Background
In order to increase awareness of the importance of making every one in Africa visible through a well-functioning Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) system covering the entire population and all vital events occurring in the different countries, the 4th Conference of Ministers responsible for civil registration and vital statistics declared 10th of August to be Africa Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Day and advised African Union member states to observe the day.

The African Union Executive Council during their 32nd Ordinary Session endorsed the recommendation and in this regard the first CRVS day was commemorated in 2018 under the theme “Promoting Innovation: Universal Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems for Good Governance and Better Lives”.

Uganda proudly joins the rest of Africa to mark the Second Africa CRVS Day today the 10th August 2019, under the theme “Birth Certificates for All—Protecting Human Rights and Promoting Inclusion”.

Birth registration is considered every child’s ‘first right’, as enshrined in both the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child as well as the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. In addition, Article 18 of the Constitution of the Republic of Uganda, 1995, states that the State shall register all births and deaths occurring in the country.

The National Identification and Registration Authority (NIRA) was established by the Registration of Persons Act (ROPA) 2015 and mandated to among other things register all births and deaths occurring in Uganda and issue birth and death certificates.

Registering a birth and issuing a birth certificate protects the human rights of a child by giving them the first official and legal identity of their own, confirms the legal relationship with the parents as well as establishing citizenship and nationality.

The lack of birth registration exposes children to the increased risk of vulnerability to exploitation, child marriages, child trafficking, child labour, parental neglect, loss of inheritance rights in the case of the death of a parent. Similarly, children in conflict or conflict with the law are equally exposed to being prosecuted and sentenced as adults in the judicial system.

This Year’s Activities – August 2019
In commemoration of the day, NIRA has commenced a series of activities aimed at registering birth and issuing birth certificates in collaboration with key stakeholders in Government namely Ministry of Health and Ministry of Local Government and major supporting development partners including the Justice, Law and Order Sector (JLOS), World Bank and UNICEF.

In line with the 2019 theme, district level stakeholder engagements and outreaches targeting the registration of births and issuance of birth certificates in under-served and hard to reach areas of Uganda have commenced in the Districts of Mukono (Bukwama Island), Bundibugyo, Moroto, Yumbe and Oyam. These activities will close at the end of August.

The Status of BDR in Uganda
In Uganda 32% of children aged 5 years and below have had their birth registered according to the Uganda Demographic and Health Survey (UDHS 2016) and 7.1% process a birth certificate (2014 NPHC). This implies that approximately 68% of children aged 5 years and below, including those born to refugee parents, remain unregistered. The ROPA 2015, recognizes civil registration as a critical and foundational element of the national identification system as illustrated in the diagram below.

In an effort to improve birth and death registration service delivery, NIRA has prioritized the following interventions:

- Gearing efforts towards leveraging resources to support strengthening of the enabling environment through development and implementation of a CRVS policy and costed strategic plan in order to provide overarching guidance and direction to CRVS implementation.
- Strengthening the multi-sectoral CRVS coordination mechanisms at national and sub-national level is also a key strategy where NIRA will build partnerships with other agencies as well as cultural and religious institutions and development partners to support and integrate civil registration service delivery and or interventions.
- Specialized capacity building trainings to all duty bearers (District Planners, Hospital birth registration focal points, Records Officers, and Sub County Chiefs etc) across the country has commenced. These trainings are focused on the specific tasks that the duty bearers are expected to carry out as well as the usage of the Birth and Death Registration (BDR) tools.
- To increase the demand for registration services including birth registration, NIRA is developing a comprehensive and coherent Communication Strategy that will provide a strategic framework for managing and coordinating the communications function in the institution and strengthening NIRA’s capacity to effectively deliver on all aspects of civil registration.

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