

People lining up to register for national IDS. The ID will enhance transparency in government services

By Edward Kayiwa

In June last year, Tom Asingwire, the proprietor of Mulungi Enterprises, lost his national identification card and has to date not bothered to replace it. Asingwire, like many others, does not see the significance a national identification card could have, aside from allowing him to travel across the East Africa region for trade.

But the national identification card, according to the National Information Technology Authority (NITA-U), is more than just a card allowing someone access to Uganda's neighbouring countries.

Each card, according to NITA, has a special National Identification Number (NIN), designed to provide citizens with digital access to all secure government e-services.

"As long as the holder of the ID punches in their NIN details, the appropriate authorities will receive their particulars and act accordingly. In the near future, it will be impossible to access any government services without the NIN, because they will all be digitised," says James Saka, the executive director of NITA-U.

NITA-U is an autonomous government parastatal under the Ministry of ICT and National Guidance, mandated to coordinate, promote and monitor information and technology developments in Uganda.

According to Saka, the national ID-NIN will enhance transparency in government servicedelivery by making data sharing across agencies seamless and digitised.

He says once all citizens have been issued with their national identification, the law will then allow Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDA) to access the data for purposes of making it easier to effectively plan and allocate resources.

For long, the government has been grappling with issues of resource misallocation and under-allocation. Therefore, to become more efficient, government chose to take all services online, according to Saka.

"Through technical support from NITA-U, a number of MDAs have taken their services online, and this has resulted into automation of processes and development of services which has led to efficiency and

National ID will be key to electronic govt services



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transparency," Saka explains.

The eCitizen portal, for example, is a one-stop online centre for government online services engineered by NITA-U, and is systematically structured to offer seamless navigation and quick access to

WHY E-GOVERNMENT

According to Kirenga, NITA-U marketing and communications manager, online delivery of public services will enable citizens, enterprises and organisations to carry out their business with government more easily, more quickly and at a lower cost.

He says the system will also improve the productivity of government agencies by eliminating duplication of work through online co-ordination.

"We believe that the system will also create a more accountable government to increase transparency and fight corruption," he says.

all the services. The portal allows citizens to use their NIN to access services such as e-Tax, business registration, trading license registration and social security statements among others.

"Our vision is to get to the point where every public service can be accessed on this portal. Currently, 74 MDA informational and transactional services may be accessed through this portal if one has their national identification details," he says.

Also, NITA-U partnered with the directorate of immigration control to develop the e-visa platform, which allows foreigners to apply for visas of all classes and renewal of insurance, residence permits application and work permits online.

"By the end of 2017, more than 212,000 applications had been made through this platform and approximately \$2.2m

reduced from one month to five work days," says Steven Kirenga, NITA-U marketing and communications manager.

Upcoming initiatives

According to Rowena Turinawe, NITA-U's manager in charge of public management, her organisation and Public Procurement and Disposal of Assets Authority have already finalised steps to launch the electronic government procurement system.

Starting July 2018, procurement of small and big projects from the government will go online through the e-procurement system.

She says the system will be launched at selected procuring and dispensing entities which are currently undergoing capacity building training at the ministry of ICT, Kampala.

According to Turinawe, the move is aimed at curbing corruption, which is rampant in government MDAs.

The government has also lined up an e-payment gateway, a web-based system to facilitate electronic payments for Government services, to make servicedelivery more efficient and responsive to the needs of the citizen, she said.

She added that NITA-U will also roll out the Unified Messaging and Collaboration System by the end of 2018 to enhance email, voice, video, social and instant messaging services to government offices.

"This will promote collaboration and communication among government departments and local governments.

Other initiatives, according to Turinawe include the SMS gateway and the electronic voucher that provides farmers in an agricultural cluster with subsidised farm inputs, improved agricultural infrastructure, post-harvest handling technologies and