

Doing business.

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For years, starting a business has meant navigating a maze of paperwork and identification numbers.

A would-be entrepreneur first needs a National Identification Number (NIN) from National Identification and Registration Authority (NIRA), then a Business Registration Number (BRN) from Uganda Registration Services Bureau (URSB), and finally a Tax Identification Number (TIN) from Uganda Revenue Authority (URA).

But government is working on a major shift, which, according to URA, will allow the NIN to serve as both the TIN and BRN, effectively creating a single identity that businesses can use across multiple government systems.

The reform, URA says, represent one of the most significant administrative shifts and promises to simplify business registration processes, improve transparency and reduce bureaucratic hurdles that many entrepreneurs say discourage them from formalising their businesses.

URA assistant commissioner for public and corporate affairs Robert Kalumba says the move is part of a broader effort by government to streamline service delivery and modernise how citizens interact with state institutions.

"It represents a major shift toward efficiency, transparency, and convenience for citizens and businesses alike," he says.

Currently, Uganda's identification and registration systems operate largely independently. While the NIN confirms a person's identity, the TIN is used for tax purposes, and the BRN identifies a registered business entity.

For many Ugandans, this means dealing with separate registration protocols for services that are closely related.

The proposed reform, URA says, seeks to bridge these systems by making the NIN the central reference number, allowing government agencies to verify identity, tax compliance, and business registration through a single database.

But most importantly, Kalumba says, the integration could significantly reduce the time and effort Ugandans spend navigating administrative processes.

Major shift: NINs to replace TINs business registration numbers



Key figures

4.52m

URA data shows that taxpayers grew to more than 4.52 million by June 2024, a sharp increase from 3.5 million in same period in 2023.

28,408

The URSB 2024/25 Annual Report shows that 28,408 new companies and 21,695 business names were registered by June 2025.

URA says NIN, as a single identifier for tax and business registration, simplifies services, improves compliance, and strengthens transparency. PHOTO / FILE

"One of the major benefits of the reform is improved convenience. With a single identification number, citizens, entrepreneurs, and business operators will no longer have to juggle several identification systems. Whether registering a business, filing taxes, or verifying identity for official transactions, the same number will be used across institutions," he says.

Expanding tax reach

The reform comes at a time when

Uganda's tax administration is expanding its reach.

The 2023/24 URA Annual Data Book shows that Uganda's taxpayer register had grown to more than 4.52 million taxpayers by June 2024, reflecting a sharp increase from 3.5 million in the same period in 2023.

But beyond taxation, URA says, the reform will also positively impact the business landscape. Every year, thousands of enterprises register with URSB, reflecting the steady growth of en-

trepreneurship across the country. URSB 2024/25 Annual Report shows that 28,408 new companies and 21,695 business names were registered in the 12 months ending June 2025, underscoring the scale of business activity entering the formal economy.

However, government says many small enterprises remain informal and do not contribute to the tax purse, deterred by the complexity of registration procedures.

Thus, by linking identity, tax registration, and business licensing through a single number, government hopes to make formalisation simpler and more attractive for small and medium-sized enterprises, which will in turn open doors to credit, government programmes, and broader market opportunities for entrepreneurs.

Beyond convenience, URA believes the unified identification system could strengthen accountability by making it harder for individuals to operate under multiple identities to evade taxes or carry out fraudulent activities.

The system is also expected to give government agencies a clearer picture of economic activity across sectors, improving the quality of data available for national planning.

Transformative change

By simplifying interactions between citizens, businesses, and government institutions, the shift could reduce administrative costs, strengthen tax compliance and support the broader formalisation of Uganda's economy.

Kalumba says the reform is part of a wider effort to modernise public service delivery.

"Although the change may appear small, adopting a single identification number could significantly transform how government services are delivered while strengthening accountability and supporting national development," he says.