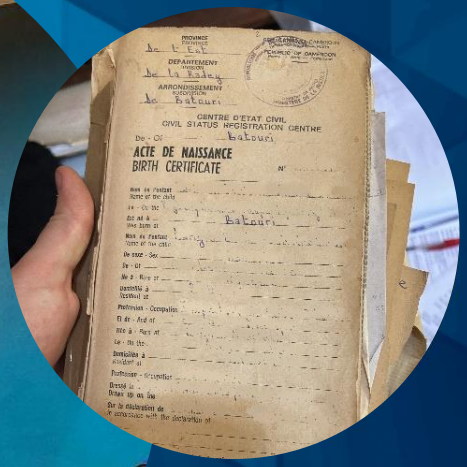

ID4D

Diagnostic of ID Systems in Cameroon

IDENTIFICATION FOR DEVELOPMENT

WORLD BANK GROUP

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About ID4D

ID4D combines global knowledge, cross-sectoral expertise, financial and technical assistance, and partnerships to help countries realize the transformational potential of digital ID and civil registration ecosystems. The goal is to accelerate inclusive growth and the achievement of a wide range of development outcomes by enabling all people to access more and better services and exercise their rights. Today, ID4D is supporting 49 countries and shaping more than US$1.5 billion in pipeline or committed financing to implement digital ID and civil registration ecosystems in 35 of them.

ID4D has become a thought leader and knowledge hub on why ID matters for development, how to build good ID and civil registration ecosystems, and tracking of benefits and progress. The initiative comprises parts of the World Bank Group (WBG) working on digital development, social protection, health, governance, gender, social inclusion, legal, financial sector development, private sector development, regional integration, data, and forced displacement. ID4D has capitalized on the intellectual partnership with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation; the UK, Australian, and French governments; the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation; and the Omidyar Network. A High-Level Advisory Council of eminent persons supports advocacy and provides strategic guidance, and a technical experts group of experienced practitioners provides leading-edge advice.

To find out more about ID4D, visit id4d.worldbank.org.

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Terms

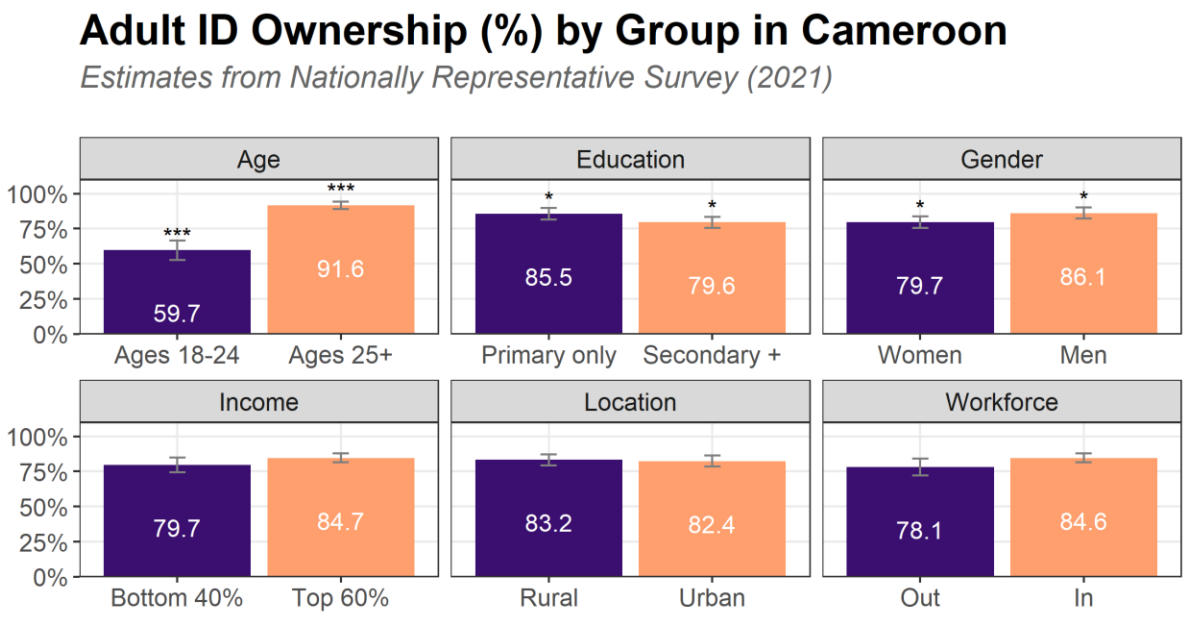
AFD	Agence Française De Développement
AFIS	Automatic Fingerprint Identification System
AI	Artificial Intelligence
ANTIC	National Agency for Information and Communication Technologies
BC	Birth Certificate
BEAC	Bank of Central African States
BUNEC	National Bureau of Civil Status
CNPS	*Caisse Nationale de Prévoyance Sociale*
CBK	Commercial Bank of Cameroon
CEMAC	Crédit Communautaire d'Afrique
CEP	Certificat d'Études Primaires
CCA	Central African Republic
CENADI	National Centre for Information Technology Development
CEP	Certificat d'Études Primaires
CFA	Central African Franc
CFC	National ID Card
CNI	Crédit Foncier du Cameroun
CNPS	The Caisse Nationale de Prévoyance Sociale
CNPTI	National Center for Production of Identity Documents
CR	Civil Registration
CRC	Civil Registration Civil Registration Center
CRVS	Civil Registration and Vital Statistics
DGSN	General Delegation for National Security
DHIS2	District Health Information System 2
ESS	Environmental and Social Standard
EU	European Union
FTP	File Transfer Protocol
FEICOM	Special Fund for Equipment and Intermunicipal Intervention
GIZ	German Agency for International Cooperation
GOC	Government of Cameroon
G2G	Government-to-Government
G2P	Government-to-Persons
ICAO	International Civil Aviation Organization
ICT	Information and Communication Technologies
ID	Identification
ID4D	Identification for Development
IDPs	Internally Displaced Persons
INS	National Institute of Statistics
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IT	Information Technology
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency

KOICA	Korea International Cooperation Agency
KYC	Know Your Customer
MDA	Ministries, Departments & Agencies
ML	Machine Learning
MINAS	Ministry of Social Affairs
MINDDEVEL	Ministry of Decentralization and Local Development
MINFOPRA	The Ministry of Public Service and Administrative Reforms
MINJUSTICE	Ministry of Justice
MINPOSTEL	Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications
MINPROFF	Ministry of Women Empowerment and the Family
MINREX	Ministry of External Affairs
MINSANTE	Ministry of Public Health
MNO	Mobile Network Operator
MTN	Major MNO in Cameroon
NFC	National Financial Credit Bank
NID	National ID Card
NIPU	New unique identification number
NIU	Unique Identification Number
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
OAU	Organisation of African Unity
PAMEC	GIZ's Program for the Modernization of Civil Registration
PATNUC	Acceleration of the Digital Transformation of Cameroon
PBF	Performance Based Financing
PFS	*Projet filets sociaux*
PRC	Permanent Resident Card
PRC	Presidency of the Republic of Cameroon
PRE2C	Civil Registration Rehabilitation Program of Cameroon
PAP	Project-Affected Persons
RC	Refugee Card
SACEL	Société d'Assistance et de Conception en Electronique Computer
SIGIPES	System for the Integrated Management of State Personnel and Payroll
SPM	The Prime Minister's Office
TRC	Temporary Resident Card
UBI	Unique Banking Identifier
UI	Unique Identifier
UNECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Refugees
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UPIN	Unique Personal Identification Number
USB	Universal Service Bus
USR	Unified Social Registry
VPN	Virtual Private Network

Executive summary

An estimated **7.5 million Cameroonians**—about one in three people in the country—do not have an official proof of identity such as a birth certificate or national ID card. More than **one in three children** have not had their birth registered and **more than half** do not have a birth certificate. An estimated **2.5 million adults** do not have a national ID. In addition to being the objective of Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Target 16.9— to "provide legal identity for all, including birth registration" by 2030—identification is a key enabler for individuals to exercise their rights and for progress towards many other SDG targets, such as financial and economic inclusion, social protection, gender equality, and safe and orderly migration. Women, people in rural areas, young people aged 18-24, people among the poorest 40 percent of the population, and internally displaced persons (IDPs) disproportionately suffer due to the lack of identity documents. Those without a birth certificate or a national ID are often unable to access basic services and economic opportunities, such as education, social assistance, financial services, or formal employment in.[1]

Figure ES1: Adults having ID in Cameroon



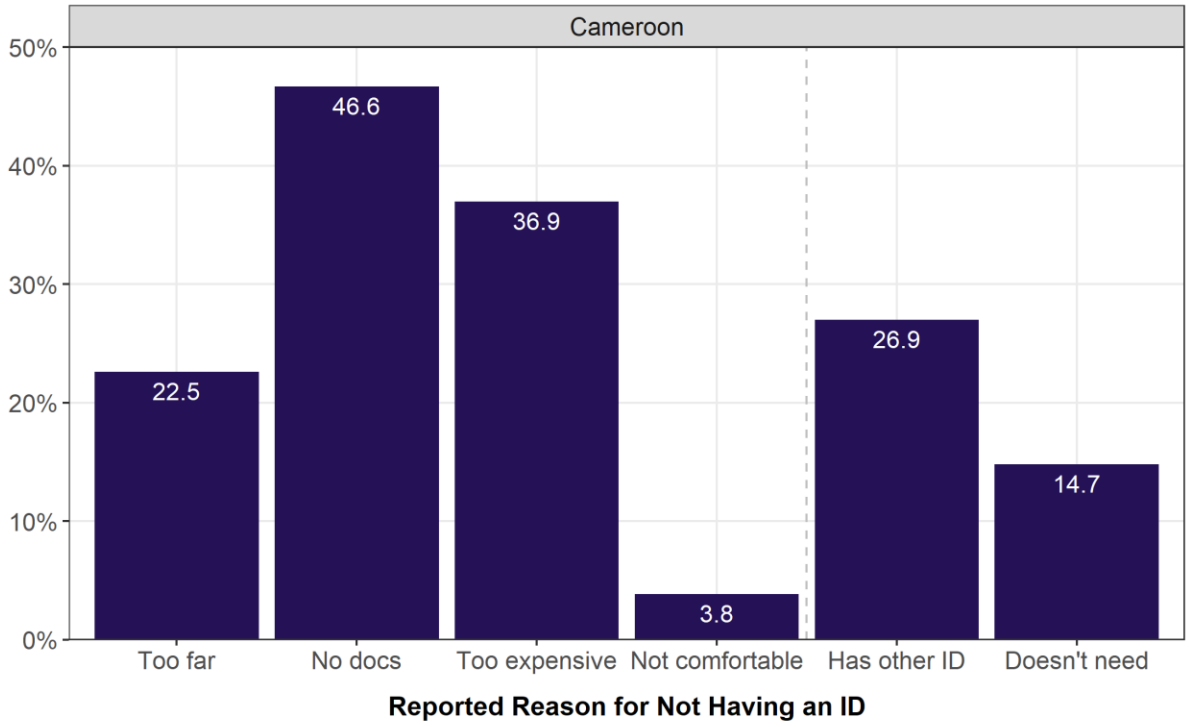
Graph shows average ID ownership by demographic group with 95% error bars, calculated using country-level weights and survey-weighted standard errors. Statistically significant differences by group are indicated using asterisks at the 95% level (*), 99% level (**), and 99.9% level (***). Information on rural versus urban location is only available for the subset of economies where face-to-face data collection was possible in 2021. Includes respondents who are also over the eligible age for obtaining the ID. Source: ID4D Global Dataset (2022), ID4D-Findex Series.

Several factors contribute to gaps in civil registration (CR) and identification (ID) coverage, including CR centers (CRCs) that are difficult to reach or non-operational, burdensome requirements to provide

[1] World Bank (2021). Databank: Identification for Development (ID4D)

documentary evidence, poorly trained and compensated staff, suboptimal paper-based CR processes and lack of interoperability with the ID system, high indirect costs associated with registration—such as bribes and travel costs—complex and costly judicial and administrative processes for late birth registration and obtaining an ID, and limited awareness or prioritization of timely birth registration and ID registration among [primarily] rural communities. Logistical and technical issues also hamper effective delivery of identification services. People who have applied for an ID card often face wait times of over a year for it to be issued. Meanwhile, they need to rely on a temporary paper slip provided for interim use with an initial expiry period of three months.

Figure ES2: Reasons for not having an ID in Cameroon



Graph shows reasons (multiple selection) for not having the country's foundational or primary ID, reported by those without one. Means are calculated using country-level design weights. Includes respondents above the eligible age for obtaining the ID. Source: ID4D Global Dataset (2022), ID4D-Findex Series.

Despite government ambitions to modernize CR and ID in Cameroon, achievements have been limited due to insufficient financing, lack of high-level ownership, and fragmented strategies. A series of measures have been taken to initiate the design of a high performing Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) system, notably the adoption of the Strategic Plan for the Rehabilitation of Civil Registration and Digitalization in 2018. Similarly, several modernization initiatives over the last two decades have aimed to improve the identification system with periodic software, system, and process upgrades. For example, a customer support center for national ID queries was created in 2021. Recently, the government created an inter-ministerial committee to harmonize identity management practices in Cameroon. Discussions around how CR and ID systems would work together and help improve the efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery are still in progress. Additionally, there is a lack of alignment on important aspects such as the use

of a unique identifier from birth, data sharing across systems, and strategies for identity verification and authentication.

Interest and engagement is growing from the government, development partners, and the international community to address the deficiencies of the ID ecosystem in Cameroon. This diagnostic aims to identify gaps and weaknesses of the current ID and CR systems (including legal and regulatory frameworks) and analyze sectoral identification needs to provide recommendations on how to best modernize the CR and ID ecosystem and mobilize investments in the country.

This analysis of the CR and ID system is guided by the *Principles on Identification for Sustainable Development.*[2] To maximize their developmental benefits and minimize risks to privacy and exclusion, ID systems should—at a minimum—meet these *Principles* (shown Figure 1 in this diagnostic), which are informed by global best practices and organized around three pillars: inclusion, design, and governance. They have now been endorsed by over 30 international organizations, donors, NGOs, and private sector associations across Africa and other regions.

Sectoral Demand: Consultations with key stakeholders of the ID and CR ecosystem in Cameroon, and various sectors providing public and private services—as well as a field visit in the East region (Bertoua, Batouri and Timangolo)—show that there is an urgent need to improve the foundational identity ecosystem in Cameroon. Commonly cited challenges faced by people, government agencies, and firms across sectors include:

- **Education**: While children without birth certificates can attend school, without them they are unable to sit for the first school leaving certificate exam nor the secondary school entrance exam, which can prevent them from attending higher education and entering the job market. The World Bank has identified **1.5 million primary school children** (around 768,000 of whom are in two priority education zones, the north and far north) without a birth certificate, which constitutes a significant barrier to access to education for many youths in the country. A total of 30 percent of primary school students do not have birth certificates.
- **Social protection**: A key challenge for Cameroon's Social Safety Nets Program is to accurately identify and verify eligible beneficiaries to ensure assistance reaches those in need and to help reduce fraud. An improved ID system could help tackle this issue and avoid duplication of identity verification efforts. With 8 million people below the poverty line, and the social safety net program aiming to reach 375,500 households by 2022, accurate identification is crucial for effective distribution of assistance.
- **Financial sector**: Lack of formal identification documents represents a key barrier to financial inclusion, preventing individuals from accessing basic banking services. In Cameroon, 76 percent of adults do not have an account at a bank or financial institution, and 36 percent of those without an

[2] Identification for Development (ID4D) (2023) *Practitioner's Guide, 1. PRINCIPLES | Identification for Development*. World Bank.

account cannot open one due to lack of identity credentials. While mobile money is on the rise, with 52 percent of adults now subscribed, compulsory SIM card registration rules prevent Cameroonians without a national ID card from accessing mobile devices and the host of benefits this brings, including mobile money access. Digitally verifiable ID can provide a highly secure method of identity verification. This reduces fraud and identity theft while increasing financial inclusion and opening new economic opportunities, such as access to value-added services (VAS) including affordable micro-loans. This is particularly important to increase the financial inclusion of women, who are around 6.4 percentage points less likely to have an ID than men.

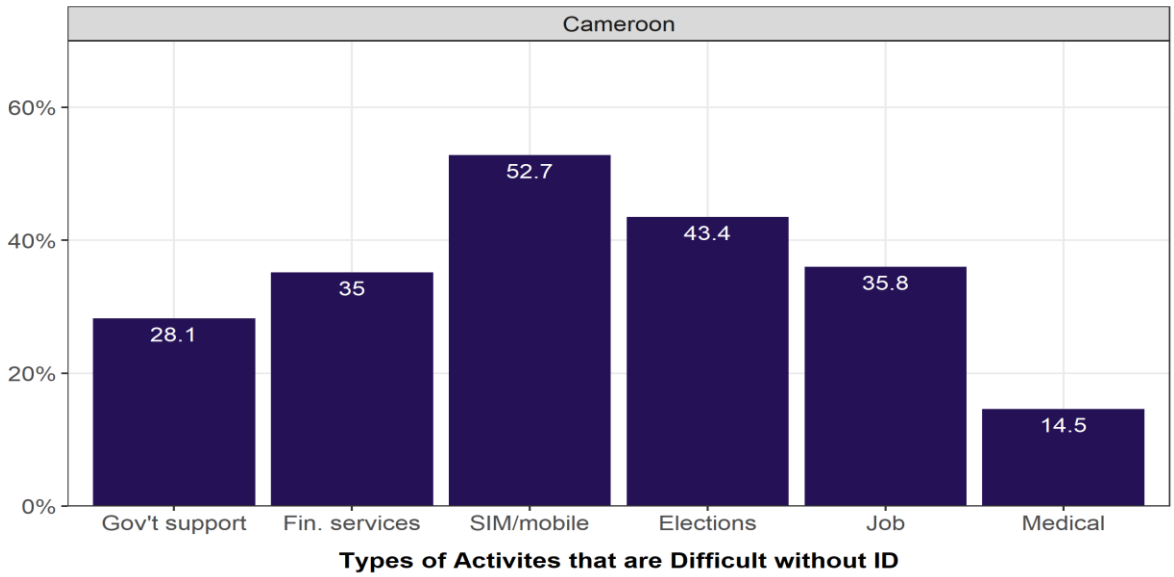
- **Agriculture**: Farmers, who comprise the majority of the poorest 40 percent of the population, are more likely to lack proper identification, preventing them from formally registering their land ownership or their farming business. Farmers are unable to enroll in agricultural support programs, which typically require a national ID card as part of the eligibility criteria. These programs provide important resources, such as inputs like pesticides, financial support subsidies, and training to help boost agricultural productivity, assure food security, and help farmers become more resilient to climate shocks.

- **Energy**: People without proper identification cannot subscribe for energy services and must pay others to open client accounts on their behalf. This not only incurs an informal "service fee," but also hinders their access to subsidized energy prices granted to the poorest households. Instead, through the aggregation of demand of multiple households, such individuals must pay the higher cost bracket designed for richer segments of the population. The government estimates that such subscribers typically pay 124 percent more than what they would under the subsidized program.

- **Public administration (civil servants, pension, tax)**: A key challenge faced by public administration in Cameroon is verifying the identity of civil servants to reduce the number of ghost workers. The *Caisse Nationale de Prévoyance Sociale* (CNPS) also faces substantial identity fraud and lengthy, expensive beneficiary audits due to paper documentation, and lack of interoperability with foundational identification systems. Integration with these systems could improve efficiency by allowing automated liveness checks for pension recipients and stopping payments upon receipt of death notifications. The Ministry of Finance (MINFI) is also seeking to improve the identification of all potential taxpayers to increase tax revenues to redistribute financial support more fairly and increase support for the poorest.

- **Health**: Some pilot programs aimed at automating birth registration in hospitals have been implemented, but there are not enough resources to scale-up these programs. This contributes to the country's low birth registration rate (62% for children under age five and 51% who do not have birth certificates). Additionally, the health management information system operational in 80 percent of public hospitals does not yet allow creation of unified patient records and tracking across health facilities, though the sector's digitization vision includes plans to create a unique patient identifier to enable these functionalities. As part of these efforts, it will be pertinent to analyze any potential synergies with the ID system; for example, for generating patient identification numbers based on unique identities assured by the foundational identification system.

Figure ES1: Activities difficult to perform without ID



Graph shows difficulties accessing various services, benefits, and rights (multiple selection) as a result of not having the country's foundational ID, reported by those without one. Means are calculated using country-level design weights. Includes respondents above the eligible age for obtaining the ID. Source: ID4D Global Dataset (2022), ID4D-Findex Series.

Our recommendations represent priority actions identified to improve and modernize the foundational identification ecosystem in Cameroon. These are structured around three main objectives:

(i) Objective 1: Ensure universal access to birth registration and ID.

(ii) Objective 2: Strengthen the digitalization of the CR and ID systems for increased efficiency, robustness, and resilience.

(iii) Objective 3: Introduce digital identity verification and authentication services.

We expand on each in order:

- **Objective 1: Ensure universal access to birth registration[3] and ID**

  The current ID coverage rate in Cameroon is 82.8 percent for adults over the age of 18,[4] although the perception of coverage by the population is lower, perhaps due to discrepancies between ownership of a temporary slip and an actual ID card. Only 62 percent of children under age five have had their birth registered, according to the latest Democratic Health Survey.[5] This means a significant number of individuals in the country still do not have official proof of identity. Considering that people in need of public services, such as social assistance, are also those least

[3] Death and marriage registration are also important, but birth registration is a priority as this conditions access to services, whereas death and marriage registration are more focused towards facilitating planning and administration. Additional targeted studies focusing on death and marriage registration will be needed to further inform recommendations.

[4] ID4D 2021 Dataset.

[5] National Institute of Statistics (Cameroon) and Intermediate Care Facilities (ICF). 2020. 2018 Cameroon DHS Summary Report. Rockville, Maryland, USA: NIS and ICF.

likely to possess an ID credential, it is critical to reduce this gap so that the different sectors can rely on unique identity verification and increase Cameroonian's access to services. This will reduce the need for specific sectoral solutions for identity verification, that will unnecessarily duplicate personal biographic and biometric data. Several solutions could be adopted to increase CR and ID coverage rates in the country:

Strengthen legal frameworks by enabling digitization and simplified procedures to remove barriers to access.

Improving coverage can be achieved through simplification and leveraging digitization. However, this needs to be enabled through legislation. While the legal framework on ID does not hinder digitization, the law governing CR does. Such hinderance not only precludes simplification of processes but, ultimately, affects inclusion, especially of the most vulnerable (such as IDPs). Cameroonians are legally bound by paper-based system to incur unaffordable costs—such as for transportation—to record or obtain documentation about vital events. Legislative efforts are needed to ensure the applicable CR legal framework enables digitization, simplifies processes, facilitates access to the system, with the ultimate aim to improve coverage of vital events, particularly birth.

Further, simplification of the CR system requires legally addressing burdensome procedures inherited from the paper-based legacy system. Once digitalization is legally enabled and digital records and documents are given equivalent value to paper-based ones, replacing judicial procedures with administrative ones are critical to simplify currently complex day-to-day processes, such as replacing a lost copy of a birth certificate or late birth registration. This shift from judicial to administrative processes requires more consensus building across stakeholders.

Organize campaigns to facilitate and support registration of vulnerable populations.

Targeted interventions to reach groups often excluded or marginalized from the formal system—such as women, children, ethnic minorities, refugees, and displaced persons—have been shown to be effective in reducing birth registration gaps and lack of ID. Campaigns can include awareness raising, mobilization, incentives, and partnerships with community leaders and organizations. Technical, process, and organizational innovations, and drawing lessons from similar campaigns in the region, can help maximize the reach and coverage of such activities.

Improve geographic accessibility of CR and ID

Based on analysis of the current infrastructure and needs of the population, improvement in human resources and geographic accessibility of registration centers is needed. Fixed registration centers can be complemented by deploying mobile units that can travel to remote or hard-to-reach locations. Additional synergies can be achieved by combining CR and ID campaigns with other public services, such as health (for example, maternity wards, vaccination campaigns), education (for example, school and exam registration) and social protection (for example, targeting campaign for

cash transfers).

- **Objective 2: Strengthen the digitization of CR and ID systems for increased efficiency, robustness, and resilience.**

  Management of CR in Cameroon is still mainly paper-based, fragmented, outdated, or incomplete, leaving millions of people invisible. The ID system has been digitized since 1994 and relies on modern tools for biometric deduplication and credential issuance. However, it needs investment to strengthen the system; render processes more efficient; and make national CR, ID, and sectoral systems (such as health) interoperate. This would improve efficiency and transparency of public and private services. Overall, to reap the benefits of digitized CR and ID systems, the following elements needs to be established:

  Strengthen the legal framework for digital governance to improve efficiency of services and increase trust in digital transactions.

  Recognition of digitized CR and ID processes and documents would need to be supplemented by adequate safeguards against risks that digitization may create. Important safeguards are needed through adoption of good practice laws that: (i) protect personal data, and (ii) sanction cybercrimes while protecting the security of data and digital infrastructure, including critical infrastructure. Further, to enable digital transactions, good practice laws will be needed to: (i) facilitate e-commerce and electronic transactions, and (ii) promote clear rules on e-government, open-data, and access to information. Effective implementation of a good practice legal framework for protecting personal data, criminalizing illegal conduct in cyberspace, and ensuring clear cybersecurity obligations and standards will also require adopting key implementing regulations and operationalization of legal enforcement and implementation entities. These laws and regulations would reinforce trust in digital systems and transactions, including those related to CR ID and, in turn, encourage uptake.

  Complete the creation of a shared CR registry platform under BUNEC.

  Currently, CR systems are decentralized with no common nationwide infrastructure. A common CR registry platform will allow registration and verification of vital events (such as births, deaths, marriages, and divorces) in a digital format, as well as enable generation and issuance of digital birth certificates. In a fragile country like Cameroon, this type of infrastructure is particularly important to allow creation of digital archives of birth certificates. This will help overcome shortcomings of physical records stored in decentralized offices, which are prone to loss or damage due to climate change or conflict. Displaced individuals will particularly benefit from being able to recover their identity information digitally and at a distance from their place of origin. A centralized and digitalized CR registry platform can also help improve data quality, reduce fraud and duplication, and streamline administrative processes.

  ***Improve interoperability between CR and ID systems*.**

  The ability of CR and ID systems to communicate and exchange data with each other, notably to

ensure a unique identity from birth to death, will improve efficiency of the registration process, facilitate automated verification of identity information and authenticity of breeder documents (for example, birth certificates) during ID registration, and automatically revoke the identity credentials of people upon death. This will greatly minimize the time needed for processing ID applications, one the key issues currently plaguing the system, as validation of authenticity of breeder documents (particularly birth certificates) requires significant time.

Invest in physical resources, such as connectivity and servers.

Discussions with authorities and field visits have confirmed the need to provide adequate and reliable hardware and software to improve efficiency of civil registration centers (CRCs) and identification posts in the country. This also involves ensuring the availability and accessibility of internet connectivity, electricity, and devices, among other things, especially in remote and underserved areas. Overall, such investment may significantly reduce the time needed for an individual to obtain an ID credential, as data is currently transferred physically on USB keys from identification posts that do not have adequate connectivity.

- **Objective 3: Introduce digital identity verification and authentication services.**

  Digital identity verification and authentication are essential components of any modern ID system, as they allow public and private services to have confidence in information being provided and the identity of the person providing it. The ability to digitally verify or authenticate credentials is essential for fully leveraging the benefits of a trusted source of unique identity in the country and the potential benefits in terms of cost savings, efficiency, security, and innovative service delivery. Currently, it is not possible for the public and private sectors to digitally access and verify residents' identity. This results in duplicate or fraudulent information in sectoral systems, contributing to leakages or inefficient management of public services. Identity verification is predominantly manual, through visual inspection. Recommendations for future identity services include:

  Verify the authenticity of ID documents.

  Currently, individuals that have registered for an ID but not yet obtained the physical card are provided a paper-based temporary ID slip, known as a *récipissé,* that offers little assurance of authenticity as it is used over a very long period and subject to wear and tear. Although more secure, ID cards can be forged, and service providers may not always be able to detect forgeries through visual inspection. Services could be offered to public and private stakeholders to verify the authenticity of temporary and permanent credentials, as well as match data stored in the ID system.

  ***Implement consent-based sharing of trusted identity data*.**

  With the right mechanisms to ensure trust (through legislation and design), services could connect directly with the ID system or digitally access information from physical credentials, enabling the service providers to receive reliable, up-to-date identity information about individuals from a single, trusted data source. This reduces time needed to collect biographic information about individuals and increases data quality.

***Enable confirmation of uniqueness*.**

Identification services can be expanded to allow service providers to compare and validate identity information stored in their databases with data in the ID system, ensuring that each of their beneficiaries is uniquely identified and thus allowing them to eliminate duplicates and reduce fraud. This is particularly important for services offering benefits to individuals, such as social protection programs and pensions for civil servants.

Enable digital authentication.

For more advanced uses, the ID system could provide secure, remote digital authentication capability; that is, enabling service providers to verify that a person is who they claim to be. This is particularly relevant for the digital economy where such services can enable people to transact securely online or through mobile devices without having to present physical documents or visit service centers. These types of services support expansion to wider markets, can improve efficiency and reduce costs (for example, by reducing physical points of services), and enable new services for higher-income populations. With adequate safeguards against exclusion, it could also benefit population groups living in more remote areas or internally displaced persons (IDPs) to access financial services, receive social protection payments or assistance, or apply for other benefits.

The prioritized list of recommendations is detailed in Table ES1.

Table ES1: Recommendations for Cameroon to implement CR and ID systems

Prioritization	System Impacted	Recommendation
Short-term (< 2 years)	Civil Registration	• Adopt legal provisions for digitalization of civil registration processes for recording and delivery of documentation. • Conduct a geographic and infrastructure mapping of existing CR centers and their capacities. • Improve quality and optimize geographical distribution of CRCs to increase accessibility. • Develop a strategy for digitizing existing birth records, based on an audit of the existing paper CR archives. • Innovate in terms of mechanisms for registering home births, including involving community health workers and midwives. • Implement the national CR digitization strategy.
	Identification	• Analyze the geographic distribution of all identification posts, their current infrastructure provisioning and infrastructure needs, to better understand needed upgrades and inform strategic positioning of new centers. • Conduct further use case analysis to enhance strategy for digital verification and authentication based on demand from public and private service providers (reach a clear agreement on how to link systems (foundational and functional), and how personal ID

		numbers (New Unique Identification Number (NIPU), Unique Identification (UI), and sectoral numbers) would be leveraged to link records between systems to enable digital authentication and verification services). • Develop business and technical requirements based on use cases, refine solution architecture, and develop an implementation plan for digital verification and authentication services. • Foster coordination and engagement with existing and future stakeholders to develop a shared vision for digital ID services, to ensure that these systems are "fit for purpose" and address the real needs of people and service providers. Such processes should involve core government ministries and private entities (for example, banks and Mobile Network Operators (MNOs), public administration, social protection, health) that rely on the ID system, as well as civil society. • Increase the number of identification posts (fixed and mobile enrollment) with adequate infrastructure and strategic territorial distribution (informed by mapping of all identification posts) to get closer to the population/reduce travel time. • Explore co-location partnerships opportunities with other government institutions to combine services necessary to obtain required documents (for example, certification of documents, certificates of nationality, identification post) in a "one-stop shop" for new centers.
	Shared	• Strengthen the legal framework for digital governance to improve efficiency of services while providing trust in digital transactions by: (i) adopting a law on data protection, (ii) amending the current law on cybercrime to align it with good practice, (iii) amending the law on e-transactions to align it with good practice, and (iv) adopting laws on e-government, open data, and access to information. • Enhance leadership at the highest levels of government and identify a clear champion, to ensure multi-sectoral coordination for development of a shared vision, strategy, and implementation plan to improve identification. • Strengthen coordination between actors throughout the entire identification eco-system and develop local, regional, and national mechanisms, with provisions embedded in legislation, including sustainable financing mechanisms and coordination of development partners' interventions.
Medium-term (2-5 years)	Civil Registration	• Once consensus is reached among key stakeholders, amend the applicable CR legal framework to simplify processes by replacing judicial procedures with administrative ones (particularly for late

		birth registration; replacement of lost copies of birth certificates; and rectification of records and copies). • Establish a national civil status database and recognize the digital version of birth certificates in updated legislation.

	Identification	• Improve data hosting and transmission infrastructure to reduce processing times of supporting documents.
		• Improve production and distribution of identity documents in the following ways:
		  ○ Determine the production capacity required based on a demand estimate and develop a strategic plan to increase this capacity.
		  ○ Explore alternative innovative solutions to produce identity documents to overcome raw material supply bottlenecks and reduce production times (for example, mobile ID, and secure complementary solutions at a lower cost).

	Shared	• Explore joint communication, awareness raising, and enrollment campaigns, focusing particularly on minorities and vulnerable groups. Also, continue conducting awareness campaigns on the importance of birth registration and on existence of a simplified ID registration procedures for people without a birth certificates (use of attestation leveraging witness testimonies). • Provide dedicated support to minorities (for example, Pygmies and Bororos) informed by qualitative studies on steps to be followed for registration, including establishment of simplified procedures, embedded in legislation, adapted to the socio-cultural norms of these populations. • Develop and implement capacity building programs at all government levels to effectively manage and utilize modernized systems. • Improve the country's cybersecurity capacity and operations to prepare for interoperability of the ID, CR, and other systems by protecting data exchanged. • Strengthen the country's e-signature architecture to enable creation of verifiable digital birth certificates, certified copies, and ID credentials. • Ensure iinteroperability with the ID system and health center management information system (MIS).
Long-term (5+ years)	Civil Registration	• Enable issuance of secure duplicates of CR documents from future centralized CR system. • Improve vital statistics by linking the health informatics system with the National Institute of Statistics (INS) and BUNEC.

	Identification	• Once CR digitization has been implemented and upgraded, and verifiable credentials rolled out, explore ways to allow immediate authentication of digital birth certificates during ID registration. • Adopt the implementation plan for digital verification and authentication services. • Conduct system assessments to identify additional upgrades (performance, security, privacy, data management) required for these additional features, while adhering to international best practices.

This diagnostic demonstrates the need to further invest in the CR and ID ecosystem of Cameroon to achieve multiple benefits for individuals, public and private service providers, and government. By reducing the identification gap, more people will be able to access essential services such as social protection, financial inclusion, education, and health. Digitizing the CR and ID system will improve the efficiency and reliability of identification processes, and CR archives currently at risk of loss or destruction will be secured. Improving the ID system so that public and private service providers can use it will enable key identity verification and authentication services, such as verification of uniqueness, authenticity of credentials, and validation of identity information. These functions are particularly important considering the demand analysis conducted for key sectors that need better identification services, including social protection, financial, education, and the health sector. Investing in the CR and ID ecosystem is not only a matter of fulfilling a basic right, but also a strategic opportunity to foster inclusive and sustainable development in Cameroon.

1. Introduction

An estimated **7.5 million Cameroonians**—or one in three people in the country—do not have official proof of identity, such as a birth certificate or national ID card. More than **one in three children** have not had their birth registered and **more than half** do not have a birth certificate. An estimated **2.5 million adults** do not have a national ID. Women, people in rural areas, people among the poorest 40 percent of the population, and internally displaced persons (IDPs) disproportionately suffer because of the lack of identity documents. People without a birth certificate or a national ID are often unable to access basic services and economic opportunities, such as education, social assistance, financial services, or employment in the formal sector.[6]

Several factors contribute to civil registration (CR) and ID coverage gaps. These include logistical issues, such as CR centers that are distant and non-operational, as well as technical issues. Other issues include poorly trained and compensated staff, suboptimal paper-based CR processes, and lack on interoperability with the ID system, high indirect costs associated with registration (e.g., bribes or travel costs), complex and costly judicial and administrative processes for late (birth) registration and obtaining an ID, and limited awareness about the importance of timely birth registration and ID registration primarily in rural communities. People who have applied for an ID card often face wait times of over a year for it to be issued once the initial registration process is completed. In the meanwhile, rely on an interim temporary paper slip with an initial expiry period of just three months.

The Government of Cameroon (GOC) is committed to human development—education, health, and protection of poor and vulnerable groups—as indicated in its policy documents (National Development Strategy 2030[7] and Vision 2035).[8] Leveraging digital for economic transformation is one of the key enablers to achieve this vision. This approach requires trust in digital transactions, necessitating modernization of civil registration and identification systems and entailing large-scale processing of personal data.

However, despite the Government's ambition to modernize civil registration and identification, achievements have been limited due to a lack of a clearly articulated unified vision, limited ownership of the project, and fragmented strategies to achieve this vision. A series of measures have initiated the design of a high performing Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) system, notably the 2018 adoption of a strategic plan to rehabilitate civil registration and digitalization. Similarly, several modernization initiatives in the last two decades have improved the identification system with periodic software, system, and process upgrades. In 2021, a customer support center for national ID queries was created. Recently, the Government created an inter-ministerial committee to harmonize identity management practices.

However, to date, discussions around how CR and ID systems would work together and contribute to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery are still a work in progress. Additionally, there remains a lack of alignment on important aspects such as use of a unique identifier from birth, data sharing across systems, and strategies for identity verification and authentication.

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[6] World Bank (2021). Databank: Identification for Development (ID4D).

[7] Ministry of Economy, Planning and Land Planning (MINEPAT) (2022) *National Development Strategy 2020 - 2030National Development Strategy 2020 - 2030*, *MINEPAT Cameroun - Ministère de l'Economie, de la Planification et de l'Aménagement du Territoire*. MINEPAT.

[8] Ministry of Economy, Planning and Land Planning (MINEPAT) (2022) *Vision of the Head of State for an EmerginCameroon by 2035*, *MINEPAT Cameroun - Ministère de l'Economie, de la Planification et de l'Aménagement du Territoire*.

A complementary vision across both foundational CR and ID systems is essential to balance the need to expand access to services in the short term (ID) against the need to provide for long-term stability (CR). Addressing coverage gaps and modernizing civil registration and identification systems is critical to support inclusive and effective service delivery and better development outcomes across education, energy, social protection, and financial and other sectors, as well as the need to strengthen identity verification and authentication mechanisms is evident across sectors, from education to social protection and energy projects. With a more accessible CR and ID system, modern identity management practices, responsible use of digital tools and technologies and a robust framework for data management and sharing, Cameroon's ID ecosystem could become an enabler rather than a barrier for easier and faster access to a range of services, from opening a bank account to social assistance programs to business registration.

Interest and engagement from government, development partners, and the international community is growing to address Cameroon's ID ecosystem. This diagnostic aims to map and address gaps and weaknesses of current Cameroonian ID and CR systems, including existing legal and regulatory frameworks, and to crystallize sectoral identification needs to inform how best to modernize the ID ecosystem and mobilize investments in the country.

Initiated in August 2022, the ID4D diagnostic is a tool to help countries assess their identity systems and identify areas for improvement. It is based on the ID4D Diagnostic Guidelines methodology[9] the World Bank has developed in collaboration with governments and development partners.

More specifically, this diagnostic consists of:

- **Assessment of the existing foundational identification systems** (civil registration and national identification system), including analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the ID ecosystem in terms of accessibility, data reliability, credentials, authentication, interoperability, data protection and security, and governance.
- **Assessment of Cameroon's legal and institutional framework for its ID ecosystem** examining enabling laws, regulations, and institutions. It covers policies, laws, and regulations related to civil registration, identification, data protection, cybersecurity, and electronic transactions.
- **Review and synthesis of past and ongoing, relevant donor initiatives** to improve the ID and CR systems, as well as a summary of the Bank portfolio analysis with lessons learned and best practices.
- **A use case identification and analysis** providing an overview of gaps in the identity verification system and needs across sectors such as education, social protection, financial services, health, and others.
- **An outline of options and considerations to improve the ID ecosystem**, notably in terms of inclusivity, integrity, and utility of CR and ID systems to achieve country goals and promote international good practices. This section is informed by a benchmark of country experience and innovative approaches.

Data collection and analysis for this diagnostic are based on:

- A review of existing documentation and data sources on the country's CR and ID systems, such as laws, policies, reports, surveys, and statistics. A review of international experience also helps inform

[9] Identification for Development (ID4D) (2023) *Guidelines for ID4D diagnostics, Guidelines for ID4D Diagnostics* | *Identification for Development*. World Bank.

the recommendations provided in this report.

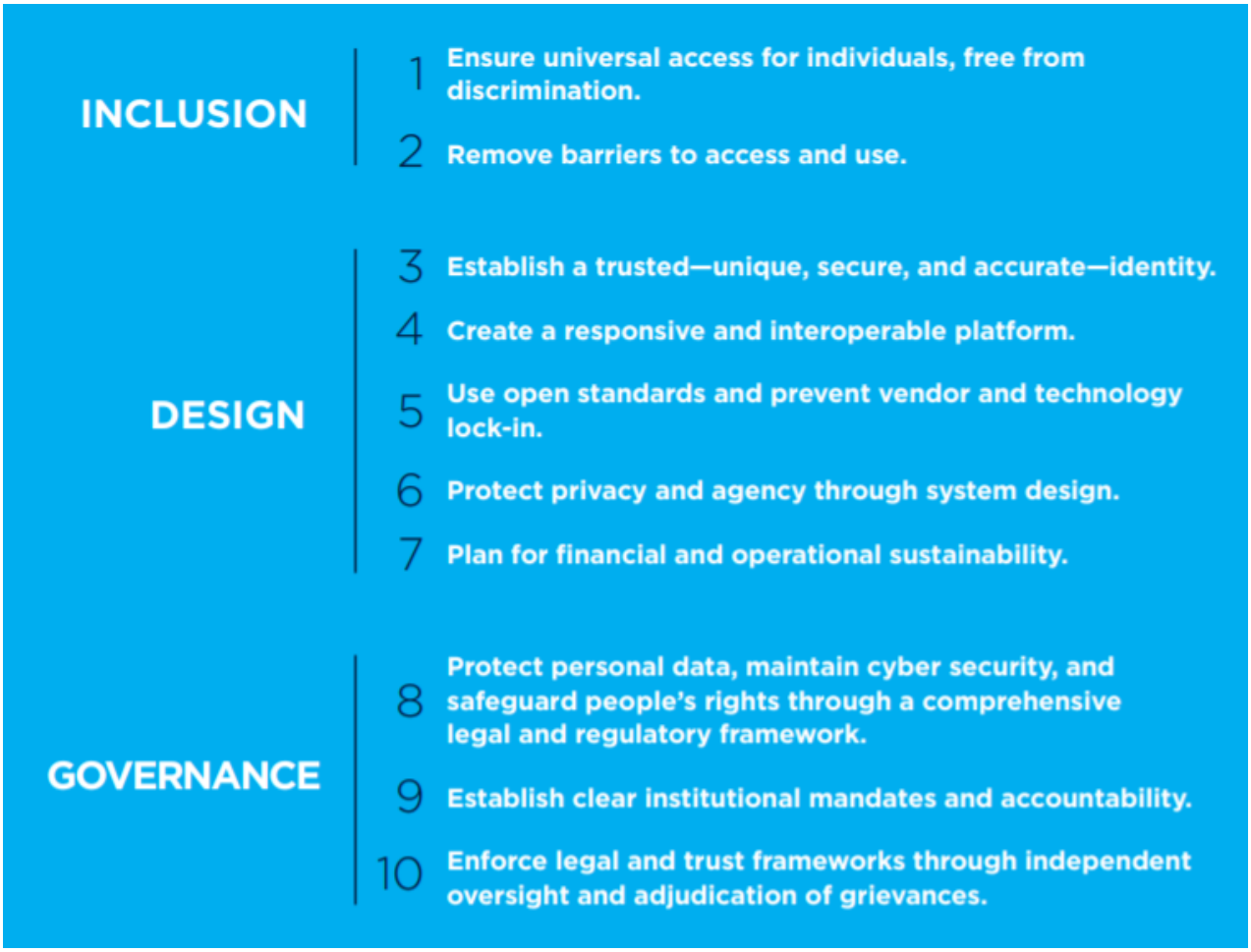
- A visit to the east region to observe the ID registration process at the Batouri identification post, as well as the functioning of CR at primary and secondary registration centers in Batouri and Timangolo. A workshop organized with local government representatives—the National Civil Status Registration Office (BUNEC); Ministry of Decentralization and Local Development (MINDDEVEL); General Delegation for National Security (DGSN); Ministry of Justice (MINJUSTICE); Ministry of Economy, Planning, and Regional Development (MINEPAT); MINAT—and sectorial ministries discussed key regional challenges and potential solutions.
- Stakeholder consultations with relevant actors from the public and private sectors, civil society, and development partners to gather qualitative and quantitative information on current challenges, opportunities, and priorities.[10] Two workshops organized in Yaounde with representatives from BUNEC, MINNDEVEL, DGSN, MINEPAT), and MINJUSTICE to discuss preliminary findings of the diagnostic and explore potential future solutions.

This analysis of the CR and ID system follows the *Principles on Identification for Sustainable Development.*[11] To maximize developmental impact and minimize risks to privacy and exclusion, ID systems should—at a minimum—meet these Principles shown in Figure 1. They are informed by global best practices and lessons and organized around the three pillars of inclusion, design, and governance. Over 30 international organizations, donors, NGOs, and private sector associations across Africa and other regions have endorsed these Principles.

[10] Conversations were held with the representatives from the following government ministries: National Agency for Information and Communication Technologies (ANTIC), BUNEC, Association of United Municipalities and Cities of Cameroon (CVUC), DGSN, MINDEVEL, Ministry of Public Health (MINSANTE), Ministry of Finance (MINFI), Ministry of Public Service and Administrative Reforms (MINFROPRA), Ministry of Justice (MINJUSTICE),Ministry of Social Affairs (MINAS), Ministry of Basic Education (MINEDUB), National Institute of National Statistics (INS). Development partners from Agence française de développement (AFD), German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ), European Union (EU), International Organization for Migration (IOM), Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA), Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) were also consulted.

[11] Identification for Development (ID4D) (2023) *Practitioner's Guide, 1. PRINCIPLES | Identification for Development*. World Bank.

Figure 1: Principles on Identification for Sustainable Development



Source: World Bank, ID4D

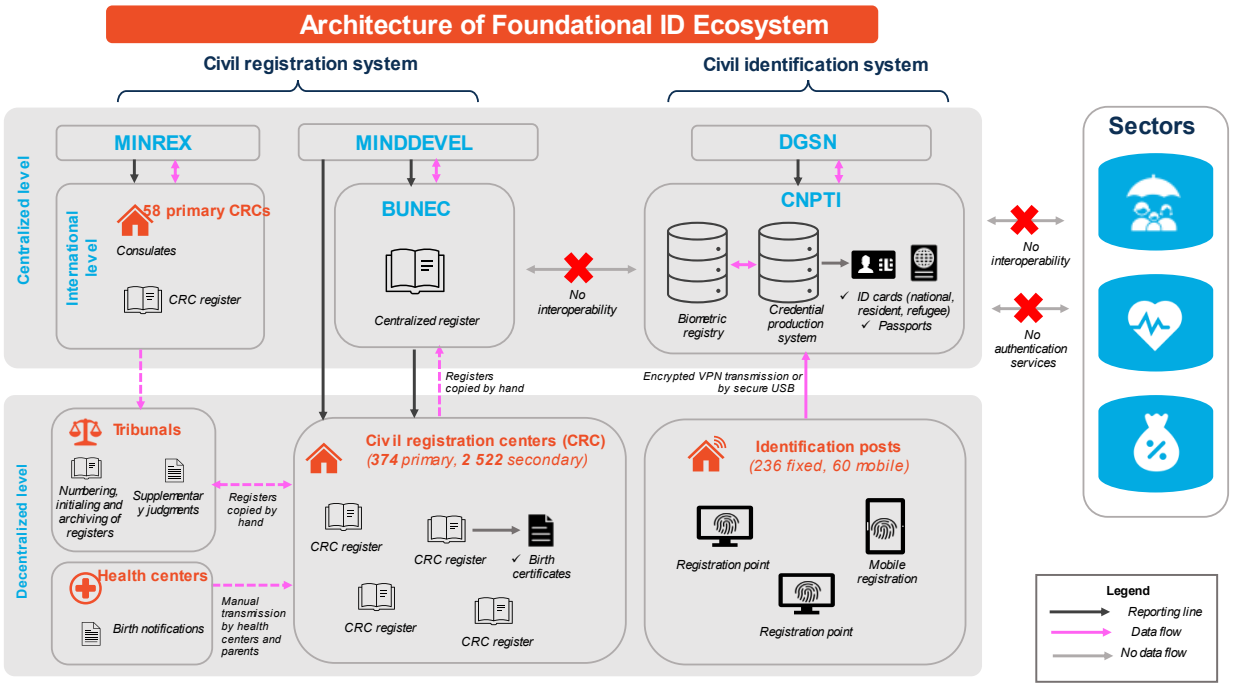
2. Identification landscape in Cameroon

2.1.Overview of the Cameroon ID ecosystem

Cameroon's foundational ID ecosystem is composed of a civil registration (CR) system responsible for registering all births, deaths, marriages, and adoptions, and an identification (ID) system open to all nationals of at least 18 years of age, residents, and refugees in the country, as well as the Cameroonian diaspora. Both systems provide legal identity to all individuals residing in the national territory from birth (if born in the country) to death.

The key institutions involved in Cameroon's ID ecosystem are The Ministry of Decentralization and Local Development (MINDDEVEL), National Civil Status Registration Office (BUNEC), Ministry of Health (MINSANTE), Ministry of Justice (MINJUSTICE), and the National Center for Production of Identity Documents (CNPTI) under the National Delegation for National Security (DGSN), as well as local municipalities, health facilities, and traditional leaders. However, coordination mechanisms across these institutions are suboptimal.

Figure 2: Overview of the foundational ID ecosystem of Cameroon



Source: World Bank

The CR system is essentially decentralized and paper-based with a few fragmented digitalization efforts through development partners in recent years. Efforts to create a centralized, BUNEC-managed civil registry, initiated in 2011, are still at an early stage and would require significant investments to cover the national territory. Communes manage CR[12] through primary and secondary civil registration centers (CRCs) responsible for issuance of birth, death, and marriage certificates based on birth declarations health facilities issue or facilitated by community leaders. All communes have at least one primary CRC and some secondary CRCs, but the birth registration rate has remained relatively low with only 62 percent of children under age five having birth registered, despite the fact that a birth certificate represents the primary document to serve as both proof of identification for minors and a breeder document for adult identity documents.

On the other hand, the ID system has been digitalized since 1994 with a fully functioning centralized system. Registration occurs at identification commune-level posts, though not all communes have an ID center. Information received at identification posts is centralized for further processing, biometric deduplication[13], and issuance of ID cards. The ID system has a higher coverage rate with approximately 82 percent of the population having a national identity card. There is no interoperability between the CR and ID systems, nor between these systems and sectorial systems, which hampers provision of effective identity verification and authentication services to sectors. This represents a fundamental need for all public and private service providers.

Both systems suffer from limited resources, complex registration requirements, suboptimal processes, deficient coordination mechanisms, inadequate digitalization, and lack of interoperability between

[12] Administratively Cameroon is divided into 10 semi-autonomous regions, and the regions are further divided into 58 departments, which again are divided into 360 arrondissements/communes and 14 urban communities.
[13] Process of analyzing biometrics in database to determine if there are duplicates.

systems. Improving coverage and effectiveness of both systems requires augmenting the physical infrastructure and human resources while process re-engineering improvements and digitalization—as enshrined in legislation—and strengthened coordination, including high-level ownership.

2.2.Civil registration (CR)

2.2.1. Overview

Civil registration (CR) is the universal, continuous, permanent, and compulsory recording of vital events and relevant biographical data for a country's population. It is the cornerstone of the identity management system in that recording of a person's biographical data is the foundation of the person's unique, legal identity.[14] The civil register can also be a source of vital statistics if it is complete and up to date.

In Cameroon, the civil register has been evolving from a fully decentralized to a centralized structure since issuance of the first ordinance for a CR system in 1917. In 1968, a law on the organization of the civil register passed to confirm the decentralized structure, giving the *arrondissements* the responsibility for recording vital events and issuing civil status certificates after being signed by the mayor. In 1981, Ordinance no.81/002 provided the framework for the creation and function of special CRCs. The mayor, in the capacity of chief executive of the municipality, was responsible for the civil register, whereas the *préfets*/*sous-préfets*[15] oversaw the operation of the centers.

Having the administrative responsibility for the CR system resting with the local authorities led to differences in how identities were verified and accusations of falsifications, and it was very common for Cameroonians to have multiple identities. To facilitate CR management at the national level, BUNEC—a centralized institutional structure under MINDDEVEL—was established in 2011.[16] BUNEC's focuses on quality control and development plus maintenance of a centralized registry. The responsibility to record events in the registries remains with the communes/local councils.

The Ministry of Decentralization and Local Development (MINDDEVEL) is responsible for management of the civil status policy. Additional institutions are playing an important role regarding the timely, accurate and universal registration of vital events, notably the Ministry of Justice (MINJUSTICE), the Institute of National Statistics (INS), the Ministry of Health (MINSANTE), and the Communes.

[14] Identification for Development (ID4D) (2023) *Glossary | Identification for Development*. World Bank Group.
[15] State's representative responsible for the supervision of departments.
[16] Law N°2011/011 of May 6, 2011.

Box 1: Responsibilities of BUNEC

Article 4 of the Decree No. 2013/03 of February 13, 2013, defining the organization and functioning of BUNEC sets out its main missions as:

- Collecting, archiving, and centralizing data and documents relating to civil status, with a view to creating a national CR database. To this end, BUNEC receives or requests the transmission registers and other relevant acts or documents which it maintains.
- Exercise of administrative and technical control over the organization and operation of civil status centers, as well as the keeping of registers and the establishment of civil status documents.
- Development, dissemination, and compliance with standards, documents, and procedures manuals applicable to civil status documents and centers.
- Supply of civil status registers as well as materials and other equipment necessary for the proper functioning of civil status centers.
- Training of civil status officers and secretaries, as well as other stakeholders in the system.
- Design and implementation of information and awareness programs for populations on regulations governing civil status.

Administratively, Cameroon is divided into 10 semi-autonomous regions, with the regions further divided into 58 departments, which again are divided into 360 *arrondissements*/communes and 14 urban communities. CR governance is therefore semi-decentralized with local CRCs recording civil events. The envisioned national CR system would be managed by the central administration, with representation offices in the regions. There are 3,154 CR offices, divided into 374 principal registration centers and 2,522 secondary (satellite) CRCs, plus 58 CRCs abroad within diplomatic missions and consulates.

Figure 3: Primary Civil registration center in Batouri (East region)

Despite efforts to open more CRCs, many people still have to travel or walk to the nearest CRC. BUNEC has indicated that people living in rural areas may live up to four hours from a CRC. A CRC in a rural area may serve up to 37,000 individuals, and some people have to travel up to 30 km to the nearest CRC. In hard-to-reach, or conflict areas such as in the far north of Cameroon, accessing a CRC is difficult, if not impossible. However, there are also many secondary centers that are less than five minutes from each other or from a main center, which means that some centers barely have demand. This points to lack of strategic positioning of the CRCs to efficiently cover the whole population.

Part of Cameroon's strategic plan for CR reforms established a high-level coordination committee—the Steering Committee of the Civil registration Rehabilitation Program of Cameroon (PRE2C)—in 2015. The committee was chaired by the Minister of MINDDEVEL, and includes representatives from the Presidency of the Republic (PRC), the Prime Minister's Office (SPM), MINJUSTICE, MINSANTE, Ministry of External

Relations (MINREX), MINFI, MINEPAT, MINAS, the MINEDUB, the Ministry of the Promotion of Women and the Family (MINPROFF**)**, INS, BUNEC, the DGSN, the Directorate General of External Research, the State Secretariat for Defense in charge of the National Gendarmerie, and the Special Fund for Equipment and Intermunicipal Intervention(FEICOM). As of 2023, this Steering Committee is no longer active as its operations were financed through development partners' projects rather than an independent budget. Once projects closed and financing stopped, operations of the Committee also halted.

2.2.2. Eligibility and Coverage

Table 1: Civil Registration Eligibility and Coverage Summary

Civil Registration	
Minimum eligible age	From birth
Coverage	• 62% under 5 registered, but only 49% have a birth certificate. • Significant disparities in registration rates by region and urban-rural divide. Children in urban areas are much more likely to be registered than those in rural areas, with a respective 80% registration rate versus 47%. • The east, far north, and north regions have the lowest registration rates (42%, 49%, and 49% respectively), while the west region and Douala have the highest rates (84% and 93%).
Eligible to Register	All births in the country for: • Cameroonian nationals. • Refugees/Asylum seekers. • Persons with legal (permanent and/or temporary) residence e.g., students, workers.

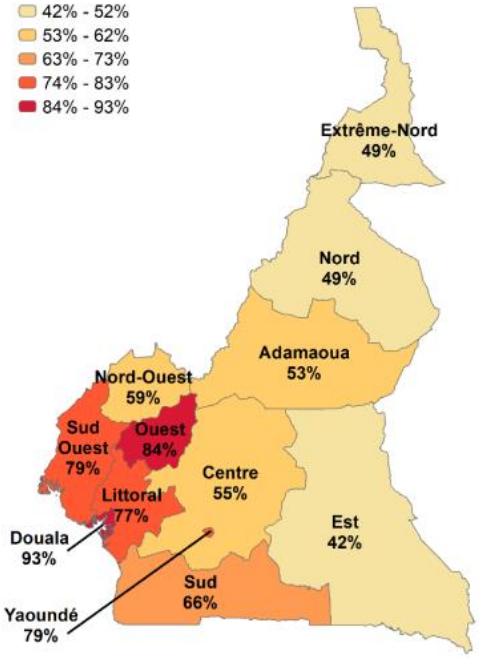
Registration of civil status events (such as births, marriages, and deaths) occurring on Cameroonian territory concerning Cameroonian or foreign nationals is mandatory, under penalty per the Penal Code. In countries where Cameroon has a diplomatic mission, Cameroonians are required to declare or have civil status events transcribed with the diplomatic or consular mission chief.

The birth registration rate in Cameroon remains incomplete and stagnant, with around 62 percent of children under age five registered, according to the latest Democratic Health Survey (DHS 2018). Of children registered only 49 percent of children under age five had a birth certificate.[17] The main reasons are that parents never picked up the birth certificate or it was lost or not available.

[17] Institut National de la Statistique/INS et ICF. 2020. Enquête Démographique et de Santé du Cameroun 2018. Yaoundé, Cameroun et Rockville, Maryland, USA : INS et ICF. https://dhsprogram.com/publications/publication-fr360-dhs-final-reports.cfm.

Figure 4: Birth registration, by region

Percentage of children under the age of 5 with the right to have their birth registered in civil status



Source: DHS, 2018

DHS data also highlights that delayed registration is a widespread problem in Cameroon. Only 57 percent of children under age five have had their birth registered within the first month after birth, with an additional 21 percent registered within the next month, and 6 percent registered two months later. About 15 percent of children were registered beyond the legal deadline of three months. Decline in registration rates may be due to a lack of awareness among parents about the importance of registration, registration procedures, or difficulties accessing registration services in certain areas.

There are also significant disparities in registration rates by region and a clear urban-rural gap. Children in urban areas are much more likely to be registered than those in rural areas, with a respective 80 percent registration rate versus 47 percent. The east, far north, and north regions have the lowest registration rates (42%, 49%, and 49% respectively), while the west region and Douala having the highest rates (84% and 93%). Socio-cultural norms in the north related to birth registration, such as the time needed to name a child (7+ days per some customs), results in delayed birth registration.

Birth registration rates are also linked to households' socioeconomic status. Children from the lowest income households have a registration rate of only 31 percent, while children from the highest income households have a registration rate of 92 percent. Cultural or social factors affect the perceived importance of registration. Targeted efforts to increase registration rates are needed, notably in marginalized and low-income communities.

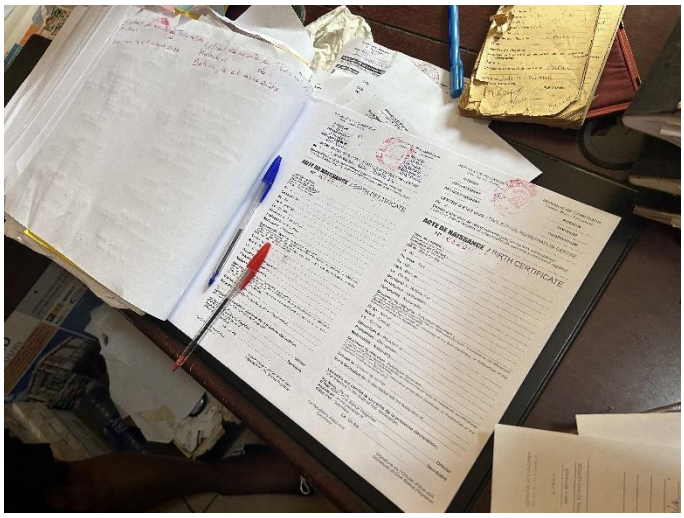
The DHS provides a good snapshoot of the birth registration rate in the country. However, the country does not benefit from a comprehensive data management system for vital statistics that would enable more accurate, up-to-date data on CR events. The lack of reporting requirements to the National Institute of Statistics limits the ability for the government to make informed decisions, notably on strategies to improve registration rates and healthcare policies.

2.2.3. Procedures

Civil Event Registries

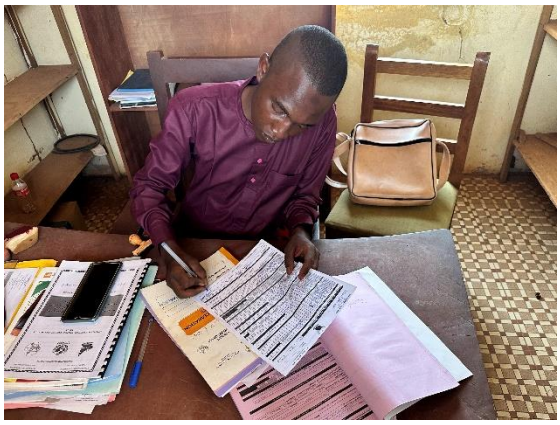
The law requires each CRC to register births in three identical registers, destined to be archived in the primary CRC for the commune, the tribunal of first instance, and BUNEC. Each register is composed of pages containing two identical blank birth records, both marked *acte de naissance* (birth record). For the register destined for local archiving, the outside copy (referred to as *l'acte*) is detached from the register along a dotted line and given to the registrant, leaving the inside copy near the binding (referred to as *la souche*) in the register for archival purposes. The copy of the birth record given to the registrant is their "original" birth certificate, and the individual is required to conserve this original document as it is very difficult to replace if lost. For the registers destined for the tribunal and BUNEC, the outside copies of the birth record are not detached, which can be used to provide a copy of a birth certificate if lost but also raises the question of the utility of this register format for archiving at BUNEC. All told, the civil registrar must hand copy, sign, and stamp the birth record a total of six times between the three registers. The fact that the biographic information is entered in longhand six times and in cursive letters introduces risk for errors, misspellings, or misinterpretation of letters, leading to inaccurate information. Mismatching of identity attributes is a serious issue for the individual if their identity is usurped or misused in any way. This presents a challenge for records digitalization, as well as for verification or authentication.

Figure 5: Birth registration register (East region)



The right copy is handed over to the parents and is referred as the original Birth certificate. The left side is referred to as the souche and kept at the CRC for archiving.

Figure 6: Secondary Civil registration center in Timangolo (East region)



The secondary CRC is hosted within a local health center of Timangolo. By March 2023, the officer still did not receive the paraphed registers from the Tribunal and use declaration forms to collect information before registering birth in the nearby primary CRC.

The process for assuring the integrity of the registers themselves is complex and highly regulated. This process has much in common with similar processes in other francophone and civil law jurisdictions, as they are all trace a common genealogy to the French Napoleonic code. At the beginning of the year, blank registers are delivered to CRCs. However, these registers cannot be used to register vital acts until the MINJUSTICE, through the tribunal of first instance, has initialized them. This consists in numbering (*coter*) and initialing (*parapher*) each page of the blank registers, thus conferring upon them legal validity as civil registers. For several reasons, the law empowers the tribunal to initialize the civil registers before any entry is made: to prevent CR office staff from adding or removing any pages from the registers, to assign the register to a particular calendar year, and to confer legal validity to the records they contain. Reports claim that sometimes the National Print is delayed with the production of the books. Both the cumbersome process of numbering and adding signatures to individual pages of the books and potential production delays mean that CRCs may not be able to start registering vital events at the start of the calendar year until the new books arrive.

At the end of the year (December 31st), a similar process must be undertaken to close the registers. The civil registrar must return the registers to the tribunal, which marks and signs the last record entered and physically removes and destroys any additional blank pages to avoid additional births being recorded in that year's register or in future years. After the registers are appropriately closed, one copy is kept at the tribunal, one copy is sent to BUNEC, while the third copy is returned to the primary CRC for archiving.

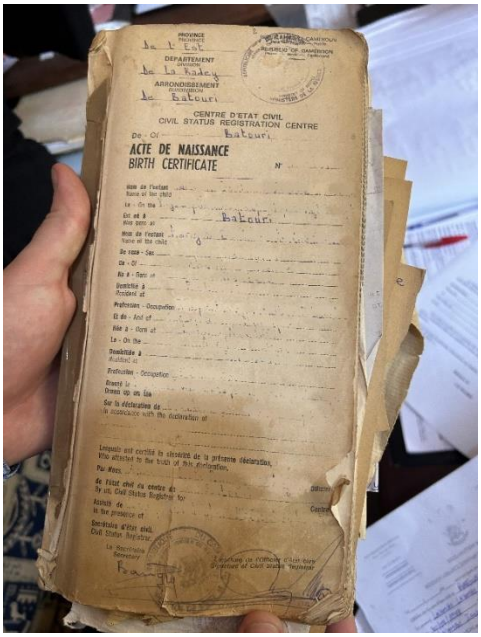
In practice, there are various issues with the implementation of this cumbersome system. While delivery of blank registers may be delayed, especially in more remote regions, the main delays come from the backlog of registers to be opened and closed at the tribunals. Civil registrars must sometimes actively follow-up to complete the process, and sometimes informal payments may be necessary to accelerate this process. Due to these challenges, some CRCs do not carry out the opening and closing of their registers according to the legal norms. Anecdotally, using uninitialized blank registers to record births, failing to close registers at the end of the year, as well as continuing to use the blank pages of one year's register to continue recording births in the next year are practices commonly observed in some CRCs. Such irregularity calls into question the legal validity of the birth records. The legal validity of the archives should be assessed as part of a project to digitize paper records and legal provisions made.

Registration of births

In many francophone countries, the term *acte de naissance* (birth record) is reserved for the data as recorded in the civil registry archive, while the document issued to individuals is formally considered to be a copy or "extract" of this record. In France, the specific terms in use are *copie intégrale d'acte de naissance* (integral copy of the birth record) and *extrait d'acte de naissance* (extract of the birth record), depending on the level of detail provided. Many francophone countries follow a similar model and nomenclature. In

such regimes, even the initial document issued to parents upon initial registration of a child's birth (commonly known in English as a birth certificate), is, formally speaking, a certified copy of the original birth record, the latter of which refers to the data recorded in the register and/or backend database.

Figure 7: Example of the souche of a birth certificate from 1997



This photo represents the state of conservation of a souche of birth certificate issued in 1997 and stored in a primary CRC. In many cases, copies held by parents will be in a poorer condition. Part of the population is therefore laminating the original copy received at birth to increase the length of conservation of the document.

Source: World Bank

Figure 8: Example of the current template for birth certificates

This new template corrects some issues with the previous version: clear separation between the given name(s) and surname of the child and only recorded once on the document, data of birth of the father, nationality of both parents recorded.

Source: World Bank

Under such a regime, if an extract/certified copy is lost, it is straightforward to obtain a replacement through a simple administrative procedure. The individual must simply visit the CR office, where the civil registrar can recopy the relevant information from the birth record and issue an updated certified copy

with equal legal validity as the initial one.[18] If, however, the original birth *record* is lost by the CR office—due to a lost or destroyed register—then the law requires court judgement to authorize the civil registrar to "reconstruct" this record. Once the record or register is reconstructed, then the usual administrative process is used to generate certified copies, as before.

While the legal regime in Cameroon is very similar to that discussed above, there are significant departures in the practical implementation that reduce overall efficiency and accessibility of the CR system. Perhaps because the copies given to parents when registering a birth are marked "*acte de naissance*" instead of "*copie intégrale d'acte de naissance*" (or an equivalent term), the Cameroonian administration and court system has come to apply the legal dispositions applying to *actes d'état civil* to these birth certificates given to individuals. Consequently, the legal requirement that "*reconstitution des actes d'état civil*" [19] requires a court judgement (*jugement supplétif*) to authorize the civil registrar to reconstruct a civil record is applied in Cameroon not only to lost/damaged register books but also to the reissuance of lost birth certificates. Previously, mayors used to issue "*duplicata"* of birth records on their own authority, which were thus effectively certified copies or civil extracts, but subsequent regulatory modifications[20] foreclosed this possibility and forced all birth certificate reissuance to go through the court system. The new draft civil registration law of 2021 currently being finalized by MINDDEVEL reintroduces a notion of a *copie intégrale,* but procedures for the issuance of such copies are unclear and require clarification that these can be issued through administrative procedures without court intervention.

Table 2: Timeline for birth registration

Article in current law[21]	Description	Timeframe	Cost
30 (I)	Birth must be declared for registration to a CR office within…	60 days from birth	Free
30 (II)	If birth is not declared within the initial period of 60 days, parents have an additional period of…	60 days from the end of the initial period of 60 days	Free
31 (I)	If birth happens in a hospital, declaration by an authorized health worker to a CR office must take place within…	30 days from birth	Free
31 (II)	If birth has not been declared by an authorized health worker, parents have an additional 60 days to declare the birth to a CR office…	90 days from birth	Free
32	Births declared after the expiration of the above timeline can be registered at the request of the public	within 6 months from birth	Not determined

[18] Indeed, many francophone countries require such documents to be issued regularly, as certain administrative procedures might require a recent CR extract (often from within the last 3 months) to ensure that the most up-to-date marginalia (marriage, divorce, death) are captured.

[19] See in particular Article 22 of Ordonnance 1981/02 du 29 juin 1981 portant Organisation de l'Etat civil et diverses dispositions relatives à l'état des personnes physiques.

[20] Ordinance of 81-002 of 1981.

[21] Ordinance of 81-002 of 1981 as amended by law 2011-011 of 2011: Arts 30-33 of law 2011-011.

	prosecutor. *		
33	Registration can only be done through the courts system (*Jugement supplétif*).	After 6 months from birth	Not determined (assumed high)

* No procedure specified

According At. 34 in the current CR law, information collected when a birth is registered is the:

- Name of the primary or secondary civil registry and, where applicable, that of the primary civil status registry.
- Full name, sex, the date, and place of the birth.
- Full name, age, nationality, occupation, domicile, or place of residence of the mother, father, and child.
- Full name and signatures of the civil status registrar and secretary.
- Date on which the record is established.

The steps of the processes required to register a birth and obtain documents are detailed below:

Registration of live birth (up to 90 days after birth)

To register a live birth:

1. Health center
    a. Birth notification recorded by health center and transmitted to CRC.
2. Secondary civil registration center
    a. Parent submits photocopies of an identity document (for example, national ID card).
    b. Staff hand writes the birth record six times in the three registry books corresponding to the year of the birth.
    c. Staff detach the outer copy from the inner copy (*souche*) for the register destined for archiving at the primary civil registration center.
3. Primary civil registration center
    a. Staff of secondary civil registrar submits the birth records for signature by the civil registrar.
    b. Civil registrar signs.
4. Secondary civil registration center
    a. Parent picks up the birth certificate (*acte de naissance*), often at a later date, which requires an additional trip to the CRC and creates an additional barrier contributing to the fact that although 62 percent of children under age five are registered, only 49 percent have a birth certificate (DHS, 2018).

The first birth certificate is free. Registration of a live birth directly at a primary civil registration center without using a secondary civil registration center uses a simplified version of the above process.

In the case of the delivery at home, no birth notification is established. Parents are expected to provide all information and present themselves at the registration center. Lack of intermediation by the health center makes it more complex for parents to understand the process and gather all required evidence. In practice, many parents living far away from a CRC will not travel to register the birth.

Delayed birth registration (between 90 days after birth and 6 months)

If a birth is declared more than 90 days after it occurred but less than six months after, the registration process must go through the public prosecutor. No specific procedure is described in the legislation.

Delayed birth registration (as of six months after birth)

Delayed birth registration or reconstruction of a lost birth record:

1. Primary civil registration center
    a. Individual requests a replacement *acte de naissance.*
    b. Staff locates the requestor's birth record in the relevant register.
    c. Staff prepares a document certifying the existence of the requestor's birth record – *attestation de nonexistence de souche.*
    d. Civil registrar signs the *attestation nonexistence de souche.*
2. Tribunal of first instance
    a. Individual requests a court hearing and submits required documentation including the *attestation nonexistence de souche.*
    b. Following a hearing, the judge issues a court order authorizing the reissuance of the requestor's birth certificate – *jugement supplétif.*
3. Primary civil registration center
    a. Individual submits the *jugement supplétif* to the civil registrar.
    b. Staff hand copy the original birth record in the registry of the year of the person's birth. (*souche*) to create a new birth record in the register of the year of the *jugement supplétif.* This is done six times in all the relevant registries for that year, just as with a new birth.
    c. Staff detach the outer copy from the inner copy (*souche*) for the register destined for archiving at the primary civil registration center.
    d. Civil registrar signs the birth certificate.
    e. Birth certificate is issued to the requestor.

Submitting the file to the court to request a late registration normally costs Central African Franc (CFA) 2,000 (about US$ 3.34), but a series of supporting evidence required can amount up to CFA 4,700 (about US$ 7.86). Once the judgment is delivered the fee to obtain the various documents amounts to a minimum of CFA 25,500 (approx. US$ 42.64).[22] This does not include informal fees or additional costs incurred by individuals during the procedure, such as transportation costs and loss of revenues due to potential seven return journeys to the different administrative office and the court. Consequently, the minimum total cost for obtaining the *jugement suppletive* is at least CFA 32.200 (about US$ 53.85) but can go as high as CFA 500.000. These costs may be exorbitant for many Cameroonians since 25 percent of the population live below the poverty line (US$ 2.15 per day) and the amount represents at least 25 days of work. Consequently, this has allegedly led to fraudulent practices such as falsification of birth certificates.

Single mothers face additional, sometimes insurmountable, barriers to registering a child and obtaining a birth certificate. For registration, she must obtain a court declaration signed by the father, the mother, two witnesses, and the civil status registrar before a birth certificate can be issued. If the mother is a minor, parents or guardian(s) should provide additional consent to register.

[22] GIZ Report, brochure jugement supplétif-fr.pdf.

Replacement of lost birth certificate (*acte de naissance*)

The current process to obtain a replacement birth certificate—*acte de naissance*—is:

1. Primary civil registration center
    a. Individual requests a replacement *acte de naissance.*
    b. Staff locates the requestor's birth record in the relevant register.
    c. Staff prepares a document certifying the existence of the requestor's birth record—*attestation d'existence de souche.*
    d. Civil registrar signs the *attestation d'existence de souche.*
2. Tribunal of first instance
    a. Individual requests a court hearing and submits required documentation including the *attestation d'existence de souche.*
    b. Following a hearing, the judge issues a court order authorizing the reissuance of the requestor's birth certificate – *jugement supplétif.*
3. Primary civil registration center
    a. Individual submits the *jugement supplétif* to the civil registrar.
    b. Staff hand copy the original birth record in the registry of the year of the person's birth (*souche*) to create a new birth record in the register of the year of the *jugement supplétif.* This is done six times in all of the relevant registries for that year, just as with a new birth.
    c. Staff detach the outer copy from the inner copy (*souche*) for the register destined for archiving at the primary civil registration center.
    d. Civil registrar signs the birth certificate.
    e. Birth certificate is issued to the requestor.

Attestation d'état civil

To obtain an *attestation d'état civil* to get a national ID card without a birth certificate:[23]

1. Prefecture
    a. Requestor—accompanied by traditional chief, mayor, and two witnesses—requests an attestation.
    b. Officer takes *procès verbal* of witness testimony.
    c. Witnesses sign the *procès verbal*.
    d. Staff prepare the attestation.
    e. Subprefect signs the attestation.

Legalized copy of birth certificate

To obtain a legalized copy of a birth certificate:

1. Prefecture
    a. Requestor presents their *acte de naissance* accompanied by a copy, either photocopy or hand copied.
    b. Officer verifies the data on the copy against the original.

[23] Article 7, Decret 2016/375 du 04 août 2016 fixant les caractéristiques et les modalités d'établissement et de délivrance de la Carte nationale d'identité.

c. Officer signs and stamps the copy to legalize it.

2.2.4. Information Technology (IT) system and integration

The government has adopted a strategic direction to leverage digital technologies to simultaneously improve trust in, and accessibility of, the civil registration system:

i) The Cameroon Civil Status Rehabilitation Strategic Plan, 2018-202.3
ii) The *Schéma Directeur de l'Informatisation du Système National de l'État Civil*, 2018

Under the *Schema* Directeur, the BUNEC has been tasked with creation of a shared IT system to record births and collect key statistics.

The envisioned digitalized civil registration system per the *Schéma Directeur* is summarized below:

- It will initially be deployed exclusively in the main civil status centers.
- The secondary civil status centers will continue with paper declarations. These will be transmitted to the main civil status centers.
- The digitalized certificates will bear the electronic signatures of the civil status officers and secretaries with QR code embedded.
- Production of a birth certificate will result in generation of a Unique Personal Identification Number (NIPU), a 17-character alphanumeric code uniquely identifying each person at birth.
- The central system will ensure centralization of documents from all civil status centers and production of indicators and statistical reports.
- Implementation of an electronic messaging system will facilitate collaboration between civil status centers, regional agencies, and BUNEC headquarters.
- In addition, an online reporting and consultation service portal will be made available to health and judicial structures.
- New online services will be offered to users, in particular the possibility for users to have copies or extracts of records delivered to the main civil status center of their choice.
- The new system will deploy a range of fraud prevention functionalities: biometric national ID card reader to acquire the General Delegation for National Security (DGSN) identifier of the persons and associate it with the new unique identification number (NIPU), affixing of a QR code (two-dimensional bar code) on the copies and extracts of deeds, trace and timestamp of all operations carried out in the system, search for deeds presenting similar civil data, among others.
- Each main civil status center will be equipped with means (scanner, electronic archiving software) allowing gradual indexing of previous paper certificates.

Several partner organizations (see Chapter 4) have piloted different digital systems to record birth and issue digital birth certificates, as well as digitize existing registries. BUNEC has not yet decided on the general architecture and the specific solution to deploy across the country.

2.3.Identification (ID) system

2.3.1. Overview – A brief history of identification

A foundational identification system is primarily created to manage identity information for the general population and provide credentials that serve as proof of identity for a wide variety of public and private sector transactions and services.[24] Identification systems collect and validate identity attributes—the combination of characteristics that make a person unique for a specific context—to establish a person's identity and provide proof of identity in the form of a credential (for example, a unique ID number, card, certificate, or mobile ID). The person can use these credentials to "assert" or prove their identity to third "relying" parties, such as government agencies, financial institutions, employers, or others that require some assurance of who they are.

Cameroon has been managing a paper-based identification system since 1964. As mandated by Decree No. 64/DF/394 of 29 September,[25] paper ID cards were issued by the Federal Security Directorate, the main authority in charge of establishment and issuance of national ID cards until the 1990s. In the early 2000s, the legal basis for issuance of identity documents to non-citizens was established and different resident cards were introduced. Identification services were provided both at the level of identification centers, often embedded in prefectures and sub-prefectures in a decentralized structure, upon delegation from the director of Federal security. Consequently, Senior Divisional Officers/Divisional Officers and Police Commissioners were responsible for managing identification services and signing identity cards. To obtain a national ID card, one needed to be age 18 or older, provide a birth certificate or witness testimonies, and be of Cameroonian nationality. Nationality was determined through visual perusal of certificate and paper ID issued immediately. Other cards produced by the ID system, such as residence cards, have other documentation requirements.

To curb high levels of identity fraud, an identity management system based on a digital database was introduced in 1994 with the French private company *Société d'Assistance et de Conception en Electronique* (SACEL) and Thales. The Delegation for Federal Security, which became DGSN, remained the main authority for establishment and issuance of national identity cards and residence permits in Cameroon. The process to obtain the card was also strengthened to provide more required documentation and allow centralized validation of data/documentation provided prior to issuance of identity documents. The National Centre for the Protection of Identification Documents (CNPTI) was established to validate data and card production. The role of Senior Divisional Officers/Divisional Officers in providing identification services was reduced over time and eventually removed. Several evolutions of the system through the 2000s improving measures against identity fraud, but financial and operational sustainability represent a recurring challenge.

The latest identification system in Cameroon was launched in 2016 with the issue of Decree No. 2016/375 of 4 August, 2016 laying down the characteristics and modalities for establishment and issuance of a new national identity card. The vendor for the system is Thales.[26] The IT system, however, is still not linked to the CR system.

[24] Identification for Development (ID4D) (2023) *Glossary | Identification for Development*. World Bank Group.

[25] This was based on the existing French identification system during the colonial period; however, it was only codified in a law in 1964.

[26] Thales has been the main vendor for most evolutions of the system. Gemalto was an earlier vendor but was acquired by Thales in 2019.

2.3.2. Institutional Arrangements

The CNPTI is responsible for issuance of national identity cards, refugee cards, and temporary and permanent resident cards. The CNPTI reports to DGSN, which is responsible for management of the national ID system and maintenance of associated technical infrastructure, while prefectures and sub-prefectures distributed across municipalities are responsible for registration and delivery of national IDs. CNPTI includes a department whose primary responsibility is to verify biometric data, validate application data, and issue national identity cards. CNPTI also includes production centers, regional data processing centers, and identification centers.

Figure 9: Enrollment & Archiving at Center

Enrollment for identification card applications is done at the identification centers, which are created as needed by DGSN leadership. There are 296 centers (236 stationary and 60 mobile enrollment) distributed across Cameroon's 10 regions Identification centers are responsible for: (1) enrollment of applicants, (ii) fee collection, (iii) issuance of temporary ID slips, (iv) management of enrollment stations, (v) communication with users.

Identification centers are located principally within prefectures and sub-prefectures due to budget constraints limiting stand-alone infrastructure. Challenges remain pertaining to infrastructure needs to manage the enrollment process, including:

- *Inadequate facilities, including missing infrastructure (electricity, connectivity, building) to provision sufficient service stations to cater to demand volume.*
- *Poor storage and archiving of files.*
- *Limited room to facilitate quick collection of cards produced by applicant.*

In 2018, an inter-ministerial committee was established to harmonize identity management practices in Cameroon. This committee includes all foundational ID system key stakeholders and relying parties[27], such as PRC, SPM, MINJUSTICE, Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications (MINPOSTEL), Ministry of Transport (MINTRANSPORT), MINDDEVEL, INS, DGSN, BUNEC, MINAT, National Centre for Information Development (CENADI), MINSANTE, CNPS, MINFI, MINREX, and MINFOPRA. Consultation occurred over three years, leading to development of a documented strategy together with system architecture and associated draft legislation, which includes provisions for development of a new institution provisionally called the "Infocentre". The aim of this structure would be to manage consolidation of foundational and functional identification systems and rectify identity fraud issues in different sectors, such as resolving mobile operator, MTN's issues with double identities.

[27] An entity that relies on foundational ID system to verify or establish the identity of an individual.

2.3.3. Eligibility and Coverage

Table 3: Coverage and Eligibility Information

National ID	
Minimum eligible age	18 years
Target Population Size	~ 14,270,000 people[28]
Coverage	• Coverage Percentage = 82.8%. • An estimated 2.5 million adults do not have an ID. • While coverage is relatively good (though worse for some groups such as women and young people) stronger monitoring and evaluation tools needed to better understand additional indicators—such as registered with no card versus unregistered, service delivery times, geographical distribution—which remain pain points.
Eligible to Register	• Cameroonian nationals. • Refugees/Asylum seekers. • Persons with legal (permanent and/or temporary) residence, such as students and workers.

The age of eligibility to obtain a national ID card is 18 and is mandatory for all citizens.[29] Other legal residents must obtain either a Refugee Card (RC), Temporary Residency Card (TRC) or Permanent Residency Card (PRC) depending on their status.

Legal residents are eligible at 18yrs for a TRC (stay between two to six years), PRC (stay over six years) or RC (refugees). Minors who are not citizens benefit from residence rights of legal guardian(s) but are not issued any separate physical credentials. For refugees to obtain a card, they must first obtain an identification card issued by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) and a refugee certificate issued by the Ministry of External Affairs (MINREX) confirming their refugee status.

An estimated 2.5 million adults—about one in five adults in the country—do not have an ID card with a 6.4 percent difference between male and female ownership.[30] This figure increases significantly when considering the disparity between individuals with only a temporary ID slip versus cards themselves. Vulnerable groups such as IDPs, refugees, people in rural areas and the poorest members of the population are disproportionately harmed by the lack of identity documents. Those without national IDs are often

[28]World Population Review, Cameroon Population 2024. Available at https://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/cameroon-population.

[29] There are no direct sanctions foreseen, but in case of policy check on road, the in the case individuals cannot present an ID, they are sent to the closest identification post in addition to paying a fee.

[30] ID4D Dataset 2021.

unable to access basic services and economic opportunities, such as education, social assistance, financial services, or formal employment. Several factors contribute to this gap in ID coverage, such distance to enrollment centers, direct and indirect costs of registration (such as transportation costs and indirect fees) and cumbersome processes. The anglophone crisis[31] has further exacerbated the situation with destroyed centers and additional concerns around interacting with the police for fear of being identified as anglophone. DGSN acknowledges that coverage of the adult population with an ID card declined in recent years due a global shortage of silicon, a key element to produce cards, causing a temporary halt in card production. COVID 19 also complicated supply chain issues. While no longer the case, these problems increased the card backlog.

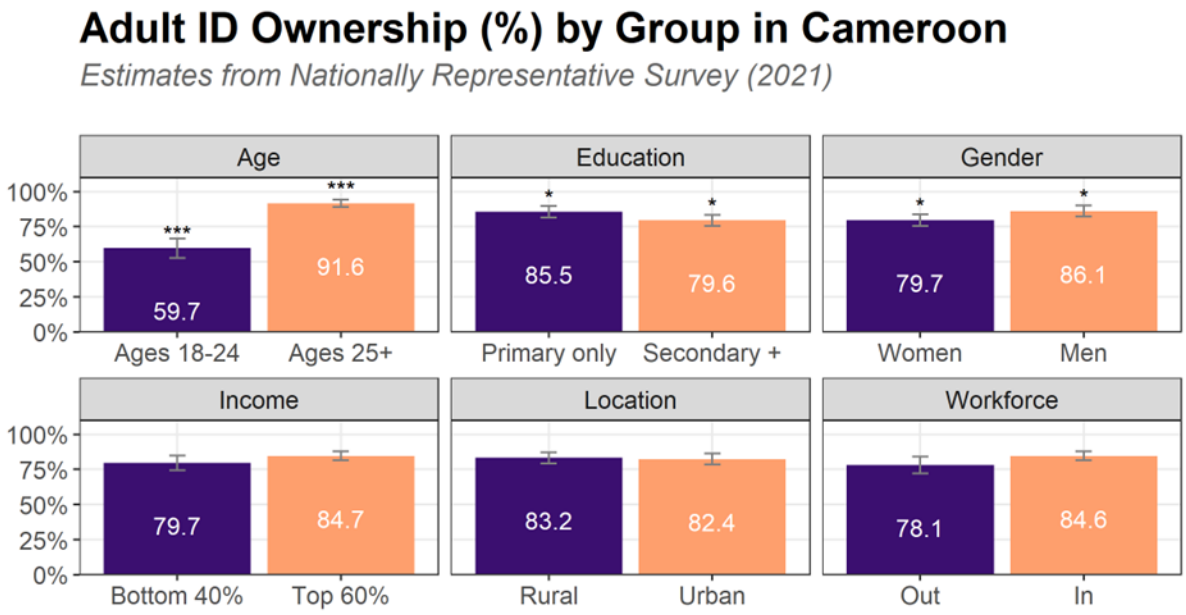
Though Cameroon has broad eligibility requirements, including both nationals and non-nationals, obtaining an identity document is challenging for many. For example, refugee card issuance was first piloted in 2022 with the issuance of 5,000 refugee ID cards. With 230,000 refugees residing in the country,[32] this represents less than 1 percent, even though the legal basis was established in a 2007 decree.[33] This has hampered refugees' socio-economic reintegration due to lack of access to basic services and jobs. For many, accessibility issues, indirect costs—such as bribes, transportation, and stamps—and wait times of over two years for a document to be issued hinder obtaining much needed identity documents. Temporary ID slips with validity of three months are supposed to be renewable only once, but end up being renewed multiple times, and are subject to wear and tear and become illegible over time. Moreover, not all relying parties—financial institution, for example—accept this slip as proof of identity, which hampers financial access.

[31] Ongoing armed conflict between Cameroon Armed Forces and Anglophone separatists who are seeking independence from Cameroon.

[32] UNHCR, Cameroon, Available at: https://www.unhcr.org/cameroon.html.

[33] https://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/docs/ELECTRONIC/83979/118121/F865098694/CMR-83979.pdf.

Figure 10: Coverage of ID by Demographic Group



Graph shows average ID ownership by demographic group with 95% error bars, calculated using country-level weights and survey-weighted standard errors. Statistically significant differences by group are indicated using asterisks at the 95% level (*), 99% level (**), and 99.9% level (***). Information on rural versus urban location is only available for the subset of economies where face-to-face data collection was possible in 2021. Includes respondents who are also over the eligible age for obtaining the ID. Source: ID4D Global Dataset (2022), ID4D-Findex Series.

2.3.4. Procedures

Applications to obtain identity documents are processed in 296 centers[34](236 stationary centers and 60 mobile enrollment units) reportedly distributed across the 10 regions of Cameroon. The majority of these centers are embedded within [sub] prefectures with dedicated rooms for ID applications. In only a few cases, identification centers have separate infrastructure from prefectures. Existing facilities are inadequate, with insufficient room in many cases to cater to demand volume or enable proper file storage and archiving. Electricity lapses and limited connectivity are rife. DGSN's long-term vision is to slowly transition towards independent identification centers in all communes. Due to financial constraints, in the short to medium term they are strategically positioning centers within prefectures.

Obtaining an ID requires at least four trips: first to the document certification authority to obtain a certified copy of birth certificate, another trip to the tribunal to obtain a certificate of nationality, and then two trips to an identification center to submit application and then again to collect the ID card. The application process itself usually takes 15-30 minutes, however, wait times to be serviced can range from a few hours to multiple days in some centers. In many cases, applicants must be present in centers as early as 5 am (a few hours ahead of average opening times) to be included in target service numbers for the day. Based on this arbitrary pre-determined target, some applicants are directed to other identification centers or return

[34] https://www.cameroon-tribune.cm/article.html/37758/fr.html/cni-passeport-lumiere-sur-le-processus and interview information from DGSN updating number of stationary centers to 236.

on a different day. Cut-off positions are determined based on arrival time as indicated by position in waiting line.

Application begins with payment of the application fee of XAF 2,800 in cash and provision of various required documentation, as per the list in Table 4. There is no separate application form, and information is entered directly into the system based on the details on the birth certificate. To complete the application, fingerprints (10 - flat) and a face photo are taken. Collected information is sent to the national ID card production center for validation and deduplication using an Automatic Fingerprint Identification System (AFIS). Once the request is registered, the applicant obtains a provisional identity document, called a *récépissé*, on which appears the photograph, parentage, height, digitized signature, the identification post/location, the date of registration, the signature of the head of competent unit, the identification stamp, the receipt number, and type of identification document. This document constitutes a presumption of identity and has a validity period of three months. It should be renewable once but gets renewed multiple times in practice due to delays in obtaining the ID card. When the applicant's national identity card is ready, it must be picked up at the same registration center upon return of the *récépissé*.

Figure 11: National ID Registration Process

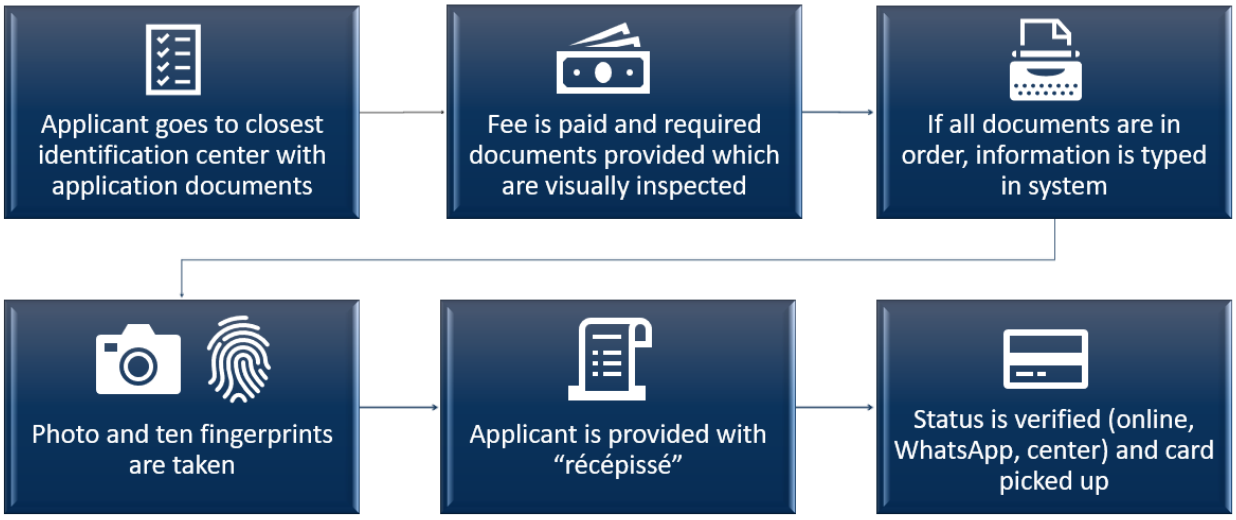


Table 4: ID Documentary Requirements

Category	Requirements
National ID	General Application • 4 photographs in color. • Certified copy of birth certificate. • Marriage certificate (for married women). • Proof of occupation (if employed). • Nationality certificate. If ID is lost or stolen (in addition to above)

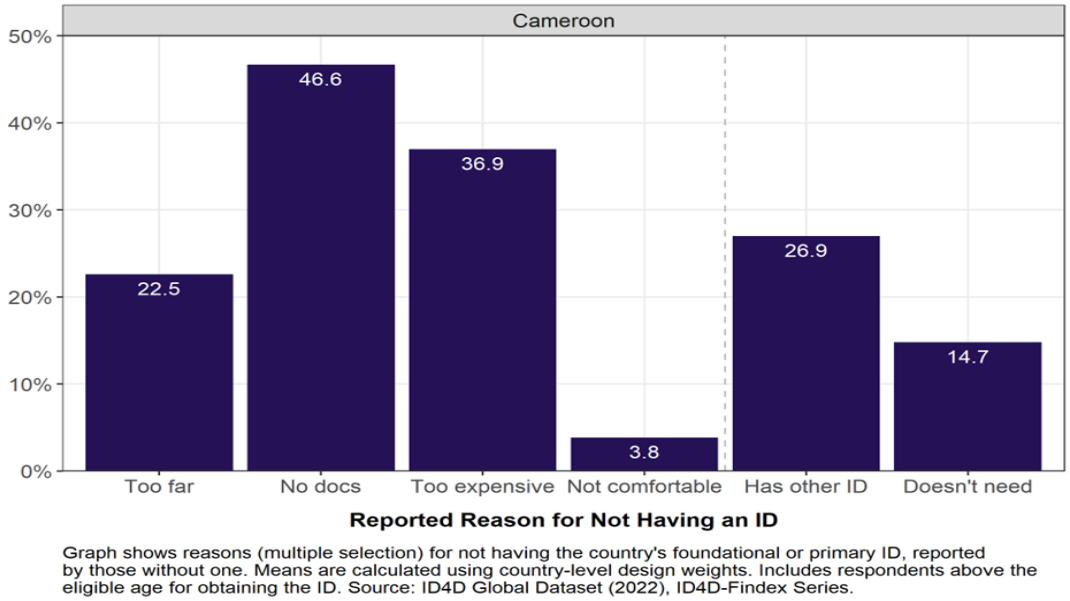
	• Attestation of loss from police (should have surname and given names, date, and place of birth, next of kin, and if applicable/available, reference ID of the location where it was delivered. Damaged ID (in addition to General Application requirements) • Damaged ID. Change or correction of name (in addition to General Application requirements) • Legal document authorizing name change. Change of Parentage (in addition to General Application requirements) • Legal document authorizing parentage change.
Temporary Resident Card	• Certified photocopy of the valid passport, bearing the long stay visa, issued within the last three months. • Certificate of residence (no issuance date requirement), issued by the administrative authority or the Police Commissioner with territorial jurisdiction bearing the stamp of the head of the district or village. • Criminal record verification requested for every application. • A tax certificate or a discharge tax receipt, or photocopy of the business license valid for the current fiscal year. • Payment of the stamp duty. • Proof of stay.
Permanent Resident Card	a) For foreigners staying or admitted as a Resident: • Residence permit renewed for the third time; at least one (01) month before its expiry date. • Certificate of residence, issued by the administrative authority or the Police Commissioner with territorial jurisdiction bearing the stamp of the head of the district or village. • Criminal record verification. • Certified copy of the valid passport dating from less than (03) months, bearing the long-stay visa. • A tax certificate or a discharge tax receipt, or photocopy of the business license valid for the current fiscal year. • Payment of the stamp duty. b) For members of religious congregations not subject to taxation:

	• an act of recognition from the congregation. • an identification document attesting to membership duly signed by the Head of the said congregation. • a certified photocopy of the valid passport dating from less than (03) months. • Certificate of residence, issued by the administrative authority or the Police Commissioner with territorial jurisdiction bearing the stamp of the head of the district or village. • Criminal record verification. c) For the spouse of a person of Cameroonian nationality • a certified photocopy of the marriage certificate, dated less than three (03) months. • a certified photocopy of the valid passport dated less than three (03) months. • Certificate of residence, issued by the administrative authority or the Police Commissioner with territorial jurisdiction bearing the stamp of the head of the district or village. • Criminal record verification. • Certified copy of the valid passport dating from less than (03) months, bearing the long-stay visa. • a tax certificate or a discharge tax receipt, or photocopy of the business license valid for the current fiscal year. • Payment of the stamp duty.

Refugee Card	• Identification card, issued by UNHCR.
	• Refugee certificate issued by MINREX.
	• Renewal of the refugee card requires the following documentation:
	  ○ Old refugee certificate, at least one (01) month before the expiry of its validity.
	  ○ Old refugee card, one (01) month at least before the expiry of its validity.

Below graphs demonstrates articulated barriers for Cameroonians to access these systems, based on the ID4D-Findex 2021 Survey.

Figure 12: ID4D 2022 Global Dataset: Reported Reasons for Not Having an ID



Graph shows reasons (multiple selection) for not having the country's foundational or primary ID, reported by those without one. Means are calculated using country-level design weights. Includes respondents above the eligible age for obtaining the ID. Source: ID4D Global Dataset (2022), ID4D-Findex Series.

2.3.5. Credentials

Unique identifier (UI)

The identification system issues a unique identification number (UI, *IU* in French) to residents aged 18 and above, which is printed on the back of the card. It is a 17-digit structured number generated after biometric enrollment/deduplication. This token is generated using an algorithm that considers enrollment year, enrollment center, name, date of birth, gender, and citizenship; however, the precise structure is not known to the public. The UI is intended to be unique, with each person having only one UI and each UI issued to only one individual. In line with this policy, the number should remain the same when renewing the card and the UIs of deceased individuals are not reused. However, this has not always been the case with previous iterations of the ID system, and there are many individuals who have had different UIs over the course of their identity lifecycle.

With introduction of a new unique identification number (NIPU), per the digitalization master plan for civil registration, there would be a need to understand how this number and that from the identification system will be used to uniquely identify people. Given the difference in structure of both numbers, with attributes such as the enrollment center number being unique and different for national ID versus civil registration centers, additional clarity would be needed on how to manage both numbers over a person's lifecycle. While BUNEC's vision is for one unique number from birth to death, DGSN's position is that the NIPU would be a temporary number to be switched to the UI at age 18. Therefore, a clear agreement is needed on how to link these systems (foundational and functional) to records.

ID card(s)

The primary physical credentials DGN issues are the national ID card (NID), Refugee Card (RC), Temporary Resident Card (TRC), and Permanent Resident Card (PRC). The Ministry of Social Affairs (MINAS) plans to introduce an ID card for handicapped individuals with DGSN as their technical partners. DGNS will only manage certain technical aspects, such as card production. MINAS will manage all other enrollment,

system, and governance aspects.

The main difference between the physical credentials is the name of the card which is printed at the left as Figure 13 shows. A temporary slip is provided upon enrollment with a validity period of three months, renewable once. To improve security features of the card, the NID was last upgraded in 2016 to a polycarbonate ID card with embedded chip, encoded with biographic data, the UIN, two fingerprints,[35] and digitally signed.

Figure 13: Sample ID Cards

National ID card

Resident card

Permanent resident card

Refugee card

Source : DGSN. https://www.dgsn.cm/titres-identitaires/

Table 5: Key Characteristics of National ID

Attribute	National ID
First issued	1964 (Paper ID card);1994 (IT system introduced with issuance of plastic cards); 2016 (smart cards)
Fee for individual	XAF 2800 (~USD4.5)

35 https://www.thalesgroup.com/fr/europe/france/dis/gouvernement/etudes-de-cas/nouvelle-carte-identite-pour-le-cameroun

Validity Period	10 years
Material	Polycarbonate Security features: cardholder's color portrait laser-engraved in high definition, in the inside of the card's body
Identifier	Unique Identifier (UI)
Application Process	In person
Method of Collection	In person
Attributes shown on the credential	**Front:** Surname, given names, date of birth, place of birth, sex, height, profession, signature, photo **Back:** Father's names, mother's names, address, issue date, expiry date, identification center number, UI, ID card number, photo, name, and signature of DG of DGSN
Machine readability	Chip
Machine – readable attributes	On the chip: • UI • two encrypted fingerprints • Biographic data

2.3.6. IT System and integrations

DGSN is responsible for data hosting and operation of the back-end system for identification system.[36] The technology stack of the ID system comprises multiple modules, contracted from Thales:

- a user management system/enrollment application
- an Automated Fingerprint Identification System (AFIS)
- ID printing software for card production (2 production centers in Yaounde and Garoua)

Thales was the system vendor from 1994–2016. In 2016, Gemalto took over from Thales as the system supplier, only to be purchased by Thales in 2019, which is the system supplier currently. Evolutions in the system design and standards over the years include adoption of the ICAO standard format adopted in 2006.

Data Management

DGSN manages its own physical data center and back-up center, which is not shared with any other government institutions. Police agents manage physical security of the center with 24/7 guard duty. Even though the ID system is interoperable by default, data is not shared with other institutions for the purpose of identity authentication and verification. Computers at enrollment centers are not connected to public Wi-Fi but have a dedicated Virtual Private Network (VPN) connection and can only exchange data with the

36 Considering DGSN's focus on security of the system, detailed technical specifications were not provided during consultations.

data center. Data collected at enrollment centers is encrypted and sent to the data center through a File Transfer Protocol (FTP). At the data center, it is decrypted and put into database. For mobile enrollment units, data is stored in encrypted flash memory drives using Universal Serial Buses (USBs) and transported to dedicated enrollment centers where only a few selected engineers have the software to decrypt and transfer to data center.

Data Processing; Centralization, Validation and Deduplication

Breeder documents are visually inspected by enrollment officers, but no other means to authenticate documents provided is used. Validation of the authenticity of breeder documents, particularly certified copy of a birth certificate, is only done at production centers. Artificial Intelligence (AI)/Machine Learning (ML) algorithms are deployed on scanned copies of documents to verify information provided against all system data, which has been preserved since 1994. These upgrades to algorithms for fraud detection and prevention supported a DGSN analysis after the introduction of system in 2016 (through comparison with all legacy system data since 1994). This uncovered close to 6,000,000 fraudulent actions on birth certificates for five regions of the country. This centralized validation requires is carried to further validate uniqueness of the applicant, after which UI is assigned.

Card Production and Distribution

high capacity in terms of data hosting and transmission. Once data has been validated, 1: n deduplication

Card production is done at two centers located in Yaoundé and Garoua with production capacity of 10,000 and 5,000 cards per day, respectively. While improvement has been reported with introduction of the Garoua center in the last year, production capacity is still insufficient to meet the needs of 27 million people. In addition to ensuring the Garoua production center is fully operational, efforts to address the backlog—created by the silicon shortage (to produce the microchips in blank cards) during COVID—are needed.

Once issued, cards are sent back to the enrollment center where the applicant originally registered. Applicants need to be proactive to check on the status of their application either online or through WhatsApp to know if their card has been issued. Unfortunately, currently no mass messaging service is widely available to notify applicants once cards are ready. For applicants without internet access, they need to periodically travel to their original enrollment center physically to validate the status of their application. Due to backlog, long processing times, and inadequate distribution mechanisms, it can take up to two years to receive card.

Figure 14: Unclaimed ID Cards

"Cartes en souffrances": Unclaimed ID cards in enrollment center. This is due to the nomadic nature of population, long processing time, inadequate communication on availability of card.

3. Legal Assessment

Cameroon's legal framework underpinning the CR and ID ecosystems includes a broad spectrum of laws and regulations either in force or in the process of being established. While some of these laws can serve as a basis to support CR and ID digitalization, gaps remain to enable digitalization while establishing safeguards for risks that may arise.

3.1.1. Civil registration

Ordinance No. 81-2 of 9 June 1981—as amended by law No. 2011/11 of 6 May 2011—currently governs the CR system. The latter created BUNEC as the central-level entity responsible for controlling and verifying that registers are regularly maintained at decentralized CR centers (CRCs) while introducing the *Fichier national d'état civil,* or national CR database. While these modifications testify to Cameroon's will to anticipate digitalization—particularly by providing for a centralized system to eventually host a national centralized CR database—further amendments are still needed to enable digitalization processes and databases and to give equivalent legal value to digital and paper-based CR documents.

To that end, the government (through MINDDEVEL), is in the process of finalizing a draft CR law amending the currently applicable framework to introduce computerized processes for declaration and registration of vital events, as well as to recognize legal value to civil status records and documents. This draft law clarifies that the national CR database is a computerized, permanent, centralized, and secure database, consisting of electronic civil status records and digitized paper civil status records. However, while the draft law enables a digitalized system, all provisions still recognize the existence and effects of the paper-based legacy system. This is an essential aspect of the text as it would allow a transitional period while digitalization of the CR system is not yet optimal and ensure that those with low or no digital literacy are not excluded from the system.

The following points represent some other positive aspects of this draft CR law:

- Extends the timeframe for declaring births to 90 days from birth for declaration by parents otherwise within 12 months from birth upon request by the Public Prosecutor.
- Expands BUNEC's missions to include wider functions for digitalization of the national CR database.
- Includes non-citizens, refugees, asylum seekers, stateless persons, and migrants within the scope.

- References fundamental principles governing CR such as continuity, universality, and permanence of civil registration as a public service.
- Introduces a unique personal identification number (NIPU) to be issued at birth and, eventually, to all those holding civil status records in paper-based format. Yet, modalities regarding this NIPU should be set out by decree.
- Includes provisions related to data protection safeguards to mitigate potential risks arising from digitalization of the CR system and cross-reference made to "the data protection law" currently being finalized by the government for adoption in coming months.

It must be noted that the confusion in terminology referred to above (see section 2.2.3) between "*copie*" (that is, certified copies of civil status records delivered to individuals) and "*acte*" (that is, civil status records maintained and archived at the CR centers and within the national CR database at BUNEC), is still present in the version of the draft CR law reviewed for this Diagnostic. Such confusion prevents interpreters and all actors responsible for complying with obligations set forth under this law from understanding which administrative route to use for specific CR procedures, as opposed to the judicial channels.

Indeed, confusing terminology used in the draft law to refer to records—as opposed to copies of civil status records—can lead to significant confusion that can affect records and copies delivered to individuals, including cases such as the constitution (of records), reconstitution (that is, reconstruction of lost or destroyed records), issuance (of copies), rectification (of either incorrect records or incorrect copies), late declaration (for example, copies of birth or death certificates), among other situations. For example, while lost copies can be substituted through an administrative process, lost, or destroyed records (that is, "*actes*") would require judicial intervention to be reconstructed. Further harmonization of the terminology used in the draft law is needed to prevent imposing unnecessary hurdles often associated with judicial procedures.

3.1.2. Identification (ID) system

Law 90/042 of 19 December 1990 currently governs the ID system. The law, along with its related decree (decree 2016/375 of 4 August 2016), created the NID card. The characteristics of the NID card are set out under decree 2016/375: the NID card issued after decree 2016/375 was enforced is now computerized, biometric, personal, contains an electronic chip, and has a validity of 10 years.

This legal framework provides that the NID card is compulsory for all citizens aged 18 and above and is issued by the DGSN upon presenting, *among other things*, a certified copy of the birth certificate, and a copy of marriage certificate for married women. In cases where the applicant does not possess the required documents, decree 2016/375 exempts them from such requirement provided they present an "*attestation d'état civil*'. This is a statement completed by the applicant that includes information that should be on a birth certificate and is delivered by the competent CR center in the jurisdiction of the applicant's birthplace, with the presence of the traditional chief and witnesses.

The applicable framework for the NID system, despite the exemption referred to, still relies on the issuance of CR documents and, particularly, birth certificates. This interdependence between CR and ID document issuance can be challenging in the absence of a simplified CR system which could prompt an increase in birth registration coverage.

3.1.3. Digital Economy

Other key legal and regulatory aspects underpinning CR and ID ecosystem digitalization include important areas of the digital economy such as data protection, cybersecurity and cybercrime, electronic

transactions, e-government, and access to information, among others. While digitalization of the CR and ID ecosystems can unlock economic potential by improving access to services across sectors, this ambitious agenda requires a comprehensive legal framework that recognizes the legal value of digital processes and transactions while mitigating harm that may occur from misuse and abuse of digital systems and personal data.

The current legal and regulatory framework for the digital economy in Cameroon lacks key legislation and requires significant improvements to align with best practices. For instance, Cameroon does not currently have a data protection law of general application. This represents an impediment to protection of personal data processed under both paper-based and digitalized systems and constrains uptake in online transactions and services in the public and private sectors. However, as mentioned, the government is currently finalizing a draft law on personal data protection to help fill this significant legal gap. Adopting such law would impose a set of compliance obligations on both public and private entities. This would ensure processing personal data is lawful, fair, and transparent. It would also give people rights to enforce protection of their personal data, either directly or through the designated data protection authority (created under this draft law), particularly in cases where processing of personal data is significant and where the nature of such data may be sensitive. Hence, the adoption of the draft data protection law in progress would be key to protect individuals' personal data under the CR an ID ecosystems.

When it comes to cybersecurity and cybercrime, the currently applicable legislation—law 2010-012 of 21 December, 2010—lacks clarity in its provisions particularly around the overlapping mandates of the National Agency for Information and Communication Technologies (ANTIC). Indeed, while the latter is construed as a cybersecurity agency in the law on cybercrime, it is also considered a root certificate authority under the applicable legislation on e-transactions, which we will further discuss. Further, the currently applicable law on cybercrime also needs to be distinguished from the legislation on electronic communications and could benefit from improvements to align Cameroon's cybercrime approach with best practices, such as those enshrined in international good practice to protect the rights of individual in the context of cybercrime investigation or prosecution (for example, the Council of Europe's Convention on Cybercrime and its Protocols, 2001).

Similarly, the applicable framework for e-transactions—governed by law 2010-020 of 21 December 2010 on e-commerce and electronic transactions—is unclear on several aspects: as mentioned, many provisions for e-transactions legislation are currently found under the cybercrime law in Cameroon, but there is no clear indication as to how electronic signatures can actually be implemented. The body of law and regulations do not distinguish between different levels of assurance, do not clearly definition what represents qualified signatures, nor do they provide implementation requirements.

However, both the cybercrime legislation and the law on e-transactions are currently being amended by the government (through MINPOSTEL) to address gaps, clarify ambiguities, and align these laws with applicable best practices.

Finally, the government is also finalizing a draft law on e-government and access to information and open-data, which are key enablers for data sharing between public sector entities (government-to-government or G2G) as well as requiring such entities to respond to reasonable access to information requests and proactively disclose public data. Adopting harmonized rules and data quality standards would help govern how public institutions share data among themselves and with individuals and would help improve effectiveness and transparency of public administration and hence of CR and ID authorities in a digital context.

4. Development Partner Initiatives

Several World Bank and other development partners initiatives have aimed to improve CR and ID systems in Cameroon. Overall, these initiatives have been relatively small-scale and fragmented, consisting mainly of pilots, sectoral investments, or targeting restricted geographic areas or categories of beneficiaries. As such, these initiatives have not unlocked transformational change to modernize the entire foundational identity ecosystem. While some initiatives have been successful and have generated important lessons, results have been limited to only the specific targeted areas or groups. As discussed in the Recommendations section in this Diagnostic, a holistic, nationwide strategic approach is needed, supported by a corresponding level of investment, to truly modernize Cameroon's foundational identification ecosystem that serves the needs of the population, government, and businesses.

In addition to the World Bank, development partners working in this area include the *Agence Française de Développement* (AFD), European Union (EU), German Agency for International Development (GIZ), International Organization for Migration (IOM), Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA), Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), among others. No less than 43 initiatives have been undertaken by development partners in recent years, with diverse aims and activities, including:

- **Increasing civil registration and identification coverage, often for vulnerable populations such as refugees, or in targeted geographic areas.** Many of the initiatives fall into this category. A joint NRC and SIDA project provided material support (booklets, office materials and other equipment) to local CRCs and financial support to beneficiaries to obtain supplementary judgments in four communes. The World Bank Group (WBG) has invested in CR and ID initiatives: improving civil registration by connecting health facilities to local CRCs and offering performance-based financing incentives for birth registrations; educating mothers through educational campaigns including information on birth registration; targeting marginalized groups by supporting delivery of ID cards to 5,000 refugees and ID documents to around 1,000 indigenous persons; and providing performance-based grants to improve the delivery of local services, including CR services. IOM, NRC, and UNHCR have supported initiatives to provide displaced populations and refugees with identification documents.
- **Improving functional identification systems,** to enable those without identification documents to access benefits**.** WBG has issued sector-specific identity cards to provide cash transfer beneficiaries with identification cards that allow them to access benefits under the national social safety net program.[37]
- **Digitization and digitalization of CR activities,** for example, the GIZ and KOICA supported project, PAMEC (Program for the modernization of civil registration) Phase 2 aims to digitize selected CR aspects in pilot municipalities in the north, southwest, and Littoral regions,[38] whereas an EU pilot on digitization focused on scanning and indexing existing paper registers in Yaounde.[39]
- **Support for legal and institutional reforms,** for example the EU's Procivis project[40] and the GIZ PAMEC Project[41] helped draft a new data protection law, although not adopted. In addition, the

[37] Cameroon Social Safety Nets Project (P128534) and the Social Safety Nets for Crisis Response Project (P164830)
[38] Support Program for the Modernization of the Civil Registration System (PAMEC II)
[39] Support Programme for the Modernization of the Civil Registration System (PAMEC I)
[40] Procivis Project in Cameroon
[41] Support Programme for the Modernization of the Civil Registration System (PAMEC I)

World Bank supported the Central Bank to issue a regulation that requires biometric identification for bank customers.

- **Studies and assessments** creating strategies and implementation plans, for example the multi-donor Africa Programme on Accelerated Improvement of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics,[42] or UN Women's Second Chance Education Project.[43]
- **Training and sensitization** to raise awareness among beneficiaries and increase demand, for example the Universal Birth Registration Project by EU and UNICEF.
- **Capacity building** for both centralized and decentralized government authorities, for example GIZ's PAMEC project which supports MINDDEVEL, BUNEC, and select municipalities to implement a reliable Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) system.

Despite this plethora of initiatives, overall improvements have been relatively limited for several reasons:

- **No attempt at holistic reform of foundational identification ecosystem**. Initiatives have been small-scale and have targeted specific improvements, mostly to CR, but no attempt has been made by partners to undertake a wholescale modernization of the identity ecosystem.
- **Limited funding**. The biggest development partner initiative was GIZ and KOICA's PAMEC Phase II project, which invested around US$8 million. Most other initiatives are relatively small, with investments under US$2 million. Even when successful pilots have been carried and generated important lessons, funding for nationwide scale-up has not emerged.
- **Sub-optimal coordination.** Donor initiatives have at times been poorly coordinated, resulting in occasional duplication of investments in the same area.

Despite the limitations, these initiatives have generated several important lessons to inform future reforms of the foundational identification ecosystem, including:

- **Future initiatives should aim for broader and more comprehensive reform of the CR and ID ecosystem**. The small, fragmented initiatives to date, while making some progress, have not led to CR and ID systemic transformation. More ambitious operations are needed for wholescale modernization of the ecosystem.
- **Coordination is needed among development partners and government stakeholders.** Development partners need to improve strategic oversight, coordination, and implementation of projects that have sometimes been characterized by uncoordinated pilots and duplicate efforts. For example, UNDP piloted OpenCRVS in the far north some years back, and now GIZ is piloting the same system. It is important to ensure that GIZ's pilot effectively incorporates lessons from the UNDP pilot.
- **Partnering with local institutions and sectoral services can promote progress outside major cities.** Collaboration with local mayors—for example, through building local committees—has been shown to enhance success. Working with local councils can facilitate access to hard-to-reach locations, thereby enabling timely production of birth certificates and increased awareness of the importance of civil status, especially among vulnerable persons. Linking birth registration to local services, and involving community volunteers, also pays dividends. Future reform efforts should capitalize on the strong community expertise of local governments while fostering effective collaboration with centralized authorities. Similarly, partnering with sectoral services can help boost demand. For

[42] Accelerated Improvement of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (APAI-CRVS)
[43] Second Chance Project

example, providing information on the importance of birth registration during antenatal care and linking health centers to CRCs can help increase birth registration rates for newborns.

5. Sectoral demand for identification and authentication services

A well-functioning foundational identity ecosystem is broadly recognized as a key enabler for development and inclusion. For individuals, the ability to establish and verify their legal identity is increasingly a prerequisite for access to a variety of public and private sector services including education, social protection, financial services, health, agriculture, and energy. For governments and businesses, foundational ID systems allow for more effective, efficient, and responsive service delivery by enabling the unique identification and verification of clients and users, thus also reducing fraud and duplicative investments in parallel systems.

Individuals. In Cameroon, as elsewhere, identity credentials are required to access a variety of services. Broadly speaking, a birth certificate is required in two important cases: to access primary education and as a breeder document for the national ID card. The national ID card (or resident or refugee card, as applicable), on the other hand, is needed to access a large range of public and private sector services; it is often referred to as a *précieux sésame* that opens many doors for individuals—including opening a bank or mobile money account, accessing affordable domestic energy, and receiving a government subsidy or compensation. Indeed, with the current insecurity in the country, an ID card is required for practically any travel outside of one's area of residency. In terms of service access, any transaction where a digital payment is involved (which is increasingly the case as the country undergoes digital transformation) will exclude persons without a national ID card (or equivalent), which is needed to open a bank or mobile money account.

Government and businesses. For various government agencies and private sector enterprises in Cameroon, there is high demand for a trusted foundational identity system that enables user identification and verification, with varying degrees of assurance. On the public side, this includes the treasury and Ministry of Finance, and any agency that seeks to effect government-to-persons (G2P) payments such as social protection agencies, social security and pension providers, the civil service ministry, and various sectoral ministries such as health, education, agriculture, and energy. In addition to requiring identity credentials from beneficiaries for identity verification, ministries and agencies also typically need to create and manage their own user databases. Linking these databases with foundational ID systems could increase efficiency (reduced need for duplicative investments in collecting and verifying user information, fewer errors, reduced operating costs) and security (stronger user authentication, greater assurance of uniqueness and removal of duplicates, reduced fraud risk). On the private side, banks and mobile money providers must fulfil Know Your Customer (KYC) requirements to register new clients, which require prospective customers to present a national ID card. The current foundational identification system falls short in meeting this demand; coverage gaps mean that many individuals cannot access services, whereas government agencies and businesses struggle to expand users and provide services. Lack of interoperability and authentication services between foundational ID systems and sectoral systems represents a significant missed opportunity to boost efficiency and security of these systems while promoting innovation and creation of potentially transformative new uses.

The following subsections describe the foundational identification needs for a variety of sectors and use cases, as well as the limitations of the current system and opportunities for evolution. The list of sectors

and use cases is non-exhaustive buts illustrate common themes and issues likely to affect all sectors through the varying mechanisms listed.

5.1.Education

5.1.1. Primary education

Key Facts and Figures

Under-5s whose birth has not been registered: **38%**

Under-5s without a birth certificate: **51%**

Primary school children without a birth certificate across all grades: **30%**

Transition rate to secondary school: **65%**

Out of school children in Cameroon: **350,000**

Education spending: **15% of total government budget**

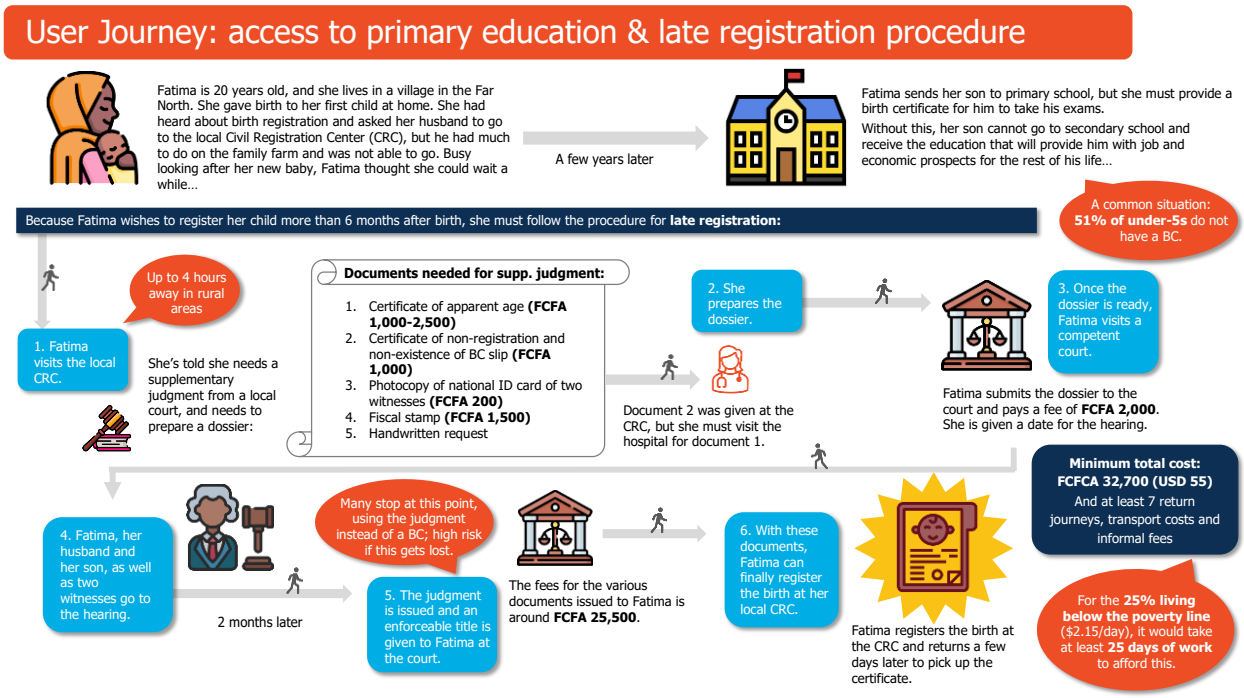
Source: Education | Data (worldbank.org), Government of Cameroon

A birth certificate is a necessary requirement to complete primary education both Anglophone and Francophone regions of Cameroon. Primary education is compulsory and lasts for six years, and children are issued a Primary School Leaving Certificate (or a *Certificat d'Études Primaires*, CEP) upon completion of exams at the end of this period. While children are *de facto* permitted to attend primary school without their birth certificate, this must be presented when they take the CEP exam. There are two main reasons for requiring a birth certificate: firstly, it provides proof of a child's age, allowing her to be placed in an appropriate class, and secondly, it ensures that the CEP diploma, which attests to achievement of certain skills and knowledge and provides opportunities later in life, is issued to an identifiable individual.

In practice, for children who start school without a birth certificate, age determination is based on parent reporting, but also on a variety of informal tests that do not always produce accurate results. On the other hand, the requirement for a birth certificate to sit the CEP is strict, creating a major barrier to access secondary education for the 1,486 million primary school children who do not have a birth certificate (around 768,000 of whom are in two priority education zones, the north and far north). Reports suggest that of children who attend school without birth certificates, the majority of those who end up obtaining them do so just before sitting for the CEP exam. Clearly, this is a strong incentive to complete the registration process, but it arrives very late: children sit this exam at age 12 (although there are reports that many children stay in school longer while their parents register their birth) and so their parents must go through the costly supplementary judgment procedure to obtain a birth certificate. For children whose parents cannot afford this, their education ends here.

Figure 15 illustrates a typical user journey of a parent who wants to send their child to school but did not register the birth in time, highlighting the various obstacles:

Figure 15: User journey illustrating access to primary education and the late registration procedure



There have been attempts to further encourage birth registration of school-age children using performance-based financing (PBF). This program rewards schools financially according to their performance on given indicators, one of which relates to establishment of birth certificates for children enrolled. To achieve this, school staff compile lists of children lacking BCs and transmit them to local town halls and BUNEC, follow up on the registration process, and collect and distribute BCs once ready. Currently, around 3,750 schools are enrolled in the PBF program, representing around 25 percent of schools in the country, with a goal to reach 5,000 by 2026. An impact evaluation of the program is in progress, but anecdotal reports suggest that it has been effective in boosting birth registration rates.

The requirement to provide a BC to complete primary education ensures that children are eventually registered and thus have a legal identity that will serve them not only in education but also throughout their lives, but there are two important challenges requiring pressing attention. Firstly, broad coverage gaps in birth registration result in considerable barriers to access to education, often for children who are already marginalized and vulnerable, like in the north and far north regions where around72 percent of children do not have BCs. Easing the requirement to provide a BC could help mitigate this problem temporarily, in addition to considering other solutions to link diplomas to unique individuals in a way that does not require a BC. Secondly, to the extent that this requirement incentivizes birth registration, the incentive operates at a time when children are already grown and requires use of the lengthy and expensive supplementary judgment procedure. Efforts need to be made to further incentivize timely registration, which is both much cheaper and easier for parents and ensures that a child's age is more accurately captured. Nonetheless, efforts such as the PBF program described, or establishment of secondary registration centers in schools, are welcome interventions to ensure that no children slip through the cracks.

5.1.2. Secondary education

Access to secondary education is conditional on passing the common entrance exam, for which a BC must be presented, as well as a copy of the parents' passports or national ID cards. Because this entrance exam does not result in the issuance of a diploma, we suggest that this requirement could be temporarily waived, and alternative solutions to uniquely identify children sitting for common entrance be explored. However, this would be a short-term measure, and comprehensive investment in the underlying CR system for a sustainable long-term solution is still needed.

5.1.3. Credentials

Children are issued students cards in grade 6, as they are about to sit for the CEP exam, and again in secondary school. There is some coordination at the district level for grade 6 student cards, and budgets are given for issuing these. Secondary schools, on the other hand, have more autonomy in issuing student identification cards, so these vary from school to school, but this is typically a paper card with an affixed photo. While these are not used for sitting exams—there is a paper *récépissé* for this, that has basic information on the student and is managed by the exam board—the student card essentially functions as a child's national ID card (for secondary school students), used to check identities of children when travelling and to facilitate access to school facilities.

5.2.Financial Inclusion

5.2.1. Opening a bank account

A national ID card (or residency card, or refugee card) is needed to open a bank account in Cameroon; this is regulatory requirement that banks must fulfil to meet their KYC obligations. Given the long delays in obtaining these credentials, the government has authorized use of the paper *récépissé* for financial transactions while applicants wait to receive their national ID cards. However, many banks do not accept these due to the lack of security of these documents and high risk of fraud.

Key Facts and Figures

Adults in Cameroon with an account at a bank or financial institution: **24%**

Adults in Cameroon with any type of account (including mobile money): **52%**

Of adults without an account, those that can't open one due to lack of identity credential: **36%**

Source: FINDEX Survey 2021

Some banks do accept other forms of proof of identity in limited circumstances; for example, one bank allows refugees to open an account using just a BC, allowing access to a limited range of financial services, with the account being capped at a certain monetary amount.[44] Others allow minors to open accounts with a BC, subject to providing a national ID card when they reach majority age, or the use of documents such as driver's licences for foreigners. On the whole, these are exceptions, and it is clear that the gap in national ID coverage constitutes a major barrier to financial inclusion; of those who lack financial accounts, 36 percent cite lack of identity documentation as their primary impediment.[45] Increasing national ID coverage would therefore have strong benefits in terms of boosting Cameroonians' financial inclusion. The government could also consider easing regulatory requirements for opening bank accounts by accepting a broader range of identity credentials, even if such accounts are limited in functionality or have a monetary

[44] In this instance, account holders are required to have a MTN or Orange mobile phone number; in essence, the KYC burden is shifted onto these telcos, who must verify identity in order to register users' SIM cards.

[45] Demirgüç-Kunt, Asli, Leora Klapper, Dorothe Singer, Saniya Ansar. 2022. The Global Findex Database 2021: Financial Inclusion, Digital Payments, and Resilience in the Age of COVID-19. Washington, DC: World Bank.

cap.

As we will discuss further, a tax ID number, also called a unique identification number (UIN), is also required to open a bank account. The main reason for this appears to be facilitating tax collection. As the process for obtaining this tax UIN is not burdensome, many banks help their clients in doing this when opening an account; the process takes around five minutes.

No current plans exist to enable eKYC or remote account opening.

5.2.2. SIM card registration

By Cameroonian law, SIM cards must be registered at authorized operators after purchase.[46] If not done in a timely manner, the SIM is deactivated after a few months. To register their SIM, customers need to bring their national ID card (or residency card) and provide their name, date of birth and address. For minors, a SIM card can be obtained with the national ID card of a parent in addition to the minor's birth certificate. In most cases, a *récépissé* is accepted in lieu of the national ID card. However, this provides only a temporary solution; a *récépissé* is only valid for three months and customers must return with a fresh *récépissé* to ensure continued service. This is also the case for the national ID card itself, whereby SIMs are deactivated upon the card's expiry date, which can cause issues due to the lengthy card renewal process. A maximum of twelve SIM cards can be registered per national ID card; that is, three SIMs at each of the mobile network operators in Cameroon.

In practice, due to the stringent identification requirements, many people use mobile phones with SIM cards registered to someone else's name; a situation which is even more prevalent among vulnerable groups such as women, the unemployed, and persons living with disabilities. This can have important implications when trying to access mobile money services or receive digital payments, as we will discuss.

The requirement to register SIM cards is prevalent around the world as 157 countries require SIM registration.[47] The most common rationale for SIM registration is that it helps prevent crime, particularly terrorism. However, empirical evidence is lacking showing a direct link between SIM registration and reduction of criminal activity.[48] Given the transformative developmental benefits of mobile telephony and the internet—particularly in terms of financial inclusion and access to jobs, services, and information—the government could consider easing SIM registration requirements to enable a wider segment of the population to access these important services.

5.2.3. Access to mobile money

Rapid growth in the use of financial services over the last few years (52% of adults in 2021 compared to 35% in 2017)[49] is driven primarily by an increase in the use of mobile money as 42 percent of adults in Cameroon now have a mobile money account. This is thanks to increased awareness of the benefits of mobile money, which ca be used for transactions such as paying bills or transport fees and is increasingly accepted means of payment (for land taxes, for example). Mobile money is also usually to meet the high demand for remittance services as customers can even receive money from abroad through certain providers.

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[46] The requirements for SIM registration can be found across a number of different legal texts, including Law 2010/013 on electronic communications, Decree No 2012/1637/PM and Decree No 2015/3759.

[47] GSMA, *Access to Mobile Services and Proof of Identity 2021*, April 2021.

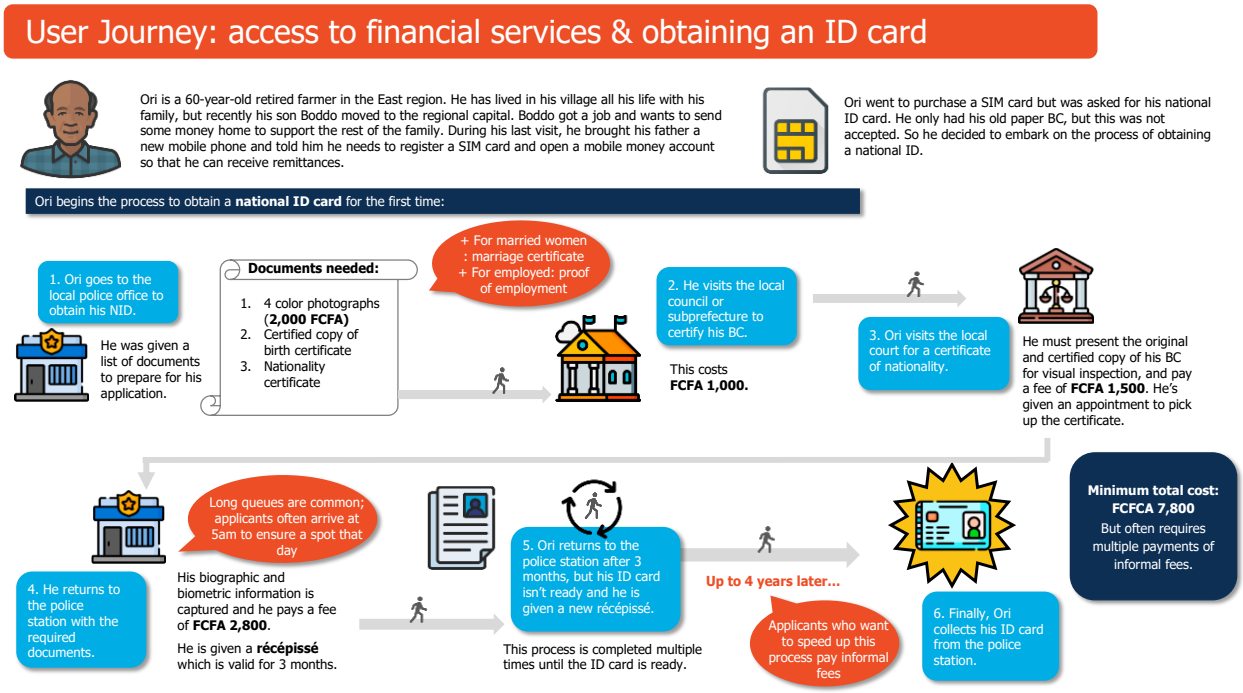
[48] GSMA, *Mandatory Registration of Prepaid SIM Cards*, April 2016.

[49] Demirgüç-Kunt, Asli, Leora Klapper, Dorothe Singer, Saniya Ansar. 2022. The Global Findex Database 2021: Financial Inclusion, Digital Payments, and Resilience in the Age of COVID-19. Washington, DC: World Bank.

Mobile network operators that provide these services are registered payment service providers in Cameroon and must respect regulatory requirements for opening accounts (KYC). To open a mobile money account, a customer needs to have a national ID card or *récépissé*, or a passport, resident card, refugee card or driving license—as well as a mobile phone with a SIM card registered in their name. People who use mobile phones with SIM cards registered in someone else's name cannot benefit from mobile money services; the name of the SIM card owner must correspond to that of the SIM owner. This limitation affects vulnerable groups in particular, who are more likely to have mobile phones with SIM cards registered in someone else's name.

The user journey diagram in Figure 16 illustrates the steps an individual must take to obtain a national ID card, and thus be able to access financial services:

Figure 16: User journey illustrating access to financial services and process to obtain a national ID card



5.2.4. Digital payments

Digital payments are taking off in Cameroon. In addition to being used for private transactions, government-to-people (G2P) payments are now becoming digitalized. A 2022 decree,[50] issued with World Bank support, allows agencies to pay beneficiaries electronically, with efforts now channeled into establishing the infrastructure and tools. As beneficiaries need financial institution or mobile money accounts to benefit from these payments, the provision of trusted identity credentials that meet KYC requirements is necessary to increase digital payments uptake. Obstacles to obtaining identity credentials is that any government ministry or department that needs to make transfers to beneficiaries—be it for social protection support, payment of subsidies or vouchers, or for old-age pensions and social security benefits—will struggle to move towards digital payments, which have a myriad of advantages over cash-

[50] Decree 2022/8001 of 16 September 2022.

based programs.

5.2.5. Regulatory requirements for customer identification and verification

In addition to requiring national ID cards to fulfil KYC requirements, the Bank of Central African States (BEAC) issued Instruction N-001/GR/2021 in 2018 to require biometric identification of banking customers in the region using fingerprints. This was in response to the need to have a unique identifier for banking customers across member states, as previous identifiers changed regularly when a person moved residence, and because many people across the region have the same names. According to this regulation, countries' Central Banks would collect and store biographic and biometric (facial and fingerprint) information for each banking customer in the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC) region and issue them with a Unique Banking Identifier (UBI) linked to all of their financial accounts. Little progress has been made on implementing this regulation due to lack of funding and high complexity; it requires collecting biometrics from all existing customers in addition to new customers, and it is unclear who would carry this out. Notwithstanding, many banks have invested in biometric equipment, although enrolment has not yet begun.

While this biometric system would allow banks to better identify and verify their customers, this goal could also be achieved through the interoperability of existing national ID databases and authentication services, a solution which would help the central bank and financial institutions avoid duplicative investments in collecting and storing biometrics.

5.2.6. Entrepreneurship

Almost 90 percent of the Cameroonian workforce operates in the informal sector: 45 percent in informal agriculture and 43 percent in informal non-agriculture.[51] As youth and informal sector workers transition into the formal economy, they are required to have a national ID card to set up and register a business.

5.3.Social Protection

5.3.1. Cash transfers

Cameroon's World Bank-supported flagship Social Safety Nets Program (or the *Projet filets sociaux,* PFS) is the country's only targeted social assistance program for the poor. Community-based methods and surveys identify eligible households, and payments are made to designated heads of households (the program prioritizes women). In addition to identifying eligible beneficiaries, there is also a need to verify their identity to receive payments. Because this population typically lacks national ID cards, the program accepts whatever piece of identity beneficiaries can provide, and then issues them a program-specific beneficiary card.[52]

Key Facts and Figures

Estimated number of people below the national poverty line in Cameroon: **8 million**

Reach of the social safety nets program (estimate for end 2022): **375,500 households, corresponding to approx. 2,365,650 individuals or 30% of the poor population**

Source: Data from the Cameroon Social Safety Nets Project (P1284534)

[51] World Bank data from the Adaptive Safety Nets and Economic Inclusion Project (P175363).

[52] It has been reported anecdotally that many beneficiaries use the money from the program to obtain national ID cards or birth certificates for their children. Given the wide range of services accessible upon obtention of a national ID card, this is not surprising, and suggests that financial barriers are salient for this particular population. This may

The beneficiary paper card contains biographic information, such as the registered head of household name, date of birth, and photograph, and a "unique" logical number based on the beneficiary's name, date of birth, residency, and filiation. An image of their fingerprint is also included, and the back of the card has a number of blank boxes where the beneficiary provides an inked fingerprint each time she collects a payment. However, biometrics are not collected digitally or stored in the back-end database, and no deduplication takes place.[53] To reduce fraud, the program is audited every six months; any suspicious cases are flagged for manual investigation, and community leaders are solicited to help assure uniqueness of beneficiaries. Nonetheless, higher levels of assurance could be achieved with interoperability and authentication services linked to a unique identification system, such as the national ID system, though this would require concerted efforts to increase national ID coverage among the poor.

The vast majority of payments under this program are made using cash, though a new World Bank project will help the program move towards digital payments. As national ID cards (or equivalent) are necessary for digital payments (see section 4.2), increased access to these credentials is a key enabler for moving in this direction.

5.3.2. Unified social registry

Currently there is no Unified Social Registry (USR) in Cameroon, although the government is considering creating one as part of a World Bank-financed project, by expanding on a pilot registry created in 2015 with the aim of reaching nationwide coverage by 2028. This registry would consolidate existing social protection, which would improve targeting and efficiency and reduce the risk of double-dipping. Biometric deduplication is being contemplated to enable assignment of a unique identification number to assure uniqueness of beneficiaries. However, as stated, this could also be achieved through interoperability with the foundational identification system, which would obviate the need for duplicative investments and biometric data collection.

5.4.Health

5.4.1. Patient identification and follow-up

In addition to being an integral part of the CR system through facilitation of birth and death registration, the health sector is also an institutional customer for identification. Typically, healthcare establishments need to identify patients to keep patient records, track them across establishments for continuity of care, and facilitate treatment payments through interconnection with health insurance providers.[54] Cameroon has little health insurance and patients make most payments for treatment upfront before receiving care; so, the second rationale for identification does not apply in the current context. As such, lack of identification is not a barrier to access to healthcare if the patient can pay for their treatment. The government health sector does cover some treatment costs for certain populations—such as expectant mothers and their children up to age five, or those suffering from diseases such as HIV or malaria. In this instance, some form of identification may be required from beneficiaries (depending on the specific case), to ensure treatment of the right person.

No harmonized or centralized system for patient identification for record keeping and follow-up exists,

be due in part to the commitments that beneficiaries have to make upon being accepted into the program, which include things like saving money and sending children to school, but also registering their births, as well as sensibilisation campaigns.

[53] Data collection using tablets was piloted, including for biometrics, but this was a failure as the tablets did not have the correct specifications.

[54] There is also a use case for the identification of healthcare personnel, but this will not be treated here.

even across public hospitals. Hospitals have their own systems, often digitized, while smaller local health facilities may keep patient records in paper books. A booklet is given to the parents of children up to age 15 where their medical information is written for parents to take to different health facilities. Records (booklets) of adult patients are kept directly at hospitals. Hospitals may give ID numbers or cards to patients, but these can only typically be used in the same facility and not across the health sector. While the District Health Information System 2 (DHIS2), a health management information system operational in 80 percent of public hospitals, offers capability for creation of individual patient records, this feature is not yet in use in Cameroon.[55] However, the health sector is looking to move in this direction as part of the health sector digitalization strategy, which aims to introduce a unique patient ID number and unified patient medical record.[56] These efforts should consider any potential synergies with the foundational ID system, for example, to generate patient identification numbers using unique identities.

5.5. Social Inclusion

Key Facts and Figures

Refugee population in Cameroon: **450,000+ (mostly from Central African Republic and Nigeria)**

IDP population in Cameroon: **1,000,000+**

Source: UNHCR, IOM, OCHA

5.5.1. Refugee identification and management

Cameroon has an open-door policy to refugees and gives refugees equal rights to citizens in several important areas, broadly in conformity with its international obligations; Cameroon is a signatory of all major refugee treaties, such as the 1951 Convention to the Status of Refugees and the 1969 Organisation of African Unity (OAU) Refugee Convention. These obligations underpin a progressive legal framework allowing refugees to work, move freely, and reside within the country, facilitated by the issuance of biometric IDs**.** DGSN is responsible for provision of biometric cards to refugees, which broadly resemble national ID cards but have a two-year validity period. According to relevant legal provisions,[57] the refugee card is an identification document issued to a foreigner who benefits from a right of asylum. Issuance and renewal of the refugee card are exempt from stamp duty.

To obtain a refugee card, the refugee must have an identification card issued by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and a certificate of refugee status issued by the Minister of External Relations (MINREX). The biometric refugee ID card enables refugees to access education, jobs, healthcare, and travel without fear of arrest.

While the initial law instituting the issuance of refugee cards was passed in 2016,[58] the actual delivery of these ID cards by DGSN began in 2022 through a World Bank-financed project.[59] As part of this project,

[55] Individual level data is entered into the system for specific diseases such as HIV or tuberculosis, and birth declarations are also entered into the system and shared with BUNEC, mostly for statistical purposes. However, there is no unified record for each patient.

[56] Cameroon National Strategic Plan for e-Health 2020-2024.

[57] Law N°2016/373 of August 04, 2016, modifying and completing certain provisions of the decree N°2007/255 of September 04, 2007, fixing the modalities of application of the law N°97/012 of January 10, 1997, relating to the conditions of entry, stay and exit of the foreigners.

58 Law No 2005/006 provides that all recognized refugees should be issued with an identity document and a travel document. Decree No 2016/373 of 4 August 2016 and Decree No 2016/374 of 4 August 2016 provide for a system to produce biometric identity cards for nationals and foreigners, including refugees. Finally, the recently issued Decree No 2023/147 of 2 March 2023 outlines the characteristics of the refugee card and modalities for issuance and renewal.

[59] Project National de Développement Participatif Phase III (P144637).

approximately 5,000 biometric IDs were delivered to Central African refugees in the eastern Gado-Badzéré camp and the Mandjou area. UNHCR estimated that about 230,000 adult refugees in Cameroon were eligible to receive refugees IDs in 2022. The provision of biometric ID cards to refugees is mired by challenges, ranging from lack of funding and lack of government coordination. While the national law recognizes issuance of a biometric card free of charge to the foreigner who benefits from a right of asylum, the current system is not established operationally. For example, the deliverance of a certificate of refugee status by MINREX is done by physical verification by MINREX officials. The government currently relies on UNHCR's database to identify refugees in Cameroon, which requires physical validation of a foreigner as a refugee to grant said person a certificate of refugee status. Although UNHCR issues its own ID cards to all refugees in Cameroon, these cards are not widely recognised, and refugees cannot use them to apply for jobs, enrol in university, or open bank accounts.

in addition to the World Bank, various other donors are working with refugees to provide them with documentation, such as UNHCR and IOM. These interventions tend to focus on ensuring birth registration for refugee children. The absence of a formal system to deliver biometric ID cards to refugees without funding from external donors impedes broad scale-up of the pilot project undertaken in 2022.

5.5.2. Identification and management of internally displaced persons (IDPs)

There are over one million IDPs in Cameroon. Many have lost their identity documents and birth certificates (if they ever had them) during their forced displacement, hampering their ability to find work, access services, and integrate into their host communities.

Because there is no centralized, digitalized civil registry, IDPs must go through the complex and costly supplementary judgment procedure to reconstitute a lost birth certificate. Currently, there is no expedited process for this population. Typically, this process involves obtaining an *attestation de l'existence de la souche* from the CRC where they were initially registered, to allow creation of a new entry in the register that matches data captured in their initial registration. Obviously, this is impossible for most refugees who cannot return to the CRC in conflict-affected areas from which they fled. To create a new entry (*souche* and *acte de naissance*) in the local register, they must obtain an *attestation de non-existence de la souche* from a local CRC and attend the supplementary judgment process with whatever identity documents or witness evidence they have.[60] Creation of a centralized, digitized civil registry, accessible by local CRCs, as well as implementing modern procedures for reconstituting lost birth certificates, would increase access to identification for IDPs, thus allowing them to access essential services and work opportunities.

5.6. Public Administration

5.6.1. Civil service management

The Ministry of Public Service and Administrative Reforms (MINFOPRA) oversees civil service management in Cameroon; its functions include recruiting civil servants, assigning them to Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs), career management and paying salaries (together with the MINFI). To be effective, MINFOPRA needs to identify and verify civil servants, as well be able to remove ghost workers and reduce fraud. Currently, the Computer System for the Integrated Management of State Personnel and Payroll (SIGIPES) system used for civil servant management assigns a structured number called a *matricule* to each civil servant. It also interfaces with the tax management and payment system for salaries. However, the

[60] This creates the risk of disparities between the original information in the registry and the new birth certificate. If these IDPs wished to reconstitute a lost national ID card, this would cause issues, as information on supporting documents must exactly correspond to information in DGSN's database.

system does not interoperate with DGSN's identification database, nor does it have the capacity to authenticate civil servants using the information stored in the national ID system. As such, MINFOPRA is working to create its own biometric identification system under the SIGIPES II project, although it is unclear how much progress the Ministry has made.

5.6.2. Pensions and social security

The *Caisse Nationale de Prévoyance Sociale* (CNPS) is Cameroon's only pension and social security institution for employees and the self-employed in the private sector, whereas the MINFI is responsible for assuring these transfers to civil servants. In 2016, the CNPS had around 900,000 beneficiaries and 4.5m dependants. However, it confronts substantial identity fraud in an estimated 8 percent of its business. MINFI conducts beneficiary audits, but these are lengthy and expensive due to the use of paper documentation and lack of interoperability with a foundational identification system. Integrating such a system would allow the CNPS and MINFI to improve operational efficiency, for example by allowing automated liveness checks for pension recipients and stopping pension payments upon receipt of an automated death notification from the CR system.

5.6.3. Identification of taxpayers and tax collection

The tax administration agency launched a unique identification number (NIU) system in 2019 to uniquely identify all taxpayers including civil servants. To obtain an NIU, an applicant needs to register on the tax authority's online declaration platform; the application is validated by administrators who carry out checks to ensure the applicant has not been previously registered. It is unclear how this validation process is carried out, and the application does not ask for proof of identity, such as a copy of the applicant's national ID card.

The UIN is created by the Fiscalis tax system, which also interfaces with the ANTELOPE system for payment of civil servant salaries and some state financial structures. However, the Fiscalis system is not interoperable with DGSN's identification database. To ensure uniqueness and properly identify all taxpayers, interoperability with the national identification system is paramount.

5.6.4. Production of national statistics (including vital statistics)

Currently, the National Statistics Institute (INS) produces national statistics using household surveys, such as the *Enquête EDF* and *Enquête Mixte*. Data is collected at the national and regional level, as well as for Yaounde and Douala, but not at the departmental level. Because the CR system does not produce data that can be used for vital statistics, nor feed into the INS national statistics in any way, these surveys produce the only such information available. Currently, they include questions on births, and will soon include marriages and deaths. However, these surveys are very costly to conduct and do not produce sufficiently granular data, and the data is not available in real time. This hampers the usefulness of these statistics for policy making and planning, leaving Cameroon unable to fulfil its international obligation to provide vital statistics to the UN.

5.7.Agriculture

5.7.1. Access to agricultural support initiatives

Agriculture is a high priority sector in Cameroon, employing a large proportion of the workforce, and a core

pillar of the National Development Strategy 2030. Many working in this sector are informal, and include vulnerable groups such as women, the poor, and IDPs. The Government of Cameroon (GOC), with support from donors including the World Bank, has a range of initiatives to support agricultural workers, boost productivity, assure food security, and build climate resilience. These programs provide important inputs, such as pesticides and tools, and financial support and training to eligible agricultural producers. For example, the *Guichet Producteur* program for coffee and cocoa growers aims to provide subsidies for some 600,000 eligible farmers, with plans to expand to other agricultural sectors, whereas the World Bank's Acceleration of the Digital Transformation of Cameroon (PATNUC) project will aim to provide e-vouchers to partially cover input costs for 35,000 beneficiaries.

Key Facts and Figures

Share of agriculture sector in GDP: **15%**

Share of workforce employed in agriculture: **43%**

Source: World Bank

Lack of identification among farmers poses a twofold challenge. Firstly, a national ID card is required for registration for some [61] of these initiatives to avoid multiple registrations and include them in agricultural land registers, as well as to help evaluate how well these initiatives boost agricultural productivity. Secondly, even if a national ID card does not form part of the eligibility criteria for programs, as the sector progresses on digital transformation and using digital payments,[62] lack of ID will be a considerable impediment for potential beneficiaries who will need to open a bank or mobile money account. This issue is particularly acute given that vulnerable groups working in the agricultural sector—including women, the poor, and indigenous peoples—are even less likely to have access to identity documents. While the sector can consider instituting stop-gap measures to support these populations, increasing inclusion in the foundational identification ecosystem would provide these groups with a more sustainable means to access agricultural support.

5.8.Energy

5.8.1. Access to affordable domestic energy services

Cameroonians need a national ID card to subscribe to domestic energy services, such as an electricity connection. Consequently, those lacking identity documentation are often obliged to solicit others to subscribe on their behalf. While this allows access these services, users "benefitting" from such arrangements end up paying much more; in addition to the informal "service fee" owed to those subscribing on their behalf, such users are unable to access subsidized energy prices reserved for small consumer households. Instead, because their demand is lumped together with the person that subscribed for them (as well as any other households they have subscribed for), they end up in higher cost brackets designed to tax wealthy households and subsidize poor ones. This is precisely the opposite outcome to what the subsidy is intended to achieve. Government estimates find that such subscribers typically pay 124 percent more than what they would under the subsidized program.

5.9. Cross-sectoral use cases

5.9.1. Identification and compensation of project-affected persons (PAPs)

[61] Programs providing emergency food assistance to food insecure areas typically do not require ID.

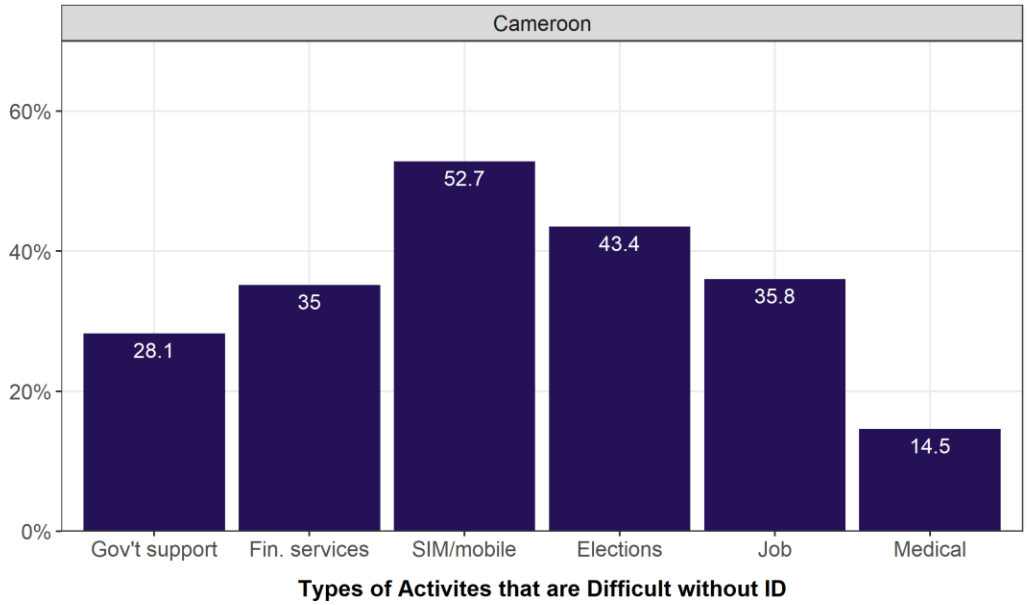
[62] In general, the government is moving towards using subsidies, whether in-kind or financial, over the free provision of inputs and materials to eligible groups. These programs tend to require beneficiaries to provide counterparty funds in a bank or mobile money account and facilitate access to microfinance—via 0% interest rates for example—to enable them to do this.

Government infrastructure projects, in some cases World Bank-financed, may involve involuntary resettlement, loss of access to natural resources, or other damages to affected communities. In such cases, governments must identify affected persons and provide compensation. For World Bank-financed projects, this is mandated under Environmental and Social Standard (ESS) 5 of the Environmental and Social Framework.[63] In such cases, proper identification of project-affected persons (PAPs) is vital to track payments to PAPs, resolve grievances, and monitor and evaluate project activities. Identification is also often mandated by the enabling legislation for resettlement and compensation.

To give an example in Cameroon, identification issues were encountered during implementation of the *CM—Rural Electricity Access Project for Underserved Regions*, which aims to increase electrification rates in rural areas. While possession of a national ID card formed part of eligibility criteria established by government decree—and necessary to open a financial account to receive compensation payments—many of the PAPs who would be resettled under the project were found to lack such documentation, resulting in inability to provide them compensation and considerably delaying project implementation. To overcome this hurdle, the project financed activities to help these populations obtain birth certificates and national ID cards. Although this allowed the project to meet obligations under national legislation and ESS 5, the delays and additional implementation costs could have been avoided had there been broader foundational identity coverage and simplified procedures for obtaining these vital documents. This rationale applies more broadly than the energy sector; lack of identification is likely to constitute a significant challenge to any project involving any resettlement activities that trigger World Bank obligations under ESS 5.

As a complement, the following graphic shows the services that are difficult to access without an ID, as compiled through the 2021 ID4D-Findex survey:

Figure 16: ID4D 2022 Global Dataset; Types of Activities that are Difficult without an ID



Graph shows difficulties accessing various services, benefits, and rights (multiple selection) as a result of not having the country's foundational ID, reported by those without one. Means are calculated using country-level design weights. Includes respondents above the eligible age for obtaining the ID. Source: ID4D Global Dataset (2022), ID4D-Findex Series.

[63] World Bank Environmental and Social Framework.

6. Enhancing Cameroon's CR and ID Ecosystem

Improving the coverage and effectiveness of CR and ID systems in Cameroon is crucial to ensure residents have access to reliable and secure identity and registration services. Achieving this requires greater investment in infrastructure, resources, and public awareness, as well as greater collaboration and coordination between different government agencies to ensure systems interoperate and can be used effectively by public and private services. This section proposes a series of recommendations on how to improve identification card and birth certificate coverage and support systems' digitization to improve usability and interoperability by different stakeholders.

6.1.Opportunities for the CR system

Modernize CR legal frameworks to enable digitization and simplification.

Improving the CR system will require improving its: (i) efficiency, while making it (ii) inclusive, and (iii) trusted. These three aspects start with strengthening the CR legal framework.

As mentioned, Cameroon's CR law hinders system efficiency as it does not enable simplified, digitalized processes for either recording vital events—including birth registration—or issuance and delivery of civil status documents to individuals. Such obstacles not only preclude simplification of processes but reduces inclusion. Many of the most vulnerable in Cameroon are particularly excluded (such as IDPs) because they are legally bound by the paper-based system to incur costs (such as transportation) to record or obtain documentation about vital events. Legislation is needed to ensure the applicable CR legal framework enables digitalization to simplify processes and facilitate access to the system to improve coverage of vital events, particularly birth.

Simplification of the CR system for better coverage and inclusion also entails legal simplification of burdensome procedures. Once digitization is legally enabled and digital records and documents are given equivalent value to paper-based ones, further legal simplification is needed to simplify day-to-day processes for both authorities and individuals, such as the judicial process for replacing a lost birth certificate. Ideally, such simplification would also be recommended for the currently complex judicial process imposed for late birth registration. While judicial processes may have been preferred by lawmakers for fraud mitigation and trust purposes, enabling digitalization and technology could fulfill this role and strengthen administrative authentication. However, since digitalization will likely be adopted in stages and will require awareness and literacy, simplification of paper-based processes is still critical. Simplification is particularly important considering that the absence of birth registration has significant implications on access to services and is often identified late when the individual needs such services. This shift from judicial to administrative processes likely requires more consensus building across stakeholders.

Further, introduction of digitalization aspects in the CR legal framework would need to be supplemented by, and combined with, adequate safeguards against digital risks that may raise, including related to personal data and cybersecurity.

Recommendation 1: Adopt legal provisions for digitalization of civil registration processes for recording and delivery of documentation.

Recommendation 2: Adopt legal provisions that would amend judicial procedures imposed for late registration of, and replacement of, lost or destroyed birth certificates, as well as rectification of records and copies of vital events, including birth.

Scale-up the successful awareness and engagement campaigns to support minority inclusion.

Awareness and engagement campaigns could significantly increase birth registration rates in Cameroon, especially among marginalized communities and minority groups. Several initiatives are already underway to support registration of these groups and help them obtain birth certificates. The UNDP has been working on a birth registration campaign with the GOC using mobile registration units to better reach individuals living in remote areas. The campaign also involved traditional leaders and community members to promote birth registration among their community and address cultural barriers that prevent some families from registering children.

UNHCR has also worked with the Government and other partners to provide refugees with birth certificates and other documentation to allow access to key basic services such as healthcare and education. The UNHCR has notably facilitated the distribution of birth certificates in the far north and east regions of Cameroon, amounting to a total of 183 birth certificates.[64] It also supported judicial proceedings for foreigners to proceed with late registration of birth in the Bakassi area.[65]

Involvement of organizations at the local level have been particularly successful. By scaling up these and other successful initiatives, Cameroon can work towards ensuring every child has access to a birth certificate. Among other benefits, this will be very important for integrating minorities into society.

Recommendation 3: Continue awareness campaigns on the importance of birth registration with specific messages that resonate with people.

Recommendation 4: Support minorities take the registration process steps, including establishment of procedures embedded in legislation adapted to the socio-cultural norms of these populations.

[64]*UNHCR, Cameroon Multi-Country Office (Multi-country Operation for Cameroon, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea and Sao Tome & Principe), Available at:* https://reporting.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/UNHCR%20MCO%20CAMEROON%20FACTSHEET%20%20JULY%202021.pdf.

[65]UNHCR, *Cameroon Multi-Country Office - Stateless or at risk of statelessness*, Available at: https://reporting.unhcr.org/node/8459.

Box 2: Examples of successful registration campaigns

Countries have recognized that a two-pronged approach is needed to fill coverage gaps and move towards universal civil registration. Firstly, sustainable methods need to be in place to register vital events as they happen; that is, registering the "flow" of these events. However, an additional strategy is often needed to increase coverage among the existing (unregistered) population; that is, to register the "stock". While improving incentives to register births in a timely way addresses the first of these dimensions, special "catch-up" operations can improve registration of the "stock" more effectively and cost-efficiently than typical late registration processes, such as supplementary judgments. Two country examples illustrate how some countries have successfully carried out such "catch-up" operations for children without birth certificates:

In **Côte d'Ivoire**,[66] a "special operation" the government carried out with UNICEF targeted 15,000 schools to deliver birth certificates to 600,000 unregistered primary school children. School directors were asked to provide lists of unregistered children in their school, which were verified and transferred to local CRCs. The centers verified that the children had not been previously registered, then submitted their files to local courts, which issued necessary legal documents allowing the CRCs to register the children and issue their birth certificates. The cost of issuing a birth certificate as part of this special operation was 1,400 FCFA, much less than the 30,000 FCFA parents would have to pay to obtain a birth certificate through the normal supplementary judgment procedure.

In the **Democratic Republic of Congo**,[67] a similar World Bank-funded initiative, supported by a range of development partners, targets school-age children and their brothers and sisters to increase birth registration (against a baseline of 25%), capitalizing on the fact that 80 percent of children attend school. A simplified procedure facilitates civil registration; parents fill in a request form at the child's school, which is sent to a local tribunal, who then issues an instruction to register the child at the local CRC. The children are also registered in a centralized database and attributed a unique number to facilitate follow-up. The initiative aims to register 2,400,000 children.

Increase CRC resources to effectively implement their mission.

Despite good coverage of secondary CRCs, many still lack resources to effectively deliver their mission. The government has invested in the creation of new CRCs over the past years, especially secondary centers. While there are 2,522 secondary CRCs, many are under-resourced or underperforming. In some cases, they may be poorly marked, and the population is unaware of their existence. In other instances, they have simply never been operationalized after approval. The current financial model does not provide adequate guarantees of performance, and monitoring and evaluation measures are inadequate.

The strategic objectives of BUNEC could be better served by focusing on supporting a smaller number of better-resourced secondary centers, while also implementing more mobile registration units (using vehicles and/or portable units) to decrease reliance on fixed centers and better reach remote areas as well as displaced and nomadic populations.

To optimize the geographical coverage of fixed and mobile centers, assessment of the location of existing centers is needed to propose a more efficient distribution of fixed centers in high population density areas

[66] Opération spéciale pour donner une identité à chaque enfant | UNICEF

[67] OIF-guide-etat-civil-2022.pdf (francophonie.org)

and identify pockets of unregistered communities for mobile registration units. This approach would be particularly important to improve the registration rate of home births. For example, starting in 2017, the EU-UNICEF birth registration program had been providing training to CR agents in Cameroon to enable them to register all births, notably those that occur at home.

Partnership with existing initiatives, such as the national-scale vaccination initiative, could be further explored to pool resources. Registration services can be provided at health clinics or community centers.

In addition, BUNEC may explore moving away from standalone secondary centers and seek synergies, including with the private sector. To support this approach, a set of standards and service-level agreements (SLAs) for secondary centers is needed against to accredit, evaluate, and monitor secondary centers.

Recommendation 5: Refine the strategy for secondary CRCs: (i) increase resources and pool infrastructure with other local services; (ii) Prioritize quality over quantity; (iii) Optimize geographical coverage; and (iv) Add mobile unties for nomadic, displaced, or remote populations.

Recommendation 6: Improve the strategy for home births, including involvement of community health workers and midwives in CR.

Recommendation 7: Simplify procedures and promote an administrative—rather than judicial—route for late birth registration, reconstitution of lost or destroyed CR certificates, and issuance of copies.

Box 3: Partnering with healthcare services to facilitate timely civil registration

To improve its birth registration rate by bringing CR closer to the population, **Rwanda**[68] extended the scope of actors empowered to undertake CR from sector-level registrars to decentralized structures like health facilities. As such, births are directly recorded by healthcare personnel in CRCs embedded in hospitals. Information is captured in Rwanda's CRVS system, which generates a unique national ID number for the registered individual, with the record automatically shared with Rwanda's National Population Registry. Parents can request their baby's birth certificate through the Irembo e-service portal. As a result of this and other efforts to improve the foundational ID ecosystem, Rwanda's birth registration rate increased from 56 percent in 2015 to 86 percent in 2020.[69]

Consider more nuanced approaches to digitization of primary and secondary centers.

The plan in the *Schéma Directeur*[70] has adopted a nuanced, commendable approach to digitization. The strategy focuses on digitizing systems and business processes with high repercussions on trust and accessibility. This focuses on primary CRCs and birth declaration systems in health centers, while deprioritizing CR aspects where digital will be less transformative, such as secondary CRCs.

This strategy could be refined during implementation. For instance, some primary centers may not have key digital pre-requisites, such as access to connectivity and digital skills; while some secondary centers, for example in urban areas or in established health centers, may be ready for digital processes. In addition, digitized birth notification could be explored for well-organized operations such as health centers or vaccination campaigns. The detailed cartography exercise (see Terms of Reference [TOR] in Annex) could

[68] Rwanda | Centre of Excellence for Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems (crvssystems.ca).
[69] World Bank data: Completeness of birth registration (%) - Rwanda | Data (worldbank.org).
[70] Civil registration digitalization Master Plan.

provide data to base a more nuanced, differentiated, and phased digitization approach.

Recommendation 8: Update CRC's digitization strategy based on a mapping of existing capacities.

Recommendation 9: Create a nationwide strategy for digitization of the stock of existing birth certificates based on mapping of the existing centers.

Box 4: Approaches to digitization of existing registers

As countries move towards digital CR systems, they are confronted with the question of what to do with the existing stock of paper registers. Some countries have chosen a full digitization approach. For example, in 2000, **Tunisia** spent five years manually entering data of historial registers directly into its electronic CR database.[71] New records are entered in parallel in both the paper registers (which have legal force) and the electronic database.

Other countries have chosen a partial digitization approach, whereby they scan existing paper registers and maintain digital copies of these scans, to help preserve records and mitigate the risk of loss, destruction, or degradation of paper registers. In **Lebanon**, the CR authority's microfilm project involves repairing or recopying existing registers, photographing the registers and supporting documents using analogue microfilm, and then digitizing these microfilmed registers into PDF files. These are indexed and stored in a database to enable day-to-day use and consultation of the registers by CRC staff. To date, 14 out of 49 *kalams* (district CRCs that maintain civil registers) have digitized their registers, accounting for around 25 percent of the population.

Digitize registries, procedures, and certificates to address some key current paper-based vulnerabilities.

Some vulnerabilities in the current CR system have been identified that can lead to proliferation of erroneous or fraudulent documents and undermine trust in the system:

- **Blank pages in registers.** If a civil registry leaves blank pages in the register, or delays closing of registers at the end of the year, it can allow delayed birth registrations to be recorded after the legally prescribed delays.
- **Issuing an *acte* without a corresponding *souche.*** Although the process of closing previous years' registers prevents addition of additional *souches* into the registers of previous years, a mayor can still use additional blank registry stock to issue a signed and stamped *acte* to a person without a corresponding *souche.* Since the *acte* is genuine, this fraud will not be detected unless the existence of the corresponding *souche* is verified in the original register.
- **Fraudulent issuance of duplicate.** Previously, mayors were able to issue duplicate copies of birth records by copying and certifying the data from the birth record (*souche*). This procedure has been eliminated by updated regulations due to concerns of manipulation of this process by mayors.

[71] Tunisia | Centre of Excellence for Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems (crvssystems.ca).

- **Fraudulent legalization of copies.** Currently, prefectures provide legalization services for copies (photocopy or handwritten) of original birth certificates, which are open to error or manipulation by police officers charged with verifying the data on the copy.

Table 6 summarizes vulnerabilities and the ways in which digitization will address them:

Table 6: Vulnerabilities of the current approach and areas for improvement

Fraud vector	**Actor**	**Improvements from digitalization**
Leaving blank pages in the register to fill in in subsequent years	Mayor	All registrations are digitally timestamped with a verifiable audit log, preventing registration for previous years.
Issuing an *acte* without a corresponding *souche*	Mayor	Digital centralized CR database issues certified copies with an electronic signature which prevents tampering by the mayor during printing and delivery.
Fraudulent issuance of duplicates (defunct process)	Mayor	Digital centralized CR database issues certified copies with an electronic signature, which prevents tampering by the mayor during printing and delivery.
Fraudulent legalization of copies of birth certificates	Prefecture	Accessible and digitally verifiable certified copies from the CR system itself eliminate the need for ordinary copies legalized by prefectures.

Operationalization of BUNEC remains incomplete as there is currently no clear architecture in place for how the national CR database will work. While municipalities are officially competent to establish birth certificates, a shared national system is needed to ensure registration consistency and accuracy.

Electronic signing of acts is important. The law could also reintroduce duplicates since they can be signed digitally and secured without the need for a judicial procedure. While the central database takes the place of the *souche* for archival purposes, digitally verifiable acts and/or extracts can be generated from the backed system in a secure way, eliminating the possibility of fraudulent manipulation by actors in the communes or the judicial system, reducing vulnerabilities of the process. and simplifying procedures.

Access to birth certificates is a significant challenge, particularly in remote or under-resourced areas. The absence of digital systems and the reliance on paper-based records means that many people are unable to access their birth certificates. This can have significant consequences, preventing individuals from accessing critical services and opportunities. By digitizing the registration process and making birth certificates more accessible, more people will be able to access their birth certificates, improving their ability to exercise their rights and participate fully in society.

Interoperability of the CR system with the ID and other systems is also critical. The systems can benefit from:

- Validation of the authenticity of birth certificates directly in the CR database during the ID registration process.
- Ensure a unique identity from birth and throughout life with correspondence between the CR identifier and the UIN from the ID system.
- Notifying an ID system of the legally recognized death of an individual through death registration.

Health centers also need to interoperate with the CR system. This is critical to streamline the registration process, reduce the burden on families seeking to register their children, and improve data accuracy and completeness. Interoperability would allow health centers to electronically register births and other vital events, reducing errors and improving registration process efficiency. This would not only simplify the process for families, but also support the effective implementation of the CR system.

Recommendation 10: Establish a national civil status database and recognize the digital version of birth certificates.

Recommendation 11: Ensure Interoperability of the ID system and health center MIS.

Box 5: Decentralized, digital civil registration systems

Several countries use a decentralized CR system supported by a centralized digital CR database. In **Tunisia**,[72] CR is under the purview of General Directorate of Local Government under the Ministry of Local Affairs and Environment. There are 350 civil registry offices in the country, collocated with local government offices, in addition to 170 subsidiary offices and mobile units. These offices are connected to a central civil registry database; registrars record events in the system and these new records are available to all civil registry offices in Tunisia the following morning. This allows individuals to access their CR records from anywhere in the country—prior to these digitalization efforts, they were obliged to travel to the place of their birth to obtain documents.

In **Mauritania**,[73] the government in 2010 embarked on CR reform; it created the National Agency for the Registry of Populations and Secure Documents (ANRPTS), overseen by the Ministry of the Interior and Decentralization. This agency was mandated to manage the National Population Register, which assigns a national identification number (NNI) to all individuals in the country, including children and non-citizens. Registration takes place at 230 citizen reception centers, which are computerized and connected to the central database using a private network.

Coordinate mechanisms for digitization and simplification of the CR system.

The CR ecosystem lacks coordination at local, regional, and national levels. The fact that the coordination committee (PRE2C) is inactive exacerbates this issue. This has led to fragmented digitization efforts by partners, who may use different technologies and data standards, making it challenging to consolidate data. This has occasionally led to multiple registrations of the same children by different actors, leading to duplicate identities and further hindering the registration process. Reactivating the coordination mechanism will help stakeholders agree upon and clarify distinctions between certificates, registers, and certified copies of birth certificates in the context of digitization to promote accuracy. Reintroducing the notion of a duplicate secure birth certificate, made possible by digital technologies, could help address multiple registration and duplicate identities. Further coordination on the legal framework to enable digitization and centralized archiving is also needed.

In addition, lack of adequate monitoring and evaluation tools to measure the effectiveness of the CR ecosystem makes it difficult to assess progress and identify areas for improvement, for example, in terms

[72] Tunisia | Centre of Excellence for Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems (crvssystems.ca).
[73] Mauritania | Centre of Excellence for Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems (crvssystems.ca).

of efficiency and adequate coverage of CRCs. Linking the health sector Management Information System (MIS) with the CR system would also help to improve vital statistics and support the effective functioning of the CR ecosystem.

Recommendation 12: Effectively implement the *Schema Directeur*.

Recommendation 13: Clarify the distinction between acts, registers, and full copies of CR acts, in the context of digitization.

Recommendation 14: introduce issuance of secure duplication of CR documents made possible by digital technologies.

Recommendation 15: Improve vital statistics by linking the health information system with the INS and BUNEC.

6.2.Opportunities for the unique identification system

Increase efforts to improve the accessibility and inclusivity of identification services.

While significant progress has been made, much more is needed to improve accessibility and inclusivity of identification services. In the last decade, an increasing number of enrollment centers (both stationary and mobile) have been established in many regions of the country to bring identification services closer to the population. Mid-2022, some enrollment centers in the east region were upgraded to meet refugee enrollment needs. As a result, close to 5,000 refugee cards were issued from 81,000 blank cards acquired. Furthermore, with the advent of the Anglophone crisis, additional enrollment centers were created in the northwest and southwest to replace destroyed infrastructure but also strengthen fraud prevention as these are high security risks regions. To improve communication with the population, a customer support center was created in 2021 with various communication channels, including 5 WhatsApp numbers for inquiries on application status. A mass-messaging service was also introduced to provide alerts when cards are ready for pick-up. Additionally, a website was introduced to provide general information on application processes and any other updates from DGSN regarding identification.

Despite DGSN's efforts towards universal coverage of the population, substantial accessibility gaps remain in terms of geography, infrastructure, and costs. A significant number of communes lack enrollment centers. Other centers have limited infrastructure, with few service stations and frequent electrical power cuts. This particularly affects vulnerable groups such as minorities, those living in rural areas and villages where center distribution is sparse. The long distances and associated travel costs act a disincentive to obtaining an ID. In addition to transportation costs, other indirect costs such as bribes, and time delays are unaffordable by the poorest population groups. The need for multiple trips to different locations to obtain required documents, waiting times to enroll, and lack of awareness of alternative procedures for people without birth certificates exacerbate the situation. The Anglophone crisis in the northwest and southwest regions has further worsened this problem as centers have been destroyed or have become non-functional. Conversely, demand has increased as resident population groups have lost their identity documentation because of displacement or arson attacks. This has increased pressure on remaining enrollment centers to process higher volumes of applications. DGSN estimates that an additional 543 identification centers are needed to adequately serve the population.

Recommendation 16: Develop a geographic map of all identification centers with their infrastructure

needs—such as connectivity, equipment, communication tools—specified to better understand center upgrades needed and determine strategic positioning of new centers.

Recommendation 17: Increase the number of identification posts (fixed and mobile enrollment) with adequate infrastructure and strategic distribution throughout the territory, informed by mapping all identification posts, o get closer to the population and reduce travel time.[74]

Recommendation 18: Explore co-location partnerships with government institutions, community leaders, and others to combine services necessary to obtain required documents—such as certification of documents, certificates of nationality, identification post—in a "one-stop shop" for new centers.

Recommendation 19: Carry out awareness-raising campaigns on the existence of a simplified procedure for people without a birth certificate, which entails use of attestation and witness testimonies.

Recommendation 20: Provide dedicated support to minorities and vulnerable populations, informed by qualitative studies (for example Pygmies, Bororos) to facilitate obtaining identity documents.

Box 7: Strategies for closing gaps in identification

Successful strategies to increase ID coverage will usually tackle both supply and demand-side barriers. These consist of legal and policy reforms to minimize costs and administrative and technology barriers. Strategies require partnerships with other sectors—such as CR, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and civil society—to bring registration points closer to people. Awareness-raising activities are also needed about the importance of identification and how to do it.

One special option to consider is having a "one-stop shop" for multiple services—such as document certification, CR, and ID—in one location. Another initiative to consider is "registration clinics"; that is, events to facilitate assisted registration, held periodically at locations frequented by community members and organized in close coordination with community leaders and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs).

- In **Chad, Sudan,** and **eSwatini**, civil registration and identification services are located within the same room with different booths (separate for CR and NID) and other government services, including a separate payments window.
- In **India**, Community Protection Volunteers help identify families and children without an ID and help them navigate the application process, connect them to social protection schemes, and build trust between communities and local government officials.

For more ideas, see the ID4D Practitioner's Guide[75]

Continue to improve the production and distribution of ID credentials.

While the ID system is robust, ensures uniqueness, and adheres to principles of data minimization, there

[74] DGSN estimates that an additional 543 identification centers are needed.
[75] ID4D Practitioner's Guide.

is still room for improvement in terms of production and distribution of ID credentials. With strong commitment to continuous improvement of the ID system, government has introduced updated systems and credentials with proven results for identity fraud reduction. Since 1994, DGSN has grown its expertise on national ID system management. The system has gone through several legislative and design evolutions over the years to increase performance in terms of data securitization and fraud prevention. The latest upgrade to the system made in 2016 improved the algorithm for fraud detection and prevention, generation of unique identification number (UIN), and a new smart card credential type. Leveraging the new algorithm, an analysis cross-referencing legacy data since 1994 with new data in 2016 system was conducted leading to identification of close to 6,000,000 fraudulent actions on birth certificates for five regions of the country. DGSN reports that no new fraudulent IDs have been found since introduction of the system in 2016.

However, issuance and distribution of national IDs have significantly slowed in recent years due to insufficient card production capacity because of budget constraints and procurement issues during COVID. While no longer an issue, the silicon shortage during COVID exacerbated the production backlog. Considering the current uncovered population of 2.5 million, it would take over one year solely on card printing, excluding other new requests for renewal and adults who recently turned 18. In 2021, the government announced opening of a secondary center in Garoua, which is newly operational. However, production capacity is still insufficient to meet the needs of the population. Moreover, centralized processing and validation of supporting documents leads to significant delays in the issuance of cards, especially in case of discrepancies of the document given by the applicant and the DGSN archive. There is also suboptimal communication from DGSN to resolve the problem with the applicant. Furthermore, once cards are ready, distribution is another issue as applicants need to travel to the original center for pick up. With long production times, applicants may have moved by the time cards are ready and many remain unclaimed. Hence, it can take over two years from registration date to receive a card, and reportedly it has taken up to four years in some cases.

Recommendation 21: Improve data hosting and transmission infrastructure to reduce processing times of supporting documents.

Recommendation 22: Once CR digitalization has been implemented and upgraded and verifiable credentials rolled out, explore immediate authentication of digital birth certificates during ID registration process.

Recommendation 23: Improve production and distribution of identity documents in the following ways:

- **Determine the production capacity required based on the demand estimate and develop a strategic plan to increase this capacity over time.**
- **Explore alternative innovative solutions to produce identity documents to overcome problems of raw material supply and production times; for example, mobile ID and secure complementary solutions at a lower cost.**

Box 8: Using multiple types of ID credential to increase accessibility and reduce processing time

Peru's National Identification and Civil Status Registry (RENIEC) is an autonomous agency with constitutional independence, that oversees both CR and the national ID document (DNI) in the country. RENIEC manages a centralized database for both CR and ID data, which uses an Automated Biometric Identification System (ABIS) to deduplicate biometric data and assure uniqueness. This system issues three types of credentials:

- A **conventional DNI card**, which includes the cardholder's photo and biographic information, as well as a barcode containing biometric fingerprint information. This costs approximately US$10, except for vulnerable populations who receive it for free.
- An **electronic smart card DNI**, which uses Public Key Infrastructure (PKI) to enable secure digital authentication and signing, and biometric match-on. The card's chip incorporates a digital certificate and signatures. This costs approximately US$14.
- A **child DNI**, which resembles the conventional card and costs US$5.50.

Adults can choose to apply for either the conventional or electronic DNI, according to their needs and means. This increases the accessibility of the DNI to different segments of the population and helps reduce processing time for the electronic smart card by distributing demand across the two types of credentials.

Expand digital identity verification and authentication services based on use cases and with a people-centric approach.

Cameroon does not have any system that enables digital verification and authentication of a person to ensure uniqueness of beneficiaries for services or provide secure access to in-person or remote services. Digital verification services are important to assure uniqueness, accuracy, consistency, and validity of identity data, such as name, age, gender, and address. There is demand from various sectors such as Mobile Network Operators (MNOs), Social Protection, Public Administration and Health to provide such services. Additionally, the visual inspection is the current mechanism to authenticate people in person, at point of service. Use cases could be further explored to determine if this authentication method is sufficient given the level of assurance needed for transactions in different sectors.

An inter-ministerial committee founded in 2018 around harmonization of identity management practices in Cameroon has already initiated evaluation of this issues. Implementation strategies and technical solutions may need further refinement. Currently, the NID has a barcode, which in addition to interoperability could facilitate digital authentication of offline verification; however, this technology has not been deployed. As Cameroon moves toward a digital economy, it will be important to assess various models for implementing digital authentication that can meet increasing demands for secure online services. Nevertheless, careful consideration is also needed to ensure that such systems are inclusive, cost-effective, and fit-for purpose, particularly as manual verification can often be sufficient for in-person transactions. There is no one-size-fits-all model for developing digital ID systems and services, and countries that have implemented these systems "top down" with little stakeholder engagement have faced problems with sustainability, use, and trust in their systems.

Recommendation 24: Further develop use cases to digital verification and authentication strategies based on demand.

Recommendation 25: Develop business and technical requirements from use cases, refine solution architecture, and adopt an implementation plan for digital verification and authentication services.

Box 9: Architectures for digital identity verification and authentication services

Across counties, different architectures for digital identity verification and authentication services require differing institutional arrangements to implement, including:

- **Single Identity Provider**: This refers to a centralized system where a single entity provides digital identities for all users, and verification and authentication services, with relying parties granting access to services. Some countries with national population registries have been able to implement digital authentication and verification as Single Identity Providers. For example, **Eswatini**'s National Population Registry (NPR) system allows for basic digital identity verification services for both public and private sector service providers (though authentication is not yet available). Single Identity Provider systems can be contrasted with Functional Identity Providers, where each government entity (or private sector service provider) issues its own digital ID credentials used only to access its own services.
- **Federated ID ecosystem**: This consists of multiple identity providers that provide government-recognized digital IDs for online transactions, with relying parties or service providers in a federation, according to an established trust framework. This type of system is more decentralized than a Single IDP, but still relies on a centralized authority to manage the trust relationships between the different identity providers. Such federated digital ID ecosystems have been implemented at the national level in multiple countries, including Norway, Denmark, Belgium, France, the United Kingdom, Estonia, Canada, Australia, Thailand, and Uruguay. Senegal and Bangladesh are also exploring establishment of this type of system.
- **Decentralized wallets**: Under this type of architecture, various identity providers issue digitally verifiable credentials stored locally by the user; for example, in a digital wallet on a smartphone or smartcard. Users authenticate themselves by presenting these credentials to relying parties, who verify the authenticity and integrity of these credentials through a verifiable data registry, without interacting directly with the issuer. The EU is moving towards using this type of nationally provided credential and decentralized wallet for use across all member states.

Recommendation 26: Coordinate and engage with all key stakeholders on a regular basis to develop a shared vision for digital ID services to ensure these systems are fit for purpose and address the real needs of people and service providers. Coordination should involve core government ministries and private entities (for example, Banks, Mobile Network Operators (MNOs), Public Administration, Social Protection, Health) that rely on the ID system, as well as civil society.

Recommendation 27: Conduct system assessments to identify additional upgrades—such as in the realm of performance, security, privacy, data management—that may be required with these additional features, while adhering to international best practices.

6.3. Shared opportunities

Establish a robust legal framework for digital governance that promotes trust and enables digitization.

The digitization of both CR and ID systems requires strengthening the legal environment for digital governance, which would, in turn, improve efficiency of the CR and ID services.

This will require adoption of laws, based on best practices, that enable digital transactions—including identifying oneself online—while safeguarding against potential risks, such as misuse of personal data and cybersecurity. These safeguards include laws that: (i) protect personal data; and (ii) sanction cybercrimes while protecting the security of data and digital infrastructure, including critical infrastructure. To enable online transactions in the public and private sectors, such a framework should: (i) facilitate e-commerce and electronic transactions, and (ii) promote clear rules on e-government, open-data, and access to information. The latter would help harmonize rules and data quality standards for sharing data among various institutions, including the DGSN and BUNEC, to improve effectiveness and transparency.

Priority should be given to ensuring effective implementation of a good practice legal framework for protecting personal data, criminalizing illegal conduct in cyberspace, and ensuring clear cybersecurity obligations and standards. This requires adoption of key implementing regulations and the operationalization of legal enforcement and implementation entities. The data protection and cybercrime legal framework plays a key role in encouraging trust in digital transactions and, in turn, uptake in the use of public and private services, including CR and ID services. Adoption of these two laws, particularly on personal data protection, is critical as digitization is introduced to the legal framework on CR.

Recommendation 28: Adopt a generally applicable personal data protection law, incorporating major principles enshrined in recognized good practice, which gives enforceable rights to individuals while establishing an oversight body entrusted with ensuring compliance with the law.

Recommendation 29: Amend the current legal framework on cybercrime and cybersecurity by adopting a new law aligned with principles, such as those enshrined in the Budapest Convention, to help clarify the mandate of the ANTIC on cybercrime and remove confusing provisions related to electronic transactions.

Recommendation 30: Amend the current law on electronic commerce and electronic transactions to clarify existing ambiguity—particularly around overlapping roles of ANTIC—as well as adopt implementing decrees to set out the legal regime for e-signature, such as different levels of assurance, criteria for reliability, and accreditation bodies.

Recommendation 31: Adopt a legal framework for Access to Information and Open Data, a key enabler for data sharing between public sector entities (G2G) and require that public entities respond to reasonable access to information requests and proactively disclose public data.

Seek opportunities to increase the sustainability of financing for modernizing the ID ecosystem.

Over the last decade, several efforts have been made to coordinate efforts cross the many different institutions playing an active role in identification ecosystem; however, sustainability of operations and financing remain issues. The GoC is to be applauded for creation of PRE2C in 2015 and of the inter-ministerial committee in 2018 to support CR coordination and harmonization of identity management practices. These committees have spearheaded many needed CR and ID reforms. In mid-2022, BUNEC also created a platform to coordinate the work of development partners, but this is yet to be operational. As

mentioned, due to lack of sustainable financing mechanisms, PRE2C has ceased operations, but coordination of key CR actors still a pressing need. Similarly, sustained operation of the 2018 inter-ministerial committee or platform to coordinate partner interventions remains unclear, and it is paramount to ensure they do not share the same fate as PRE2C.

Coordination between different institutions is key due to complex reporting structures, differing interests and mandates, with siloed and unclearly delineated sets of responsibilities in some cases. For example, while BUNEC's mandate articulates its role in quality control of civil registration processes, it has no direct oversight over primary and secondary CRCs to enforce quality of service measures. On the other hand, for MINDDEVEL—with oversight over both CROs and BUNEC—legislation describing their mandate only mentions their role in the CR legislative process when it comes to specifics of CR responsibilities. As a result of these complex institutional arrangements, monitoring and accountability mechanisms are largely missing and there is limited information flow between local, regional, and national levels of government.

Recommendation 32: Seek leadership at the highest levels of government with a clear champion to ensure multi-sectoral coordination for development of a shared vision, strategy, and implementation plan for ID improvements.

Recommendation 33: Strengthen coordination between actors in the entire identification eco-system, and develop mechanisms at the local, regional, and national strategic levels with provisions embedded in legislation, including sustainable financing mechanisms and coordination of development partners' interventions.

Recommendation 34: Develop and implement capacity building programs at all levels of government to effectively manage and utilize modernized systems.

Recommendation 35: Explore synergies and clear agreements to achieve economies of scale and enhance the shared vision for unique identification for all from birth to death across stakeholders, informed by sectoral use cases.

The absence of enough financing has been a clear constraint to making progress on the CR and ID agenda in Cameroon, from implementation of developed strategies and operational plans for digitization to scaling up successful pilot operations. Based on lessons from development partners' past initiatives, and experience from other countries, pooling resources among development partners and expertise is paramount to achieving economies of scale needed to make significant progress. Pooling resources among development partners will support sustainability of interventions to promote CR and ID accessibility and inclusivity, robustness of systems with necessary safeguards, and with good governance measures in place. There is also the need to evolve from legal identification systems to digital identification and digital verification and authentication. Finally, to enable digital identification, verification, and authentication, parallel improvements are needed to Cameroon's cybersecurity capacity to ensure that data exchange can take place in a secure environment. Similarly, a robust e-signature architecture is needed to allow verification of digital credentials, such as digital birth certificates and ID credentials.

Recommendation 36: Explore co-location/partnerships—between government institutions, community leaders, and others—to combine the services necessary to obtain breeder documents—such as certification of documents, certificates of nationality, and identification post—in a "one-stop shop" for new centers where feasible.

Recommendation 37: Explore joint communication, awareness raising, and enrollment campaigns,

focusing particularly on minorities and vulnerable groups.

Recommendation 38: Further develop use cases for digital verification and authentication services, enhance the vision and technical architecture, including interoperability, based on these and create an implementation roadmap to operationalize.

Recommendation 39: Reach clear agreement on how to link systems (foundational and functional), and how personal ID numbers (NIPU, UI, and sectoral numbers) would be leveraged to link records between systems to enable digital authentication and verification services.

Recommendation 40: Improve the country's cybersecurity capacity and operations, to prepare the interoperability of the ID, CR, and other systems by ensuring adequate protection of data exchanged.

Recommendation 41: Strengthen the country's e-signature architecture to enable creation of verifiable digital birth certificates, certified copies, and ID credentials.

Annex A: Strengths, challenges, and guidelines

Civil registration

Category	Strengths	Challenges	Detailed guidelines
Inclusion	✓ Awareness and increased commitment of local authorities / civil registrars to finding solutions to bring registration closer to people. ✓ Decentralized management of civil registration at the local level. ✓ Creation of new secondary civil registration centers.	✓ Cumbersome late birth registration processes. ✓ Lack of standardization of procedures, staff training and knowledge of legislation. ✓ Cost of Birth certificates is not harmonized (informal/indirect costs and substitute judgements costs). ✓ Low demand due to the fact that birth registration is not given priority over the other requirements of life, and penalties for non-compliance with compulsory registration are not enforced. ✓ Poor reporting of home births and non-compliance of some health centers with reporting obligations. ✓ Socio-cultural, gender, and religious norms prevent timely registration. ✓ Sub-optimal coverage of secondary registration centers in urban centers and remote areas.	✓ Continuous awareness-raising campaigns on the importance of civil registration, with specific messages. ✓ Support for minorities in the procedures to be followed, including the introduction of procedures adapted to the socio-cultural norms of these populations. ✓ Improve the strategy for **home births**, including involving community health workers and midwives in declaring civil status events to the civil registration centers. ✓ Refine the strategy **for secondary civil registration centers:** ✓ More **resources** and sharing of infrastructure with other local services. ✓ Prioritize **quality** over quantity. ✓ Ensure optimum geographical **coverage.** ✓ **Mobile facilities** for nomadic, displaced, or remote populations. ✓ **Simplifying procedures** involved in reconstructing civil status records and issuing copies by encouraging administrative channels.
Design and Operation	✓ Creation of BUNEC to oversee quality control and creation of a national civil status database. ✓ Efforts to facilitate logistics for late birth	✓ Limited interoperability with health centers and the civil identification system. ✓ Missing, lost, and destroyed records and	✓ Overall strategy for legacy recovery based on mapping of existing civil registry. ✓ Update the civil registration centers digitalization strategy in line with existing

	registration. ✓ Initial efforts to standardize collaborative training and improve interoperability with ID system. ✓ State budget planned for 2022 (500mn FCFA) to carry out a mass birth registration campaign. ✓ Development of a digitalization master plan and initial digitalization efforts. ✓ Funding from several donors to supplement the state budget in the short term.	documents are difficult to recover. ✓ Under-funded centers ✓ Incomplete operationalization of BUNEC. ✓ Lack of a sustainable funding mechanism, and of a sufficient budget allocation from the State.	geographic map. ✓ Set up a national civil registry. ✓ Ensure interoperability with the ID system.
Governance	✓ Coordination platform created by BUNEC to synchronize the work of partners.	✓ Inadequate monitoring and evaluation tools. ✓ Lack of coordination at local, regional, and national levels between the multiplicity of players involved in the CR ecosystem (inactive Coordination Committee, PRE2C). ✓ Fragmented digitalization efforts by partners using different technologies and data standards that will hinder bcentralization of data. ✓ Multiple registration of the same children by different players, leading to duplicate identities.	✓ Effective implementation of the **Master Plan.** ✓ **Clarify** the distinction between documents, registers, and full copies of civil registration documents, in the digitalization context. ✓ **Legal framework** to enable **digitalization** and centralized archiving. ✓ Reintroduce the concept of secure deduplication of civil registration records made possible by digital technologies. ✓ Improve civil registration statistics by linking the health IT system with INS and BUNEC.

Identification System

Category	Strengths	Challenges	Detailed guidelines
Inclusion	✓ Inclusive eligibility (nationals, residents, refugees). ✓ Good rate of identity document coverage for the eligible population (82.9%) compared with the average rate for sub-Saharan Africa	✓ Incomplete geographical coverage: not enough registration centers in some communes due to lack of resources, centers destroyed due to crises. ✓ The process of obtaining an identity document is not optimized, requiring at least	✓ Increase the **number of identification posts** (fixed and mobile) with an appropriate infrastructure and strategic distribution over the territory (GIS mapping) so as to get closer to people/reduce travel time. ✓ Campaign to **raise public awareness** of the

	(56% lack an identity document). ✓ Successful pilot registration of refugees in the Eastern region in 2022 (6,000 registered) with a willingness to extend the scheme more widely. ✓ Establishment of communication channels (telephone, WhatsApp, website) to obtain information on the status of applications for identity papers, and to better deal with grievances. ✓ Mobile identification posts to reach remote populations.	4 trips and the preparation of a file containing documents that are difficult to obtain (particularly for people without the required supporting documents). ✓ Direct and indirect costs that are prohibitive for vulnerable populations (delays, transport, indirect costs). ✓ Lack of support for minorities. ✓ Despite the government's efforts to register refugees, only around 1% are currently registered (pilot not yet scaled up).	existence of a simplified procedure for people without an identity document (civil registration certificate). ✓ Combine the services needed to compile files (e.g., certification of deeds, certificates of nationality, identification post) **in a one-stop shop.** ✓ Support for **minorities and vulnerable groups** to make it easier to obtain identity documents. ✓ Scale up registration of **refugees.**
Design and Operation	✓ A robust single identity system based on biometric deduplication, KPI and secure credentialing, resulting in a significant reduction in fraud and a high level of identity assurance. ✓ Solid foundation for the introduction of an authentication system for access to public and private services and (qualified) electronic signatures. ✓ Good central system security measures, such as encryption and physical security, reducing the system's vulnerability to external hacking. ✓ Procedures tailored to the realities on the ground (e.g., use of encrypted USB for data transmission from identification stations not connected to the Internet). ✓ Digitalized archiving of copies of 8m birth certificates, following authenticity checks by trained staff. ✓ Good experience with recognized vendors.	✓ Lack of reliable infrastructure (electricity and internet). ✓ Centralized processing and validation of supporting documents leads to major delays in the issue of cards, especially in the event of a contradiction between the document provided by the applicant and the DGSN archives (and sub-optimal communication to resolve the problem with the applicant). ✓ Problems with the supply of raw materials (blank cards), production delays due to insufficient capacity of the production center. ✓ Distribution logistics problems (backlog of cards). ✓ Lack of interoperability with the civil registration for validating identity data. ✓ Lack of digital authentication and verification solutions for sector use cases, establishing beneficiary uniqueness and maximizing efficiency of service delivery.	✓ To reduce the **time taken to process** supporting documents: ✓ Improvement of **hosting and data transmission infrastructure** to reduce processing times. ✓ **Immediate validation** of supporting documents (once the verifiable extracts from civil registration have been made available to the public). ✓ To improve the **production and distribution** of identity documents: ✓ Determine the **necessary production capacity** based on estimated demand and develop a strategic plan to increase this capacity over time. ✓ Explore **innovative alternative solutions** to produce identity cards to overcome problems with the supply of raw materials and production times (e.g., mobile ID, additional secure solutions at lower cost). ✓ Adopt an implementation plan for **authentication services** that adequately meets the needs of sectoral use cases (business and

			technical requirements) - Infocentre. ✓ Conduct system assessments to identify **additional upgrades** (performance, security, privacy, data management) that would be required, while complying with international best practices; and upgrade the system (overall robustness).
Governance	✓ Interministerial coordination committee with a shared vision between MINDDEVEL, BUNEC and other stakeholders on the evolution of civil identity and civil status systems and their interoperability. ✓ The system launched in 2016 is running smoothly due to a good strategy and internal processes that have proved their worth.	✓ Lack of clarity of vision on the link between the NIPU (planned for the civil registration) and the NIU for identity documents (and sectoral identifiers). ✓ Existing monitoring and evaluation systems, which would enable better strategic decision-making, can be improved. ✓ Insufficient mechanisms for managing complaints.	✓ Dynamic **information sharing** between all governance levels to facilitate strategic decision-making.

Institutional and legal framework

Category	Strengths	Challenges	Detailed guidelines
Civil registration	✓ Extensive legal framework governing civil status. Currently applicable framework: Law 2011-011 of 2011 amending Ordinance 81-02 of 1981. ✓ Extension of births declaration deadline (from 30 to 60 days for births outside health facilities). ✓ Creation of a national body responsible for coordinating and ensuring the proper implementation of civil registration processes.	✓ No clear reference to key principles of civil registration as recommended in best practice. ✓ The applicable provision sets out a largely paper-based civil registration system. ✓ Requires court intervention for procedures that could be carried out administratively (e.g., rectification of records). ✓ Cumbersome legal procedure to obtain a supplemental judgment for the late declaration of births, likely to have a negative impact on the most vulnerable. ✓ Contains discriminatory provisions (particularly on the basis of sex: difference between boys and girls as regards the legal age for marriage).	✓ Incorporate the principles of universality, continuity, and permanence of civil status. ✓ Introduce provisions concerning computerized processes for civil status. ✓ Limit processes that involve legal intervention and simplifying them as far as possible, for example by proposing an administrative process for rectifying civil status records; eliminating the costs related to the process of obtaining a supplementary judgment for the late declaration of births and introducing exemptions for special circumstances. ✓ Amend provisions that discriminate on the basis of sex, for example setting the legal age of marriage for boys and girls at the same age.
Unique Identification	✓ It is compulsory for all citizens aged 18 and over to have an identity card. ✓ Non-citizens, including refugees, asylum seekers, stateless persons and migrant workers are also entitled to identity documents. ✓ The current legal framework provides an alternative means of obtaining an identity document for people who do not have a birth certificate and/or marriage certificate, in particular by means of a "civil status attestation" (carried out in the presence of witnesses and the traditional chief).	✓ The creation or rectification of the NICs requires the provision of a birth certificate and a marriage certificate for married women, which may be difficult to obtain for some people. ✓ There is no coordination between the agency issuing the NICs and the civil registration centers and/or BUNEC, although such coordination would make it easier to verify birth.	✓ Make provision in the existing legal framework for coordination mechanisms between the civil registration and ID systems. ✓ Introduce provisions to protect both systems once they have been digitalized, while guaranteeing the protection of individual privacy.

	✓ Recent legislation establishes a computerized, biometric, personal identity card with an electronic chip. ✓ National identity cards issued before the decree came into force remain valid until they expire.		
Data protection	✓ N/A.	✓ There are no data protection laws in force and no data protection authorities, which represents a high risk of abuse and misuse of personal data, both offline and online.	✓ Adopt and implement a legal, regulatory and institutional framework for the protection of personal data that is in line with international best practices, in particular by adopting a law of general application that sets out both compliance obligations and rights for those concerned and establishes a personal data protection authority.
Cybercrime and cybersecurity	✓ Existing legal framework governing cybercrime and cybersecurity: Law 2010-012 of 2010 on cybersecurity and cybercrime. ✓ Defines the security framework for electronic communications networks and information systems. ✓ Defines and punishes offences relating to the use of information and communication technologies. ✓ Establishes the legal regime for digital evidence, security activities, cryptography, and electronic certification. ✓ Protects the fundamental rights of individuals, in particular the right to human dignity, honor, and privacy. ✓ Creates the National Agency for Information and Communication Technologies (NAICT) to regulate electronic security activities. ✓ The country has applied to join the Budapest Convention in 2022.	✓ Lack of clarity regarding NAICT's multiple mandates as a cybersecurity agency and as an authority. ✓ Lack of harmonization with the provisions of the Budapest Convention, to which Cameroon has requested accession. ✓ Provisions relating to electronic transactions in cybercrime legislation, which create some confusion as to what are in fact separate issues.	✓ To make the necessary amendments to the law currently in force to distinguish the issues specific to cybersecurity and cybercrime from those relating to electronic transactions. ✓ Clarify the distinct mandates of NAICT specific to cybersecurity and those relating to its role as root certification authority.

Global Ecosystem challenges and guidelines

Challenges	Detailed guidelines
✓ Incomplete synergy between civil registration processes and user-centric civil identification. ✓ Lack of resources to achieve economies of scale. ✓ Low civil registration rates, leading to exclusion from registration in the civil identification system. ✓ Lack of interoperability with the civil registration database to enable validation of identity data when registering for national identification. ✓ Lack of digital authentication and verification solutions for sector use cases, with the aim of establishing beneficiary uniqueness and maximizing the value of service delivery. ✓ Lack of a team to implement the common vision on the harmonization of civil registration and civil identification systems.	✓ Develop standardized procedures to ensure uniform registration and enrolment procedures. ✓ Develop an overall digital government architecture that includes the civil registration, the ID and the sectors. ✓ Promote interoperability between the various systems. ✓ Ensuring continuous identity management throughout an individual's life, using a common unique identifier. ✓ Adopt a legal framework favorable to the digitalization of the identification and authentication ecosystem, to facilitate the country's digital transformation. ✓ Better support for minorities and vulnerable groups in the process. ✓ Continue to strengthen collaboration between stakeholders on the harmonization of the identity ecosystem. ✓ Improve interministerial technical coordination for

	a common ecosystem.

Annex B: Terms of reference (TOR) for national mapping of CRCs and inventory of registers

The consultant will evaluate, for all primary and secondary centers in Cameroon that are considered accessible according to the project security management plan (SMP), the following criteria:

State of archives

- Inventory of registers, flagging any missing registers and cataloguing periods (not) covered.
- Evaluation of legal conformity of all existing registers, in particular if they have been côté and paraphé according to applicable standards.
- Assessment of state of conservation of existing registers, rating registers according to their likely ability to be digitized (good condition / some data may not be legible / impossible to digitize).

State of centers

- Physical infrastructure.
- Physical security of the center, including locking doors and cabinets.
- Weather proofness.
- Existence of adequate storage provisions, such as shelving and protective covers for registers.
- Assessment of level of electrification of the center.
- Assessment of level of internet connectivity at the center.
- For unconnected centers, assessment of closes reliable power and/or internet connection.

State of personnel

- List of key personnel, with titles and employment status.
- Remuneration, if any.
- Qualifications, education level of key personnel.
- Administration of digital skills test (on a random sample).

Annex C: Further details on World Bank and development partner initiatives

As part of the diagnostic, the team conducted a portfolio analysis of projects supported by the Bank and other development partners to understand the nature and size of investments into CR and/or ID.

World Bank Portfolio Review: The team conducted a review of 38 lending and ASA projects in Cameroon that are active, closed and in the pipeline. We found that, of the 38 projects reviewed, 11 have a CR activity, 10 have ID activity, and 7 have both CR and ID activities. Most WBG projects that have CR and/or ID activities focus on civil registration. Functionally, most of the projects are focused on operations, particularly supporting beneficiaries to access identification documents for the purposes of supporting other project objectives. For example, social safety projects will help provide beneficiaries with functional identification documents to enable the project to identify, verify, and implement the project effectively. Thus, CR and ID activities within the WBG projects tend to be incomprehensive and do not address the root causes of CR and ID issues in the country.

Table 7: Projects that Incorporate CR/CI Activities

Project Name	Global Practice	Project Status	Description of CR/CI Activity
Adaptive Safety Nets and Economic Inclusion Project (P175363)	Social Protection & Jobs	Active (from 2022 to 2028)	• Provide birth certificates for children who do not have one. • Support the creation of a Unified Social Registry (USR) to serve as the social information system of socio-economic conditions of the poor and vulnerable population in Cameroon, supporting the processes of intake, registration, and assessment of needs and conditions of the poor and vulnerable population in Cameroon. • Liaise with the Ministry of Home Affairs to issue IDs to beneficiaries who do not have for the purposes of receiving cash transfers digitally.
CM- Rural Electricity Access Project for Underserved Regions(P163881)	Energy & Extractives	Active (from 2020 to 2025)	• Finance activities to help PAPs in going obtain birth certificates and ID cards.
CAMEROON Education Reform Support Project (P160926)	Education	Active (from 2019 to 2026)	• Increase access to pre-school in rural areas by providing parents with education modules will include information birth registration. School-based sensitization on birth registration.
Additional Financing	Education	Active	• Scale-up of activities carried out by BUNEC

for the Education Reform Support Project (P172885)		(from 2019 to 2026)	under the Cameroon's Health System Performance Reinforcement Project (HSPPR) (P156679) to strengthen CRVS activities for refugees and host communities. • Conduct birth registrations for all deliveries and provide birth certificates. • Identify children without birth certificates and them with birth certificates using the most accurate information available. • Assist refugees and IDPs, and host populations to acquire official identification documents and birth certificates. • Provide civil registration centers under performance contracts with subsidies for registration documents delivered to refugees and vulnerable host populations.
Lake Chad Region Recovery and Development Project (P161706)	Social Sustainability and Inclusion	Active (from 2020 to 2025)	• Provide support to communities in the issuing of birth certificates and national identity cards.
Local Governance and Resilient Communities Project(P175846)	Social Sustainability and Inclusion	Active (from 2023 to 2027)	• Contain as PBG criteria to increase civil registry.
Health System Performance Reinforcement Project (P156679)	Health, Nutrition & Population	Closed in 2022	• Support the building of the national civil registration and vital statistics systems (CRVS). BUNEC will partner with the Ministry of Public Health to support investments to improve data collection and quality for mothers and children. • Support strengthening of the CRVS through (i) increasing birth registration rates through PBF indicators at the community, health facility and district levels through ensuring registrations are made for each delivery and maternal death audits are conducted; (ii) reinforcing the HMIS system through piloting and scaling-up DHIS-2 and linking data with the CRVS system and PBF portal; (iii) training and capacity-building activities for the PBF program at all levels of the health system that will include components on birth registration, death registration and maternal death autopsies; and (iv) piloting mobile technology (smartphones and tablets)

			for enhanced and more efficient community verification, linking verification results to the online platforms and identifying geographical areas where birth registration remains low.
Health System Performance Reinforcement Project - Additional Financing (P164954)	Health, Nutrition & Population	Closed in 2022	• Supported the scale-up of activities carried out by BUNEC under the Cameroon's Health System Performance Reinforcement Project (HSPPR) (P156679) to strengthen CRVS activities for refugees and host communities. • Conducted birth registrations and provided birth certificates for children. • Assisted refugees and IDPs to acquire official identification documents and birth certificates. Incentivize civil registration to provide refugees with registration documents.
Community Development Program Support Project (P073629)	Urban, Resilience and Land	Closed in 2009	• Support indigenous people (Baka, Kola, and Aka) obtain identification cards and birth certificates for them to establish equal legal status.
Community Development Program Support Project-Phase II (P113027)	Agriculture and Food	Closed in 2013	• Provided identification cards to indigenous populations enabling them to achieve recognition and increase their full participation as citizens of Cameroon.
Community Development Program Support Project-Phase III (P144637)	Social Sustainability and Inclusion	Closed in 2022	• Support a municipal-level civil registration management system and proactive registration of newborns and women, according to Cameroonian law.
Community Development Program Support Project Response to Forced Displacement (PNDP III) (P164803)	Social Sustainability and Inclusion	Closed in 2022	• Support a municipal-level civil registration management system and proactive registration of newborns and women, according to the Cameroonian law. Support includes the issuance of birth certificates to host communities and refugees, the establishment of special local hearings for the purpose of issuing replacement birth certificates or duplicates.
Cameroon Social Safety Nets(P128534)	Social Protection & Jobs	Closed in 2022	• Provide personal paper photo IDs (with picture and personal data (name, date of birth, and a unique identification number) to verify the identities of beneficiaries of safety net programs, enable them to collect

			cash transfer payment, and to ensure transparency and protect the program against fraud.
Social Safety Nets for Crisis Response (P164830)	Social Protection & Jobs	Closed in 2022	• Scales up the activities of the P128534.

Development partner initiative review: The table below provides a list of CR and ID initiatives implemented by development partners. This information was collected from desk research and interviews with partners; representatives from the various development organizations validated the information.

Table 8: CR and ID Initiatives by Development Partners

Initiative Name	Partner Name	Activity Description
Support Programme for the Modernization of Civil Registration (PAMEC Phase 2)	GIZ KOICA	• Invested 8 million US$ in: • Sustainable solutions for ICT systems. • Capacity building for digitalizing CR. • Population awareness on civil registration. • Watchdog on service quality through CSO.
Second Chance Education Project	UN Women	• Facilitated a dialogue on women and girls' access to civil status documents in conflict affected areas in Cameroon.
Sustainable solutions to Legal Identity	IOM AFD	• Discussions with DGSN and the DGSN border police to find solutions for the information management system for border management solutions and checking the authenticity of documents.

Information, Counselling, and Legal Assistance (ICLA)	NRC UNHCR BHA[76] SIDA ECHO[77] GFFO[78] NMFA [79] AFD	• Work with mayors to provide IDs to refugees. from CAR in coordination with UNHCR in the East • Work on CR issues with BUNEC. • Support provision of both ID cards and birth certificates in the Far North, North-West and Southwest. • Sensitization efforts.

Information, Counselling, and Legal Assistance (ICLA)	NRC
	BHA
	ECHO
	SIDA
	ECW[80]
		• Out of a total budget of US$ 53,000, US$ 23,000 was invested in:
		  • Work on CR issues with BUNEC.
		  • Establish ID cards and birth certificates in the NWSW, Littoral, and West region.
		  • Provide Information and counselling sessions on Legal and civil documentation.
		  • 7,100 beneficiaries.

Support for Civil Registration Mechanisms	NRC BHA ECHO SIDA ECW	• Provide material support (e.g., civil status booklets, office materials and other equipment) to civil registration facilities (i.e., civil status centers, courts and BUNEC) as a form of capacity building to enable them to provide quality and timely services. • Provide payments for the provision of judgement suppletifs. • Benefited 8 municipal councils.
Advocacy	NRC BHA ECHO SIDA ECW	• Organize Lobbying and round table meetings civil status stakeholders.

Capacity Building Workshops with Government on Legal ID for IDPs	NRC
	BHA
	ECHO
	SIDA
	ECW
		• Out of a total budget of US$ 53,000, US$ 23,000 was invested to:
		  ○ Provide capacity building to government authorities (e.g., Ministry of Justice, Public health service providers, local administrators) to respond to more ID cases from refugees.
		  ○ Raise awareness of the rights of displaced people concerning legal identity.

[76] Bureau Humanitarian Assistance
[77] Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations
[78] German Federal Foreign Office
[79]Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs
[80] Education Cannot Wait

Enhancing access to legal identity and civil documentation for CAR refugees int he East Region	NRC
	EU
	NDICI[81]
		• US$ 83,540, out of US$ 147,540 to:
		  ○ Improve civil registration coordination and timely delivery of civil status documents to CAR refugees and vulnerable hosts.
		  ○ 5,000 project beneficiaries.

Providing Legal Identity to Displaced Populations and other Vulnerable Persons in Cameroon's Centre and East regions	IOM
	AFD
		• US$ 275,000 out of US$ 550,000 invested to:
		  ○ Development of a model of multi-actor/ stakeholder coordination for the provision of a legal identity, responsive of the particular position of each individual.
		  ○ Benefitted 600 displaced persons.

Providing Legal Identity to Displaced Youth in Littoral and West region as part of a durable solutions framework	IOM
	UN PBF
		• US$ 50, 000 out of US$ 870,000 invested in:
		  ○ Development of a model of multi-actor/ stakeholder coordination for the provision of a legal identity, responsive of the particular position of each individual.
		  ○ Benefitted 100 displaced youth.

Information, Counselling and Referral Services (ICRS)	IOM UN PBF USA Japan	• Socio-economic profiling system for guiding potential reintegration pathways for ex-associates of armed groups. • 2,000 beneficiaries.
Data Collection on Legal Identity Needs through IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM)	IOM Japan Canada	• Data collection on the needs of displaced populations in Cameroon, including on needs for legal identity as part of protection cluster.

[81] Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation instrument – Global Europe' (called 'Global Europe')

Renforcement de l'Etat Civil dans l'Ouest et de Restitution des Droits (RECORD)	AFD
	CIVIPOL
		• US$ 3,278,783.74 invested to:
		  • Reinforcement of the capacity, human resources and functioning of CR centers in the West region.
		  • Raise awareness of local population on CR and knowledge about CR issues and procedures when declaring civil status facts, in the West Region.
		  • Reinforce coordination in both central (ministry) and local level on CR issues by displaying digital tools (developed through the PAMEC project).

Données pour la Santé-Composante ESEC	Vital Strategies	• US$ 500,000 to improve CRVS.
Support Programme for the Modernization of Civil Registration (PAMEC Phase 1)	GIZ	• US$ 5,152,374.45. • Strategic solutions for sustainable ICT systems • Provide BUNEC and MINDDEVEL with capacity building for reliable civil registration and population statistics system. • Dialogue with civil society and public awareness on civil registration.
The Active Citizenship Strengthening Programme (PROCIVIS)	EU	• US$ 9,485,052.96.[82] • Supported government in launching strategy for indexing of existing birth certificates through studies to understand digitalization/indexing and interoperability. • Worked with DGSN and MINPOSTEL to draft a data protection law. • Financial support to CSOs to provide support with increasing access and ownership of birth certificates. • Conducted a pilot in 8 councils, launched a scanning operation, and supplied equipment for such as scanners, computers, servers.

[82] For six countries)

The Universal Birth Registration Project	EU UNICEF	• US$ 5, 620,772.13[83] • Improving access to CR services by linking birth registration services and the regional services and volunteers (health specialists), admin and CR officers and establishing a mechanism for effective distribution of birth certificates. • Trainings and sensitization. • Provided equipment for CR officers.
Legal Identity Project	UNDP	• US$ 4,000,000.00. • Creating awareness on the importance and benefits of civil registration and legal identity. • Improving the infrastructure and human capacity of effective delivery of legal identity documents • Enhancing coordination among relevant national agencies. • Promoting interoperability of the civil registration and identity management systems.
Africa Programme on Accelerated Improvement of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (APAI-CRVS)	ECA[84] AUC[85] AfDB[86] UNICEF WHO[87] UNECA UNHCR	• Assessment of civil registration ecosystem and the production of statistics.
Cameroon Issues ID Cards To 6,000 Central African Republic Refugees	UNHCR WBG	• US$ 80,000. • Verify refugees from CAR for receiving identity cards.
Capacity Building Workshops with Government on Legal ID for Refugees	NRC AFD	• Training of government authorities on registration of civil status events vis-a-vis the legal framework to enable them respond timely to the civil documentation needs of refugees and vulnerable host community members. • Raise awareness of the rights of displaced people concerning legal identity.
Training workshop for Francophone experts on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics	ECA AUC AfDB UNICEF UNFPA[88] UNHCR	• Training on the principles and recommendations of the United Nations on civil status, presentations, and discussions on the strategy for mobilizing resources to support the CRVS improvement process.

[83] Financing for four countries
[84] Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs
[85] African Union Commission
[86] African Development Bank
[87] World Health Organization
[88] United Nations Population Fund

UNICEF's Cooperation Program	UNICEF	• Trained and equipped personnel at civil registration centers to provide access to birth registration.
Improving Protection for Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Cameroon	UNHCR	• US$ 3,000,000, out of US$ 5,983,000, invested to: • Verification of refugees and asylum seekers • Issue biometric identity cards to refugees and asylum seekers by the Government of Cameroon • Benefitted 220 000 refugees
Improving CR Service Delivery	AFD	• US$ 3,278,783.74 invested planned for: • Capacity building • Digitalization • Sensitization

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IDENTIFICATION FOR DEVELOPMENT

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