



*Ms Mwende Gatabaki speaking at the C4DLab's August Tech Innovation Forum held at the University of Nairobi.*

On August 14, 2014, the acting Director General of the Kenya Citizens and Foreign Nationals Management Service (KCFNMS), Ms Mwende Gatabaki was at the University of Nairobi's [School of Computing and Informatics](#) to impress upon Kenyans the pressing necessity for a national digital registry.

Expected to see "Kenya transformed", the National Digital Registry (NDRS) has three main objectives as outlined here: the first is to "strengthen national security, reduce crime, improve safety". Second is to "drive efficiency, effectiveness and accountability in service delivery". The third aims to "provide citizen-centric services that are easy to access, available and affordable".

Being the "foundation" of the Presidential Digital Transformation of Government (PDTG), NDRS, which goes by the name 'Umoja Kenya', will occasion two other most crucial entities: government shared services (e-cabinet, president delivery unit, GoK e-mail, streamlined back office), and one-stop office for public services (e-services, single access points, multi-channel).

Notably, the Umoja Kenya NDRS will oversee registration of people, land, assets as well as establishments. Registration of all the four factors is expected to deliver "a single source of truth" for our country.

The Umoja Kenya platform originated from the Kenya Citizens and Foreign Nationals Management Service, which was established in 2011 by an Act of parliament. KCFNMS was put up as "a state corporation which hives off the immigration and registration of persons directorate". It comprises the Civil Registry Department (CRD), National Registry Bureau (NRB), Immigrations Department (ID), Department of Refugees Affairs (DRA), and Integrated Population Registry Service (IPRS).

Hence by June 2015, Umoja Kenya is expected to commence "information services delivery", whose social and economic benefits were outlined as ease of doing business, efficient public services delivery, revenue collection, credit provision as well voter registration. This is guaranteed since the NDRS will be providing proper "identification services".

Further, the provision of “intelligence services” by NDRS will facilitate crime scene finger print matching, CCTV Network facial recognition matches, residents registries (nyumba kumi), border management systems and cyberspace security.

All in all, Ms Gatabaki believes that the NDRS will achieve a win-win situation for the following three: the citizens will feel belonging and counted since they will be accessing services “anywhere, anytime”. Kenyans will be enjoying enhanced security and rapid response. They will also experience, for the first time in a long time, “equity in allocation of public resources”.

For business people, it will be natural to expect ease of doing the same when Kenya becomes an investments destination. The Government will in turn “win” by achieving improved revenue collection.

Nevertheless, the Director General’s optimism has been countered all along by what she termed in her presentation as “key challenges to the project”: vested interests and corruption especially in the high income generating areas; identity authentication as a critical security measure does not exist; initiatives with similar objectives have been tried before without success; resistance to change in the directorate—former Ministry of immigrations and Registrations of Persons.

Yet, “to protect our country, we must corporatize the directorate—establish efficiency, effectiveness and accountability processes,” asserted Ms. Gatabaki.

And she assures Kenyans that “it will work this time”. Why, the necessary level of urgency as demonstrated by the growing terrorist attacks, the lamentable pace of response and intensifying criminal activities, existence of a legal framework to support the NDRS (Act 31 of 2011), and Umoja Kenya being a national solution (addressing identity authenticity as a key component of security), are the reasons the project should take off.

But why should the citizens and even the Government care, even the more? The task force head of the Presidential Digital Transformation of Government gives us cause: it’s limited knowledge on people, rather we don’t know our people. As a result, over 40% of births and 50% of deaths are not captured, over 10% of the ID data are people who have passed on and the number of fake and illegal IDs passports is not known.

Ms Gatabaki’s team has also found that “we don’t have sufficient capability to respond to threats” because residence registries , formal reporting as well as rapid response mechanisms are lacking, with the biggest blow being “security as a service” not existing.

Explanation for why “we don’t know who enters our country when” is this: systems at the existing registries and at border points are not linked, visa recipients are not sufficiently vetted, corruption networks that facilitate drug dealers and terrorists are abundant in our country, yet we don’t know.

Also, here is what the Government must know: in the 90’ s, corruption networks had swarmed the “financial sector”. They then moved to “various sectors”, but only for a little while. They are now seeking a permanent refuge in the “security sector”.

What about the “moving security targets” ? Tier 1 threats were social security. Tier 2 were social and economic. Tier 3, which we are now in, involves social, economic, territorial and cybersecurity. This is where Umoja Kenya National Digital Registry comes in:

It is expected that a digital people registry will “know” our people when and only when we are able to capture clean, complete, correct and secure biometric data achieved facilitated by facial image, fingerprints, and iris scan. And then be able to establish location resident registries.

Accompanying the project are “citizen services” which entail issuance of unique digital IDs (DIDs) to all Kenyans of all ages, referenced from birth to death; e-Passports and e-Driving Licenses will be issued when anchored on DID; another one will be voter registration and authentication.

“Foreign Nationals and Refugees Services” will center around issuance of biometric visas (which will be embedded with work permits, permanent residence, etc.) and citizenship . That package also comes with refugees services based on biometric identifiers. The last in the category will be ongoing registration service in the Umoja Kenya platform.

When it comes to “border security management”, it will be quite possible to issue foreigners with biometric visas prior to their arrival in the country, establish immigrations police unit, and implement effective systems at all border points.