



## CERTIZENS Newsletter

Certifications of Citizenship in Africa



PHOTO: UNHCR/Hélène Caux

### Welcome to Issue 7 of the CERTIZENS Newsletter: Year-end and challenges ahead

As the year ends, CERTIZENS appreciates the deepening work of its eight core researchers, while welcoming three new younger scholars, whose forthcoming MPhil research projects, featured here, will contribute to the emerging knowledge base we're developing of Ghana's and Uganda's identification ecosystems. We also feature the recent visit to CERTIZENS in Copenhagen of London-based PhD scholar Nai Kalema, as well as public presentations in Copenhagen of their work by two of our senior CERTIZENS researchers from Ghana and Uganda respectively. Meanwhile, we continue to explore, and share, some of the growing media, academic and policy material emerging around relevant identification and certification issues in Africa and elsewhere.

There is always much to honour and celebrate in terms of human ingenuity and insights within this and other fields. Nonetheless, 2022 has ended with a world marked by an even greater than ever set of challenges for millions, both in their home countries or forcibly on the move: millions seeking safety, security and a future that can be trusted; seeking access to basic dignity and services; seeking recognition and the right to citizenship itself. Real and equitable access to meaningful, appropriate forms of legal identity (in the plural), that respond to a range of different needs in different contexts, across a lifetime, remains a crucial part of such widespread struggles. Proffered technocratic and technical solutions to identification shortfalls – especially digital and often singular, standardised solutions – may address some of the key gaps. However, evidence from many places in Africa, Asia and Latin America, and including from early CERTIZENS findings in Ghana and Uganda, underscores the need for a much more varied and nuanced approach to addressing the historically and contextually specific social, cultural, political, institutional and economic challenges associated with secure and just systems of identification.

Going into 2023, the CERTIZENS project continues to embrace active engagement with and mutual learning from a wide range of actors, in multiple locations – scholars, activists, policy makers, planners, practitioners, entrepreneurs, and ordinary citizens – concerned with questions of citizen classification, recognition, identification and certification, and with enhancing access to and protection of valued, productive lives for all. As a new year starts, we hope that this newsletter (here in its seventh edition) at least partly facilitates such ongoing engagement.

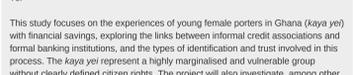
With wishes for a much more peaceful year ahead.

Amanda Hammar, CERTIZENS Project Leader  
Copenhagen, January 2023

## CERTIZENS Updates

### Introducing CERTIZENS' new MPhil Students

The CERTIZENS project welcomes three new additions to the team: Charles Donkor (University of Ghana), Gift Cobbinah (University of Ghana), and Moses Muluba (Makerere University) are each being supported by CERTIZENS to undertake the research for their respective MPhil degrees during 2023. The intended focus of their research projects are summarised here.



**CHARLES DONKOR**  
*Bureaucracy and Digitalization during the Electoral Process in Ghana: The case of selected slum communities in Greater Accra region*

This study is concerned with the effects on voting possibilities and practices among residents of informal settlements within Greater Accra, given new requirements for forms of ID that are linked to permanent addresses. It does so on the basis of the policies and processes of the 2020 voter registration in such settlements by the Electoral Commission of Ghana. The study will investigate the various mechanisms and processes used for identifying the inhabitants of selected settlements, focusing on the challenges of digitalisation in informal settlements without proper address systems, and the implications for citizenship among differentiated residents.



**GIFTY COBBINAH**  
*The Role of Micro Credit and Identification in the Vulnerability Reduction of Kaya Yei*

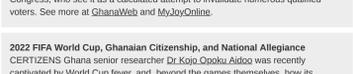
This study focuses on the experiences of young female porters in Ghana (kaya yei) with financial savings, exploring the links between informal credit associations and formal banking institutions, and the types of identification and trust involved in this process. The kaya yei represent a highly marginalised and vulnerable group without clearly defined citizen rights. The project will also investigate, among other things, how these women navigate formal identification systems, such as the Ghana Card, in order to be recognized as citizens and to participate in social and economic life.



**MOSES MULUBA**  
*Challenges and Implications of Birth Certification in Uganda: The case of Iganga district in Busoga region, 1962-2020*

This study aims to provide a long-term historical perspective on Uganda's changing systems of birth registration and certification and its implications, especially for children's citizenship. Between 2011 and 2015, several policy and institutional changes altered national responsibility for birth registration and certification (as well as for adoption), finally resting with the National Identification and Registration Authority (NIRA). This study will unfold a detailed, multi-faceted historical analysis of birth registration and certification through a focused case study of Iganga district in Uganda, which has the highest total population without birth certificates across the country. It focuses on challenges people face in securing protection and identity, and the implications particularly for child rights.

### Featuring CERTIZENS at Copenhagen University



Dr. Koko Opoaku Aidoo, photo: Raramai Campbell | Dr. Godfrey Asitwene, photo: Raramai Campbell

On the 4th November 2022, CERTIZENS hosted a seminar at the Centre of African Studies at the University of Copenhagen featuring the research of CERTIZENS Ghana Project Coordinator, Dr. Koko Opoaku Aidoo, and CERTIZENS Uganda Project Coordinator, Dr. Godfrey Asitwene. It brought students, researchers and the public together for engagements with questions of certification, identity and citizenship within two specific contexts and communities. Read more about their presentations [here](#).

### Guest PhD researcher, Nai Kalema, links up with CERTIZENS in Copenhagen

While attending the ID4Africa Augmented General Meeting (AGM) in Marrakech in May 2022, Copenhagen-based CERTIZENS team members Amanda Hammar and Tabe Joffe, encountered London-based PhD researcher Nai Kalema, and found there to be rewarding areas of common interest in the fields of national identification and digitisation. This prompted a guest researcher visit by Nai in November 2022 to the Centre of African Studies at the University of Copenhagen, where CERTIZENS has one of its main bases. Below, you can read Nai's responses to some key questions about herself, her doctoral research focus, and how she sees her research relating specifically to CERTIZENS. Read more [here](#).

### Recent reflections from CERTIZENS researchers

**The Ghana Card and 2024 Elections**  
CERTIZENS Ghana PhD researcher Julius Dede has been reflecting on serious concerns among fellow Ghanaians that the Ghana Card is becoming the primary identity document for the next general elections in 2024. This is in a context in which large number of citizens have not yet obtained their Ghana Card. The Electoral Commission initially claimed that the Ghana Card will serve as a method of identification for the restricted registration exercise preceding the elections in 2024. Yet soon after, it also suggested that it be used as a substitute for the existing Voter's ID, arguing that the Ghana Card is a more authentic method of identifying who is a Ghanaian. The Commission aims to use it to construct a new database for the upcoming general elections and is due to submit a new Constitution Instrument to the Ghanaian legislature for ratification of the Ghana Card. This idea is being vigorously opposed by the opposition National Democratic Congress, who see it as a calculated attempt to invalidate numerous qualified voters. See more at [GhanaWeb](#) and [MyJoyOnline](#).

**2022 FIFA World Cup, Ghanaian Citizenship, and National Allegiance**  
CERTIZENS Ghana senior researcher Dr. Koko Opoaku Aidoo was recently captivated by World Cup fever, and, beyond the games themselves, how its hosting in Qatar sparked controversies about nationality, patriotism, citizenship and belonging among players in some teams. These echo some of the themes of interest to the CERTIZENS Ghana research team. This includes the relationship of differentiated population groups to citizenship in various locations and historical periods in Ghana. Dr. Aidoo's reflections were prompted by reading an online article by Prosper Andre Batinge on 2022 FIFA World Cup National Allegiance, which addresses the different legal pathways by which one can become Ghanaian. Batinge asks what being Ghanaian and voting allegiance to Ghana at the World Cup mean for the 26 Ghanaian players selected to compete at Qatar on behalf of the 30.8 million Ghanaians. The broader questions this prompts are: who is a Ghanaian, according to what terms, and what does it mean to be one?

## In the News

Here we present a selection of CERTIZENS-relevant issues in the press. To suggest a news report or feature for the next newsletter, please email: [certizens@teol.ku.dk](mailto:certizens@teol.ku.dk)

**Lack of ID cards and voter exclusion in Cameroon**  
Delays in the production of ID documentation and cases of extortion within the delivery process have made Cameroonians worried for their right to vote in an upcoming general elections. Many have failed to acquire the ID card which is required for voter registration and verification. See more at [Biometric Update](#).

**Calls for greater caution with promotion of global digital ID solutions**  
Concerned civil society organisations and academics around the world have called on the World Bank's ID4D initiative and others, to consider carefully the worrying implications for exclusion, surveillance, exploitation and other human rights impacts. This is an urgent call for more nuanced and inclusive debates around the over-promotion of often highly centralised digital ID systems. Read [the letter](#).

**Plans to double Ghanaian national IDs as driver's licenses**  
Ghana's Driver and Vehicle Licensing Authority (DVLA) claims to be 'seamlessly integrating' its own registration system with the centralised national Ghana Card. The technological 'handshake' between the two systems aims at enhancing service efficiency and stimulating business in related sectors such as motor insurance, as well as traffic safety. See more at [Innovation Village](#).

**Ugandan digital ID on trial**  
Biometric Update reports on the crucial ongoing high court case in Uganda concerning accusations of key citizen exclusions from public services by the national identity system, something that the Attorney General and National Identity Registration Agency (NIRA) contest.

**Experiences of statelessness in Zimbabwe**  
Development and Cooperation reports on the rising number of people living in Zimbabwe who are without national IDs. They describe the consequences as exclusion from accessing digital services, education, participating in democratic processes and obtaining support from non-governmental organisations.

**Prioritising civil registration as a tool to enable good governance in Africa**  
The importance for 'good governance' and national planning of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) – and especially effective civil registration and ID management – is actively on the agenda of African Ministers at ongoing meetings now and in the coming spring, reports [Biometric Update](#).

**Nearly half of African countries lack proper safeguards for biometric data collection**  
According to [Biometric Update](#), concerns over storage, collection and management procedures raise worries for data privacy and protection.

**And more...**  
Modern ID systems: [Watching a global identity crisis unfold](#), Aljazeera, 16 Sep 2022  
Madagascar signs with MOSIP for national digital ID pilot, plans 1x enrollments, [Biometric Update](#), 10 Nov 2022  
Many women in Pakistan still do not have national ID cards, [Report](#), Big News Network, 10 Nov 2022  
Rumours and infighting plague Liberia's biometric voter registration procurement process, [Biometric Update](#), 30 Nov 2022  
Nigeria ID4D head calls for stronger legal framework to support digital ID consistency, [Biometric Update](#), 30 Nov 2022

## What We're Reading

This section presents a selection of recent journal articles, books, reports and blogs on CERTIZENS-relevant themes. To suggest an item for the next newsletter please send a link to the work and a brief description of its relevance to: [certizens@teol.ku.dk](mailto:certizens@teol.ku.dk)

## Journal articles

**Mistrust of government within authoritarian states hindering user acceptance and adoption of digital IDs in Africa: The Nigerian context**  
Babatunde Okunoye, *Data & Policy* 4, 2022

**In brief:** This article reflects on Nigeria's updated ID policy and public perceptions of it. It explores growing resistance and mistrust to recent government initiatives to unify public and private identity databases. These squaddies are set against the EndSARS (Nigeria's Police Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS)) protests of October 2020 in Nigeria.

**Indirect Discrimination: Huduma Namba (Digital Identification) and the Plight of the Nubian Community in Kenya**  
Natalie Kilu, *Strathmore Law Review*, Volume 7 Issue 1, 2022

**In brief:** A study exploring how and why some Nubians in Kenya are excluded from being fully-fledged citizens in their country. This article explores the switch to a new digital identification system, namely Huduma Namba and its indirect impacts on limiting citizen-making through discriminatory processes.

## Reports and Analysis

A policy brief by [Research ICT Africa](#) looks at the safety and inclusiveness of digital identity systems, particularly in South Africa – and the implementation challenges they face.

**Mahmoud Mamdani** shares a personal reflection on being one of approximately seventy thousand Asian Ugandans told to leave the country in 1972. He reflects on historical circumstances leading to the expulsion and how politicised the notion of citizenship has become.

The report by [The Collaboration on International ICT Policy for East and Southern Africa \(CIPESA\)](#) analyses the laws and policies that impact privacy and regulate surveillance in 23 African countries. It also discusses challenges related to inadequate data protection mechanisms.

## What We're Listening To

This section presents a selection of recent podcasts and audio material on CERTIZENS-relevant themes. To suggest an item for the next newsletter please send a link to the work and a brief description of its relevance to: [certizens@teol.ku.dk](mailto:certizens@teol.ku.dk)

**ID for all purposes or people?**  
ID16.9's [essays](#) with Tom Fisher from Privacy International addresses the questions: What's happened to the UN's Sustainable Development Goal 16.9 for legal identity for all by 2030? Has it been replaced to support other goals? And if so, who's responsible?

**International ID Day – who is it for?**  
Listen to [ID16.9 podcast interview](#) with Uganda's national registration authority, NIRA, on the occasion of this year's International ID Day, 16 September 2022. In it, they discuss challenges, successes and opportunities to remove identity barriers to access.

**ID4Africa LiveCast EP36**  
On 7 December, ID4Africa featured three segments in its [LiveCast EP36](#) with senior decision makers from government, development agencies and thought leaders in conversation with LiveCast host, Dr. Joseph Atack. This included a conversation with India's Infosys Chair and Co-founder and Founding Chair of UIDIA (Aadhar), on 'Identity, Payments & Data Empowerment for the Digital World'. It also included a focus on IDs in Malawi, and a discussion on Digital Identity and Humanitarianism.

## Upcoming

To suggest an entry for the next newsletter's Upcoming section, please send details of the conference, seminar or other relevant event to: [certizens@teol.ku.dk](mailto:certizens@teol.ku.dk)

CERTIZENS has had a panel accepted for the ninth [European Conference on African Studies \(ECAS\)](#) in Cologne, 31 May to 3 June 2023. The short description of the panel, titled 'Changing African ID Systems and Reshaped Citizen Futures', states: "This panel explores how increasingly centralized and digitalized national ID systems in Africa – simultaneously overvaluing new technical 'solutions' and devaluing selective pasts, peoples and papers – are restructuring state-citizen relations and reshaping differentiated citizen futures." While spaces are reserved primarily for CERTIZENS own researchers, additional paper submissions are welcomed for several additional slots. The deadline for paper submissions has been extended to 23 January 2023. Guidelines for submission (which must be done online) can be found via the ECAS website (The panel is listed as Pol12 under the Politics and International Relations stream.)

The next [World Conference on Statelessness](#) will be held in February 2024 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The conference will center on those with lived experience of statelessness and focus on solidarity, knowledge and change. More information forthcoming. The Institute on Statelessness and Inclusion (ISI). Read [more](#).

'Identity at the Leading Edge of Digital Public Infrastructure' is the theme for the next ID4Africa augmented General Meeting (conference and expo) held over 5 days (3 physical and 2 virtual as LiveCasts), in late May and June 2023. See [here](#) for details.

## Resources and Opportunities

We encourage you to submit announcements of relevant opportunities for the next CERTIZENS newsletter, including conferences, calls for journal articles or book chapters, job openings, researching funding, or other opportunities. Please email: [certizens@teol.ku.dk](mailto:certizens@teol.ku.dk)

**Open call for several doctoral and post-doctoral fellowships on digital population registration systems in Africa**  
PhD Institute for Social and Economic Research (WISER) at the University of the Witwatersrand invites applications for both PhD and post-doctoral fellowships, for a full-time programme to research the origins and institutional effects of digital population registration and finance systems currently under development in Africa. Deadline for applications is 20 January 2023. For more details see [this document](#)

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