

WHITE PAPER 01/2016

TABLING OF THE WHITE PAPER

ON A NATIONAL IDENTIFICATION SYSTEM POLICY FOR JAMAICA

1.0 PURPOSE

1.1 The White Paper seeks to table in this Honourable House, the National Identification System (NIDS) Policy.

2.0 BACKGROUND

2.1 Cabinet has approved the NIDS Policy for tabling in Parliament as a White Paper vide Cabinet Decision 34 /16 dated October 10, 2016.

2.2 Article 6 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) establishes that “everyone has the right to recognition everywhere as a person before the law.” The right to a legal identity is a fundamental human right, where the State is obliged to enable each person to exercise his or her right to a name. Having a legal identity is increasingly important for any person who interacts with both the public and private sectors. When persons are undocumented, they are oftentimes denied opportunities and possibilities to exercise their civil and social rights.

2.3 This Honourable House is being asked to note that the Government of Jamaica (GOJ) has been deliberating on the introduction of a National Registration System since the 1970s. The concept was that each person from birth should be issued with a unique number, which would be used when transacting business. In 1990, the Electoral Advisory Committee (EAC) made a recommendation to the then Honourable Minister of Justice (who was responsible for electoral matters), for the establishment of a body to implement a National Registration System. By way of Cabinet Decision No. 33/1993, the Cabinet approved the establishment of a National Registration Unit in the Ministry of Health in 1993. Two years later, the Cabinet, by way of Cabinet Decision No. 45/95, gave approval for the tabling of a National Registration Bill and that Bill was presented to Parliament in 2000.

2.4 In 2006, the Cabinet approved the proposal for the implementation of a NIDS, amendments to the existing draft National Registration Bill and the issuing of drafting instructions to the Chief Parliamentary Counsel by way of Cabinet Decision No. 12/06. As a result of this Decision, the Bill was withdrawn for redrafting and resubmission at a later date.

2.5 The Cabinet, by way of Cabinet Decision No. 40/08, recommitted to the implementation of a NIDS by 2010. In July 2011, approval was given for the National Registration Unit to be transferred from the Ministry of Health (MOH) to the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM). Subsequently, the GOJ received a grant in September 2011 from the Inter-American Development Bank through the Korean Poverty Reduction Fund in the amount of Six Hundred and Seventy Thousand United States Dollars (US\$670,000), for the purposes of conducting the preparatory work required for the implementation of a NIDS. Thereafter, the Cabinet gave approval for the development of a NIDS Policy in December 2011, by way of Cabinet Decision No. 48/11.

2.6 The development of the NIDS Policy has benefited from extensive consultations with the public sector and key stakeholders within the private sector. With the transfer of NIDS to the OPM, core working groups were established with representatives from Ministries, Departments & Agencies (MDAs) to inform the development of the policy, legal framework and the ICT architecture of the NIDS. A series of major workshops were held between 2012 and 2016 to discuss issues and key aspects of the NIDS, determine the elements of the policy, ICT architecture and legislative framework. Comments have been received on the draft policy from all Ministries and workshop participants and incorporated into the policy document.

3.0 RATIONALE FOR THE POLICY

3.1 The NIDS Policy recognises that Jamaica does not have any reliable means of efficiently verifying the identity of every citizen through a single and authoritative source of trusted identity. Issues arising from the non-existence of a national identification system include, *inter alia*, social exclusion of the poorest due to lack of basic legal identity documents, fraud within social benefit programmes, identity theft, for example, the use of a birth certificate or passport of a deceased person and persons creating a claimed identity. There are also errors in some official records (incorrect and misspelled names, wrong addresses, missing data fields) which greatly increase the possibility of inconsistency among different records.

3.2 There are a number of identity systems being utilized by various public sector entities, which were designed to meet the objectives of the respective organizations for identification of their clients. Some identity systems are enabled by legislation (for example, TRN, passport, voter's identification and the National Insurance Scheme). Other identity systems were designed to facilitate delivery of services by a particular Ministry or Agency (for example, farmer's identification).

3.3 Existing identification numbers associated with various agencies are sectoral and functional based. This means that the sharing of information is challenging due to technical, logistical or

legal barriers. In addition, the lack of inter-connectivity among the many systems means that there is limited scope for, and no standard method of authentication and verification of an individual's identity across agencies and systems. It further limits the Government's ability to implement a coherent e-government strategy and joined up Government.

3.4 *An Economic and Cost/Benefit Assessment for the Implementation of a National Identification System for Jamaica* undertaken by the NIDS Project Unit in 2015, concluded that there are a number of common areas where a NIDS will generate return on investment for stakeholders, both in the short and longer term, namely economic savings, convenience and ease of doing business, improved governance and expansion in welfare and social protection for the most vulnerable.

4.0 VISION AND GOAL OF THE POLICY

4.1 The vision of the policy is that: *“Jamaica's National Identification System is the primary source of verifiable and authentic identity assurance for every citizen and person ordinarily resident in Jamaica”*.

4.2 The goal of the policy is: *“To facilitate the establishment of a National Identification System that supports secure, reliable and robust identity verification and authentication of citizens and persons ordinarily resident in Jamaica by 2017”*.

5.0 OBJECTIVES OF THE POLICY

5.1 The strategic objectives of the policy are:

- i. To provide the basis for a robust governance framework, including legal and institutional arrangements, for the issuance of a lifetime unique and secure national identification number and a national identification card to each citizen and person ordinarily resident in Jamaica.
- ii. To facilitate the implementation of simplified procedures through which citizens may have access to an array of benefits and services, including social, economic and security programmes.
- iii. To support e-government and e-business for all Citizen to Government (C2G), Government to Government (G2G), Government to Business (G2B) and Government to Citizen (G2C) services.

6.0 OVERVIEW OF THE POLICY

- 6.1 The NIDS Policy outlines a governance and operational framework for the establishment of a NIDS, which will see the institution of a unique, reliable and secure method of authenticating an individual's identity. It requires that each Jamaican and person ordinarily resident should be registered and issued with a National Identification Number (NIN), which will be their unique identifier in the system. Information captured through registration for a NIN will be stored in a secure National Civil and Biometric Database (NCBD). The use of the NIN as the primary key will enable interconnectivity of the NIDS database and all records within existing GOJ databases. Thus, the NIDS will be the primary enabler for integrated and interconnected client centered government services.
- 6.2 The NIDS will be utilised by the public sector to reduce costs and improve efficiency in the delivery of national, social, economic and security programmes. Through the use of the NIN, Government will be able to accurately and reliably identify beneficiaries, resulting in more equitable and efficient administration of public goods and social services. The NIDS will also facilitate the ease of doing business by providing an identity management system which will enable the authentication of an individual's identity by both the public and private sectors.
- 6.3 Implementation of a NIDS will simplify the means of establishing and verifying a person's identity, resulting in a more consistent, efficient and streamlined experience when interacting with the private and public sectors. It will support the "know-your-customer" requirements for banks and other businesses. Given its robust identity enrolment and verification processes, there will be a reduction of opportunities for identity fraud, whereby one person can possess multiple identities with a single Government agency.
- 6.4 Benefits to the private sector include simplification of business transactions, streamlining of employment eligibility for potential employees and reduction in identity fraud. A NIDS will support financial institutions in managing secure transactions by authenticating users and generating roll back transactions. Consequently, it has the potential to increase the use of electronic financial transactions and online services, thereby contributing to the growth of e-commerce.
- 6.5 The implementation of the NIDS Policy is guided by the National Development Plan-Vision 2030 Jamaica, which aims to have Jamaica achieve developed country status by 2030. The establishment of a NIDS will contribute to the achievement of key 'Vision 2030' goals, including effective social protection, security and safety, effective governance, an enabling business environment, a technology-enabled society and improved national competitiveness. NIDS is also aligned to the strategic areas of the Medium Term Socio-

Economic Policy Framework (2015 – 2018), namely, Development and Protection of Human Capital, National Security and Justice, Economic Stability and Competitiveness and Employment.

7.0 POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

7.1 The implementation of the NIDS Policy will be spearheaded by the OPM, with support from key public sector entities. The Registrar General Department (RGD), which was recently placed under the auspices of the OPM, will be transformed into the Jamaica National Identification Agency (JNIA), a statutory body, which will have responsibility for civil registration and civil identification functions to facilitate this process. JNIA will perform all functions carried out by the RGD, as well as civil identification functions, such as the registration of eligible persons, issuing of the NIN and national identification card and collection of related information that is to be contained in the NCBD.

7.2 The enrolment of citizens will commence in January 2018.

Legislative Considerations

7.2.1 The NIDS will require an appropriate legal and regulatory framework to support its establishment and operation. With respect to new legislation, it is being proposed that an Act will be promulgated to govern the NIDS, which will incorporate provisions for the following:

- Registration of citizens and persons ordinarily resident in Jamaica;
- Generation and assignment of a NIN;
- Issuing of identification cards;
- Establishment of a NCBD;
- Data storage and management;
- Data sharing;
- Sanctions for illegal use of information;
- Protection of an individual's right to privacy; and
- Institutional arrangements.

7.2.2 In addition to the promulgation of new legislation, there are several pieces of legislation which will require amendment. These include, *inter alia*, Registration (Births and Deaths) Act, Marriage Act, Forgery Act, Passport Act, Immigration Restriction (Commonwealth Citizens) Act, Jamaican Nationality Act, Representation of the People Act, Revenue Administration Act and Access to Information Act.

7.3 Public Education Programme

7.3.1 A robust Public Education Programme has been developed to inspire enthusiasm for the NIDS and will be implemented to target all stakeholders. Town Hall meetings with non-governmental organizations, community based organizations and faith based groups, print, electronic and social media will be used to reach a wide cross section of the population. The Public Education Programme will also incorporate strategies for sensitization of Jamaicans in the Diaspora.

7.4 Financing

7.4.1 The GOJ is currently negotiating with a multilateral institution to finance the NIDS Implementation Plan.

This Honourable House is asked to note the National Identification System Policy, which is now tabled as a White Paper. This policy is available on the websites of the Office of The Prime Minister and the Jamaica Information Service at the following website addresses: www.opm.gov.jm and www.jis.gov.jm.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Andrew Holness', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Most Hon. Andrew Holness, ON, MP
Prime Minister
November 4, 2016