Development Fund (2023). Enhancing access to legal identity for migrants: IOM's commitment to "legal identity for all", 25 October.

Japan International Cooperation Agency (2022). *Data Collection Survey on Refugee-Related Business and Social Investment*. Available at <https://openjicareport.jica.go.jp/pdf/1000047520.pdf>.

Kamurungi, Elizabeth (2024a). NIRA given mandate to conduct civil marriages. *Monitor*, 19 April.

_____(2024b). Registration for upgraded national Identifications to start June 2024. *Daily Monitor Newspaper*, Kampala, Uganda.

Legido-Quigley, Helena, and others (2019). Healthcare is not universal if undocumented migrants are excluded. *The British Medical Journal*, vol. 366, No.14160 (September).

Lindrio, Patricia (2023). Safe but sidelined: qualified refugees are being turned away from jobs in Uganda. *Global Press Journal*, 2 October.

Lutwama, Joseph S., and Brenda Banura (2023). Refugees and financial freedom: not yet Uhuru. *Financial Sector Deepening Uganda*, 17 August.

Maastricht Graduate School of Governance (2017). Uganda Migration Profile: Study on Migration Routes in the East and Horn of Africa.

Macrotrends (n.d.). Uganda refugee statistics. Available at www.macrotrends.net/global-metrics/countries/uga/uganda/refugee-statistics (accessed on 5 February 2024).

Mills, Samuel, Jane K. Lee and Bahie M. Rassekh (2019). Benefits of linking civil registration and vital statistics with identity management systems for measuring and achieving Sustainable Development Goal 3 indicators. *Journal of Health and Population Nutrition*, vol. 38, No. 18 (Supplement 1): 18.

Mugerwa-Sekawabe, Muyenga (2021). Increasing access to education for refugees in Uganda. *Law Democracy and Development*, vol. 25 (January) pp. 1–29 (January).

Munyoka, Elvis (2023). Investigating the role of identity documents in refugees' access to education in South Africa. *South African Journal of Policy and Development*, vol.7, No. 1 (June), Article 3.

National Identification and Registration Authority (2019). *Handbook for Birth Registration in Uganda*. Kampala.

_____(2021a). Facts about NIRA. Available at www.nira.go.ug/publications/facts-about-nira.

_____(2021b). How to register births and deaths. Available at www.nira.go.ug/media/2021/09/How-to-register-Births-and-Deaths.pdf.

_____(2021c). How to register for a national identification. Available at www.nira.go.ug/media/2021/09/A2-Poster-How-to-register-for-a-National-Identification-1.pdf.

_____(2022a). A handbook on birth registration. Available at www.nira.go.ug/media/2022/11/BIRTH-REGISTRATION-HANDBOOK-Final.pdf.

_____(2022b). A handbook on death registration. Available at www.nira.go.ug/media/2022/11/DEATH-REGISTRATION-HANDBOOK-final.pdf.

NewVision (2023). New refugee appeals board tasked on accumulated cases, 22 September.

Norwegian Refugee Council (2018). *Refugee Status Determination: A Study of the Process in Uganda*. Oslo.

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (2010). *Handbook for the Protection of Internally Displaced Persons*. Geneva.

_____(2014). *Protection of Refugee Children in the Middle East and North Africa*. Available at www.refworld.org/reference/regionalreport/unhcr/2014/en/108428.

_____(2016). Submission by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights' Compilation Report Universal Periodic Review: 2nd Cycle, 26th Session – Uganda. Available at www.refworld.org/policy/upr/unhcr/2016/en/119221.

_____(2018). Implementing registration within an identity management framework. Available at www.unhcr.org/registration-guidance/chapter5/documentation/.

_____(2021a). Ending statelessness: background guide. Available at www.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/legacy-pdf/61a0fed94.pdf.

_____(2021b). Inputs on OHCHR report on good practices and challenges in using the guidelines on participation UNHCR – stateless section. Available at www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2022-01/UNHCR.doc.

_____(2022). Detention prevention and response. 22 November. Available at <https://reliefweb.int/report/egypt/unhcr-egypt-detention-prevention-and-response-november-2022>.

Peters, Guy (2016). Civil registration and vital statistics as a tool to improve public management. Discussion Paper, No. IDB-DP-473. Washington, D.C.: Inter-American Development Bank.

Pistelli, Micol (2023). Gaining ground on refugee financial inclusion through advocacy, innovation and partnerships. Available at www.unhcr.org/blogs/gaining-ground-on-refugee-financial-inclusion-through-advocacy-innovation-and-partnerships/.

Plan International (2020). *Investment Case for Birth Registration in Kenya*. Nairobi.

Raposo, Vera Lúcia, and Teresa Violante (2021). Access to health care by migrants with precarious status during a health crisis: some insights from Portugal. *Human Rights Review*, vol. 22, No. 4 (May), pp. 459–482.

Refugee Council of Australia (2020). Identity documents for refugee. Available at www.refugeecouncil.org.au/identity-documentation/.

Sharpe, Marina, and Salima Namusobya (2012). Refugee status determination and the rights of recognized refugees under Uganda's Refugees Act 2006. *International Journal of Refugee Law*, vol. 24, No. 3, pp. 561–578.

Uganda (1904). Marriage Act, chap. 146.

_____ (2006). The Refugees Act, 2006. *The Uganda Gazette*, vol. XCVIX, No. 47 (4 August).

Uganda Bureau of Statistics (2016). *The National Population and Housing Census 2014: Main Report*. Kampala.

_____ (2021). *Statistical Abstract 2021*. Kampala.

_____ (2023). *Statistical Abstract 2023*. Kampala.

Uganda, Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (2020). *Jobs and Livelihoods Integrated Response Plan for Refugees and Host Communities in Uganda*. Kampala.

Uganda, Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs (2012). Draft Uganda civil registration policy. Kampala: Uganda Registration Services Bureau.

Uganda, Office of the Prime Minister (2017). Comprehensive refugee response framework: Uganda – the way forward. Available at <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/63266>.

_____ (2018). The comprehensive refugee response framework: annual report 2018. Available at <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/74395>.

Uganda, Office of the Prime Minister, and others (2023). *Uganda Country Refugee Response Plan: Detailed Planning 2024–2025*. Available at <https://data.unhcr.org/es/documents/download/106734>.

United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2014). *Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System: Revision 3*. Statistical Statistics Division Statistical Papers, Series M. No. 19/Rev.3.

_____ (2021). *Handbook on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems*. Available at <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic-social/Standards-and-Methods/files/Handbooks/crvs/crvs-mgt-E.pdf>.

_____. (2022). *Handbook on Civil Registration, Vital Statistics and Identity Management Systems: Communication for Development*.

United Nations Children's Fund (2008). Birth registration and the rights of the child. Available at www.europarl.europa.eu/cmsdata/180175/20080304ATT22808EN.pdf.

_____. (2019a). *Synthesis Report: Review of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Innovations in Eastern and Southern Africa Region – Digitization, processes, and strategies*. New York.

_____. (2019b). Birth registration for every child by 2030: are we on track? New York.

_____. (2022). Uganda Annual Report 2022.

United Nations Development Programme (2020). Project document: legal identity for all. Available at https://info.undp.org/docs/pdc/Documents/H70/00121856%20signed%20prod%20Legal%20Identity%20for%20All_JPN.docx.pdf.

_____. (2023). Mitigating security risks to Africa's informal cross border trade through e-commerce: issues, challenges and prospects. Nairobi: Africa Borderlands Centre.

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (2019). Enforcing the right to education of refugees: a policy perspective. Working Papers on Education Policy, vol. 8, No 16. Paris.

United Nations Legal Identity Expert Group (2019). United Nations strategy for legal identity for all. Available at <https://unstats.un.org/legal-identity-agenda/documents/UN-Strategy-for-LIA.pdf>.

_____. (2020). *Implementation of the United Nations Legal Identity Agenda: United Nations Country Team Operational Guidelines*. Available at https://unstats.un.org/legal-identity-agenda/documents/UNCT_Guidelines.pdf.

URN (2022). Uganda suspends labour export agreement with Saudi Arabia over torture. *The Observer*. 27 December.

Wilson, Anne P. (2011). Trafficking risks for refugees. Available at <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1003&context=humtraffconf3#:~:text=Without%20documents%20or%20legal%20authorization,all%20kinds%2C%20including%20human%20trafficking>.

World Bank (2018a). *ID4D Country Diagnostic: Uganda*. Washington, D.C.

_____. (2018b). Study of options for mutual recognition of national identifications in the East African Community. Available at <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/337501535031584335/pdf/129621-ACS.pdf>.

_____. (2019). *ID4D: The Practitioner's Guide: Version 1.0*. Washington D.C.

Yahya, Maha, Jean Kassir and Khalil El-Hariri (2018). Unheard voices: what Syrian refugees need to return home. Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

Zakaryan, Tigranna (2019). Report on citizenship law: Uganda. Available at https://cadmus.eui.eu/bitstream/handle/1814/62485/RSCAS_GLOBALCIT_CR_2019_05.pdf

Zetter, Roger, and Héloïse Ruaudel (2018). Refugees' right to work and access to labour markets: constraints, challenges and ways forward. *Former Migration Review*, no. 58 (June), pp. 4–7.