Setting up a Unified Social Registry in Burundi:
Moving towards a better coordination within social protection[1]

Anaïs Vibranovski, International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth (IPC-IG)

Over the past two decades, social protection has become one of Burundi's priorities. There has been significant progress, including the implementation of an increasing number of non-contributory programmes. However, their coverage remains limited. Some of the institutional challenges of the sector identified by the government include the lack of coordination between interventions, and the absence of common targeting and monitoring and evaluation tools. To address these challenges, the country is committed to setting up a Unified Social Registry—called *Registry* in this One Pager.

In support of Burundi, the IPC-IG, in partnership with UNICEF, the World Food Programme (WFP) and the Permanent Executive Secretariat (SEP) of the National Social Protection Commission (CNPS), conducted a feasibility study and developed a roadmap for the implementation of the Registry. The main stages of the roadmap and the recommendations proposed are as follows:

1. Define the scope, the objective and the purpose of the Registry: According to the recommended model, the Registry would be a common gateway for user programmes, which would keep their current architectures and their own eligibility criteria. The Registry would collect and provide non-contributory programmes with household data, feeding their selection process. Thus, it would lead to stronger coordination regarding beneficiary identification within the social protection sector and help establish more effective emergency responses, as programmes would have a database of potential beneficiaries at their disposal. In the long term, the Registry could be used for data exchange with other sectors if the same unique identifier is used.

2. Define the institutional arrangement: During the first five years, the country should concentrate the operational implementation of the Registry within the national flagship programme, building on the existing infrastructure, database and human capacities already developed for it. Supervision and coordination would fall under the purview of SEP/CNPS, which would act as the 'project owner'. This would facilitate and accelerate the implementation of the Registry in the short term. The team should be composed of consultants and civil servants, who would benefit from external expertise, ensuring capacity transfer in the long term. It is also recommended to invest in continuous skill development across all levels, as it would make it possible to transfer the management of the Registry to a permanent government structure in the future.

3. Establish a legal framework for protection of personal data and the rights of registered individuals. This framework should also define the conditions for data sharing and use, with legal and judicial guarantees. Additionally, it should establish the Registry, the regulations defining the roles from ministries and programmes and, in particular, their responsibilities. This could be a law or decree that would determine the Registry in the long term. However, some flexibility should be left for decrees and ordinances to specify the implementation modalities, budget, human resources framework, etc., at a later date.

4. Define data collection and updating methods: Burundi should collect and update household data through the 'active search' method. This method consists of rotating teams travelling continuously across the country, prioritising certain regions featuring high poverty and vulnerability rates. It should be combined with 'on-demand' registration, carried out by the decentralised offices of the Ministry in charge of national solidarity, the SEP/CNPS and local units of the Burundian Red Cross. Financial incentives and a data updating deadline must be instituted and clearly communicated to the population as an incentive. Data should be updated at least every 4 years. This frequency should be defined taking into consideration the administrative capacity, available resources, programme needs and trends in the evolution of variables.

5. Develop a joint questionnaire to collect information regarding the eligibility criteria of all user programmes through a consultative process, with the support from the Statistics and Economic Studies Institute of Burundi (ISTEEBU). Variables must be standardised across programmes. They should be tested and correspond to the variables featured in the national surveys as much as possible.

6. Set up the Management Information System (MIS) and the required infrastructure: The Registry MIS could be based on the flagship programme's, which already has essential modules that can be adapted to serve the Registry' data collection and information management purposes. Additionally, the flagship programme's MIS was developed using a cloud-based server, which allows Burundi to minimise material procurement costs and benefit from a large, secure computing capacity. A minimum infrastructure, including IT and office equipment, must be set up at the central government and municipalities. In addition, the Registry MIS must generate a social identification number for each registered individual. Over time, other programmes and sectors should replace their own identifiers with the one from the Registry, enabling integration across various social protection programmes in the medium term, and data sharing and verification with other sectors in the long term.

7. Establish a sustainable funding mechanism: For the long term, it is recommended that all social protection systems should be funded by government resources and that certain costs should be included in the national budget. To this end, a co-funding system for the Registry should be developed, featuring contributions from international partners and the government. Government funding could start with a gradual cost-sharing increase In the short and medium terms, the government should consider financing less costly, yet strategic components of the Registry, such as the coordination of stakeholders.

Reference:
    Vibranovski, A. 2022. "Setting up a Unified Social Registry in Burundi : Moving towards better coordination within social protection". *Policy Research Brief,* No. 93. Brasília: International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth.

Note:
    1. All data referenced in this One Pager can be found in Vibranovski (2022).

The views expressed in this page are the authors' and not necessarily those of the United Nations Development Programme or the Government of Brazil.