

Birth registration using mobile phones advances civil rights in developing countries

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CMI's GooB initiative (Governance out of a box – population registration in Liberia) is developing a system of mobile phone-based birth registration in Liberia. Registration of birth is a prerequisite for the fulfilment of numerous civil rights. In a country with rough, difficult-to-cross terrain and weak governance structures, registering a birth is often a challenge for both the parents of the child and the public sector.

Registration via mobile phone makes it possible for an increasing number of children to appear on official birth registers. The initiative will support the capacity of Liberia's central government to deliver the basic services its citizens need, and thus consolidate the development of peace in Liberia.

Liberia, which is recovering from a protracted and brutal civil war, is one of the world's poorest states. Child mortality is as high as 100 in every 1,000 newborn children, and life expectancy is 58 years. The new technology could play a significant role in reducing poverty and facilitating the emergence of stabler social structures in the country.

In carrying out a midway evaluation, VTT's task is to scrutinise the development of the new technology as well as the challenges and opportunities presented by its exploitation. VTT will carry out the midway evaluation of the project in cooperation with the University of Helsinki. The GooB initiative is funded by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland and the Alfred Kordelin Foundation. The project will be realised in cooperation with the Liberian state and Nokia Oyj.

Midway evaluation of the CMI initiative is part of VTT's growing activity in Africa. Over the course of this year, VTT has carried out projects with partners such as the African Union and the UN's Economic Commission for Africa.

Provided by VTT Technical Research Centre of Finland

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