

The Call of the 100 in favour of civil registration and legal identity for all in Africa!



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A drama is played out in silence. In Africa, less than half of all births are declared and registered at the civil registration office. More than 95 million children between the ages of 0 and 5 are thus deprived of a legal identity - not forgetting those who are in school or who have reached adolescence, or even the majority, without a civil registration.

The lack of legal identity turns these children into citizens without rights, or even stateless in their own country. They are often deprived of education, a source of equality among citizens and social emancipation. Unable to enjoy their fundamental rights and having difficulties in accessing essential services, they are also at the mercy of human traffickers and all kinds of degrading and inhuman abuses, such as early and/or forced marriage of young girls, illegal adoption, sexual violence, child prostitution, the recruitment of child soldiers, etc.

The current COVID-19 pandemic raises fears that the momentum on the African continent to accelerate birth registration could be abruptly interrupted. However, the unprecedented and constraining health context in which we are currently living should not lead us to isolation, let alone to give up. On the contrary, this situation must be a source of emulation for active human solidarity.

In order to amplify this call, we take the opportunity of this day, September 16 (inspired by Sustainable Development Objective 16.9 "By 2030, provide legal identity for all, including birth registration"), to alert States and International Organisations to the need to make the fight for legal identity an absolute priority.

The subject is fundamental in many ways. Not only because this situation is morally unacceptable for tens or even hundreds of millions of unborn children, but also because it constitutes a major risk factor in political, economic, social and security terms.

Although international conventions have been signed and ratified by almost all African countries, many of them do not benefit from a reliable and consolidated civil registration. Some States are faced with a lack of financial, human and even technological resources necessary for the proper maintenance of civil registration, while others lack the real political will to remedy the shortcomings of registration systems.

Extreme poverty, lack of information, corruption, the weight of traditions, armed conflicts and incessant intra-African migration are major obstacles to the consolidation of civil registration in Africa.

Let us demonstrate generosity, solidarity, ingenuity and creativity to set up and sustain actions that, while allowing a reliable and decentralised birth registration system, preserve the sovereignty of states and the dignity of citizens.

Let us promote and boost the intelligent, adapted and prudent use of digital tools that offer us tremendous opportunities in the fields of declaration, birth registration, conservation and archiving of civil registration records. The confidentiality and ownership of data is a sovereignty issue for African States. They must therefore observe the utmost caution in the conduct of their relations with possible private service companies.

We must also avoid undermining the civic and voluntary approach that characterises civil registration and contributes to forging a nation state. The local and decentralised systems (local authorities) on which civil registration is based in Africa risk being further weakened if they are left behind in the adoption of new technologies. Decentralisation is essential for anchoring the recognition of individuals, in that it gives access to fundamental rights, promotes a dynamic of inclusion and allows the stabilisation of social relations in the territories.

The creation of **Urgency Identity Africa**, a fund hosted by the King Baudouin Foundation and created in February 2020, in Brussels, around Maitres Abdoulaye HARISSOU and Amadou Moustapha NDIAYE, aims to bring together African personalities and internationally renowned actors around the urgency of legal identity and civil registration. Urgency Identity Africa has undertaken to combine philanthropy and sponsorship from individuals and legal entities, in order to finance local actions enabling the consolidation of civil registration in Africa.

In addition to reviving the commitment of local authorities, this fund will strive, through the creation of a label called "Commune Zero phantom children", to establish a culture of civil registration and to eradicate the phenomenon of "phantom children" in the medium term.

Together, let's mobilise and act to win this fight to help those who do not have the choice of their destiny!

For more information, visit www.uiafrica.org



The call of the 100 / 16.9

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Hamza **HRAOUI** Samantha **GALLAY**
Regine Evelyne **DOOH COLLINS EKOLLO** Michel Hamala **SIDIBE**
Filomena **MENDES MASCARENHAS TIPOTE** Sophie Venecia **REYES**
Didier **ACOUETEY** Ghislaine **LOKO DJIDJOHO**
Wilfrid Lauriano do **REGO** Magloire **SOSSOUVI** Merav **GRIGUER**
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**Urgence
Identité
Afrique**
Fonds géré par la Fondation Roi Baudouin

**L'ÉTAT CIVIL : DES DROITS
POUR LA VIE !**

Thank
you all
for your
commitment

Gilles **YABI**
Bineta **FALL**
Kako **NUBUKPO**
Mame Cafa **SALL**
Jean-Luc **PRADIER**
Mehdi **REDDAD**
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