UNDP

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1st Government Forum on Electronic Identity in Africa

Electronic identity in the Service of democratic Elections in Africa

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Niall McCann

Lead Electoral Advisor UNDP

United Nations Development Programme

- The UN' global development organization;

- Provides expert advice, training, and grant support, with increasing emphasis on least developed countries;

- Focuses on poverty reduction, HIV/AIDS, democratic governance, energy and environment, social development, and crisis prevention and recovery;

- Has offices in 177 countries, and works with national and local governments to meet development challenges and to strengthen local capacities.

UNDP & Elections

- An average of **about 65 countries** per year receive some form of electoral assistance from UNDP.

- Assistance is provided under the political lead of the USG for Political Affairs

Focus of UNDP's Electoral Assistance

- Strengthening the capacities of independent and permanent electoral management bodies (EMBs);
- Support civic outreach and voter education;
- Prevent electoral violence and support peaceful transitions;
- Promote legal reform;
- Promote women´s participation as voters, candidates and EMB staff;
- Encourage political participation of vulnerable and marginalized groups (youth, women, persons with disabilities, minorities);
- Coordinate electoral assistance and facilitate South-South Cooperation.

UNDP Electoral Assistance and biometrics

- Support to EMBs often includes **voter registration**;
- UNDP's Procurement Support Office (PSO) in Copenhagen – as part of its programme of delivery of UN electoral assistance – has procured **digital voter registration systems that capture biometric features** on behalf of national partner electoral management bodies (2008-2013)
  - Contracts range from USD 0.6m to 12m
  - Total amount sums up to approximately USD 50m
  - BVR were purchased for 9 countries (3 in Asia and 6 in Africa).

Advantage of BVR Systems

- Biometric voter registration systems – *if implemented properly*:
  - can **assist** in the detection of multiple registrants *(particularly important in countries with poorly developed population registration ('civil registry') systems)*
  - can boost public confidence in the accuracy of a voter register;
  - can facilitate further data analysis, and further use, for other population registration needs.

UN Policy on high-tech VR solutions

- SG has raised sustainability concerns about high-tech VR solutions in developing countries, e.g.:
  - reliance on foreign technology companies (e.g. proprietary software => 'vendor lock').
  - high financial cost/difficulty of long-term domestic financing of BVR, under-calculation of diffuse costs.
  - capacity of national EMBs to take over BVR operation.
  - Complacency – neglect of other methods to boost confidence? e.g. party agents/observers/indelible ink.
  - *better technology does not always make for better elections;*
  - *Good elections require political will.*

UN Policy on high-tech VR solutions

- There is no silver bullet to voter registration problems. Biometric VR is not a panacea!

- *"If you think biometrics will solve your VR problems, then you don't understand biometrics and you don't understand your VR problems."*

- **Decision to introduce biometric voter registration should be in accordance with national needs and financial capacities, using thorough and independent feasibility studies.**

UN Policy on high-tech VR solutions

- *BVR helps detect multiple registrants. Why?*

- ***Underdeveloped population registration systems*** *allow the possibility for either a) no official identity, or b) multiple identities.*

- *NB – BVR systems help identify if someone registered more than once,* **but they do nothing to determine who a person actually is***. This is an* **under-recognized limitation of BVR systems.**

- **Move from paper-based population registration, to digital/biometric registration, can, in cases, mean moving from a low-tech fake identity, to a high-tech fake identity.**
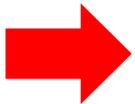
UN Position on biometric crossover to other population registrations

- BVR equipment procured via electoral projects can be very useful for initiatives such as national ID cards;
- <u>The adequate legislative frameworks must be in place;</u>
- There should not be an unnecessary burden on electoral management bodies;
- Electoral projects are the most appropriate mechanism for the UN to support such initiatives, if requested
- *The responsibility to ensure accurate population registers is ultimately with different state entities*
- *Each country need a holistic vision on identity management.*

UN & Identity Management (I)

- UNDP currently supporting such national ID card systems in, for example, Afghanistan, Moldova, Zambia, Malawi, Sierra Leone.

- Identification is basic to many of the rights set out in the UN Declaration on Human Rights and the Convention of the Rights of the Child.

- They include rights to: a name, an identity with family ties, nationality, recognition before the law.

UN & Identity Management (II)

- No established principles/policies within the UN system – no one UN agency 'holds the pen'
- UN/UNDP is not against **responsible** collection and use of biometric data, which *includes* adequate legislative frameworks to ensure that:
    - *biometric data is protected and not misused;*
    - *traditional, paper-based methods of identity management retain legal primacy alongside biometric-based digital identities;*
    - *citizens are informed about the kind of biometric data held on them and the purpose for doing so;*
    - *national capacity is developed.*

Challenges of data collection, management and storage

- Ethnic profiling
- Identity fraud or abuse of data
- Exclusion
- Big Brother-style "control"
- Single point of failure "infecting" other systems
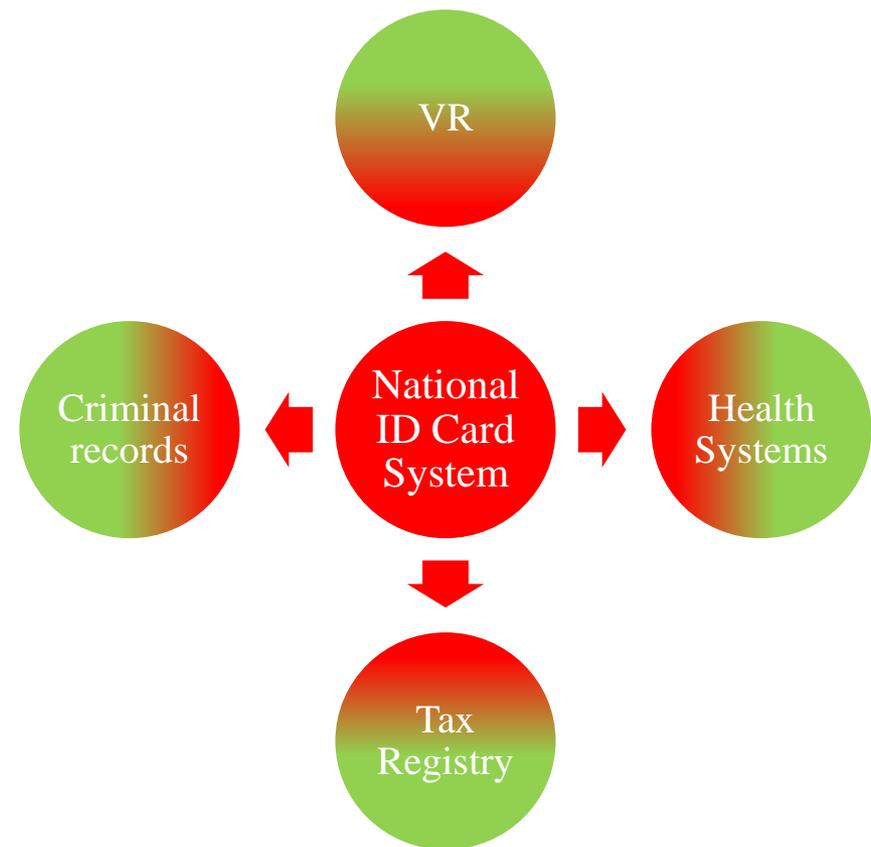
Conclusion (I)

- High-tech equipment cannot substitute for the lack of essential documents (e.g. birth certificates and passports) which establish legal identity and citizenship;

- The impact of biometric identification systems depends largely on the political, technological, and legal context in which it is used;

- In several cases, biometric technology has been costly but ineffective (due to mismanagement or lack of capacities)

- Evidence suggests that despite some advantages—using biometrics for periodic voter registration may impose more costs than benefits (especially in complex environments).

Conclusion (II)

- No generic approach to digital identity management: identity management approaches are culture-specific and experiences/approaches cannot be easily transferred from one country to another;

- Technology is neutral; it opens up new possibilities that can be used for good or for ill.

- The utility and morality of identity systems and technologies depend on context, usage and need.