

Tigo supports mobile birth registration in Tanzania

DAR ES SALAAM, Tanzania – A decentralised births and deaths registration system for under-fives, using mobile technology, benefits over 650,000 children in the Geita and Shinyanga regions of Tanzania.



Minister for Constitutional Affairs, Dr Harrison Mwakyeembe (L) presents a birth certificate to a parent during the launch of mobile birth registration campaign in Geita and Shinyanga Regions. Tigo Tanzania donated 1,200 mobile phones to support the exercise. Credit: Tigo.

Tanzania's digital lifestyle company, Tigo, has continued to support the Tanzania government's under-five birth registration initiative through an innovative mobile application that is massively accelerating provisioning of birth certificates for children under the age of five.

The programme brings registration closer to the community by establishing registration points at existing health facilities as well as at the community ward executive offices. This will enable parents in these two regions to have access to more than 598 registration points. Moreover, there will be more than 1,300 trained Registration Assistants equipped with 1,200 mobile phones donated by Tigo to support the registration process.

Tigo has been partnering with Registration, Insolvency and Trusteeship Agency (RITA), and UNICEF in scaling up this project in Geita and Shinyanga regions following success registered in Mbeya, Songwe, Mwanza, Iringa and Njombe regions where more than 830,000 under-five children have been registered and provided with birth certificates since 2013 to date.

Integration of mobile technology is one of the objectives of scaling up birth registration of children under-five initiative.

Innovative mobile app

Speaking during the launch of the project in Geita region, Tigo director for the Lake zone, Ally Maswanya, said: "It's no doubt that technology has changed birth registration dynamics in Tanzania. The innovative mobile application developed by Tigo has simplified not only capturing of birth registration information, but also retrieving of the same information, uploading and sent to a central database at the National Registration Bureau in real time. We are exceptionally honoured to share our core technology expertise in solving pressing needs in the country."

The launch of the initiative, the main aim which is to reduce the backlog of unregistered children and establishing a system for registering all new births in the two regions, was attended by the Minister for Constitutional Affairs, Dr Harrison George Mwakyeembe.

Explaining Tigo's facilitation of the registration exercise, Maswanya added: "This community investment forms part of our broader digital lifestyle agenda, with a focus on promoting use of mobile technology in social development programs.

Additional to the development of the mobile application currently being used in this project, we have been donating mobile phones for all regions where the project has been implemented”.

As a special gesture, the government has waived the fee for registration under this initiative, and the first copy of the certificate is given free of charge. The initiative is a ‘one step, one visit’ process and has adapted an innovative way of data collection using mobile phone technology ensuring instant transfer of data which is uploaded through SMS facilitating a real time tracking of progress.

The decentralised system marks a significant shift in accelerating birth registration in Tanzania’s mainland, after years of stagnation. “We are transforming the system to make it easier for children and their families to access the entitlement of a birth certificate,” said Emmy Hudson acting chief executive officer of the Registration, Insolvency and Trusteeship Agency (RITA), responsible for the programme.

Access

She added that: “Now parents can receive birth certificates from the designated health facilities or through the ward executive offices.”

On his side, UNICEF deputy representative in Tanzania, Rene Van Dongen, said that, “every child has the right to an identity. A birth certificate is a vital record that documents the birth of a child.

“Currently Tanzania has a very low level of birth registration which means that millions of children under-five are ‘invisible’ to the nation's records. This initiative aims to accelerate birth registration to help more Tanzanian children to claim their rights and be protected. The Government too will have better data for policy and planning.”

The initiative has bridged the rural-urban divide by improving access to the most marginalised communities to register their children.

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