

The Identity Target in the Post-2015 Development Agenda

Enabling Access to Services for All

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Robust personal identification (ID) systems are critical to the success of many development programs. Regardless of the methods used, official ID for all—together with the legal, political, and economic rights it confers—is becoming a priority for governments around the world. Legal ID is on the post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) agenda as SDG target 16.9, urging states to ensure that all have free or low-cost access to widely accepted, robust identity credentials. The international community should join forces to achieve this goal, as attaining it will also be a key enabler of many other SDGs.



About 2.4 billion people in the world today lack official identification (ID), including children up to the age of 14 whose birth has never been registered and many women in poor rural areas of Africa and Asia. SDG 16.9 aims to “provide legal identity to all, including birth registration, by 2030,” and represents the first time that documenting identity has been officially stated as a global goal.

Legal identity is a fundamental human right, and providing it to the disenfranchised is also instrumental in achieving many of the other SDGs.

The Identity Target and Other SDGs

Providing robust means of identification (SDG 16.9) to all who now lack legal ID will fundamentally support the achievement of at least 10 other SDGs in the following areas:

- Social protection, including for the most vulnerable (SDG 1.3)

- Assistance in dealing with shocks and disasters (SDG 1.5)
- Access of the poor to economic resources, including property and finance (SDG 1.4)
- Empowerment of women (SDG 5a and 5b)
- Ending preventable deaths of newborns (SDG 3.2)
- Improving energy efficiency and eliminating harmful energy subsidies (SDG 12c)
- Reducing remittance costs (SDG 10c)
- Reducing corruption (SDG 16.5) and fighting crime and terrorism (SDG 16a)

The range of these development goals demonstrates ID’s immense practical importance. A person lacking ID suffers legal, political, social, and economic exclusion. Traditional, typically paper-based forms of ID are difficult to extend to poor or isolated populations. But in the developing world, enormous gains can be obtained from extending services and opportunities to all in new ways, such as using digitally based mobile platforms to regis-

ter for, and access, legal ID (see *Connections* Note 13, “Digital IDs for Development”). A traditional birth certificate is a start but is often not enough for all purposes.

International Support for the Identity Target

Accomplishing the Sustainable Development Goals requires making the best use of every dollar from every source—including knowing who has received services and tracking with precision where, when, and to whom transfers and payments have been made. That cannot be done without establishing a unique identifier for each beneficiary.

World Bank Efforts

Last year, the World Bank Group launched its Identification for Development (ID4D) program to address SDG 16.9 in a more integrated and multisector way. The program aims to build new alliances and reshape existing development strategies.

The World Bank has engaged with a number of partners—including UNICEF, WHO, and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific—regarding the agenda for CRVS (civil registration and vital statistics). In July 2015, these discussions culminated in the official launch in Addis Ababa of the Global Financing Facility, which includes strengthening and expanding ID platforms of CRVS systems. Canada committed \$16 million toward a global Center of Excellence for CRVS, which will help countries better monitor and track their progress.

IDs Fit for Purpose

Official ID should be available throughout the life cycle of the individual, be available to both poor and rich, and be widely accepted under the regulations and economic practices of the country concerned.

Such a credential need not always imply a specific format, such as a national ID card. Some countries do not supply national ID cards, and the attainment of many SDGs that hinge on universally

available ID does not require evidence of national status. The key is universal access to robust “fit for purpose” ID.

Near-Term Outlook

The final post-2015 agenda, to be adopted at the UN General Assembly in September 2015, represents the most important effort to date by the international community to address the major development challenges facing the world. The Addis Ababa meeting focused on financing, but it will take a lot more than aid from member states to deliver on the ambitious post-2015 agenda, including such key underpinnings as universal ID.

Among other things, the agenda requires political leadership, bold reforms, and a commitment to development-friendly policies. These in turn will require greater resources.

For example, donors support at least half of the ID-related programs in developing countries. Some of this assistance should be shifted away from costly one-off exercises to better support permanent, foundational registration and ID programs that will more powerfully contribute to attaining the SDGs. Such a shift could be a useful topic for consultation and discussion at the next meeting of the UN General Assembly.

► For more information on this topic:

The Role of Identification in the Post-2015 Development Agenda, World Bank and Center for Global Development, July 2015
<http://pubdocs.worldbank.org/pubdocs/publicdoc/2015/7/149911436913670164/World-Bank-Working-Paper-Center-for-Global-Development-Dahan-Gelb-July2015.pdf> [cont.]

Global Financing Facility:
<http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2015/07/13/global-financing-facility-launched-with-billions-already-mobilized-to-end-maternal-and-child-mortality-by-2030>

The biometrics revolution:
<http://www.cgdev.org/publication/identification-development-biometrics-revolution-working-paper-315>

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