

# CERTIZENS Newsletter

Certifications of Citizenship in Africa



## Welcome to Issue 5 of the CERTIZENS Newsletter

As we move ahead with the CERTIZENS Project, we're truly excited to be able to share what we're doing, thinking about, and discovering as part of the ever-growing community of researchers and practitioners engaged with questions of state registration and identification practices.

In the current Newsletter, we're especially pleased to introduce the **CERTIZENS Africa Podcast** – a new platform to engage with a wide range of actors in the field through direct conversations about key topics. In addition, we feature two of our younger researchers, from Ghana and Uganda respectively, and hear about the early stages of their PhD projects.

Besides this, the June Newsletter once again highlights some key ID flashpoints in the media (from among a growing number globally), and provides summaries of a selection of fascinating short and long reads from and about the field – both academic and more popular – to stimulate further thinking and debate.

As always, we welcome your feedback and contributions. Please get in contact with us at: [certizens@teol.ku.dk](mailto:certizens@teol.ku.dk).

**Amanda Hammar**, CERTIZENS Project Leader  
Copenhagen, June 2022

## CERTIZENS Updates



### Spotlight on researchers in Ghana and Uganda

In [two new video interviews](#) we speak with CERTIZENS PhD researchers [Milcah Abasabyona](#) and [Isaac Owusu Nsiah](#) about their research on ID systems in Uganda and Ghana and why it matters.

Milcah's work focuses on the conditions and experiences of 'ghetto youth' living mostly without legal forms of national identification in some of Kampala's poorest informal settlements, while Isaac's project considers the interplay of formal national identification systems with the logics and dynamics of everyday 'lived' citizenship, focusing on the experiences of Ghanaian Fulanis in the country's Ashanti Region.

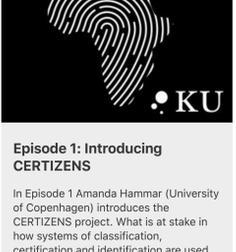
[Click here to hear more about Milcah and Isaac's projects.](#)

### Tune in to the CERTIZENS Africa podcast

We're delighted to announce the launch of a podcast series produced by the CERTIZENS team and aiming to connect scholars, practitioners, and policy makers working on ID systems – both in African contexts and beyond. Together we hope to create a space of dialogue to explore the complexities, challenges and implications of current and emerging systems of citizen classification certification and identification.

You can listen to the podcast by [visiting this page](#), or through [Google Podcasts](#) and [Spotify](#).

**Would you like to join the conversation? We are looking for interested scholars and practitioners to feature in our podcast. Contact us at: [certizens@teol.ku.dk](mailto:certizens@teol.ku.dk)**



#### Episode 1: Introducing CERTIZENS

In Episode 1 Amanda Hammar (University of Copenhagen) introduces the CERTIZENS project. What is at stake in how systems of classification, certification and identification are used to shape citizens and states?

[Click here to listen to Episode 1](#)

#### Episode 2: Dr Bronwen Manby

In Episode 2 Dr Bronwen Manby (LSE Senior Policy Fellow) discusses the key themes and concerns of CERTIZENS. Why is this research important in the current moment, and what is particular about histories of ID systems in Africa?

[Click here to listen to Episode 2](#)

## 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)

**Sri Lanka to model new digital identity scheme on India's Aadhaar card**  
[The Hindu reports](#) on India's decision to fund Sri Lanka's new digital identity system, apparently modelled on India's Aadhaar card scheme. The Aadhaar system has registered over 1.3 billion users so far but has faced several privacy related controversies – including the leak of over 100 million users' payment card details in 2017.

**Ethiopia launches digital ID programme**  
Plans recently announced by the government include distributing digital ID cards to 95% of its citizens by 2025 – with public officials emphasising the importance of this move for access to public services, 'financial inclusion', and 'regional economic integration'. [Read the full report by The Ethiopian Herald here.](#)

**And more...**  
[Ugandan government to extract DNA for national ID cards renewals](#), *The African Exponent*, 25 May 2022  
[Ghana card will expire in 10 years](#) – National Identification Authority, *Pulse*, 24 March 2022  
[Biometrics registration for Zambia's new national ID system underway](#), *Biometric Update*, 14 March 2022  
[Zimbabwe: Two million ID target for mobile registration blitz](#), *The Chronicle*, 18 February 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

[Theophilus Quartey et al., 'Determinants of National Health Insurance Enrolment Among People at Risk of Statelessness in Ghana'](#)  
*Advance Access Article* (2022)

**In brief:** Taking people at risk of statelessness as its focal point, this paper investigates the importance of factors influencing the decision to enrol in Ghana's National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS). According to the paper, while the gap in coverage between rich and poor, married and single appears to have narrowed, these factors continue to determine NHIS coverage among people at risk of statelessness. The paper concludes that efforts must be increased to ensure equal access to healthcare.

[Grace Mutung'u, 'The United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, Women and Digital ID in Kenya: A Decolonial Perspective'](#)  
*Business and Human Rights Journal* Vol 7 (2022)

**In brief:** This article uses the 'protect, respect, remedy' framework of the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights to analyse how decolonial approaches could be applied to the study of digital ID systems, in order to trace colonial legacies, investigate the ever-increasing power of businesses involved in digital ID systems, and broaden intersectional understandings of human rights. Drawing its empirical material from Kenya's historic and contemporary identity registration programmes, the paper argues that digital identity registration systems risk continuing or exacerbating historically embedded gender-based exclusions.

[Jaap van der Straaten, 'Legal identity for all, or not? On the measurement of birth registration completeness'](#)  
*Research Paper* 2022-2 (March)

**In brief:** This paper interrogates the latest available data on birth registration completeness which are essential to monitor progress towards the Sustainable Development Goal (16.9.1) goal for a legal identity for all. The paper focuses in particular on data sources, methodological aspects, and data veracity.

[Jaap van der Straaten, 'Hundred Years of Servitude, From Kipande to Huduma Namba in Kenya'](#)  
*SSRN Electronic Journal* (2020)

**In brief:** This paper describes the history of one hundred years of identification in Kenya, from the first colonial 'kipande' to the most recent Huduma Namba identification system, concluding that in Kenya 'the more things have changed, the more things have remained the same'.

[Imke Harbers, 'Legal identity for all? Gender inequality in the timing of birth registrations in Mexico'](#)  
*World Development* Vol 128 (2020)

**In brief:** The paper examines gender inequality in birth registration at birth. Based on demographic data for Mexico, a higher middle-income country that has recently made considerable progress with regard to birth registration, it shows that gender bias is expressed not only in the under-registration of girls, but also in systematically longer delays compared to their male counterparts. Timely registration is crucial for the effective guarantee of individual identities, since delays are associated with under-registration, and incorrect records.

### Books

[An Evaluative Study on the Citizen's Perception Towards the Philippine Identification System Through the Lens of Technology Acceptance Model](#)  
Vivien P. Aceron, Masters Thesis at Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität, Münster (2021)

**In brief:** This paper draws on quantitative data to evaluate the Philippine Identification System (PhilSys) through investigating the perception of Filipino citizens towards the system. The study's findings reveal that the perceived usefulness and ease of using the Philippine Identification System (PhilSys) moderately influence Filipino citizens' intention to use the ID System. However, issues surrounding awareness, transparency and concerns related to privacy and security also heavily influence such decisions.

[The Birth Certificate: An American History](#)  
Susan J. Pearson, US: University of North Carolina Press 2021

**In brief:** For many Americans, the birth certificate is a mundane piece of paper, unearthened from deep storage when applying for a driver's license, verifying information for new employers, or claiming state and federal benefits. Yet as Donald Trump and his fellow "birthers" reminded us when they claimed that Barack Obama wasn't an American citizen, it plays a central role in determining identity and citizenship. In *The Birth Certificate: An American History*, Susan J. Pearson traces the document's two-hundred-year history to explain when, how, and why birth certificates came to matter so much in the United States.

### Reports and Analysis

An analysis by the NGO **Unwanted Witness** examines Uganda's national ID legislation and its compliance with international human rights obligations – and offers recommendations on how to improve access and inclusion. [Read the full report here.](#)

**A blog post** by Ngozi Nwanta at the **Centre for Human Rights and Global Justice** (NYU School of Law) casts a critical eye on the West Africa Unique Identification for Regional Integration and Inclusion (**WURI**) programme, instigated by the World Bank under its Identification for Development initiative.

**A report** by **Zimbabwe's Research and Advocacy Unit (RAU)** looks at how women across the country interact with official citizen registration systems – and what failure to access IDs means for their quality of life.

Looking further afield, the research report **Good ID in Latin America** identifies appropriate uses of digital identification within the Latin American context – drawing on work from institutes in [Brazil](#), [India](#) and [Kenya](#).

An interesting **Long Read** from **Privacy International** maps how the EU works an interestingly with non-EU countries to introduce biometric ID systems 'manage' migration and borders.

An **investigation** by **Lighthouse Reports** reveals how a French multinational company made tens of millions of euros from failed biometric systems purchased by the Kenyan government.

## 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)

**ID4Africa Annual Meeting**  
**Physical conference (Marrakesh, Morocco): 15 & 16 June 2022**  
**Virtual conference (Online): 28 & 30 June 2022**  
The ID4Africa Annual Meeting brings together stakeholders from the African and international identity community for knowledge exchange and networking. The event will be held in two parts: in person in Marrakesh and online later the same month. [See more details here.](#)

**Conference: The global politics of northern European systems of population registration**  
**27<sup>th</sup>-29 June 2022, University of Bergen (Faculty of Law)**  
This symposium will seek to assess the development, benefits, risks and futures of northern European models of civil registration and population registration in different national and socioeconomic contexts, and across international borders and to compare these models with the current experiences being promoted in developing countries. [Registration and further details here.](#)

## Resources and Opportunities

We encourage you to submit announcements of relevant opportunities for the next CERTIZENS newsletter, including conference calls, 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)

**Blog: The Critical Statelessness Studies Blog**  
A space for short reflective pieces by academics and practitioners working on statelessness from a critical perspective. [Published here by the University of Melbourne.](#)

**Database: Citizenship Rights in Africa Initiative**  
This website contains a database on nationality and statelessness in Africa, featuring laws and subsidiary legislation, government and independent reports and academic articles, news stories and blog postings, and other resources. [You can access the database containing more than 4,000 items here.](#)

**Do you know someone who would enjoy this newsletter? Please forward it on**



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