

# THE IDENTIFICATION FOR DEVELOPMENT (ID4D) AGENDA: Its Potential for Empowering Women and Girls

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## Background Paper

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# Abstract

Gender inequality and related issues remain a major global challenge, particularly for developing countries. Despite considerable progress on gender equality over recent decades, key gender gaps remain in endowments (health and education), in access to jobs and economic opportunities, and in voice and agency. Lack of data limits ability to assess gender gaps and measure progress toward eliminating them. Successfully addressing the incompleteness of civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) systems could help fill some of these vital data gaps. In addition, having official personal identification (ID) is an important stepping-stone for women and girls—enabling them to access services, claim their entitlements as citizens, and increase their voice and agency through participation in voting and other politics. Global initiatives such as *Identification for Development* (ID4D) promote opportunities to provide women with access to foundational documentation such as birth certificates and expansion of other ways to establish their legal identity. In addition, better data resulting from personal identity registration will advance gender equality policy discussions and planning. This paper examines rates of male and female registration for national identities globally to identify key registration constraints and gaps. We find no systematic evidence of gender-based gaps in birth registration; rather, evidence suggests that poverty, social exclusion, and geography may constrain birth registration of both males and females. Drawing on case studies and national-level data, we next examine outcomes in specific policy areas: access to financial services, access to social protection schemes, and inclusion in electoral roles and voting. Here, the evidence suggests, adult women face gender-specific barriers in getting ID, sometimes related to inability to obtain foundational documentation such as birth certificates.

# 1. Introduction

Despite unprecedented progress in many important aspects of the lives of girls and women over recent decades, key gaps in endowments, opportunities, and agency persist between males and females in all countries. There is considerable variation within and between countries and regions, but in most countries, gender inequalities tend to be greater among the poor than the rich, especially in education, health, and economic opportunities (World Bank 2011).

In addition, lack of data on women and girls has hindered efforts to increase gender equality and to design evidence-based policies that can lift the constraints that hold women and girls back. Without adequate data, policies to promote gender equality are difficult to formulate, and it is also hard to assess progress toward achieving such goals. Moreover, women often struggle to assert their rights and eligibility for lack of personal identification (ID) and other associated legal documents that would prove eligibility to government programs and give access to services. Without a robust way of proving one's identity, exercise of basic citizen rights, claim of entitlements, access to a range of governmental services, including social protection and health care, and conduct of many daily activities could be hampered.

While the widespread lack of official ID in developing countries is a critical stumbling block to national growth, it affects in particular women, and their children. Missing birth registration certificates and official ID documentation hampers a host of daily activities: entitlement claims; access to governmental services such as social protection, education, and health care; access to financial institutions and other economic opportunities, including many types of jobs; family and property transactions requiring individual legal status; and basic citizenship rights, including voting and participation in politics.

Recognizing the transformational potential of modern, 21st-century ID systems for the improved delivery of basic services to the poor, the World Bank has launched the *Identification for Development* (ID4D) program that aims to bring global knowledge and expertise to bear across multiple sectors and countries to tackle this fundamental development challenge. It also will engage operationally in this area, collaborating with development partners, donors, and governments to provide unified technical and financial support to low- and middle-income countries participating in this effort.

As the world moves towards the new Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) framework, setting new and ambitious targets for global progress investing in efforts to collect gender data and evidence becomes increasingly urgent. For the World Bank closing gender data gaps and increasing access to gender-relevant data are priorities, central to the mission of eliminating extreme poverty and boosting shared prosperity. The recently launched ID4D agenda aims to help achieving that vision.

ID4D's goals and principles align not only with the World Bank Group's twin goals of ending extreme poverty and promoting shared prosperity, but also with the proposed SDG target #16.9 of universal legal identity, including birth registration (Dahan and Gelb 2015).

## 2. Rationale for Improving ID Systems in Developing Countries

### POTENTIAL FOR GREATER DEVELOPMENT OUTCOMES AND WELFARE GAINS

An overwhelming majority of low- to middle-income countries lack adequate systems to register births or identify millions of people living within their borders, predominantly the poorest and most vulnerable, excluding them from participating in many important aspects of society. This is a problem—and an increasingly urgent one—for delivering successful development outcomes. Data and evidence are also important to make visible the lives of women and girls. But in many countries, particularly in the developing world, we lack the data needed to understand gender gaps in economic opportunities, health and education, and women’s voice and agency.

A growing body of research highlights the importance of understanding better the causes of inequality and strengthening development policies in these areas:

- **Education.** Enormous progress has been made across all developing regions in reducing gaps between girls and boys in primary and secondary school enrollment. As of 2011, the net primary school enrollment rate was 92 percent for boys and 90 percent for girls, and the gross secondary enrollment rate was 72 percent for boys and 69 percent for girls. However, comparisons also show differences in achievement between countries at different levels of per capita income: just 20 percent of low-income countries have achieved gender parity at the primary level, 10 percent at the lower-secondary level, and 8 percent at the upper-secondary level (UNESCO 2014; UN Women 2014).
- **Health.** Although the reproductive health of women and girls has improved in some respects over the past few decades, maternal mortality remains high. Globally, there were an estimated 287,000 deaths from complications of pregnancy or childbirth in 2010, a decline of 47 percent since 1990 but well below the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) target to reduce the maternal mortality rate by three-quarters by 2015 (UN 2000).
- **Economic opportunities.** Gender inequality in the world of work has been stubbornly persistent across multiple dimensions, despite relatively large gains in women’s health and education. On virtually every global measure, women are more economically excluded than men. Women are more likely than men to work in low-productivity activities, be unpaid family workers, work in informal employment, and transition more frequently between informal employment and being out of the labor force. Globally, women’s labor force participation has stagnated, in fact decreasing from 57 percent in 1990 to 55 percent in 2012. Women on average earn 10–30 percent less than working men; on this score, there are large variations between countries, although we don’t know exactly why (World Bank 2011, 2014).

Highlighting the deficit of data and evidence in this domain, the Data2X partnership’s report - “Mapping Gender Data Gaps” - outlines the key gender data gaps across five domains of women’s empowerment: health, education, economic opportunities, political participation, and human security (Buvinic, Furst-Nichols, and Koolwal 2014). Based on need, population coverage, and policy relevance, the Data2X report identifies 28 priority gender data gaps to close—coverage of national identification (ID) documentation being one of them. The report also draws attention to the benefits of improved vital

registration data, such as more accurate data on maternal mortality and its causes. It also notes that civil registration—of births, deaths and causes of death, and marriage and divorce—is critical for both health and civic initiatives.

This is where the link between gender-disaggregated data and the civil registration and Vital statistics (CRVS) and ID4D comes to light. Without proof of personal ID and official registration of their children, women do not even make it into the count of population – they simply do not *officially* exist – and thus the lack of data and evidence on their lives make it impossible to design effective development policies.

## POTENTIAL FOR GREATER INCLUSION AND ECONOMIC GAINS

A body of evidence accumulated over recent years has shown the benefits of inclusive societies and the costs—social, political, and economic—of discrimination. For example, *Inclusion Matters* finds that the exclusion of the ethnic minority Roma from the economy costs Romania €887 million in lost annual productivity and that ethnic exclusion of indigenous populations in Bolivia reduces agricultural productivity by up to 36 percent (World Bank 2013b). Moreover, Stiglitz (2012) identifies discrimination—against women, African Americans, and Hispanics—as a major source of the growing and outsize inequality that slows economic growth, lowers gross domestic product (GDP), and produces instability in the U.S. economy.

For economies worldwide, the bottom line is this: Any country that cannot provide free or low-cost identity credentials to its entire population stands therefore to lose the immense potential of full participation in society, whether measured as human well-being or as economic growth.

## NEW OPPORTUNITIES FROM EMERGING TECHNOLOGY

There is no one single approach to improving ID systems; however, emerging information and communication technologies (ICTs) provide new opportunities for developing countries<sup>1</sup>. The widespread use of mobile devices in the developing world, combined with the decreasing costs of biometrics technology, offers a transformative solution to the problem—a simple means for capturing personal ID that can reach far more people and can provide new, more efficient ways for government and business to reach and serve the population, especially the most disadvantaged groups (Dahan and Sudan 2015).

Many developing countries have started to implement national ID schemes that aim to be inclusive. India launched the massive Aadhaar program to provide a foundational ID service for all residents, including the marginalized groups.<sup>2</sup> The Aadhaar program is distinctive in a number of ways. It does not distinguish citizenship (hence cannot be considered as a “national” program) and relies on direct biometric authentication against the central database rather than an ID card.

The main objective in developing the program was to help rationalize India’s bewilderingly complex and leaky system of subsidies. However, the benefits of using Aadhaar over the past three years have

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1 For more information, see “Information and communication technologies for women’s socio-economic empowerment” World Bank policy toolkit, 2009.

2 “Foundational” ID refers to an ID including the most basic information (biographic data, biometrics, and other attributes), such as registries for civil registration and national ID systems. This information can be reused or shared to support the development of integrated “functional” registries, which are administrative databases supporting specific programs or services (for example, benefits administration, financial services access, or business registries). More information on India’s Unique ID program can be found at <http://uidai.gov.in/>.

helped to expand its scope of application and coverage to yield several innovative solutions to entrenched social problems. For instance, Aadhaar was an enabling element in India's Direct Benefit Transfer for Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) scheme in 2013 and 2014, encompassing approximately 100 million customers and 3,770 distributors (DBTL Review Committee 2014). Instead of the former three-tiered market (consisting of a consumer subsidized price, a consumer market price, and a commercial price), under the new scheme, consumer subsidies were deposited directly into the enrolled consumers' bank accounts, which are linked to their *Aadhaar* numbers. Among its results, the scheme decreased diversion of subsidies to the commercial market and increased the availability of LPG for consumers.

Estonia has followed a different model: it modernized its CRVS system to successfully transition to a national ID system. Now the country delivers services on digital platforms that can quickly authenticate citizens' identity credentials—whether for financial transactions or for elections (European Commission 2012). The Estonian Constitution guarantees “equality before the law” for women and men, and this equality extends to access to the national ID cards (World Bank 2013a).

These examples show that different implementation models for improving ID systems can achieve results. Some countries, like Estonia, may choose an incremental approach, while others will leapfrog to an *Aadhaar*-type system. What matters in the end is that everyone is counted in: everyone gets access to a unique identity and to digital ID-enabled services.

### 3. The Role of IDs in Achieving Gender Equality in Development Outcomes

This paper argues that identification is a critical factor for gender equality and the empowerment of women across multiple policy areas. Unique identification may help in strengthening governance by improving the integrity of electoral processes and making service delivery more transparent and accountable. In some jurisdictions, it is required to exercise the legal right to information under access to information laws. And evidence is accumulating that, alongside the direct benefits to women and their families, accruing from their ability to access government benefits and services and economic opportunities, indirect effects on their decision-making power within the household, self-esteem, and broader political participation and social inclusion can occur.

#### ACCESS TO FINANCIAL SERVICES

Having a bank account, access to loans, and other financial services is fundamental to the ability to benefit from economic opportunities. Legal proof of identity is central to the ability to access financial services, including the compliance with know-your-customer (KYC) requirements (Gelb and Raghavan, forthcoming). The world’s financial systems exclude 2 billion adults, or 38 percent of adults worldwide, the vast majority of whom live in developing countries and are disproportionately poor and female (Demirgüç-Kunt et al. 2015). Worldwide, 42 percent of women are unbanked compared with 35 percent of men, and 18 percent of unbanked adults report lack of documentation as one of the reasons why they do not have a bank account (Demirgüç-Kunt et al. 2015). Table 1 lists the reported barriers to use of a bank account, by gender. By far the most common reason reported by both men and women is insufficient funds. Of the total number of adults reporting that lack of documentation is one of the barriers they face, 49 percent are men and 51 percent are women (Global Findex database).<sup>3</sup>

Barrier	Men	Women
Financial institutions too far away	23	20
Accounts too expensive	24	23
Lack of necessary documentation	19	17
Lack of trust	14	12
Not enough money	61	57
Religious reasons	6	5
Family member already has an account	26	30
No need for an account	31	30

*Source:* Demirguc-Kunt et al. 2015, based on Global Findex database.  
*Note:* Respondents offered more than two reasons, on average.

3 The Global Findex database, the world’s most comprehensive database on financial inclusion, provides in-depth data on how individuals save, borrow, make payments, and manage risks. Collected by the World Bank in partnership with the Gallup World Poll and funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Global Findex is based on interviews with about 150,000 adults in over 140 countries. For more about the Global Findex database, see the website: <http://www.worldbank.org/en/programs/globalfindex>.



Beyond the benefits of financial inclusion, procedures adopted by financial institutions that use secure means of ID for their clients can also have specific benefits for women. For example, Opportunity International, operating in about 30 countries globally, safeguards its clients' bank account balances by requiring that transactions be authenticated by fingerprint—making it impossible for male relatives to seize control of women's assets upon the death of their husbands, as is common in Malawi.<sup>4</sup> Not surprisingly, the vast majority of Opportunity's clients are women (Dahan and Gelb 2015).

## ACCESS TO SOCIAL PROTECTION AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

A digital ID can ensure that benefits meant for women, such as conditional cash transfers, actually reach women (Sudan 2013). In Pakistan, for example, the use of biometric IDs is a precondition for accessing cash transfer programs, ensuring that payments to female beneficiaries are delivered directly to them rather than to their husbands or brothers, as had been common under the previous system (Malik 2014). By 2012, 40 million women in Pakistan possessed a Computerized National Identity Card (CNIC), and program managers report significant empowerment effects for women, such as having a sense of identity not experienced before, having the right to vote, and having legal protection as registered citizens of the country. Early results of an independent impact evaluation of the Benazir Income Support Program (further discussed in box 1) support these views, finding evidence of impact on women's decision-making power within the household, improvement of their status within the family, and improvement in their self-confidence (OPM 2014).<sup>5</sup> Social norms about women's mobility seem to be slowly changing, too, with increased acceptance that women can travel to collect the transfers themselves.

### Box 1. Impact Cash Transfers to Women in Pakistan

Giving cash directly to women increases their bargaining power within the family, and when women have greater power to make decisions, the household increases its investment in human development. Recent evaluations and beneficiary assessments of the Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) endorse this gender-differentiated impact in Pakistan.

Data from the Pakistan Social and Living Standards Measurement survey show that when Pakistani women have more decision-making power, households spend significantly more on things that women value, including nutrition and child education (particularly for girls), and that women make greater use of reproductive health services. A recent study showed that 78 percent of the women receiving cash transfers used their cash for food, while the next most common expenditure was on health (15 percent). In addition, when a woman acquires a Computerized National Identity Card (CNIC), she gets other citizenship rights (voting, the option to open a bank account, and the like). From 2009 to 2012, CNIC enrollment of female citizens jumped by 94 percent, largely because of collaboration with BISP.

After receiving BISP cash transfers, the beneficiaries felt more empowered: about 58 percent of the women said they could spend money as they wanted, 75 percent felt their importance in the family had increased, 62 percent were making more family decisions, and 72 percent reported having more confidence. Evaluation results also exhibit that that 64 percent of the female beneficiaries report that they retain control over how the cash transfers are spent, mainly toward increasing consumption and reducing poverty. The BISP transfer is also associated with higher engagement with formal institutions: BISP beneficiaries are more likely than non beneficiaries to report that they would vote.

*Sources:* Pakistan National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) (for CNIC enrollment numbers); ICF GHK 2012; Oxford Policy Management 2014; World Bank, forthcoming.

4 For more about Opportunity International, see its website: <http://opportunity.org>.

5 The Government of Pakistan has not yet released this report.

Unique identification may help in strengthening governance by improving the integrity of electoral processes and making service delivery more transparent and accountable. In some jurisdictions, it is required to exercise the legal right to information under access to information laws.

Women face significant legal and institutional hurdles, disparities, and disadvantages that are directly, or indirectly, linked to lack of recognized legal identity. In many countries, single mothers and women in consensual unions who are not legally married cannot register their children without the father's signature. Further, poor and less-educated mothers register their children at birth significantly less often than other mothers (UNICEF 2002, 2013).

## POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

In their pursuit of the opportunity to participate in public events, influence decisions women encounter multiple forms of discrimination and disadvantage, keeping them from realizing their political and civic ambitions (NDI 2014). While requirements for voter ID vary between countries, often women get completely sidelined from any electoral process if they do not possess a recognized form of ID or a voter card.<sup>6</sup>

### Box 2. Lack of National ID Cards as a Barrier to Voting in Guatemala

In 2007, in addition to supporting Mirador Electoral's (Election Watch) pre-election and election-day observation efforts, the National Democratic Institute (NDI) partnered with a Mirador member, the Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences (FLACSO), to conduct a study of barriers to political participation in Guatemala.

FLACSO and NDI experts used surveys in four communities to research why indigenous citizens vote at a lower rate than their non indigenous counterparts in Guatemala. The study found that lack of a proper ID card—rather than a lack of interest—was the main reason that Guatemalans across all ethnic groups did not vote.

The study has informed FLACSO's election observation and advocacy efforts. Since 2008, the Guatemalan government has made a concerted effort to register women voters, which not only increased the ID cards issued to women but also led women to make up the majority of the voter registry for the first time in 2011.

*Sources:* Nevitte, Cruz, and Estok 2008.

Electoral registration work has exposed gender-specific barriers faced by women in some countries. The National Democratic Institute (NDI) has found that the gap on birth registration for women and for some men is most acute when it comes to documentation requirements for voter registration or candidate nomination. The NDI reports that because women are often less likely to have those types of documents and be more negatively affected in those types of electoral environments, there is a gender gap in ability to register to vote or register as candidates because of the missing documentation.<sup>7</sup> A striking example is from Burkina Faso, where, to get a birth certificate, citizens must have two witnesses, such as their mother or a midwife, to vouch for their birth in the country (NDI 2012). But many women leave their birth villages when they marry, and returning to find witnesses can be a daunting

6 A Carter Center report found that most Latin American countries surveyed require national ID cards, but in Africa a range of means exist for identifying a potential voter (Carter Center, n.d.). Some African countries accept any one of a large number of IDs or witness testimony in lieu of ID. Others may accept only a limited number of IDs or, in the case of six countries, only one document.

7 NDI personal communication, June 6, 2015.

task. Burkina Faso is one of the world's poorest countries, and for a woman to leave her village for an entire day to complete this task can cost more than she can afford. In the run-up to Burkina Faso's last election, the NDI and its partners mobilized women to obtain birth certificates and traveled with Ministry of Interior officials to the regions with lowest registration to bring women to a central location where they could obtain birth certificates. More generally, for both women and men, unavailability of required documentation, such as birth and marriage certificates, can be a challenge in some rural, conflict, or post-conflict contexts because of factors such as displacement or lack of documentation at the time of birth, among others. In such cases, it may be necessary to verify identity through alternative methods.

Other work on electoral registration often refers to the particular difficulties that women face relative to men, given that women are more likely to be illiterate and social norms may restrict their mobility, preventing them from traveling to and entering public offices to obtain documentation.<sup>8</sup> Pakistan, for example, instituted days for women-only registration for voter ID to respond to these limiting gender norms. Such initiatives can help to overcome ID and registration challenges for women such as those in rural villages distant from registration centers and those living in areas where there are security issues.

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8 See, for example, Wang 2013.

## 4. Right to Identity for All

Legal barriers can also prevent women obtaining an ID for themselves or their children in the same way as men that men can obtain them. Many countries are biased toward using the father's nationality when determining a child's nationality (UNICEF 2013). These gender-related disadvantages in women's ability to register their children are not only unfair but are also a strong link in the intergenerational transmission of poverty between mothers and children.

The following are just a few examples of the child-registration obstacles that women face (UNICEF 2013, 11–12):

- *Barriers to registration based on unknown father or unmarried status.* In Bhutan, children with unknown fathers cannot be registered; Nepal requires the names and approval of both the father and grandfather; and Nicaraguan women living in consensual unions can only register their children temporarily if the father hasn't signed the birth record.
- *Barriers to registration based on marriage certificate.* In Indonesia, a marriage certificate is required to register a child's birth.
- *Barriers resulting from limited access.* Papua New Guinea has just one birth registration center for 7 million people living in an area spanning more than 460,000 square kilometers, including 600 islands.

*Women, Business and the Law* latest report assessed differences between women and men's legal ability to interact with the government and private sector (World Bank 2013). These differences can affect a woman's ability to engage in the economy, access services and resources, or even receive health care for herself or her children. Findings from the World Bank's *Women, Business and the Law* database (table 2) reveal that differences exist between the actions required of women and men to obtain an ID card or passport or to confer citizenship on their children. Some of these differences constitute more of a barrier to obtaining identity than others. To obtain an ID card, for example, certain countries impose the following differing requirements for women and men:

- Married women must provide marriage certificates, but married men are not required to do so.
- Married women require an additional signature, such as a father's or guardian's, while married men do not.
- Married women must indicate the name of their spouse, but married men are not required to do so.
- Identity cards are optional for women but required for men.

Moreover, important differences in accessing these legal documents exist between married women and unmarried women, pointing to serious legal constraints and barriers to equal rights for women.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Analysis based on data from the World Bank's *Women, Business and the Law* database, <http://wbl.worldbank.org/data/exploretopics/accessing-institutions#rights-of-married-and-unmarried-women--1>.

<b>Table 2: Economies Imposing Differing Legal ID Processes for Married Women and Married Men</b>	
<b>Type of ID request</b>	<b>Economies with different processes for married women and married men</b>
Obtain a national identity card	Benin; Cameroon; Egypt, Arab Rep.; Mauritius; Oman; Pakistan; Saudi Arabia; Senegal; Togo (9)
Confer citizenship on children	Guinea; Iran, Islamic Rep.; Jordan; Kuwait; Lebanon; Madagascar; Malaysia; Mali; Mauritania; Nepal; Oman; Saudi Arabia; Sudan; Syrian Arab Republic; United Arab Emirates; West Bank and Gaza (16)
Apply for a passport	Benin; Botswana; Cameroon; Congo, Rep.; Egypt, Arab Rep.; Fiji; Gabon; Haiti; Iran, Islamic Rep.; Jordan; Kuwait; Malawi; Oman; Pakistan; Saudi Arabia; Uganda; United Arab Emirates; Yemen, Rep. (19)

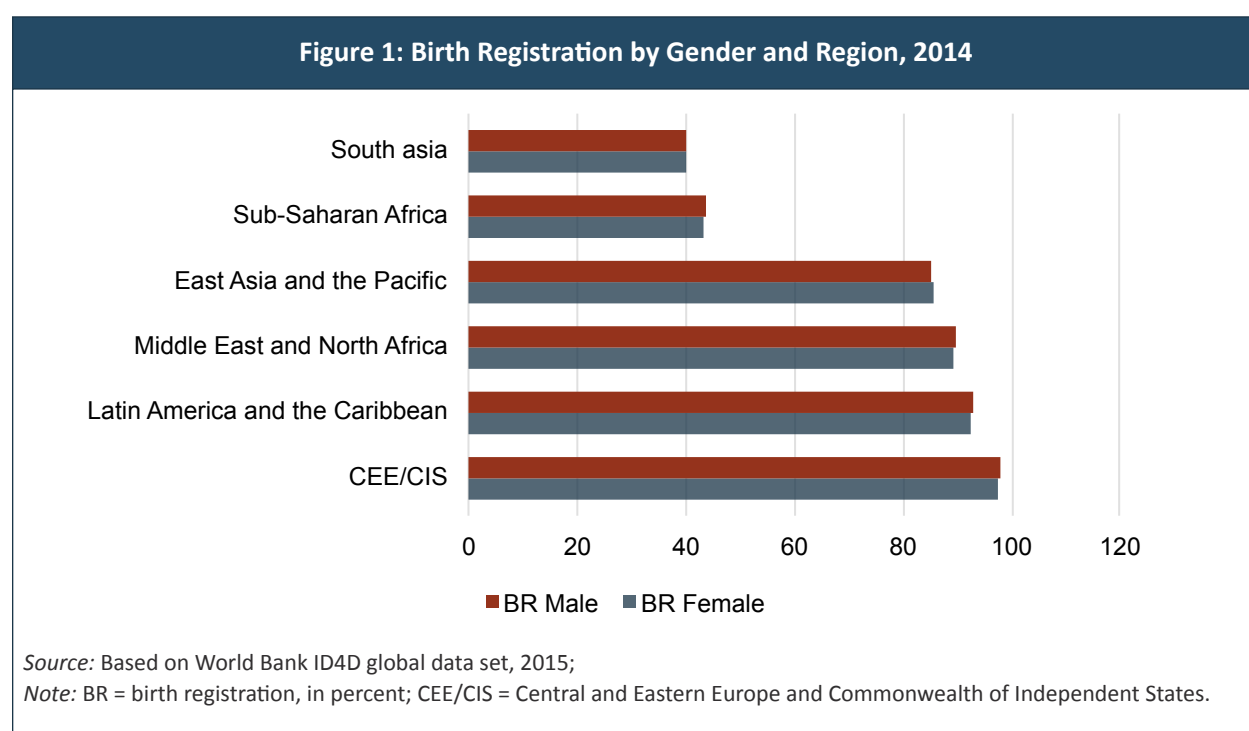
*Source: World Bank 2013c.*

## 5. Need for Gender-Disaggregated Identity Data

In 2012 alone, 288 million infants—4 out of every 10 babies delivered worldwide that year—were not registered with civil authorities, and globally 750 million children under the age of 16 lack formal identification (Dunning, Gelb, and Raghavan 2014). Too many people are still uncounted. Too much information is out of date, unreliable, or simply not available. Too many people cannot access and use the data they need to make informed decisions and hold others accountable.

### GLOBAL BIRTH REGISTRATION DATA

What, then, do we know about the rates of registration of males and females, respectively? Using survey data from 145 countries, UNICEF (2013) found no significant difference between the birth registration rates of boys and girls.<sup>10</sup> However, few data, let alone globally comparable ones, are available. Drawing on the evidence provided by Data2X and extending it where possible, we find the same result for the 178 countries covered by the World Bank’s ID4D global data set (figure 1).



Do these regional data mask cases of individual countries where the birth-registration gap between boys and girls is large? Among the regions, there are no gender differences<sup>11</sup> in the Europe and Central Asia region or in East Asia and the Pacific, except in Narau, Micronesia, where there the birth registration rate of girls is 6 percentage points higher than that of boys. **Table 3** shows gender gaps for individual

10 UNICEF (2013) used data are from Multi Indicator Cluster Surveys, Demographic and Health Surveys, and other national household surveys and vital registration systems, 2005–12

11 meaning variation from the regional percentages shown in figure 1

countries in each region: the largest is a 6 percentage point difference in favor of boys' registration rates in Ecuador. For comparison, the gap is only about 1 percent in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Two percentage points	Four percentage points	Six percentage points
Cameroon	Nepal	Ecuador
Mauritania	Sudan	
Niger	Yemen, Rep.	

*Source:* Source: Based on World Bank ID4D global data set, 2015

## INDIA'S BIRTH REGISTRATION DATA

Delving deeper into the gender-disaggregated birth-registration data and looking at India, as a case study, one notes that India's birth registration system is updated daily, showing birth registration rates of males and females at the district level for all states. This is quite impressive for the country's size and the scale of undertakings. **Table 4** shows the registration rates of females per 1,000 males for all Indian states in two age groups: 0–4 years and 5–17 years. Among those 5- to 17-years-old, more males than females are registered except in Nagaland. Among those 0- to 4- years-old, the number of registered girls equals or exceeds the number of registered boys only in Manipur and Tripura.

State	Ages 0–4 yrs.	Ages 5–17 yrs.	State	Ages 0–4 yrs.	Ages 5–17 yrs.
Andaman and Nicobar Islands	933	955	Madhya Pradesh	906	875
Andhra Pradesh	978	948	Maharashtra	880	870
Arunachal Pradesh	828	981	Manipur	1,165	967
Assam	954	935	Meghalaya	652	841
Bihar	941	860	Mizoram	875	979
Chandigarh	900	836	Nagaland	629	1,007
Chhattisgarh	975	956	Odisha	962	925
Delhi	876	832	Puducherry	947	957
Goa	971	931	Punjab	848	798
Gujarat	824	816	Rajasthan	770	768
Haryana	839	796	Sikkim	950	960
Himachal Pradesh	881	882	Tamil Nadu	967	946
Jammu and Kashmir	811	888	Tripura	1,000	955

**Table 4 (contd.): Females Registered in India, by Age Group and by State, 20134**  
females per 1,000 males

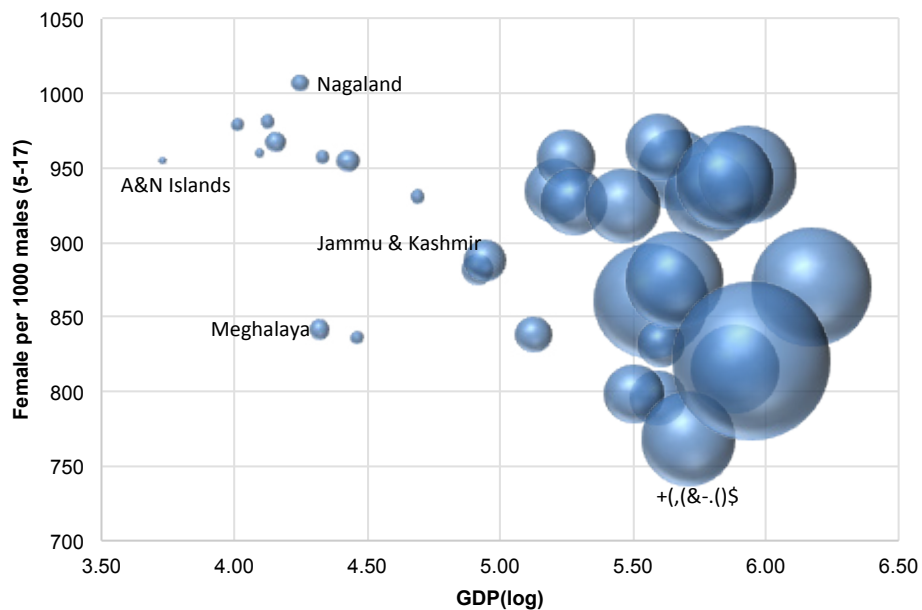
State	Ages 0–4 yrs.	Ages 5–17 yrs.	State	Ages 0–4 yrs.	Ages 5–17 yrs.
Jharkhand	892	928	Uttar Pradesh	840	821
Karnataka	981	931	Uttarakhand	851	838
Kerala	967	965	West Bengal	921	941

Source: India National Statistics Bureau data (accessed June 11, 2015).

Of course, it is not possible to calculate whether the lower female registration per 1,000 males truly represents a gender gap without knowing the denominators: the percentages of girls and boys in each population cohort. The gender gaps shown in table 4 can reflect (a) that there are more boys than girls in each population cohort, (b) that more boys than girls are registered, or (c) some combination of both. Overall, the 2011 India census showed that the female-to-male population ratio was 914 girls per 1,000 boys, with the lowest female-to-male ratio in Haryana, at 861 girls per 1,000 boys. In Haryana, Rajasthan, and Punjab, where fewer than 800 girls of ages 5–17 years are registered per 1,000 boys, it suggests that, at least in those states, more girls than boys have not been registered.

Lower female-to-male registration ratios (among those of ages 5–17 years) are not associated with poorer states. Figure 2 shows that some of the poorer Indian states have higher female registration rates than richer, more populous states. (The size of the bubble indicates the relative size of the states' population, including Rajasthan [labeled] and Uttar Pradesh [the largest bubble].)

**Figure 2: Registered Females per 1,000 Males (Ages 5–17 Years) in Indian States against State Income (log)**



Source: India National Statistics Bureau, 2015.



## 6. Making Everyone Count: a Global Agenda

That women often struggle—for lack of personal ID and associated legal documents—to assert their rights and claim entitlements to public benefits is increasingly seen as a development issue, mobilizing international advocacy.

The World Bank's ID4D Strategic Framework sets out to help key stakeholders share a common understanding of the benefits, challenges, risks, and proposed processes involved in rolling out the ID4D agenda (World Bank 2015). It may also be instrumental in recognizing the urgent opportunities afforded by the post-2015 global development discussions as well as the availability of new technologies to accomplish the ID4D goals.

In addition, new partnerships are oriented toward using digital identity and data to address specific aspects of gender inequality. A prominent example is the Data2X initiative, which seeks to improve data collection on women and gender and promote the use of data on women and girls to enhance policy. Data2X partnerships and initiatives have involved collaboration with (a) the UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) and the Africa Program for Accelerated Improvement of CRVS (APAI-CRVS), to provide expertise on gender considerations of CRVS systems; and (b) the ILO, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), and the World Bank on gender issues for employment.<sup>12</sup>

Another response is the U.S. Girls Count Act, which gives executive branch agencies, such as the State Department and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), authority to support programs in developing countries that promote birth certification and some form of national ID to ensure that all citizens, including boys and girls of all ages, are counted and that there is no discrimination against girls (UN Foundation 2015a, 2015b).<sup>13</sup>

With the importance and promise of identification systems today, the World Bank Group intends to expand its ID4D agenda in support of national, regional and sub-regional ID efforts. Currently, in collaboration with other development partners, the World Bank Group is engaging with countries and regions and providing technical and financial support in addition to promoting specific objectives including gender equality.

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12 Data2X, named for the power women have to multiply progress in their societies, is an initiative to advance gender equality and women's empowerment by building partnerships to improve data collection and demonstrating how better data on the status of women and girls can guide policy, leverage investments, and inform global development agendas. For more information, see the Data2X website: <http://data2x.org/>.

13 By June 2015, the Act had passed unanimously in the U.S. House of Representatives (UN Foundation 2015a).

## 7. Critical Considerations for Policy Design

Given the gender-related legal disparities, including those outlined in this paper, women and girls are at particular risk if ID policies do not incorporate appropriate measures for privacy and personal data protection. In addition, there are risks that inequalities and negative attitudes and practices toward women will be reproduced in the digital world; that new threats, such as cyber-bullying and harassment, will emerge; or that women will simply be left behind for lack of knowledge and digital literacy skills (UN Women, n.d.). Privacy legislation or policies are a key foundational element of digital society and—in combination with sexual harassment and domestic violence legislation—may serve to address some of the risks.

An Overseas Development Institute literature review assessing digital programs and initiatives to enhance the voice of women and girls furthers this point by noting that information and communications technologies “are a mirror on society” (Cummings and O’Neil 2015). The review highlights cases in which, without protections and safeguards, digital technology can reinforce gender norms and increase the vulnerability of women and girls.

Complex feedback loops related to ID4D and gender equality policies may also lead to unintended consequences and other counterintuitive results. In the Republic of Korea, for example, a 2012 adoption law that required the registration of all babies available for adoption led to a decrease in domestic adoptions and the doubling of infant abandonment (Economist 2015). Indeed, the mothers of babies born out wedlock are at times hesitant to register the babies, for fear that their family or potential employers will have access to the records.

## 8. Conclusions

Despite progress toward gender equality over the past ten years, social and economic barriers remain to women's and girls' access to services and to full participation in their economies and societies. Limited access has often been institutionalized when women lack official personal ID documentation. The right and need for an ID extends to newborns and children, because the legal ID can provide the basis for accessing health care and education. Even today, however, many developing countries have institutional barriers to registration of children by mothers who had them outside of wedlock or by unknown fathers.

Ineffective CRVS and ID systems can result in incomplete statistics and data on women and girls. As a result, both country-level policy makers and the development community are denied an operational view of women's status and progress toward gender equality, because lack of registration or incomplete records result in an inaccurate baseline picture.

This background paper has identified a set of important research questions and areas for future investigation and analysis. There are several distinct domains where identity matters, each of which has bearing on gender equality and women's empowerment:

- Gender equality in access to services: improving access to services and entitlements, such as social protection, for women and excluded groups
- Gender justice: enhancing women's voice and influence through citizenship and civil rights
- Women's economic empowerment: legal identity as the foundation for exercising property rights, access to financial services and entering into and enforcing contracts
- Measuring progress on gender equality : Data and evidence to monitoring and influencing policies and programs for gender equality

To make progress on this agenda, more data must be produced—disaggregated by sex, ethnicity, ability, and other axes of exclusion—that show how many people lack ID documents and birth certificates and to ascertain the consequences for progress in gender equality in each of the domains above, recognizing that implications for the ID4D agenda may vary. It is hoped that as more data and evidence is being produced and gathered, this work will constitute a solid basis for policy paper and recommendations.

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