

BACK TO OFFICE REPORT: FIELD MONITORING ON ID CARDS DISTRIBUTION AND CONTINUOUS REGISTRATION

Traveler: Titus Kavalo

DATES OF MISSION: 19 – 23 February 2018

DISTRICTS VISITED: Chikwawa, Nsanje, Mwanza, Neno, Thyolo, Mulanje, Phalombe, Chiradzulu, Blantyre, Zomba

General observations:

- ID cards distribution is going on well but with some issues for urgent attention and decisions to be made. In terms of collection rate, in all the districts collection rate across centers has been over 90%.
- Continuous registration is proceeding well but with mixed experiences on progress across districts. Continuous registration started mostly in January. In some districts, more numbers are coming to register than in others.
- Functionality of BRKs for continuous registration varies across districts. While a majority of BRKs are working well, there are some which are not functioning well and need to be checked and fixed.
- Public awareness regarding ID cards distribution but also continuous registration should be maintained. Loud hailing could perhaps be among the most effective means
- NRB district staff (i.e. Assitant District Registrars, Logistics Officers and District Data Processing Clerks) committed and dedicated to ID cards distribution and continuous registration
- Continued challenges of people especially from rural areas to prove their citizenship when they come to register but also failure to complete the NR1 forms correctly.

Key issues for consideration/action & others just for noting:

ID CARDS DISTRIBUTION & CONTINOUS REGISTRATION

Cards with errors

In all the districts visited except for Phalombe and Zomba where cards are yet to be distributed, the people whose cards have errors are daily frequenting district registration Offices to seek correction/rectification of their cards or re-registration. As there is no policy or guidance yet on how these cases will be handled, ADRs/DROs are just sending these people back with a promise that they will get their cards corrected later. This is leaving people frustrated. Sometimes, some of these people do deny having registered during mass registration because they believe registering again will quickly solve their problem. As such, there is a likelihood that people will be re-registering.

In addition to the other errors such as misspelling names, messing up on sex and dates of birth etc., the most common one is about the names. There are people who instead of putting their surnames, based on the Chichewa translation of surname and perhaps due to illiteracy, they were putting their Father's first names on the NR1 forms.

Consequence: As some services or service providers are now linked to the IDs e.g. banks, employers such as estate owners etc., when people with ID cards with errors want to access bank services or seek employment somewhere e.g. those with their father's names, they are rejected. In Thyolo for example, Estate Owners are demanding national IDs from all prospective casual labourers who want to be employed.

Action: Policy or guidance should be provided decided at the earliest convenience on how to handle the above issues and that DROs should be communicated to on the same so that correction of cards with errors can start soon. To also consider whether correction/rectification will be free of charge or not as these people have been asking.

✚ ID cards lost, damaged or stolen

There are reported cases where some people lost their cards through theft etc., while others have their cards damaged. This category of people is showing up at the DROs to register again but as there is no guidance on this, these people are simply sent back to come at a later stage.

Action: Policy or guidance should be provided decided at the earliest convenience on how to handle the above issues and that DROs should be communicated to on the same so that correction of cards with errors can start soon.

✚ ID cards for some people not found in both first and second round

From the districts that I visited and have received both round 1 and round cards, there are reported cases that despite registering during mass registration, some people's cards are not found. One plausible reason is that either the cards are printed but misplaced and that they could be in other districts or centers because of errors that the Registration Officers might have made in terms of messing up district names or registration center names during mass registration. Secondly, it could simply mean cards for some of these people were outright not printed for both first and second round. As a result of cards missing in both rounds, people have resorted to seek re-registration even though they are being told not to.

Action: A decision needed on how to handle this so that nobody is denied right to identity but also that nobody is denied access to services for lacking a national ID card.

✚ Work load

It appears that in some districts, NRB district staff are overwhelmed with work as they must do ID cards distribution at the district office, continuous registration, birth and death registration etc. While the registration staff are careful to check the system for duplicates, this is not always possible.

Action: NRB to fast track its recruitment process of additional staffing but also do an analysis that will help them prioritize

✚ Proportion of ID cards at the district offices

Apart from each of the districts visited reporting an average of 95% ID cards collection rate, the number of cards remaining in each of these districts vary because total number of cards received was different. Blantyre and Chikwawa still have sizeable numbers of cards at the NRB district offices. For Blantyre, there are about 30,000 cards remaining from both round 1 & 2 which may take a month to deliver. Chikwawa has sizeable number of cards at the NRB district office because of the fact there are about 4 centers where the majority of those who could have collected their cards are seasonal cane cutters who

are off season and went to their respective homes far away from Chikwawa. These will only come again when the season opens sometime in April and that's when they will collect their ID cards.

Action: Work of the paid temporary Distribution Officers at the one center in Blantyre should be extended.

✚ Public awareness for both ID cards collection at the district offices and continuous registration

Since uncollected ID cards from the centers are all taken to the district office for citizens to continue collecting from there, there is need for continued public awareness about this arrangement so that all cards should be collected. On continuous registration, Nsanje communicated to the public about it through traditional leaders, loud hailing, NICE volunteers. Mwanza communicated the public through traditional leaders and during cards distribution. Neno communicated to the public through traditional leaders and primary school pupils. Thyolo communicated to the public through traditional leaders, ward councilors and loud hailing. Mulanje communicated to the public through traditional leaders, ward councilors, members of parliament and loud hailing. Chiradzulu communicated to the public through traditional leaders only. Blantyre communicated to the public through traditional leaders, members of parliament, ward councilors, and district media and public relations fora. Chikwawa was yet to communicate to traditional leaders, ward councilors etc. Zomba and Phalombe have also not done much on communicating to the public about continuous registration, perhaps due to the fact that they are yet to distribute ID cards to those that registered during mass registration.

One of the interesting cases creating demand for the ID card thereby making more people go and register in the ongoing continuous registration is the requirement by estate owners in Thyolo and Mulanje who are now demanding ID cards from any potential casual labourer before being recruited. In mwanza, those providing humanitarian assistance are also demanding ID cards.

Action: All the districts should continue communicating to the public about both continuous registration and collection of ID cards. Loud hailing may be the most effective channel as chances are high that despite communicating to community leaders, Ward Councilors and MPs, it does not follow that these will automatically tell the people in their respective communities. People should also be assisted in completing the NR1 forms by the NRB teams at the districts. Through the loud hailing, message of proof of citizenship for one to get registered should be made clear and emphasized as most people especially from rural setting end up being sent back from registration for failure to prove citizenship as their scores do not add up to 100%. The forms should first be checked properly before data entry as I noted that a lot of people due to high illiteracy levels mess up completion of the forms especially on names.

✚ Data being sought by MPs

In some districts such as Chikwawa, MPs have been asking the ADR to provide them with data on number registered, cards printed saying such would help them make a good judgement of whether many people in their respective constituencies registered or not during mass registration so that they can encourage those that did not to go register through continuous registration. **ADR is therefore not sure if she should share the information with the MPs?? She should be guided.**

Performance of BRKs

Apart from most of the BRKs in the districts I visited working well, there are some other BRKs in Nsanje, Chikwawa, Mwanza, Zomba which are require the attention of NRB Technicians as they are not performing well.

Action: NRB Technicians to go check the performance of some of the BRKs in the aforementioned districts to fix the problems.

Number of people being registered during continuous registration

From the districts I visited, Chikwawa started continuous registration on 5th February 2018 and had registered 49 people by the 16th of February. Nsanje started on 5th February 2018 and by the 16th of February, they had registered 275 people. Mwanza started end of December 2017 and registered 188 people by 19th February 2018. Neno started on 25th January 2018 and by 16th February 2018, they had registered 127 people. Thyolo started end of December 2017 and by 23 February 2018, they had registered about 650 people. Mulanje started in January 2018 and by 21 February, they had registered about 600 people. Phalombe started mid-January and by 21 February, less than 15 people only had been registered. Blantyre officially started on 16th January 2018 and by 21st February, they had registered over 900 people. Zomba started on 5th January 2018 and by 21 February, they had registered 568 people. For Chiradzulu, it was only reported that they are registering an average of 201 people per day but this was not verifiable as they are not keeping records in form of the receipts.

Action: Considering the case of Chiradzulu where records in form of receipts are not kept, NRB to provide direction to all districts as to whether the receipts should be kept or not.