



4.1. Application process and identity verification

Established under the Identification and Registration Act, Law No. 009 of March 2023, the National Identification and Registration Authority (NIRA) is Somalia's institution responsible for managing the country's comprehensive national identification system. As indicated by the WB NIRA support team, services are open to everyone, and anyone can choose to go to a registration centre.³³⁰ As of 1 April 2026, 'registration and issuance of ID physical card [was] free of cost'.³³¹

NIRA is tasked with providing 'every citizen and legal resident with a secure, verifiable identity' through the issuance of a unique National Identification Number (NIN), also known as *Tirsi Aqoonsi* in Somali.³³² Among others, the system relies on advanced biometric technology, such as fingerprint and facial recognition.³³³

ID cards applicants rely on different ways to confirm their identity names, which encompass the formal means – e.g. passports, drivers licenses, birth certificates, education certificates – and the more informal ways, including community confirmations,³³⁴ or 'testimonial verification' as worded by NIRA.³³⁵ NIRA frames testimonial-based verification as follows: 'if an applicant cannot provide the necessary documents, they may provide a witness who is registered with the system and can vouch for their identity. Witnesses must be individuals of trusted status in the community, such as government employees or community leaders'.³³⁶ As to the formal means, as mentioned above, IDPs, who generally lack civil documentation, have the lowest birth registration rates.³³⁷

Against this framework, according to Abdirizak, the main issue with IDPs accessing ID cards relies in their widespread lack of official documents,³³⁸ while at the same time access to informal means of identification remains limited.³³⁹ According to Farhia Mohamud, there are cases where IDPs are unable to access NIRA ID cards because they cannot afford the standard 15 USD needed to issue a birth certificate – with a premium price of 15–30 USD for expedited service.³⁴⁰ At the same time, there are cases where a single IDP, who had managed to register through a birth certificate, can work as guarantor for many others while guaranteeing for their identity. Alternatively, the registered IDP may seek assistance from businesspeople, sheikhs or other community leaders as identity guarantors.³⁴¹

However, Abdirizak points out to another issue revolving around testimonial verification. Among other witnesses, elders, who can vouch for people in need of identification,³⁴² are reportedly required to be registered as guarantors at the ministry of interior,³⁴³ as also confirmed by a

government source.³⁴⁴ Apparently IDPs do not have many registered elders available to vouch for them and their identity claims.³⁴⁵ According to Abdirizak, another option could be to ask camp managers.³⁴⁶ As of 1 April 2026, the WB's NIRA support team was 'not sure if registration [was] happening for the [IDP] segment yet'.³⁴⁷

Upon submission of an application and capture of biometric data, which includes fingerprints and digital photographs, applicants are issued a unique 11-digit National ID number at the end of a stepped process.³⁴⁸ The Somali ID card is available as a physical card, a digital ID wallet - *eAqoonsi* - or downloadable and printable verifiable credential- paper certificate with QR code.³⁴⁹

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WB, Task team for SCALED-UP and SPRING projects - NIRA ID program support implementation, Email exchange, 1 April 2026

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WB, Task team for SCALED-UP and SPRING projects - NIRA ID program support implementation, Email exchange, 1 April 2026

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Somalia, NIRA – Background, n.a., [url](#)

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Somalia, NIRA – National ID, n.a., [url](#)

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WB, Task team for SCALED-UP and SPRING projects - NIRA ID program support implementation, Email exchange, 1 April 2026; see also Somalia, NIRA – National ID Registration, n.a., [url](#)

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Somalia, NIRA – National ID Registration, n.a., [url](#)

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Somalia, NIRA – National ID Registration, n.a., [url](#); WB, Task team for SCALED-UP and SPRING projects - NIRA ID program support implementation, Email exchange, 7 April 2026

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UNHCR, Somalia - Annual Results Report, 2024, [url](#), pp. 10-11

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Abdirizak Farah Mohamed, Telephone interview, 1 April 2026; see also NRC, “Who are you?” Linkages between Legal Identity and Housing, Land, and Property Rights in Somalia, November 2022, [url](#), pp. 28-35, 36-37

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Abdirizak Farah Mohamed, Telephone interview, 1 April 2026

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Farhia Mohamud, Telephone interview and email exchange, 8 April 2026. Farhia Mohamud is a researcher and political/security analyst at Somali Public Agenda, a leading research organisation based in Mogadishu; see also NRC, “Who are you?” Linkages between Legal Identity and Housing, Land, and Property Rights in Somalia, November 2022, [url](#), pp. 31-34

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Farhia Mohamud, Telephone interview and email exchange, 8 April 2026

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NRC, “Who are you?” Linkages between Legal Identity and Housing, Land, and Property Rights in Somalia, November 2022, [url](#), p. 40; see also UNDP Somalia, Nabadon Mohamud, the Somali elder delivering justice on the ground, 27 March 2025, [url](#); Lifos, Somalia – Folkbokföring, medborgarskap och identitetshandlingar, 9 April 2019, [url](#), pp. 16-19, 24, 28

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Abdirizak Farah Mohamed, Telephone interview, 1 April 2026

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Osman, Interview, 10 May 2026. Osman works as an advisor to the current Somali government.

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Abdirizak Farah Mohamed, Telephone interview, 1 April 2026; see also NRC, “Who are you?” Linkages between Legal Identity and Housing, Land, and Property Rights in Somalia, November 2022, [url](#), p. 41; Osman, Interview, 10 May 2026

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Abdirizak Farah Mohamed, Telephone interview, 8 April 2026

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WB, Task team for SCALED-UP and SPRING projects - NIRA ID program support implementation, Email exchange, 1 April 2026

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Somalia, NIRA – National ID, n.a., [url](#)

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Somalia, NIRA – Identification, n.a., [url](#)

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