

*Side event of the 2023 SDG Summit*

## Unlocking SDG 16.9: Harnessing the UN Legal Identity Agenda for Leaving No One Behind

***Date and Time: 10:00 to 12:00, 15 September, 2023, Danny Kaye Hall, UNICEF HQ, 3 UN Plaza, New York – 11003***

**Sponsors:** The UN Legal Identity Task Force in collaboration with partners, including the Bloomberg Philanthropies Data for Health Initiative (Vital Strategies, CDC Foundation, Global Health Advocacy Incubator).

**About:** The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) aim to address pressing global challenges and improve people's lives worldwide. Among the 17 SDGs, Goal 16.9 specifically focuses on providing legal identity for all, including birth registration, by 2030. Despite the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, countries, including in South Asia and Africa, have improved birth registration coverage. At the global level, the birth registration rate for children under five has risen to 77 per cent from 75 per cent in 2019, primarily because of the progress made in countries like India, where over 90 per cent of newborns are registered today.

However, despite significant progress, more than 160 million children under five globally remain unregistered, limiting their access to essential services, education, healthcare, and protection. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted that death registration is incomplete and deficient in most low- and middle-income countries. In addition, a majority of UN Member States are unable to quantify the completeness of marriage and divorce registration and produce routine vital statistics from CRVS systems.

Recognizing the urgency to accelerate efforts, this side-event of the SDG Summit 2023 will provide an opportunity to discuss strategies for accelerated achievement of universal birth and death registration and legal identity for all in six priority countries, viz. Bangladesh, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, India, Nigeria, and Pakistan. These countries also collectively account for half of the global burden of unregistered children (more than 19 million U1s and over 79 million U5s). Accelerating progress to ensure well-functioning civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) and identity management systems in these focus countries, therefore, is critical to global progress on SDG 16.9.

1. **Objective:** The main aim of this side event is to foster knowledge exchange and collaboration between Bangladesh, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, India, Nigeria, and Pakistan, on ensuring legal identity for all, as well as the establishment of more sustainable collaboration and joint monitoring mechanisms amongst themBy

bringing these countries together and amplifying their experience, we aim to highlight successful strategies, challenges, and innovative approaches to the global community and promote greater international support and commitment to achieving SDG 16.9..

**Target Audience:** The side event aims to engage representatives from Member States, multilateral and international organizations, civil society organizations, the donor community, academia, and experts in child rights, human rights, CRVS, and legal identity.

**Participants:** This event will convene three to four high-level representatives (Ministers, DGs, and heads of agencies) from the participating countries' governments within the CRVS, health, and National ID management sectors. The principals/senior management from UN LIA Task Force members, the Global Financing Facility, Vital Strategies, CDC Foundation, Global/Health Advocacy Incubator, and UNICEF colleagues from concerned ROs and COs will participate as partners and to help facilitate the event.

**Format:** The event will include remarks from principals/senior management representing the UNLIA task force and partner organizations, moderated panel discussions with Government representatives, and concluding with an engaging Q&A session. The agenda will be circulated in due course.

### Possible Panel Topics

Recommended topics:

1. Innovative Approaches and Digitization: Participants will explore innovative approaches such as leveraging technology, community engagement, and partnership models that have proven effective in granting legal identity for all including increasing birth and death registration rates.
2. Multisectoral Collaboration: The importance of multisectoral engagement, especially with health, social protection, education, nutrition, and national ID systems and collaboration involving government agencies, civil society organizations, and grassroots organizations, will be emphasized.
3. Challenges and Solutions: An open discussion will allow participants to identify common challenges and collaboratively develop practical solutions to overcome them.

Other potential topics and ideas:

4. Legal and Policy Frameworks: Participants will discuss the role of legal and policy frameworks in facilitating birth registration and ensuring the rights and protection of unregistered children.
5. National Initiatives: Each country will share its national initiatives and policies to improve birth registration rates and legal identity for children, focusing on successes, challenges, and lessons learned.

### Satellite Meetings with Country Delegations:

In addition to the side event, UN LIA will engage in 1- on-1 consultations with each of the participating countries to jointly develop a comprehensive strategy addressing areas of improvement and produce an efficient pathway forward.

### Expected Outcomes:

2. **The main expected outcome will be a commitment to a** country-specific action plan with specific targets and commitments to accelerate progress towards achieving SDG 16.9 and collective monitoring/collaboration mechanisms amongst these countries.

### Other outcomes:

1. **Exchange of best practices:** Sharing successful strategies, innovative approaches, and best practices among the participating countries to promote South-South learning.
2. **Enhanced partnerships:** Strengthening partnerships between and among UN agencies, non-UN entities, and relevant stakeholders, fostering future collaborations.
3. **Policy recommendations:** Identification of policy recommendations to address the challenges associated with birth registration and legal identity for unregistered children.
4. **Increased Awareness:** Raising global and regional awareness about the importance of birth registration and legal identity for unregistered children and mobilizing support for collective action.

### Release of documents:

UNICEF will also release **CRVS and ID country case studies for six countries** (Bhutan, Bangladesh, Kenya, Rwanda, Namibia, and Colombia) and **a technical note on bringing synergies between birth registration and social protection interventions**. UNICEF takes the lead in developing these documents as part of the UN Legal Identity Agenda (UNLIA) Task Force, aiming to support countries in advancing the SDG 16.9 agenda.

UNDP will also release the model governance framework of digital identity. The official release day is on 17<sup>th</sup> September, but the launch of the framework will be mentioned during the event.

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