



PRESS STATEMENT

RESPONSE TO THE SUNDAY VISION ARTICLE ALLEGING FORGERY IN NATIONAL ID REGISTRATION PROCESSES

DATED: 5TH May 2019

Our attention has been drawn to an investigative report published in the Sunday Vision of May 5th 2019 under the title "For Sh. 100,000 you can buy Ugandan Citizenship". The report raises a number of allegations, inter alia, that there is forgery and bribery in the national ID registration process.

As a matter of fact, citizenship of Uganda is conferred under Chapter Three of the 1995 Constitution of the Republic of Uganda which stipulates the various forms of citizenship and who qualifies for each type. It can therefore never be sold.

We also wish to state, that the Government of Uganda has made huge investments in setting up the National Identification System in the country starting with the mass enrolment of Ugandans in 2014 and issuance of the first ever national IDs in 2015 under the National Security Information System Project and that established the National Security Information System (NSIS). The project was a huge success and has been hailed as one of the best in Africa by credible institutions like the World Bank.

Consequently, the Uganda National ID has been internationally accepted as a credible security document that is now even used as a travel document through international airports and across borders in the region. In addition, the national register where the biodata of all the individuals registered is kept has been accepted as an authentic primary source of information and identification of individuals and therefore there is a growing demand from both public and private institutions to access the information for validation purposes.

Equally, there is also growing pressure from all those persons previously not registered to do so and obtain national IDs. This increased demand puts a lot of pressure on the NIRA resources, both human and others. However, the personnel in the organisation have been and continue to work tirelessly, often under extreme conditions to offer the much desired services.

Whereas the Authority appreciates constructive criticism aimed at improving the system and registration processes, we take strong exception to the story that is neither based on fact nor in any way provides information that would improve the process of registration. Rather it is a gross misrepresentation of the registration processes and procedures and more than anything aims to undermine the credibility of the registration process and therefore the data in the National Identification Register.

In the overzealous effort to present fact of corruption and forgery, the report completely fails to examine the entire process of registration, from the point of application, through review of supporting documents, enrolment on the registration kit, data transfer to the central data processing system, actual data processing, citizenship verification, quality assurance, allocation of National Identification Numbers (NINs), personalization of data and finally production of an ID.

To further correct the misinformation in the article, citizenship verification (CV) and quality assurance (QC) of submitted data is done by a team of data processors at the NIRA Headquarters that are different and totally unknown to the people who do the enrolment in the field. It is therefore totally inaccurate to suggest that NINs are allocated at the enrolment stage as anyone who has gone through the process will testify.

However, we can take this opportunity to inform Ugandans about registration processes and clarify some of the issues alleged in the article as follows:

1. Payment of bribes as a means to quicken the process of acquiring an ID:

NIRA has in the recent past publicized the various services she offers, clearly indicating those that are free and those to be paid for and the attendant fees. In any case, a Registration Assistant handles the basic enrolment of persons which is the first stage of the process and does not therefore have the capacity to quicken the process of acquiring an ID as reported.

Further still, NIRA as a matter of policy has zero tolerance for corruption and has partnered with different law enforcement agencies including the Police, the Anti-Corruption Unit under the Office of the President and RDCs, to ensure that anyone identified is punished. In fact, in recent weeks at least 13 arrests have been made of conmen posing as NIRA officials in various parts of the country.

We wish to caution the public against making any attempts to offer bribes to NIRA officials as this may result in the prosecution of such individuals. We also encourage those that have fallen victim to immediately report such cases to NIRA or the Police.

2. Delays in processing national IDs: it currently takes between two to three months for one to register and obtain his or her ID. We therefore encourage those who wish to register in good time to avoid last minute panic that will often land them in the hands of conmen. Timely registration also allows for quick interventions where there may be issues with an application that need to be resolved. This also applies to those that lose their cards who should be aware of these timelines and should immediately report the loss and initiate the replacement process. We have often had individuals initiate the process six months after the loss and often when they need the card urgently.

3. Allegations that a one Abitex is a NIRA Officer in Namungo Sub-county, Mityana District: NIRA under the sub-county registration exercise engaged and deployed one Registration Assistant per sub-county on a temporary basis for a period of three months. The deployed Registration Assistant in Namungo sub-county is Mugarura Issa. We do not therefore have on our records any one individual by the name Abitex serving as an appointee of NIRA in that area as alleged in the story.

And if indeed the said Mugarura Issa endorsed on behalf of the DISO, that application and any other in that category from any part of the country will not pass the data processing stage. In addition, the purported "NIN" is also fake. In fact, the so-called investigative reporters may proceed to check the format of the alleged "NIN" against the actual NIN on their national ID since they already have one to establish whether they match. NIRA will however investigate further the actions of Mugarura Issa and institute corrective measures if he is found culpable.

4. Purported registration of foreigners: The report further alleges that some Rwandese and Congolese were being registered by changing names and hiring of parents. There is sadly no single evidence given, by way of a NIN to confirm that actually the people were registered. Accordingly, the reporter based on hearsay to make such a disparaging allegation. It should also be noted, that giving false information to a registration officer is a prosecutable offense under Section 76 of the Registration of Persons Act (ROPA) 2015. The public should therefore be informed that all information provided for registration constitutes a permanent record and can be retrieved at any time and used to prosecute individuals involved.

To give confidence to Ugandans, is that even if someone successfully registered using falsified documents, such an application will be rejected at data processing and citizenship verification where the information provided is carefully matched against the existing data in the national register.

We have however had cases of Ugandans who have innocently given their cards to support children registering for IDs where the parents of such children are not readily available or have not yet registered. We therefore strongly advise that no person should give his or her national ID to another for registration purposes as that amounts to an offense.

We also encourage any person with information where a non-Ugandan was registered to provide that information to NIRA so that appropriate action is taken as per Section 57 of the Act that confers powers to cancel a person from the National Register.

5. Collusion by LC Chairpersons and DISOs: On the issue the integrity of the other structures, i.e. the LCs and DISOs offices over which NIRA does not have direct control we are confident that the parent agencies will no doubt bring errant office bearers to account and NIRA will avail any information that comes to her attention to aid these agencies in their supervisory roles. NIRA also continuously engages these agencies about the criticality of their roles in the registration process and the fact that they could be prosecuted if they endorsed wrong information.

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