Technology driven Birth and Death Certificate processes

When I am dead my dearest,
sing no sad songs for me,
Try not getting a death certificate,
from the colonial bureaucracy.

The laws made in 1886,
That we are unwilling to abdicate,
Have made dying far easier,
than obtaining a death certificate.

Affidavits, attestations and runarounds,
Make people miserable and angry,
So why not adopt processes,
That are digital, easy and hassle-free.

There is a dire need to appreciate that our birth and death certificate system awaits radical, digital, people-friendly and out-of-the-box solutions. (A suggestion equally valid for every other process or reform in Pakistan). Using digital technology and redesigning processes, can make it possible to bypass the existing torturous methods that the citizens have laboriously lugged since 1886. It is now possible to move forward to 2024 in weeks and not in years.

The core principles of citizen-friendly processes:

The birth and death processes must be driven by two core principles – publicly declared as an official policy of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. These are:

1. For birth and death certificate, no citizen shall visit no government office.
2. For birth and death certificate no citizen shall need to fill any application or produce any affidavit, photocopies, notary-public attestations, No Objection Certificates, verification by Grade 17 Plus officers, or bribe a government official. (Should be true for all processes, but we shall limit ourselves to birth and death only.)

Pre-requisites:

NADRA must implement the following requirements before implementing the proposed re-engineered processes.

1. All hospitals and clinics are registered and given a Unique ID. A birth and death notification App is made available to hospitals and clinics.
2. All graveyards are registered and given a Unique ID. A graveyard burial notification App is made available.
3. All paramedical staff engaged in home deliveries be registered, given a Unique ID and an App for 'children delivered at home' is made available.

Birth Certificates Process Flow:

1. A child birth in a hospital / clinic is an event. Once it takes place, it becomes mandatory for the state to know and record the facts of this event – even if no individual comes forward to report it.
2. Hospitals / clinics ought to be mandated to record the birth event by sending the 'NADRA specified data' on a 'NADRA specified App' directly to NADRA. Typically, this data would be as follows:
   a. Unique ID of Hospital / clinic
   b. CNIC numbers of mother, father and grandfather
   c. Time and date of birth.
   d. Name and CNIC number of doctor responsible for delivery.
   e. Child's name, gender, photograph.
   f. Phone numbers registered on the name of mother / father. (to provide links to SIMS, CNIC and biometrics)
   g. Any other element of data specified by NADRA

3. The hospital / clinic generates a **Unique ID for Each Birth**. This consists of the hospital ID, the sequential number for birth in the hospital and the cnic number of mother / father, ie. H298-13030724-4230137665797.
4. The Hospital communicates the **Unique ID for birth** and the specified data to NADRA within 48 hours of the birth.
5. Hospital gives a letter to parents that mentions the **Unique ID for Birth.**
6. NADRA databases verify data.

7. Mother / father of the child, using the phone whose SIM is registered on his/her names, calls up a NADRA specified phone number, within five days of the birth of the child. NADRA operator asks a few verification questions (such processes are routinely implemented by banks and credit card companies).

8. NADRA verification could result in 2 decisions. a). The data was matching and correct.   b). Data was not matching or incomplete.

9. If the data was **matching and correct**, NADRA takes the following actions.

a) NADRA system automatically generates a birth certificate and uploads on its website, quoting reference of the **Unique ID for birth.**

b) The birth certificate also includes the registration identity number for child, thus eliminating the need for a separate process to be undertaken for **Child Registration Certificate (CRC)**

c) The birth certificate is downloadable from any where on payment of NADRA specified fee, say Rs300. (Fee paid electronically through any of the available mobile phone-based money transfer systems.)

10. If the data was not matching or incomplete, The NADRA will inform the Hospital / clinic accordingly. And give an opportunity to resend corrected / complete data.

11. NADRA will upload a data error message against the **Unique ID for birth on** its website. This will require the parent to visit the nearest NADRA office, quote the Hospital supplied **Unique ID for Birth** to resolve the inadequacy, after which NADRA will upload the birth certificate.

12. As all birth certificates will include the identity number for child, the requirement of **Child Registration Certificate (CRC)** could be eliminated as redundant.

13. Likewise, the requirement of **Juvenile ID card** for (under 18) could be eliminated as redundant.

14. NOTE: The process involves just one time fee payment – and that too without any human interaction.

Death Certificate Process Flow:

1. A death event may happen in a hospital or at home. Once it takes place, it is mandatory for the state to know and record the facts of this event – even if no individual comes forward to report it.
2. Hospitals / clinics ought to be mandated to **record the death event** by sending the **'NADRA specified data'** on a 'NADRA specified App' directly to NADRA. Typically, this data would be as follows:
   h. Unique ID of Hospital / clinic
   i. Name and CNIC number of deceased.
   j. CNIC numbers of three relatives of the deceased, i.e father, spouse and a child of the deceased (in case the deceased had children).
   k. Time and date of death.
   l. Cause of death.
   m. Name and CNIC number of the doctor authenticating the death.
   n. Any other element of data specified by NADRA

3. The hospital / clinic generates a **Unique ID for Each Death** event, that consists of the hospital ID, the sequential number for death in the hospital and the CNIC number of deceased, ie. H298-3040524-4230137665797.
4. The Hospital communicates the Unique ID for each death and the specified data to NADRA within 24 hours of the death.
5. Hospital gives a letter to the family of the deceased that mentions the **Unique ID for Death.**
6. Within 24 hours of the deceased's burial in a graveyard, it must be obligatory for the graveyard management to send to NADRA, a burial report on the NADRA specified App, giving the information specified by NADRA. Typically, this data would be as follows:
   a. Unique ID of graveyard.
   b. Name and CNIC number of deceased
   c. Date and time of burial
   d. CNIC number of a family member (parents, child, spouse)

7. NADRA databases cross-check and verify the data sent by the hospital and the graveyard for adequacy and correctness.
8. If found correct, NADRA acts to take the following actions:
   a. NADRA sends messages for pension and SIMS cancellation to the respective departments.
   b. NADRA acts to cancel the ID card of the deceased.
   c. NADRA system automatically generates a Death Certificate and uploads on its website.

9. The Death Certificate also mentions cancellation of the CNIC of the deceased, thus **eliminating the need for a separate process to be undertaken for CNIC cancellation.**
10. The Death Certificate is downloadable from any where on payment of NADRA specified fee, say Rs300. (Fee paid electronically through any of the available mobile phone-based money transfer systems.)
11. If the data provided by the hospital and the graveyard does not match or is found inadequate, a Death Certificate will not be uploaded, and the NADRA website will simply place a notice for the family to contact the nearest NADRA office.

The following three NADRA tools were also reviewed.
1. Utilisation of UCs for limited NADRA services
2. CRVS process flow
3. Birth Notification tool process flow.

These are progressive and useful initiatives. They however do not make life any easier for a citizen, who must still remain dependent on the misery of completely redundant Union Council driven processes. While the corporate sector competes to re-engineer processes in order to retain and attract more customers, the public sector feels no such compulsion. It prefers to hang on to costly, counterproductive and complex processes, reinforcing one single message – the state does not care. It is time for Pakistan to reform, to care for its ordinary people, to bid farewell to 77 years of attestations and to lay the foundations of a moder, citizen-friendly state.

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