An Operational Guide to advancing birth registration through schools

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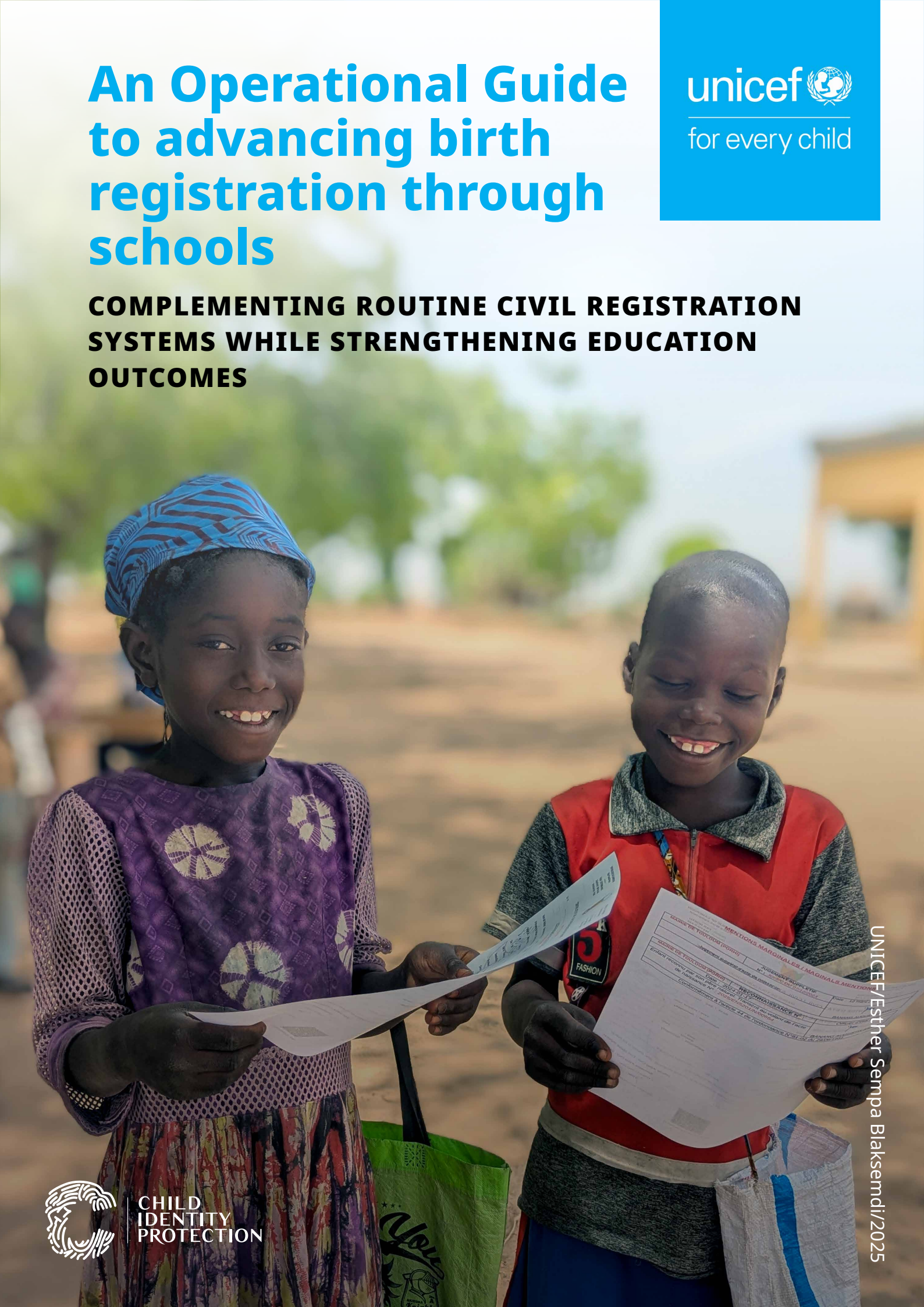
for every child

COMPLEMENTING ROUTINE CIVIL REGISTRATION SYSTEMS WHILE STRENGTHENING EDUCATION OUTCOMES



CHILD IDENTITY PROTECTION

UNICEF/Esther Sempa Blaksemdi/2025

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Foreword

Every child has the right to be registered immediately after their birth. Legal identity is crucial for a child to be recognized by the government and serves as the gateway to accessing other rights, such as health, education, social protection, and justice mechanisms.

To date, efforts on birth registration have rightly focused on newborns, including through effective collaboration with the health sector. This should remain our priority. However, in 2024, over 200 million children under 5 worldwide lacked a birth certificate. Additionally, statistics – when collected - from different countries note that millions in primary school also do not have a birth certificate.

Targeted solutions are needed for these older groups of children. We warmly welcome this publication as the first-ever global effort to provide operational and practical guidance on how the education sector provides an excellent opportunity to regularize the situation of these older children. Schools provide a natural decentralized bridge to families of unregistered children. They already collect essential information during enrolment, examination, and certification periods that can feed into the civil registration process. For the education sector, having precise data about the age and numbers of children from birth allows them to plan and ensure age-appropriate learning. As such, leveraging these existing mechanisms provides multiple advantages for both sectors.

We strongly recommend that States continue to build and strengthen convergence and pool resources with civil registration and education to ensure that every child – including those who are older – can enjoy their right to birth registration. We hope that this publication will provide guidance to States undertaking such endeavors, including concrete field examples, lessons learned, risks to avoid, and highlights of enablers for interoperability between civil registration and education. We must work collectively to leave no child behind.

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Acronyms

BR	Birth registration
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CR	Civil registration
CRVS	Civil Registration and Vital Statistics
CRVSID	Civil registration, vital statistics, and identity management
DHIS	District Health Information System
DHS	Demographic and Health Survey
EMIS	Education Management Information System
ID4D World Bank	Identification for Development
MICS	Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys
NEMIS	National Education Management Information System
NID	National identification
NIDA	National identification agency
OAU	Organisation of African Unity
OIF	Organisation internationale de la Francophonie
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
UBR	Universal Birth Registration
U1	Under 1
U5	Under 5
UIN	Unique Identification Number
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

Introduction

The right to universal birth registration and education are mutually reinforcing, critical from both human rights and development perspectives. Every child should be registered immediately after birth.[1] Every child has the right to free and inclusive education.

The dual achievement of birth registration and education rights provides every child with the foundation to grow, flourish, and become an independent adult integrated into society. Indeed, birth registration data should be shared in real time to inform the education sector to help plan for the child's educational journey – a win-win for both sectors. Yet, for millions of children, particularly those already in school, at risk of dropping out, or who have already dropped out, this ideal remains unrealised. Of all children under age 1 worldwide, nearly 29% (about 38 million) have not had their births registered.[2] In Sub-Saharan Africa, it rises to 55%, accounting for about 60% of the global population of unregistered children under age 1.[3]

As a result, parents are often forced to register the birth of their children when there is a need for a birth certificate, including for school enrolment. However, such delays do not lead to meaningful gains, as 23% of children under the age of five (approximately 150 million) remain unregistered worldwide.[4] Of these, more than 90 million live in Sub-Saharan Africa.[5]

For children aged 5-17, who account for 22% of the global population,[6] there is hardly any data on birth registration. What is available is scattered and fragmented, with no global estimates. Even the World Bank's ID4D database on legal identity uses the U5 BR for this age group.[7] It appears that fewer than 40 countries have birth registration data for ages 5-17 from the Demographic and Health Survey (DHS), Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS), and population censuses, and in most cases, these are just one data point.

A large proportion of out-of-school children, which can be as high as 50% in some countries, adds another challenge to achieving both universal birth registration and inclusive education for all.[8] In 2023, about 272 million children and youth (aged 6-17) worldwide were out of school – an overall increase of 8 million more than in 2015.[9] In sub-Saharan Africa alone, the number rose by nearly 20 million during the same period.[10]

This paper focuses on a critical yet often overlooked opportunity: **leveraging schools as platforms to identify and register unregistered children at scale while simultaneously improving educational outcomes**. By positioning school-based birth registration as a time-bound strategy to clear existing backlogs, the paper highlights how countries can use the education system not only to deliver legal identity, but also to reach the most excluded children, improve enrolment and retention, and build stronger, more integrated systems for the future.

There are, however, challenges when countries undertake birth registration campaigns to clear the backlog of unregistered children. Indeed, when there are inadequate efforts to address the root causes of why children are not registered immediately after birth, the backlog can be difficult to deplete as every year there is a new group of older children that need to be registered. Such campaigns may then become

1 Art.7, CRC
2 UNICEF. (2024). The Right Start in Life: Global levels and trends in birth registration. 2024 update https://data.unicef.org/resources/the-right-start-in-life-2024-update/
3 Op cit.
4 Op cit.
5 Op cit.
6 State of Women and Children (2025). UNICEF https://data.unicef.org/resources/sowc-2025/
7 https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/099031924132035631
8 Statbase. (2026). Children out of school https://statbase.org/datasets/science-and-education/children-out-of-school-percent-of-primary-school-age/
9 UNESCO. (2025). World Education Statistics at 33 https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000396754
10 Op cit.

a persistent feature of the system. Another challenge can be that Governments can often be reluctant to waive penalties or replace cumbersome and expensive judicial procedures. Moreover, these initiatives are resource-intensive and benefit only a small fraction of unregistered children. At the same time, the continued reliance on such campaigns may inadvertently discourage parents from registering births on time, even though timely registration is free of charge. It seems that these cases are increasing. In some cases, parents may wait for birth registration campaigns to help them navigate complex, burdensome, and costly late and delayed registration procedures.

Consequently, in the absence of birth certificates, schools routinely rely on alternative documents such as maternal and child health cards, baptism certificates, or, most commonly, self-reported age as proof of age. This widespread reliance on unreliable proxies can be a key driver of age-inappropriate school placement. The situation is further exacerbated by cumbersome admission procedures, including the requirement that families physically visit Civil Registration (CR) offices to validate birth certificates, reflecting a lack of integration between Civil Registration Vital Statistics (CRVS) and education systems. A major hurdle to such integration is the insufficient level of digitalisation of CRVS systems and manual education management systems in most countries.

In response to these challenges, this paper proposes the following objectives to strengthen the role of the education sector in advancing universal birth registration while simultaneously supporting improved learning outcomes:

PROMOTE

interactions with schools to identify unregistered children and facilitate their birth registration within a defined timeframe;

IDENTIFY

a range of operational modalities for facilitating birth registration, enabling countries to select context-appropriate approaches that align with their legal and administrative frameworks, illustrated through country examples

LEVERAGE

schools as entry points to identify out-of-school children within their catchment areas and support both their birth registration and reintegration into the education system

STRENGTHEN

linkages between CR and education systems through the real-time sharing of a minimum dataset on each child following birth registration, as countries progressively move towards fully interoperable CRVS and Education Management Information Systems (EMIS), depending on system maturity

UTILISE

school-based data and statistics as a complementary mechanism to validate and improve the completeness and accuracy of CRVS systems, ideally through structured data exchange between the two systems

To operationalise these objectives, this paper is structured around four interrelated pillars following the background discussion.

PILLAR 1

Using schools as platforms to help clear the backlog of unregistered children;

PILLAR 2

Reaching out to out-of-school children to support their birth registration while facilitating their return to education;

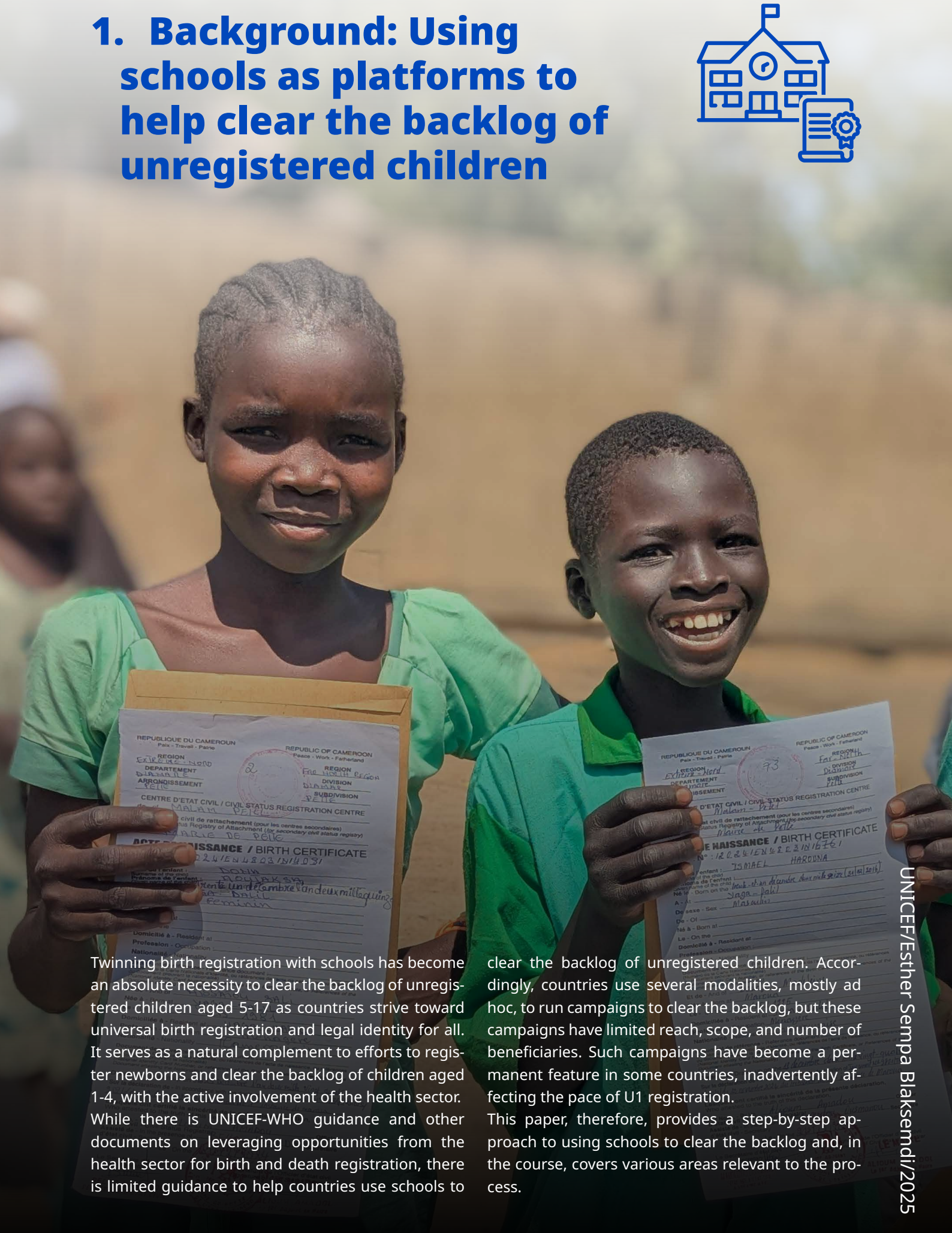
PILLAR 3

Strengthening system integration between CRVS and education sectors;

PILLAR 4

Identifying key enablers required to support implementation across different country contexts.

1. Background: Using schools as platforms to help clear the backlog of unregistered children



Twinning birth registration with schools has become an absolute necessity to clear the backlog of unregistered children aged 5-17 as countries strive toward universal birth registration and legal identity for all. It serves as a natural complement to efforts to register newborns and clear the backlog of children aged 1-4, with the active involvement of the health sector.

While there is UNICEF-WHO guidance and other documents on leveraging opportunities from the health sector for birth and death registration, there is limited guidance to help countries use schools to clear the backlog of unregistered children. Accordingly, countries use several modalities, mostly ad hoc, to run campaigns to clear the backlog, but these campaigns have limited reach, scope, and number of beneficiaries. Such campaigns have become a permanent feature in some countries, inadvertently affecting the pace of U1 registration.

This paper, therefore, provides a step-by-step approach to using schools to clear the backlog and, in the course, covers various areas relevant to the process.

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1.1. Rights-based framework

Every child should have a birth certificate and equal access to education; these are non-negotiable rights.

Human rights imperative

The right to birth registration[11] and access to universal education[12] are both well-recognised in multiple international standards, notably the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights; 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). Indeed, UNESCO notes that "*the right to education is guaranteed in at least 48 international (including regional) legal instruments and 23 soft law instruments*."[13]

Human rights achievement

Without legal identity and/or quality education, children are denied fundamental protections. A birth certificate is more than a document – it can be a shield against child marriage, labor, exploitation and other violations. Similarly, having a quality education provides a child with the crucial skills they need to succeed in school, in their communities and into independent adulthood.

Alignment with global goals

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) prioritise universal birth registration (Target 16.9) and equitable education (Target 4.5). Aligning these efforts accelerates progress on both fronts. A 2026 Human Rights Council resolution on birth registration recognises that the *"full implementation of target 16.9 will have both a direct and an indirect impact on the achievement of other Sustainable Development Goals, targets and priorities, inter alia, (...) access to inclusive and equitable quality education."*[14] Moreover, schools provide access to justice for older children, who should have been registered immediately after birth, as they provide an opportunity to remedy their situation (SDG 16).

Compliance with international and regional monitoring mechanisms

The various UN and regional treaty bodies monitoring the implementation of these rights have systematically recommended to States parties to address these issues. They have recognised the value in efforts to register children in schools. To illustrate, the CRC Committee in 2024 welcomed "*the significant efforts to improve the civil registration system, the registration of students without birth certificates*" in Senegal.[15]

11 See outline of main international milestones in United Nations Children's Fund. (2019). Birth Registration for Every Child by 2030: Are we on track?, UNICEF, New York, 2019. https://data.unicef.org/resources/birth-registration-for-every-child-by-2030/

12 See outline of main international standards in Chapter 2 in UNESCO. (2019). Right to education handbook : Right to Education Initiative. UNESCO, UK.

13 Op cit.

14 A/HRC/61/L.32/Rev.1 https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/61/L.32/Rev.1.

15 Committee on the Rights of the Child. (2024). Concluding observations on the combined sixth and seventh periodic reports of Senegal, United Nations

1.2. How schools can unlock universal birth registration and legal identity for children

When designed thoughtfully, linking schools with CR can create a mutually reinforcing relationship that strengthens both legal identity systems and education outcomes. In many contexts, schools are often seen only as end users of birth certificates, as they request proof of age or identity for enrollment, examinations, and certification.

These opportunities are discussed below:

Schools are natural contact points for screening birth registration

As schools are integrated naturally into community settings, families understand the importance of ensuring access to education and such interactions for enrolled children provide opportunities for birth registration. The potential reach is massive given that schools represent one of the largest decentralised public infrastructures in terms of both geographical and population reach.

Schools provide a medium for operational efficiency for late and delayed birth registration

Linking birth registration with schools helps address complex processes of late and delayed registration, including repeated visits to CR offices. While providing a structured pathway for registration and certification, they ensure accessibility, affordability, and efficiency.

Schools are a fitting pathway for reaching out-of-school children

Schools serve as optimal contact points for out-of-school children residing in their catchment areas. Siblings and neighbours of such children, as well as specific community-based interactions (back-to-school campaigns, school activities within the community), provide opportunities to contact, counsel, register and bring them back to school.

Leveraging schools, however, provides another organic opportunity for birth registration and legal identity, including for vulnerable and marginalised children born at home or residing in underserved areas, who missed the opportunity to be registered at birth. A well-functioning birth registration system offers several advantages for the education system, including access to birth registration data and birth certificates as proof of age.

Schools are communication channels

Schools can be the most efficient and cost-effective medium to help raise awareness among the community they serve about the importance, advantages, and processes of timely birth registration. Schools can equally be used to spread targeted messages about a campaign, including its duration, required documentation, and benefits.

Schools' data can be used for birth registration

During enrolment, examination, and/or certification process, schools generally collect information about the child, including their age, gender, place of birth, and their parent(s). This information often mirrors what is required for the birth registration process and can be used for birth registration, easing the need for fresh data collection.

Schools can provide statistics for children over five years without a birth certificate

As schools often collect information about the status of birth registration and certification for every child, they can be a good alternative source of information for children who are unregistered and/or without a birth certificate. Notable examples include Cameroon, which estimates that in 2023 there were over 1.4 million children in schools without a birth certificate, and Côte d'Ivoire in 2024, where there were over 1.25 million children in primary schools without a birth certificate. Even in schools where these details are not collected systematically, a filter question about the status of birth registration and certification can be added during enrolment.

School-based registration should be viewed strictly as a transitional mechanism to address existing backlogs. Countries should at the same time intensify efforts to achieve universal registration immediately after birth, as the long-term routinisation of school-based registration would represent a failure of the CR system to register children at the appropriate time.

1.3. What schools gain in return

When birth registration systems are strengthened, function well, and are linked to education, schools themselves benefit in multiple ways:

Accurate age data improves planning and learning outcomes

Reliable dates of birth help schools place children in appropriate grades, reduce age–grade mismatch, and improve classroom management. This supports better learning outcomes and reduces dropout risk, especially at transition points.

Smoother transitions and examinations

Birth certificates are often required for school enrolments, national examinations, and certification. When students are registered early and have valid documents, schools avoid last minute crises, administrative backlogs, and the exclusion of otherwise eligible learners from exams.

Stronger education data and system credibility

Linking education records with CR improves the quality of EMIS. Schools and the Ministry of Education gain more accurate enrollment figures, completion rates, and cohort tracking, which strengthens planning, financing, and accountability.

Reduced administrative burden on schools

In contexts where registration is weak, schools are often drawn into ad hoc verification exercises, affidavits, and manual record checks. Reliable birth registration systems reduce this burden, allowing school staff to focus on teaching and learning rather than paperwork.

Better targeting of education support

When identity systems are linked across sectors, schools are better able to connect students to scholarships, school feeding programs, fee waivers, or social protection programs that depend on age or household eligibility.

1.4. How convergence with schools is a natural corollary to the linkage between CRVS and Health

Given the utmost necessity of registering every newborn immediately after birth (Section 1.1), countries have made significant efforts to leverage the health sector to turn every contact point into an opportunity to register a birth or facilitate its registration.

The continued interactions for postnatal checkups, vaccination, growth monitoring, etc., have also enabled the registration of children aged 1-4. Such efforts to decentralise registration services through the health sector have yielded significant results toward improving the birth registration of children U5 across several countries.

However, sporadic, ad hoc attention has been given to utilise interactions with schools to identify and register children aged 5-17 who missed the opportunity through routine CR processes. It is therefore important to view twinning birth registration with schools as a logical complementary step, as education services are the next public infrastructure that children systematically interact with. Ideally, engagement with the health and education sectors should occur simultaneously and in a coordinated manner to improve the uptake of U1 registration by registering all newborns and clearing the existing backlog for ages 1-17 within a given time frame.

As further explained under Pillar 3, this should be seen as part of, and a continuation of, the broader Health-CR-Education-Social Protection-National Identity pathway, which schools will continue to serve as an additional pathway for identifying and supporting unregistered children.

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2. Pillar 1: How schools can clear birth registration backlogs of children enrolled in the education system

UNICEF/Talla/2024

The overarching objective should remain the universal and timely registration of births through regular CR mechanisms, with schools serving as an additional pathway to identify and support unregistered children, especially in settings with a significant backlog of older unregistered children. Broadly, there are four ways schools can help clear the backlog of in-school children as discussed next. At any of these occasions, children should not be denied enrolment and/or access to exams for want of birth registration or a birth certificate. In practice, countries may adopt a differentiated and combination of approaches based on their legal frameworks, administrative capacity, and service delivery context.

2.1. School admission as an entry point

Schools can clear the backlog of birth registrations for new enrollees during school admissions, for new and existing students, including during their transitions to the next class, or for specific examinations.

Registration at school

During school enrollment, teachers and administrators can verify the status of children's birth registration. Unregistered children can be registered on-site by setting up a temporary registration desk at schools by deputing a civil registrar or by declaring a schoolteacher, preferably the headteacher, as a sub-registrar for a specified period where law permits. In either case, the civil registrar or the schoolteacher will have to be empowered to register children born in different villages or areas covered by a particular school to address the issue of non-coterminous jurisdiction between school and CRVS authorities. On-site school registration provides a one-stop solution for both registration and certification and is well-suited for larger or secondary schools with sufficient capacity.

While deputing civil registrars in schools alleviates the need for training and oversight support, it is costly and may not work in settings with a limited number of civil registrars. Declaring a school teacher a sub-registrar, on the other hand, requires proper monitoring and supervision, as well as training and other support. Adequate measures should be taken to prevent duplicate registrations by establishing a mechanism to verify the registration status of unregistered children, including by sending a minimum set of information to civil registries online, where such facilities are available. This should also include built-in system checks and audit trails, as well as effective monitoring and supervision, to prevent potential misuse by designated school teachers serving as sub-registrars.

Teachers as informants

School teachers can act as informants and send completed declaration forms to the nearest CR office. This allows for proactive identification and initiation of the birth registration process. However, this may be practically challenging in more resource-constrained or remote settings, for example, where teachers are dealing with large classes and complex situations.

Teachers as facilitators

A facilitation model can be equally effective, with teachers supporting students, including out-of-school children, in completing and submitting declaration forms and coordinating with civil authorities for registration. Teachers act as a link between the community and the registration authorities through the nearest CR office. This referral process can be optimised by working with parent teacher association groups as well as community and religious leaders to complete necessary forms.

A significant advantage of this approach is that duplicate registration can be avoided through the usual registration process. However, follow-up and monitoring can be difficult, which can mean that some children do not receive a certificate in the end.

Whether teachers are informants or facilitators, it will be the responsibility of the nearest CR office to distribute the declaration forms to other CR offices for children born within their jurisdiction and to send the certificates back to the school after registration. The onus of ensuring that registration is completed within a given time frame should rest with supply-side actors.

The same modalities can be used during transitions to the next class or when appearing for a particular examination for existing unregistered in-school children. Special attention should be given to vulnerable and marginalised children who often lack documentation.

Table 1: Summary of proven models for school-based registration

	ON-SITE REGISTRATION	TEACHERS AS INFORMANTS	TEACHERS AS FACILITATORS
Description	By deputing a civil registrar or delegating registration responsibilities to a school teacher, preferably the head teacher.	Designating teachers as official informants ensures a proactive approach. Where permitted by law, designated education officials complete declaration forms.	Where teachers cannot be designated as official informants, they support parents of students and out-of-school children in completing forms, forwarding them to civil authorities, and distributing certificates.
Advantages	Enables a one-stop approach to registration and certification.	Parents do not need to travel to civil registration offices.	Provides comprehensive practical support to families (including out-of-school children) to complete forms, as well as avoid or minimize travel to civil registration offices.
Additional safeguards required	Requires a legal provision allowing delegation to school teachers. Mechanism should be in place to avoid duplication.	It may not work unless the CR authorities convert all declarations into registration and issue certificates.	Still depends on civil registration authorities; delays or weak follow-through can affect timely registration.

Table 2: Case examples for school-based registration

In **Cote d'Ivoire**, the Law 2018-863 provides a completely free and efficient framework for catch-up birth registration. This law allows for the detection and referral of children at schools, verification by the Mayors/Sous-Prefects and then court orders. The simplified process allows for the Judge to make orders without having an in-person hearing with the parents. Through this law, in 2019, over 650 000 children were registered. The continued efficient implementation of this law requires a standard operating procedure at national, regional, and local levels, as well as wide dissemination of its existence.

In the **Central African Republic, the Republic of Congo and Madagascar**, a dedicated project on Civil Registration and Education was launched in 2025 with support from OIF. Its innovation lies in systematically articulating education and CR systems, leveraging the fact that an identity document is required to sit for national exam, while schools offer wide coverage to identify unregistered children who were missed by health-based approaches. Beyond registration, the project introduces sustainable curricula through teacher training and community awareness, in line with a child-rights-based approach. It further innovates by integrating birth registration objectives into Contractual School Projects (PEC), creating accountability and structured dialogue among education authorities, civil registrars and parent associations.

The system in **Senegal**[16] is quite advanced due to the 2020 Protocol for detecting and registering pupils without birth certificates and its SIMEN system which electronically connects the CRVS and EMIS platforms. This Protocol led by the Ministry of Education in collaboration with the Ministries of Justice and Decentralisation describes all the stages from identifying students without birth certificates to obtaining their birth certificates via the education system. In 2023, more than 76,000 pupils from CI to CM2 were registered out of the 152,752 detected as having no birth certificate. In 2024, research was carried out in eight regions of Senegal involving 138 stakeholders, where school based registration occurs and for specific cases, the teacher can act as an informant. The research proposes potential solutions for integrating the remaining 70,000 pupils who have not yet been regularised.

In **Uganda,** a birth certificate is recommended but not enforced for school enrolment. Schools identify learners without documentation and channel them to scheduled the National Identification Registration Agency (NIRA) registration services (including mobile/outreach teams that periodically register from schools), where forms are completed/verified and data are captured by NIRA officials.[17] There is coordination between MoES and NIRA. A strong legal foundation for CRVS exists under NIRA, with operational education-linked outreach practices. CRVS–Education interoperability remains workflow-based, with no established nationwide cross-system data exchange or integrated EMIS–CRVS architecture.

16 https://www.child-identity.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/UNICEF-CHIP-Report-Senegal-EN.pdf
17 https://www.nira.go.ug/media/2021/05/Handbook.pdf

2.2. Special school-based campaigns to clear the backlog

Organising special school-based campaigns to clear the backlog of unregistered children is another approach adopted in several countries. These campaigns are generally conducted for 1-2 weeks, and involve substantial resources, including teachers, civil registrars, CR authorities, education authorities, CSOs, and local community and religious leaders.

For this duration, a pre-decided number of civil registrars, along with their support staff, including data entry clerks, are deployed. School teachers support parents in completing the declaration forms. Such campaigns have the advantage of covering the entire lot of unregistered school-going children in one go. However, they can be effective as a one-off measure to clear the backlog only when a system is in place to register all newborns within the legally permissible time window. Otherwise, a new backlog will continue to be produced. The success of such campaigns also depends largely on the efficacy of the awareness-creation program, community involvement, and operational and logistical preparedness.

These campaigns are not without limitations. Risks include the operational reality that such campaigns generally rely on manual processes that increase the likelihood of duplicate or fraudulent registrations, weak oversight, greater focus on achieving numbers, poor data quality, delayed processing, staggered registration and certification, inconsistent records, and poor institutional feedback loops. If poorly designed and executed, school-linked campaigns may create unintended incentives for delayed registration. Indeed, the current practice of organising such campaigns every 2-3 years to address the new backlog can be detrimental, as they become permanent or routine features of the CRVS and may be perceived by families as substitutes for timely birth registration.

Such temporary measures should therefore be clearly framed as corrective inclusion mechanisms, not as alternative pathways. They should be reinforced through consistent public messaging and registration modalities within the legal timeframe.

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Table 3: Case examples for school-based campaigns

In **Cameroon,**[18] as part of an initiative launched by the Ministry of Basic Education, Ministry of Decentralization and Local Development (MINDDEVEL), Ministry of Justice, the National Civil Status Registration Office (BUNEC), and in collaboration with UNICEF Cameroon, World Bank and other key stakeholders, the Special Operation of the Support Programme for Education Reform Special PAREC Operation) was launched in 2024. The operation provides birth certificates to pupils at the end of their primary education, as it is a mandatory document for sitting the end-of-primary exams. Through Special PAREC Operation, 48,232 Year 6 pupils had their legal identity established and civil status regularised over the course of only a few months. A Working Group, led by MINEDUB and representatives of all relevant stakeholders was established to support research seeking to optimise the Special Operation by Child Identity Protection (CHIP). Some of the risks that were observed during this campaign included double registration of children and some not receiving the actual birth certificate. UNICEF in collaboration with CHIP is supporting Cameroon to formalise this mechanism to improve better coordination between relevant Ministries at national and local levels to address the remaining backlog and improve broader data exchange between CRVS and Education sectors.

In **Chad,** birth certificate is not required for school enrolment but during national exam. In 2024, over 53,000 school-aged children without birth certificates were registered by the Agence Nationale Des Titres Sécurisés – ANATS, in collaboration with the Organisation internationale de la Francophonie (OIF) as part of a special campaign to encourage children to attend school in two provinces (Tandjilé and Ennedi Est). Schools served as relay points for reporting and identifying pupils without birth certificates, and for registration campaign point.

India cleared birth registration backlogs in multiple states from 2002 to 2009 using school-based strategies. The report of the annual conference of Chief Registrars in 2010 provides a summary of how this work was carried out.

In **Kenya**, there is partial interoperability emerging. The policy is that a birth certificate is required for national exams, not for enrolment. The National Education Management Information System (NEMIS) records learners' birth certificate numbers and identity details to generate a Unique Personal Identifier (UPI). This supports learner identification within the education system, but NEMIS is not yet technically integrated with the CR database for automated data exchange

In **Rwanda**, [19] interoperability between CR and education is not only a technical idea; it is a practical service improvement. Education benefits from authoritative identity and population data for admission, progression, examinations and planning. CR benefits from the education sector's reach, routine contact with children and families, and ability to identify missing or inconsistent records early. The result is a more accurate, more inclusive and more efficient system for both sectors - and ultimately better protection of every child's right to education and legal identity.

18 https://www.child-identity.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/Research-Report_Birth-Registration-CAM_Web.pdf
19 NIDA Endline Evaluation of Rwanda CRVS Strategic Plan (2016-2024) https://docs.google.com/document/d/1cM3VmKpH2nnQV6zW_9QLCLj72TR_FL0J/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=114862215330551587668&rtpof=true&sd=true

Practical example	BENEFIT TO EDUCATION	BENEFIT TO CRVS / NIDA
P1 admission and age verification	The school places the child in the correct entry cohort, opens a cleaner student file, and plans resources more accurately.	If a child lacks a record or the date of birth is inconsistent, the case is flagged early and referred before later stages become more complicated.
P6 / S3 / S6 examination and school-transition registration	Identity checks reduce errors in candidate names, dates of birth, index numbers and certificates; they also improve transparency in school selection.	Parents and schools help validate official details, and corrections can be pushed back to CRVS / NIDA instead of remaining only in the school record.
Transfer, repetition or equivalency from another district or education system	Schools verify that the learner's official identity matches previous academic records, reducing duplicate or fragmented files.	Interoperability helps detect duplicate identities, unresolved spelling differences, or records that were never properly linked to the national registry.
Targeted support, re-entry and inclusion cases	Programmes such as school feeding, bursaries or re-entry support can be planned on a more accurate count of children actually served.	Where schools repeatedly find undocumented or vulnerable children, registrars can prioritize outreach, help desks or awareness campaigns in those areas.

2.3. School records to detect, refer, and register children

Education authorities, often through EMIS and school-level records, systematically identify learners whose births are unregistered or who lack birth certificates and refer them through defined channels to CRVS.

This detection, referral, and registration role occurs as part of routine practices for children who have not been registered at birth. Such an approach can be effective if followed up as part of the broader CR-Education system integration, as it can verify CR authorities' claims and serve as an additional layer of filtering, especially for vulnerable and marginalised children. After birth registration, CR authorities can send the Unique Identification Number (UIN) to EMIS to facilitate subsequent tracking of that child's educational journey and beyond. In the absence of the UIN, the birth registration number can serve as an interim unique identifier.

2.4. Schools can integrate National Identification Registration

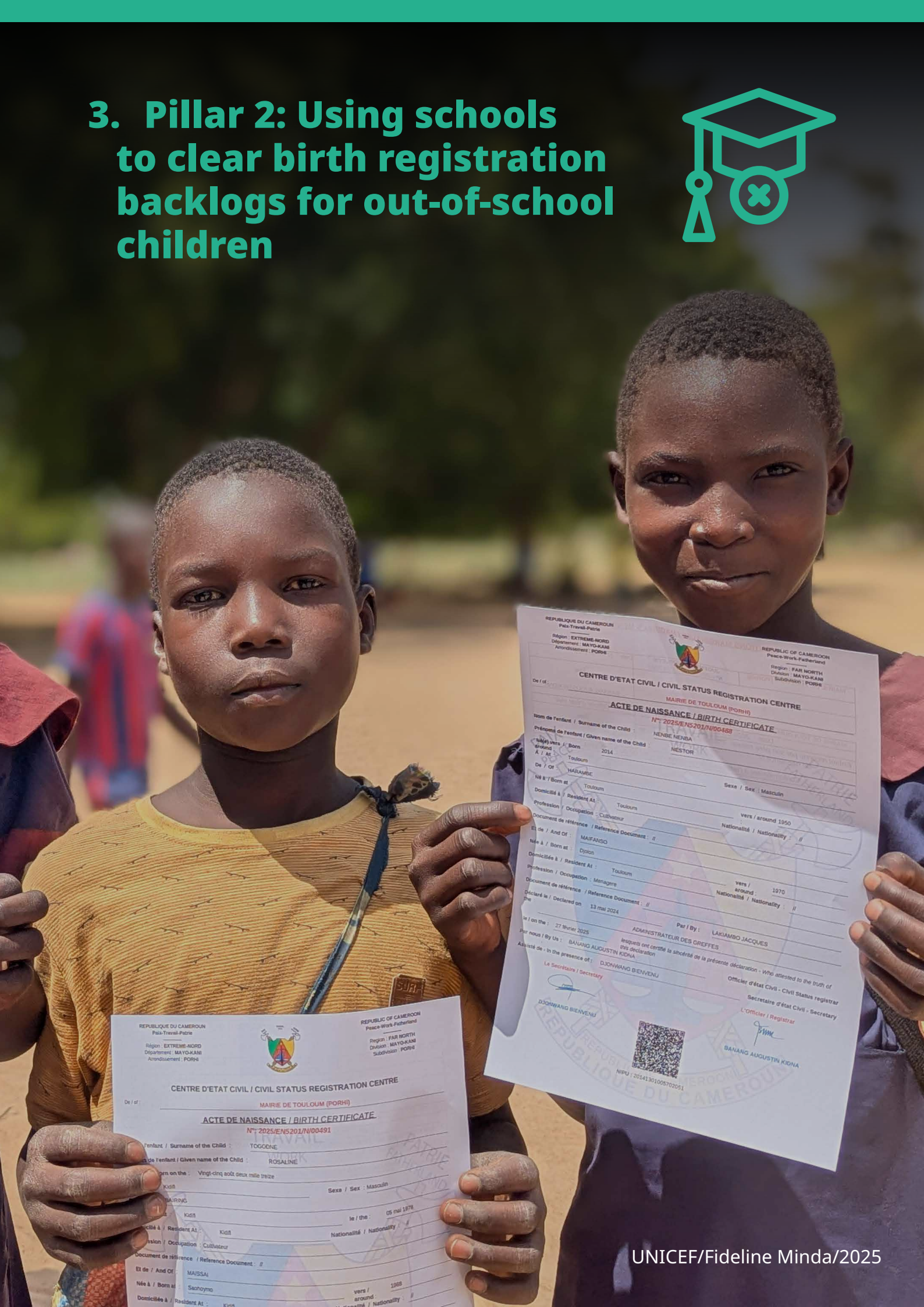
As countries have begun expanding National Identification (NID) registration coverage to the entire population, starting with issuing a UIN at birth registration at age "0", schools have become a natural point of contact to support access to NID registration for children aged 5–17 by facilitating identification and referral processes.

Such efforts can also be used to register the births of unregistered children through service convergence. The optimal approach would be to deploy a civil registrar with the NID registration team or at the NID registration site to leverage NID infrastructure and investments. Seizing the opportunity presented by the NID registration campaign is crucial for clearing the backlog of birth registrations and shouldn't be overlooked.

Birth registration, in turn, will ensure that key biographic details needed to establish a person's identity are consistent across both systems, converging towards a single source of truth. Where birth registration cannot be completed on-site, countries can ensure that the information needed for birth registration is shared with CR authorities for follow-up. CR authorities can register the birth of such unregistered children and confirm the correctness of biographic details to NID authorities. Full integration between education and CRVS has many additional benefits (Section 4).

Approach	STRENGTHS	LIMITATIONS
School admission as an entry point	Integrates registration into routine school processes (admission, class transitions, exams). Prevents denial of education opportunities due to a lack of documentation. Can empower teachers or registrars to register children directly. Helps avoid duplicate registrations if verification mechanisms are in place.	Requires training and oversight if teachers act as sub-registrars. Costly if civil registrars are deputed to schools. Risk of jurisdictional mismatches between schools and CRVS offices. Needs strong monitoring to prevent errors or delays.
Special school-based campaigns	Can clear large backlogs quickly in a short period. Mobilises multiple stakeholders (teachers, registrars, CSOs, community leaders). Raises awareness among families and communities.	Resource-intensive and logistically demanding. Risk of duplicate/fraudulent registrations due to manual processes. May encourage families to delay registration and wait for campaigns. Poor data quality and weak oversight if not well designed.
School records to detect, refer, and register	Uses existing school records and EMIS to identify unregistered children. Provides systematic referral channels to civil registration services. Supports integration between education and CR systems. Helps track vulnerable and marginalised children.	Relies on strong coordination between education and CR authorities. Requires reliable data systems and consistent feedback loops. May face delays if referral pathways are weak or under-resourced.
Schools for NID registration	Leverages national ID campaigns to simultaneously clear birth registration backlogs. Ensures consistency of biographic details across CR and NID systems. Provides convergence of services, reducing duplication. Strengthens long-term identity management.	Dependent on the collaboration between the NID and Civil Registration authorities. Risk of incomplete registration if birth details are not properly shared with CR authorities.

3. Pillar 2: Using schools to clear birth registration backlogs for out-of-school children



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Ensuring that out-of-school children likewise have equal access to inclusive and universal education is part of the government's zero-out-of-school-children agenda. Schools can play a key role in reaching out to such children to bring them back to school, as well as in facilitating the birth registration of unregistered children.

This can be done by conducting a campaign to identify such children residing in the school's catchment area. Such campaigns should ideally be conducted at least a month before the start of school season or during school breaks, to avoid disruption with the school routine.

Given the proximity of schools to the community, a household-to-household visit can be organised to identify out-of-school children and collect the necessary biographic information, including the status of birth registration. During such visits, birth declaration forms can also be completed for unregistered children to initiate the birth registration process. Such a frame will serve as a conduit for follow-up efforts to bring out-of-school children back to school after screening to determine entry into the age-appropriate class. Out-of-school children can also be reached through school-enrolled children's contact with those not in school (e.g., siblings, cousins, extended family, and neighbors), which is highly effective for follow-ups.

Unregistered children in schools can avail themselves of any of the available 1-4 options for birth registration (Section 2). For those who cannot be enrolled or mainstreamed into schools for any reason, schools can send the completed birth declaration forms to the nearest CR office for registration.

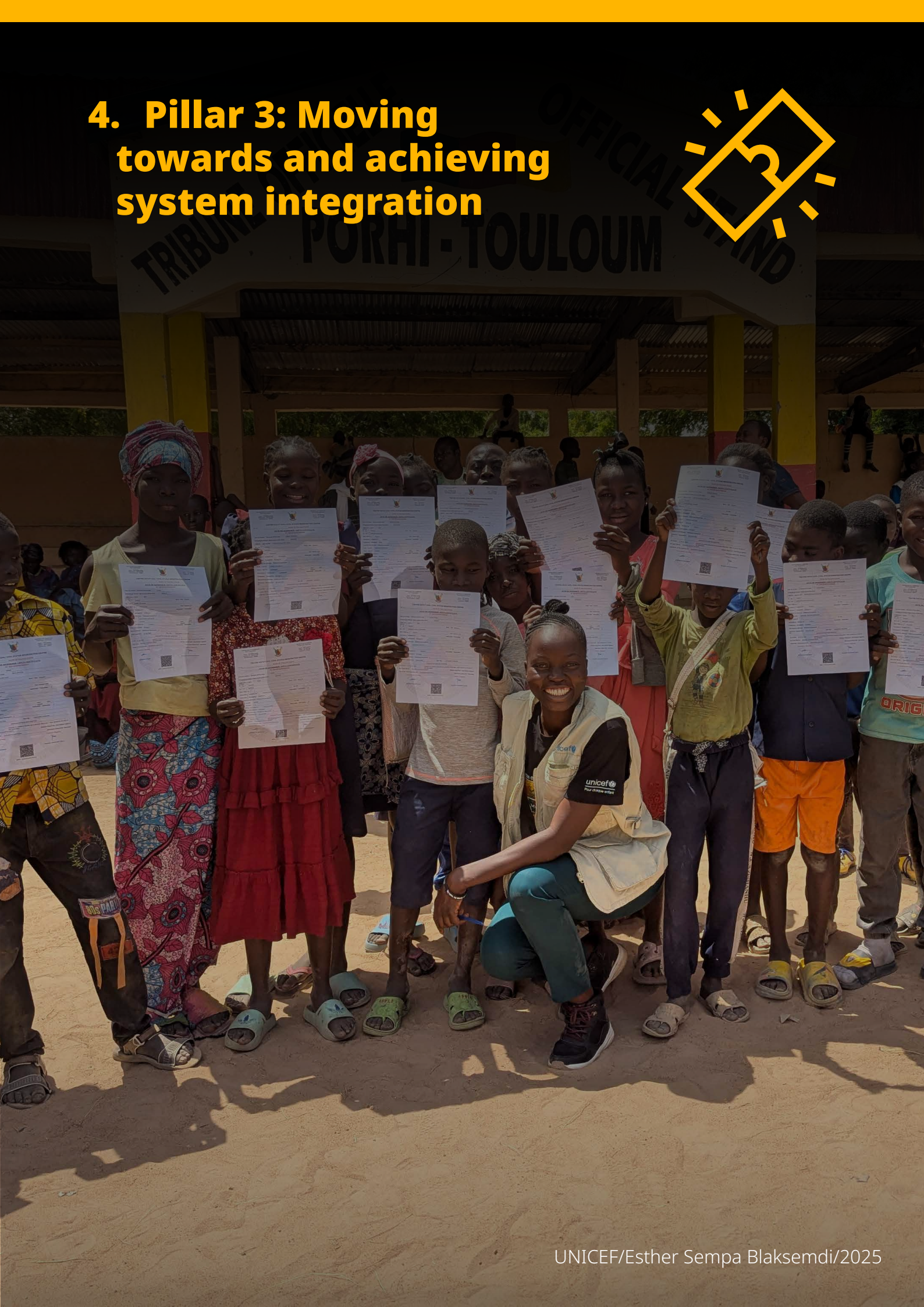
While school-based outreach is a practical entry point, it may face some constraints. Financing needs can be significant, as household outreach, training, transport, data systems, and coordination require sustained funding, often difficult to maintain in resource-constrained settings. The approach also relies heavily on local capacity: its effectiveness depends on the skills, motivation, and availability of teachers and local officials, and heavy workloads and weak systems can undermine quality and follow-up. Finally, there are notable equity risks. School-linked strategies may miss the most marginalised, such as displaced, street-connected, nomadic or pastoralist children, and those in informal settlements or social exclusion who have little or no link to schools, potentially reinforcing existing gaps unless complemented by targeted outreach beyond the school system.

In **Liberia**, "Back to My Classroom" campaign links enrolment with registration for the thousands of children out of school.[20] The Education-led outreach supports CRVS coverage. A birth certificate not required for enrolment (enrol-first approach); "Back to My Classroom" is a presidential, multi-sector initiative that re-enrols out-of-school children and links enrolment to birth registration and UIN assignment through a structured referral/batching process between schools, CR, and the national ID registry. This is a time-bound initiative demonstrating operational linkage; where institutionalisation and system integration remain in development.

In **Senegal**, the Ministry of Education with multiple actors such as UNICEF are working to provide bridging initiatives targeting children out of school.[21] These initiatives offer learning opportunities for children such as those living in street situations and those in nomadic lifestyles. As they target these children through these initiatives, they also detect children without birth certificates and support them with the regularisation of their situation.

20 https://www.moeliberia.com/ministry-of-education-relaunches-back-to-my-classroom-campaign-to-advance-inclusive-learning-across-liberia/
21 https://orientation.education.sn/SousRubrique/21 and https://www.unicef.org/senegal/recits/ma-plus-belle-r%C3%A9compense-serait-de-voir-ces-enfants-poursuivre-leurs-%C3%A9tudes-jusqu%C3%A0

4. Pillar 3: Moving towards and achieving system integration



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School-based birth registration can be implemented across a wide range of country contexts—whether systems are fully manual, partially digitised, or highly advanced (Sections 1, 2 and 3). In settings where both CRVS and education systems are paper-based, schools can still play a critical role in identifying unregistered children and facilitating registration through manual processes.

Where one system is digitised and the other is not, hybrid approaches such as digitising school records or using offline data collection tools can be used. In fully digitised environments, integrated platforms can enable seamless data exchange. While these models are all viable, efficiency, accuracy, and scale improve significantly when CRVS and EMIS are integrated.

While school-based registration can function in diverse system environments, integrating CRVS and education systems transforms it from a campaign-driven intervention into a sustainable, lifecycle-based approach to legal identity and service delivery.

System integration should ideally begin at birth. Once a newborn is registered, birth registration data along with a UIN should be securely shared with the education sector in real time. In countries where UINs are not issued at birth, the birth registration number can serve as an interim unique identifier to link CRVS and EMIS until a National Identification Number (NIN) is assigned. This approach establishes a single source of truth for a child's identity, ensuring consistency of biographic data across systems.

For the education sector, access to reliable, child-specific data offers multiple benefits. It improves education planning and resource allocation by providing early visibility into future enrolment cohorts. It also enables streamlined school admissions, allowing schools to pre-populate student records and reducing the need for parents to repeatedly submit documents, including birth certificates. At the individual level, a verified birth record provides proof of age, supporting age-appropriate school placement and reducing both underage and overage enrolment.

Integration can further support backlog reduction and service delivery. For example, CRVS systems can share data on children registered between ages 1–4, helping education authorities identify those already registered before school entry. For unregistered children aged 5–17, integrated systems can enable the use of education data directly for birth declaration and registration, minimising the need for additional data collection and accelerating processing. At the same time, system linkages help prevent duplicate or fraudulent registrations, especially in large-scale school-based campaigns.

Beyond registration, interoperability enhances service access across the lifecycle. Integrated systems enable real-time or online verification of birth certificates, which is valuable when students sit for national examinations, apply for scholarships, or seek education loans. Linkages between CRVS, education, and other systems such as social protection equally make it easier to identify and track out-of-school children, improving targeting and inclusion in both education and welfare programmes.

The long-term vision is an integrated health–CRVS–education–social protection– NID pathway. This delivers three core advantages: collect data once and use it multiple times; update information across systems as changes occur; and move information—not people—between services. Achieving this vision requires interoperable systems.

However, interoperability depends on several enabling conditions. These include harmonised data standards, sufficient levels of digitalisation across sectors, and the availability of person-specific data from the health sector at birth. Investments are likewise needed to address practical constraints, such as reliable electricity, connectivity, and digital infrastructure at the local level. Equally important are robust data protection and privacy safeguards, supported by clear legal frameworks and standard operating procedures governing data sharing, access, and use.

5. Pillar 4: Chief enablers to support school-based birth registration

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There are several key enablers that can help countries move towards and achieve full system integration (Section 4). These enablers operate in a context where school-based birth registration is not a single intervention but a system-wide effort that requires alignment between legal frameworks, service delivery mechanisms, digital systems, and community outreach. The complexity increases when countries need to address large backlogs of unregistered children within a limited timeframe, while also maintaining the integrity of the CRVS system and supporting education sector objectives.

The feasibility and effectiveness of different approaches such as on-site registration, use of teachers as informants, or facilitation models as discussed in Section 1 depend heavily on enabling conditions such as legal mandates, institutional coordination, operational capacity, human resources, and access to technology. Without these enablers in place, even well-designed models may face implementation bottlenecks or limited coverage.

A deeper understanding of these core enablers is critical to help countries move beyond fragmented or pilot efforts toward scalable, efficient, and sustainable solutions.

5.1. Law and policy framework

Governments should establish a clear and robust legal and policy framework, such as standard operating procedures (SOPs) that encompasses all feasible models of school-based birth registration.

This includes providing blanket authorisation, for a defined backlog clearance period, to:

- set up registration desks in schools by deputing civil registrars,
- delegate registration responsibilities to school authorities (e.g., head teachers), designate teachers as official informants, or
- allow schools to facilitate birth declaration, registration and certification.

These provisions should be context-specific and avoid piecemeal approvals. The framework should also replace judicial processes with simple, low-cost administrative procedures that can be implemented at the school or community level. In addition, fees and penalties for late and delayed registration should be waived during the campaign period to remove financial barriers and enable universal access.

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5.2. Use of digital tools to improve efficiency and transparency

Digitalisation can significantly enhance the speed, quality, and scale of school-based registration. Countries should deploy simple, interoperable digital tools aligned with EMIS and CRVS standards to:

- capture and share data on unregistered children,
- reduce duplication of data entry across systems,
- improve registration and certification processes,
- real-time issuance of UINs and verification of parent's credentials,
- flag potential duplicate or fraudulent registrations, and
- track cases from identification to certification.

Where available, existing digital platforms (e.g., newborn registration apps) can be extended to support school-based registration. Mobile devices can likewise be leveraged to send real-time updates to parents and schools, including status alerts and digital links to download birth certificates. In low-connectivity settings, offline-capable solutions should be considered.

Table 4 : Key success factors for school-based birth registration:

- Position school-based registration as an interim measure:
  - frame as time bound strategy to eliminate the backlog (e.g., within 3–5 years)
  - communication strategies about benefits, procedures and temporary nature of relaxed measures, while reinforcing the importance of timely registration at birth
- Simplify late and delayed registration processes
  - reduce administrative steps, decentralize approvals, and enable school-linked processing to ensure fast, child-friendly registration at scale
  - relax documentation requirements
  - temporarily allow alternative evidence (e.g., school or health records) instead of affidavits and witnesses, with safeguards against misuse.
  - replace judicial processes with administrative procedures
  - simplified administrative decision-making by authorized officials in place of court-based processes
- Remove fees and penalties for late and delayed registration during the defined campaign period.
- Institutionalise SOPs outlining roles, responsibilities, timelines, and processes across CR, education, and local authorities (e.g. joint planning, shared targets, and coordination platforms)
  - Establish on-site and decentralised dispute resolution mechanisms
- Ensure adequate resourcing and capacity building (e.g. train teachers, registrars, and frontline workers)
- Use digital tools for registration, tracking, and certificate issuance, ensuring interoperability across systems.
  - Establish protocols to protect personal data when using digital and interlinked systems.
- Institutionalise monitoring, evaluation, and feedback loops (data-driven management)
- Engage community and religious leaders such as PTAs and self-help groups to build trust and drive uptake.
- Deploy frontline workers for last-mile delivery
  - Ensure inclusion of the most marginalized groups
  - Target out-of-school, displaced, disabled, and excluded children through tailored outreach and flexible approaches

5.3. Coordinated planning, implementation and capacity building

A well-coordinated, whole-of-system approach is critical. Governments should develop a comprehensive SOP covering all implementation modalities, including school-based registration, outreach campaigns, and services for out-of-school children.

SOPs should clearly define roles and responsibilities of all actors CRVS authorities, education officials, local governments, community leaders, and CSOs from planning to implementation and follow-up.

A multi-tiered training program should be rolled out to build the capacity of teachers, registrars, and frontline workers, with clear guidance on procedures, safeguards, and "dos and don'ts."

Implementation should be guided by clear milestones and performance indicators (e.g., children identified declared registered certified). Reliable estimates of the target population in each catchment area are essential for planning human and financial resources. Rather than fragmented efforts, countries should pool resources and implement a single, well-coordinated, large-scale campaign to maximise impact.

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5.4. Community-based identification and outreach

Community engagement is essential to identify unregistered children and generate demand Governments should leverage back-to-school campaigns, enrolment drives, and other community events to:

- create awareness for better participation of the community
- identify children without birth certificates and/or who are out of school,
- distribute or collect birth declaration forms, and
- refer cases to registration authorities or school-based services.

Existing community structures, such as parent-teacher associations, local groups, and religious platforms, should be actively involved. Frontline workers and CSOs can play a key role in reaching vulnerable and hard-to-reach populations. Importantly, systems should be designed to minimise the need for parents to travel to distant registration offices. Bringing services closer to communities through schools or mobile units helps overcome both accessibility and affordability barriers, ensuring that no child is left behind.

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Conclusion

School-based birth registration offers a powerful, practical pathway to close persistent gaps in legal identity, particularly among older and marginalised children.

When designed as a time-bound, large-scale response to clear backlogs, it can rapidly expand coverage of unregistered children while strengthening the link between CR and essential services such as education. The evidence shows that no single model fits all contexts, countries can adopt flexible combinations of on-site registration, teacher-led declaration, and facilitation approaches, tailored to their legal frameworks, system maturity, and operational capacity.

Beyond its direct impact on legal identity, school-based registration also delivers significant benefits for the education sector. It enables schools to identify and enrol children who are currently excluded due to lack of documentation, thereby supporting inclusive education and improved access for marginalized and out-of-school children. Integrated data systems allow education authorities to track and locate out-of-school children, support targeted outreach, and design more responsive policies and interventions. Verified birth records facilitate age-appropriate placement, reduce administrative burdens during admissions, and improve the accuracy of education data for planning, budgeting, and service delivery.

However, the success of these models depends not only on delivery mechanisms, but on the strength of enabling systems, clear legal mandates, simplified procedures, coordinated implementation, digital integration, and sustained community engagement. Equally important is maintaining the integrity and long-term vision of CRVS systems: school-based registration must remain an interim strategy, complemented by efforts to ensure universal, timely registration at birth through routine CR channels.

Ultimately, integrating CRVS with education systems transforms birth registration from a one-time administrative act into part of a continuous, lifecycle approach to identity and service delivery. By investing in interoperable systems and inclusive approaches, countries can ensure that every child is not only registered but also enrolled, visible in systems, and able to access education and other essential services. This creates a virtuous cycle where identity enables education, and education systems help secure identity, laying a strong foundation for equity, human development, and the full realisation of children's rights.

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