

## Pacific Regional Workshop on Legal Identity and Identity Security

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### Session X.X: Introduction to key terms and concepts of Legal Identity

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#### INTRODUCTION

This paper provides definitions of selected concepts and terms associated with the topics: “civil registration”, “identity” and “legal identity”, and in particular, those that are anticipated to be used during the workshop. “Legal Identity” is an evolving subject, and often different concepts surrounding this subject mean that they are understood and are applied differently by different players. The purposes of this paper are therefore firstly, to facilitate communication with precision and clarity and hence ensure that there is a common understanding throughout the discussions at the workshop, and secondly to provide a quick reference point to participants in instances where unfamiliar terminology is used. The definitions provided in this paper are largely drawn from the *Dictionary for Civil Registration and Identification*<sup>1</sup> developed by the inter-American Development Bank and from the United Nations Handbooks and guidelines on civil registration and vital statistics.

#### DEFINITIONS OF KEY TERMS AND CONCEPTS

- 1. Accuracy of registration:** A state where data items for each vital or civic event on the vital record are said to be completely accurate when they have been correctly and completely filled out (i.e., there are no response errors or missing items).
- 2. Authentic document:** An original document that has not been altered and may have been notarized or legalized.
- 3. Biometrics:** A measurable physical characteristic or personal behavioural trait used to recognize the identity or verify the claimed identity of an individual, such as the facial image, fingerprints, gait, or iris.
- 4. Birth certificate:** An original document or certified extract, usually issued by a government authority, stating when and where a person was born and usually identifying one or both of his or her parents as per the legal requirements of each country. See also breeder document.
- 5. Birth notification:** Notice by an individual or institution of the occurrence of a birth, such as health authorities to civil registrars, who then register the birth.

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<sup>1</sup> IADB, 2013 *Dictionary for Civil Registration and Identification*  
<https://publications.iadb.org/en/bitstream/handle/11319/3679/Dictionary>

**6. Breeder document:** An identification document issued to support a person's identity and used to obtain another document or privilege of greater perceived value, such as a passport or driver's license. The most important breeder document is the birth certificate.

**7. Civil identification:** The verification, registration, management, and conservation of personal data of citizens, with the goal of establishing a unique civil identity. Civil identification includes all of the data from the civil registration on that particular citizen as well as other attributes such as a unique number and/or biometric data. The process of civil identification serves as a basis for the verification of identity (i.e., passport or national identification documents).

**8. Civil register:** The repository of loose-leaf file, ledger book, electronic file, or any other official file set up for the universal, continuous, and permanent recording, in accordance with established procedures, of each type of vital event and its associated data of the population of a defined area (e.g., county, district, municipality, or parish).

**9. Civil registration:** Continuous, permanent, compulsory, and universal recording of the occurrence and characteristics of vital events (live births, deaths, fetal deaths, marriages, and divorces) and other civil status events pertaining to the population as provided by decree, law, or regulation, in accordance with the legal requirements in each country.

**10. Complete civil registration:** When every vital event that has occurred for the members of the population of a particular country (or area) has been registered in the civil registration system within a specified period. Thus, the system has attained 100 percent coverage.

**11. Data integrity:** Assurance that data have not been accessed or altered by an unauthorized entity and there is no variance across data banks in data for a particular entity.

**12. Digital identity:** A set of features that individualize a person in a computer-based environment.

**13. E-government:** Government agencies' use of information technologies to transform and optimize relations between the government and citizens, businesses, and other sectors of government.

**14. Electoral card:** An identity card issued by an electoral authority that must be used to exercise one's right to vote. In many countries, the identity card used for legal identification is also used as the electoral card for voting. In other countries, citizens must obtain both documents when they come of age as defined by the relevant legislation.

**15. Electronic identification documentation (e-ID):** A token that proves an individual's identity and is used to identify, authenticate, and act as an electronic signature. Generally, an e-ID is a smart card that contains a contact or contactless chip.

**16. Electronic identity:** The set of data or attributes that enables persons to prove electronically who they are in order to access services or reserved information. See also electronic signature.

**17. Electronic signature:** A set of electronic data that can be used to identify the person or organization signing a document. An electronic sound, symbol, or process attached to or logically associated with a contract or other record and executed or adopted by a person with the intent to attest to the accuracy of the facts in the record.

**18. Fraudulent document:** Any identity or other official document (a) that has been falsely made or altered in some material way by anyone other than a person or agency lawfully authorized to make or issue the document; or (b) that has been improperly issued or obtained through misrepresentation, corruption, duress, or any other unlawful manner.

**19. Identification credential:** Information (electronic, token, or paper) that seeks to uniquely identify or provide qualifications or attributes that define the individual identity.

**20. Identity:** A unique set of features and characteristics that individualize a person, including name and other biographical data of the individual. See also unique identity.

**21. Identity card:** A document issued to a person that includes personal data such as a photograph, name, signature, and sex. The card enables the holder to perform certain activities or prove membership in a particular group.

**22. Identity/identification document:** A piece of documentation designed to prove the identity of the person carrying it. See also identity token, passport, travel documents.

**23. Identity management:** A combination of systems, rules, and procedures that are defined between an individual and organizations regarding the entitlement, use, and protection of personal information in order to authenticate individual identities and provide authorization and privileges within or across systems and enterprise boundaries.

**24. Identity number:** A numeric or alphanumeric code assigned to identity documents as a control, follow-up, and linking tool.

**25. Identity theft:** The illegal acquisition of confidential information so that unauthorized individuals can use it to impersonate the true owner of the identity.

**26. Identity token:** A portable piece of hardware that a user carries and uses to access a network. The token enables the user to prove his or her identity and authentication for the use of a service

**27. Legal identity:** Legal civil status obtained through civil registration at birth and civil identification of unique attributes such as a personal identification number and biometrics that recognizes the individual as a subject of law and protection of the state.

**28. Legal identity<sup>2</sup>:** the basic characteristics of an individual's identity, such as name, sex and date of birth, established by registration in the official State civil registers or other appropriate mechanisms, in accordance with national legislation and international recommendations and standards.

**29. Notifier:** An individual appointed by the local registrar to act as an intermediary between the local registrar and the informant in providing all information and characteristics of an event that is to be legally registered by the local registrar.

**30. Passport:** A government-issued document identifying a person as a national of the issuing state, which is evidence of the holder's right to return to that state. The passport is the internationally accepted certificate or proof of nationality.

**31. Safeguards to privacy protection:** A set of security measures used to protect personal data against risks such as loss, unauthorized access, destruction, modification, or disclosure.

**32. Semantic interoperability:** The standard that ensures that information exchange can be performed automatically between computer systems and that information can be understood and/or reused by applications that were not involved in its creation.

**33. Timeliness in registration:** The difference between the date of the occurrence of a civil or vital event and the date of its registration when compared with the interval specified by legislation.

**34. Travel documents:** A generic term encompassing all documents that are acceptable proof of identity for the purpose of entering another country. Passports and visas are the most widely used travel documents. Some states also accept certain identity cards or other documents.

**35. Unique identity:** The combination of individually assigned numeric or alphanumeric digits with the biographic and biometric data of a person.

**36. Unique identity number:** An attribute in the form of a unique number used to identify individuals upon their inscription in the civil registration or civil identification system.

**37. Vital event:** A live birth, death, fetal death, marriage, divorce, adoption, legitimation, recognition of parenthood, annulment of marriage, or legal separation.

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<sup>2</sup> According to the UN Inter- Agency Working Group on Legal Identity

**38. Vital statistics system:** The total process of (a) collecting information by civil registration or enumeration on the frequency of specified and defined vital events, as well as the relevant characteristics of the events themselves and of the person(s) concerned, and (b) compiling, processing, analyzing, evaluating, presenting, and disseminating these data in statistical form. See also vital event.

**39. Voter identification card:** An identity document that legally enables a person to vote.

**40. National ID system:** A national identification system is a foundational identification system that provides national IDs - often in the form of a card - and potentially other credentials.

## REFERENCES

IADB, 2015. Dictionary for Civil Registration and Identification 2015:

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