



LIEG SDG 3 TOOLKIT – Legal identity + Health & Well-being for All

WHAT IS LEGAL IDENTITY?

Legal identity is the legal recognition of the basic characteristics of an individual’s identity—e.g. name, sex, place and date of birth, family ties—by an authorized civil registration authority following a major life event (i.e. birth, marriage, divorce, adoption, death).

If a person is not registered at birth or given a birth certificate, they may be able to acquire a legal identity by a government issued or legally recognized identification authority, such as the case for some refugees or non-nationals.

THE UNITED NATIONS LEGAL IDENTITY AGENDA

The United Nations Legal Identity Agenda 2020- 2030 (UN LIA), backed by the Deputy Secretary-General, was launched as a One UN approach to support of Member States building holistic, country-owned, sustainable civil registration, vital statistics and identity management systems.

Building on existing systems and structures, these UN LIA’s efforts to reduce the global identity gap will be closely coordinated across shared value sectors in health and proven interventions aimed at accelerating progress towards Sustainable Development Goal target 16.9—*legal identity for all, including birth registration*—and SDG 17.19, which aims to support statistical capacity-building.

CALL FOR COMMITMENTS

High-level political commitment from Member States and sufficient support from the development community will be critical to reach the benchmark goal of *‘closing the global identity gap by 300 million by 2025.’*

A Multi-Partner Trust Fund will be launched in the margins of this year’s UN High-Level Political Forum and facilitate a cohesive approach across the UN system to respond to the requests for support from Member States to strengthen their legal identity policy and programming at the national, regional and global levels. This MPTF will allow major funding and development partners supporting efforts across the UN system to pool resources and maximize investments.

WHY LEGAL IDENTITY MATTERS IN THE CONTEXT OF GOOD HEALTH & WELL-BEING (SDG 3)

Well-functioning civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) systems are significantly associated with better health outcomes. SDG 3 aspires to fulfil the goal of good health and well-being for all—i.e. commitments to:

- end the preventable deaths of newborns & children under 5;
- halt AIDS & other communicable diseases;
- provide access to safe medicines & vaccines.

If successful, this would have an incalculable impact on children, saving millions of lives and allowing them to grow up to live healthy and productive lives.

However, one of the obstacles standing in the way of achieving SDG 3 is low birth and death registration and certification:

Without a birth certificate, or other forms of legal identity, **a child may not be able to access health care or services** in many countries, with serious implications for combating illness, injuries and disability.

Without death registration we do not know who, where or from what, people are dying, impeding the ability to provide life-saving interventions.

Registering births and deaths is critical to improving public health. Without an effective system to register births, deaths and causes of deaths, Governments miss out on vital information that can help to accurately monitor and respond to child health concerns.

Civil registration data can help to track progress towards SDG 3. Data from well- functioning CRVS systems— particularly related to birth and death registration—can help to measure progress towards seven SDG 3 targets and 23 indicators.

KEY MESSAGES

LEGAL IDENTITY FOR ALL: A GAME-CHANGER TO ACCELERATE PROGRESS

Legal identity—starting from birth—is game-changer for accelerating progress towards reaching the SDGs.

If we are to unlock the full potential of the world’s population, we must take a life-cycle approach to identity starting from birth and ending with death.

In many countries, lack of legal identity can lead to denial of even basic health care & services, which in turn feeds into a pervasive cycle of poverty and inequality.

Legal identity for all is not only the sustainable solution for closing the global identity gap, but the key to fulfilling the promise to “leave no one behind” and realizing in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

We cannot hope to fulfil our goal of universal health coverage for all without closing the global identity gap and ensuring we are truly leaving no one behind.

Mutually beneficial

- Increasing the number of children with birth certificates and a legal identity is linked to improving public health.
- The health sector plays a central role in strengthening birth registration.

This interlinkage makes building the partnership between health and civil registration authorities critical to all efforts to achieve SDG 3.

OBSTACLES TO CLOSING THE GLOBAL IDENTITY GAP & HOW IT NEGATIVELY IMPACTS INDIVIDUALS’ HEALTH & WELL-BEING

Potential barriers include:

- In many countries, no birth certificate means no access to health care and services.
- Low socio-economic status or household income? No access to essential health care & services.
- Without a birth certificate, children (and unregistered adults and adolescents) are at higher risk of being denied health services—especially women & girls in need of SRHR services.
- Without a legal identity, individuals are at risk of being denied life-saving medical care and cannot be immunized in 20 countries.
- No birth certificate means those orphaned by HIV/AIDS have more difficulty accessing inheritance, social services and monetary grants.
- Without a birth certificate, families may be denied access to health services, nutritional grants and ECD services.

Legislation must be reviewed and revised to combat discriminatory laws/policies restricting women’s ability to register their children at birth or access health services without their husband present.

Discrimination based on gender is a common barrier in many countries which, in conjunction with the negative effects a lack of legal identity, entails:

- No marriage certificate? No birth registration for your child.

- Single mother or mother in an unrecognized union? No birth registration for your child—plus, the potential shame/stigma for trying to register a child as a single mother.
- Father not present? No birth registration for your child.
- Female sex workers and trafficked girls may be denied access to treatment and general health care without proof of legal identity.

POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS AND INNOVATIONS FOR CLOSING THIS IDENTITY GAP

Through innovation and investment in research for sustainable, effective solutions, we can drive progress to close the global identity gap and ensure universal health coverage for all.

We cannot measure annual progress without secure, consistent data collection from vital statistics collected by public health programs at all levels. By registering births and deaths, we can better calculate health indicators, e.g. life expectancy, fertility, mortality rates/ratios and causes of death.

INCREASE ACCESS AT THE LOCAL LEVEL—How to integrate birth registration into health services globally:

By integrating birth registration systems with health services, we can remove obstacles to access and increase awareness from day one for families and individuals.

Examples of health care and services:

Immunization: Immunization services can provide legal identity as part of health system & immunization strengthening (HSIS). Linking birth notification/birth registration with immunization registries creates a holistic picture of countries' populations and aid in service delivery planning/evaluation.

HIV interventions: Civil registration is critical to comprehensive population data on mortality rates and causes of death. This is critical to design, plan and program effective HIV interventions, and other health programs.

Nutrition: Birth certificates help facilitate data collection of nutritional rates as a reliable source of a child's age.

Training & certifying community health workers—including midwives & birth attendants—**can help improve civil registration (recording births and deaths) by minimizing the geographic barriers** that often impede access—through:

- increasing registration site locations, i.e. hospitals and schools;
- reaching rural and remote populations; and
- increasing access through innovative technology, e.g. SMS and mobile phone registration.

COMBAT GENDER INEQUALITY

Registration of legal identity is critical to measuring SDG Target 3.1—*to reduce the global maternal mortality ratio to less than 70 per 100 000 live births*—through adequate CRVS systems.

Birth registration provides legal documentation needed to protect against child marriage, which is often correlated with early pregnancies and childbearing.

Children whose births and deaths are not registered are missed from CRVS systems, leading to under-estimations of newborn and child mortality.

National legislation restricting women's ability to register their children at birth or access health services without their husband present must be reviewed and revised.

Adequate civil registration stats are paramount to calculate violent deaths stats for young girls.

SUGGESTED SOCIAL MEDIA MESSAGING

Women are often primary caregivers for their children's #health & #education. Without a #legalidentity, both mothers & their children are at higher risk of being denied access to exercise their rights & protections.

Innovation & investment in research for sustainable, effective solutions are key to drive progress towards closing the global #identity gap & ensure #UHC for all. #Legalidentity & #HealthforAll

Secure, consistent #data collection by #publichealth programs at all levels is critical to measure annual progress. #legalidentity

By registering births and deaths, we can better calculate #health indicators, i.e. life expectancy, fertility, mortality rates/ratios & causes of death. #legalidentity

Without a #birthcertificate, children can't be enrolled in school or get vaccinated in some countries. Everyone deserves the opportunity for a better, healthier future.

When we invest in training local #health workers to provide #legalidentity to their communities, we drive progress to close the global identity gap & leave no one behind.

Newborns are least likely to be registered at birth & even fewer have a birth certificate. This means they're at risk of being denied:

- ⊗ life-saving medical care such as;
- ⊗ immunization in over 20 countries;
- ⊗ health care in 10 countries in sub-Saharan Africa.

A healthy start #foreverychild.

By linking immunization programs with national registration systems, we can significantly increase birth certification and registration. #legalidentity

A #legalidentity is a life-long passport for children to access their rights—including:

- ✓ #healthcare
- ✓ #education
- ✓ #protection from child labor, marriage & trafficking.

A bright future & #healthforall.

Community & religious leaders can play an important role to raise awareness & improve access to #legalidentity for all.

#Legalidentity for all means everyone has the right to:

- ✓ access health care
- ✓ go to school
- ✓ receive social services

#DYK About 3 out of 4 infants in #SubSaharanAfrica do not have a birth certificate, may be denied access to healthcare, immunization.

A #legalidentity, #foreverychild.