

# **INTERNATIONAL FAMILY LAW SYMPOSIUM IAFL WITH EALS AND CLA 2 September 2025**

## ***Session Resources Pack Session 5: Child Rights' Implementation, Data, Identity and Protection***

*Tuesday 2 September 2025  
14:00 – 15:15*

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## RUTH JULIET NYAMBURA GACHANJA

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Ruth Juliet Nyambura Gachanja is an Advocate of the High Court of Kenya and a trailblazer in child rights, with 12+ years of leadership in child protection and anti-human trafficking. She holds LLMs from Leiden(International Children Rights) and Middlesex(Minorities, Rights and the Law) universities and lectures law at Kabarak University. As Child Justice Advisor to the Chief Justice of Kenya, she led the development *Judiciary Child Justice Strategy*. Ruth played a key role in enacting the Children Act, 2022, and Chaired the development of *the delta 8.7 Justice Policy Guide* on ending modern slavery. She chairs the boards of the African Institute for Children Studies and Love Justice International – Kenya. Her work drives Child justice reform in Kenya and beyond.

## **NANKALI MAKSUD**

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Nankali Maksud has served as UNICEF's Regional Advisor for Child Protection in Eastern and Southern Africa since April 2024. She brings over 20 years of experience working across development and humanitarian settings, with a focus on strengthening child protection systems, policies, and services for children and women.

Prior to her current role, she coordinated the UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage -the largest global initiative addressing harmful practices under SDG 5.3. In this role, she led cross-regional efforts to influence policy, mobilize partnerships, and accelerate national action in support of adolescent girls.

A committed advocate for child rights, Ms. Maksud has contributed to reforms that have improved national care systems and legal protections for children affected by violence, child marriage, and female genital mutilation.

## **MIA DAMBACH**

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Mia Dambach is an Australian trained lawyer working on children's rights. Starting as a children's lawyer in Sydney, she moved to Switzerland, where she has undertaken evaluation missions; mostly on behalf of UNICEF, in Cambodia, Cameroon, Denmark, Egypt, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Morocco, Senegal, Sudan, Ukraine and Viet Nam. She has provided technical support (legal reforms and training) in over 20 countries focusing on birth registration, alternative care, adoption, children on the move, assisted reproductive technology and surrogacy. Recently, she co-founded Child Identity Protection and started her doctoral studies on mass reparation schemes for children under Ann Skelton and Ton Liefwaard.

## **EVERLYNE SIMIYU**

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Organizational Productivity, Judiciary of Kenya  
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Everlyne Simiyu is an accomplished Economist with over 17 years of dedicated service in the Kenyan Judiciary, currently serving in the Directorate of Strategy, Planning & Organizational Productivity. She holds a First-Class Honours degree in Economics and Statistics and a Master's degree in Economics, both from the University of Nairobi. Throughout her career, Everlyne has played a pivotal role in analyzing children-related statistics, providing critical insights to guide policy formulation. Her expertise blends data-driven analysis with strategic planning to support judicial transformation and evidence-based decision-making. She also offers technical expertise in implementing the Judiciary's Performance Management and Measurement Understanding framework.

## **DIAHANN GORDON HARRISON**

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Mrs. Diahann Gordon Harrison is Jamaica's Children's Advocate and National Rapporteur on Trafficking in Persons (the first to hold this post in the Latin American & Caribbean Region) and an Attorney-at-Law by profession.

Her current roles provide a platform from which she promotes the rights of children and vulnerable people from a victim-centred and rights-based orientation. She is passionate about accountability frameworks through which persons violating the rights of children and vulnerable persons can be held responsible for their actions.

She is an Associate Tutor at the Norman Manley Law School; certified to the Geneva-based Justice Rapid Response Roster of global experts in International Criminal Law; and a serving member of the Board of the International Society for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect.

## **RACHAEL KELSEY**

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Rachael is President of the IAFL- the first Scot and the only woman from the UK in the thirty-nine year history of the Academy. She is a founding Partner of SKO Family Law Specialists, which is the largest niche family practice in Scotland. She is the only 'Star Individual' in Scotland in Chambers and Partners and the only Scottish lawyer in Band 1 of the UK-wide HNW Guide. She was the recipient of the 'Private Client Lawyer of the Year 2023' Award at the Legal 500 Scottish Law Awards, from a shortlist of ten lawyers including tax, rural property and family law specialists.

Rachael currently sits on the Family Law Committee of the Scottish Civil Justice Council, having been appointed by the Lord President to sit for a third term, and is the only Scot to sit on the UK Ministry of Justice International Family Law Committee. She splits her time between Edinburgh and London.



# Why Birth Registration Matters for Every Family



Introduce the concept of legal identity as a gateway right-Ensuring Every Child is Counted and Protected from Birth.



Nankali Maksud

Child Protection Regional Adviser - UNICEF ESARO

02/09/2025

Time:1400hrs

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## INTRODUCTION

- **Birth registration is a gateway right**-it unlocks access to education, healthcare, protection, and legal identity.
- **Millions of children in Africa remain invisible** to government systems due to lack of registration.
- **Unregistered children face heightened risks** of exploitation, statelessness and exclusion from services.

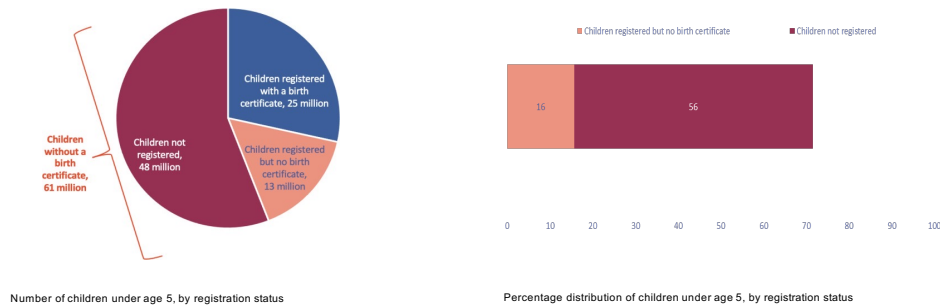


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## Challenges in Achieving Universal Birth Registration



Despite global and regional commitments, the Eastern and Southern Africa region continues to report some of the lowest birth registration rates in the world.



## What's Driving the Gaps?



To understand how we can step up action at the regional level, we must first examine the persistent challenges that prevent universal birth registration;

- **Legal Barriers:** Outdated laws and fragmented policies disproportionately affect rural and marginalized families (Ex: Penalties for late registration discouraging families from registering, gender discriminations, statelessness risks for children of refugees and ethnic minorities and excessive documentation requirements)
- **Technological Limitations:** Paper-based systems hinder efficiency and data accuracy.
- **Conflict and Displacement:** Fragile states and humanitarian contexts disrupt CRVS continuity leaving children unregistered.
- **Institutional Fragmentation:** Weak coordination between ministries and lack of integrated systems-missed opportunities for registration.
- **Geographic Inequities:** Families in rural and underserved areas face limited access to registration services due to distance.

## Regional Success Stories: What's Working in ESARO

- Namibia
- Rwanda
- South Africa
- Mozambique
- Tanzania:



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## Strategic Programme Framework: A Roadmap for Action

- Having seen the challenges and promising practices across the region, it was clear we need a unified, strategic response.
- In July 2025, UNICEF ESARO launched the Strategic Programme Framework to guide countries in strengthening CRVS systems.
- The framework prioritizes legal reform to remove discriminatory practices and simplify registration for all families.



## Vision and Goals



**By 2030, every child in Eastern and Southern Africa is registered at birth and has a legal identity.**

The goal is to reach 95% birth registration coverage across the region by 2030.

This is not just about numbers. It's about ensuring that children are not invisible and that they can access education, healthcare, protection, and opportunity, starting with a birth certificate.

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## Three core strategies



### Interoperability

We must connect CRVS systems with health, education, protection, and national ID systems. This means registering births at health facilities, using school enrolment as a catch-up opportunity, and linking CRVS to child grants and other services.

This is already happening in countries like **Rwanda**, **Namibia**, and **South Africa** and it works.

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### Decentralisation

We must bring services closer to families, especially in rural and underserved communities. Local registration points, mobile units, and community-based outreach are essential.

Countries like **Tanzania** and **Mozambique** have shown that decentralisation increases access and equity.

### Digitalisation

It involves shifting from slow, paper-based systems to secure, interoperable digital platforms that enhance data accuracy, accessibility, and service delivery.

Country **Namibia** where mobile-based birth notifications, demonstrate how digital tools can streamline registration.

## Supporting Interventions (i)



To make the three core strategies-interopability, decentralisation, and digitalisation more effective, the framework outlines **five critical supporting interventions**:

### 1. Legislative and Policy Reform

- Legal reforms must prioritize inclusivity removing penalties, simplifying procedures, and empowering local authorities to serve families better.
- Promoting inclusive legal frameworks that recognize CRVS as a public good and enable integration with health, education, and social protection.
- Empowering local authorities through decentralized legal mandates and ensuring data privacy.

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## Supporting Interventions (ii)



### 2. Resource Mobilization and Domestic Financing

- Advocating for increased national budget allocations and dedicated CRVS budget lines.
- Encouraging public-private partnerships to support digital infrastructure and outreach.
- Leveraging international co-financing and donor support to ensure long-term sustainability.



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## Supporting Interventions (iii)



### 3. Partnerships

- Engaging with governments, civil society, private sector, and regional bodies to align efforts and share resources.
- Strengthening collaboration with international organizations and regional initiatives to harmonize policies and scale innovations.
- Involving youth networks and community-based organizations to expand outreach and trust in CRVS systems.



## Supporting Interventions (iv)



### 4. Social and Behavioural Change

- Legal awareness is key-families must know their rights and how to navigate the system. Community leaders and health workers play a vital role in demystifying registration.
- Promoting the value of birth registration beyond legal identity, linking it to access to education, healthcare, and protection.



## Supporting Interventions (v)



### 5. Capacity Building

- Training CRVS personnel in digital tools, data management, and inclusive service delivery.
- Equipping local offices with the infrastructure and resources needed to operate autonomously and effectively.
- Developing e-learning platforms and peer-learning exchanges to ensure continuous skill development and system resilience.



## Call to action



Success depends on collective action:

- ❑ **Families and communities** must be empowered to advocate for inclusive laws and accessible services. Their voices are essential in shaping legal reforms that reflect lived realities
- ❑ **Partners:** advocate for annual CRVS performance reviews, assist governments in publishing statistical reports, and ensure demographic trends inform policies.
- ❑ **Governments:** Lead and invest, track data completeness, accuracy, and timeliness while integrating vital statistics into national development strategies.



