

A Snapshot of Civil Registration in Sub-Saharan Africa



 **NIRA**
National Identification and Population Register
Uganda - My Country My Identity

FORM 3
Regulation 8(1)

THE REGISTRATION OF PERSONS (BIRTHS AND DEATHS) REGULATIONS, 2015

NOTICE OF BIRTH OF A CHILD

1. D at of birth (dd/mm/yy) 20/5/17 Time of birth 4:15 p.m.
2. P of birth 123/10/11 Name of medical facility lectora Hospital no. of 12345
3. If one and name of street 123/10/11
4. C of Municipality, town or village 123/10/11
5. D at of 123/10/11
6. N of (if any) of child 123/10/11
7. S of child 123/10/11
8. W of at birth 123/10/11
9. P of 123/10/11
10. Surname 123/10/11
11. Given Name 123/10/11
12. A of 123/10/11 Other Names 123/10/11
13. A of (both physical and postal)
 - a) Village 123/10/11
 - b) Parish 123/10/11
 - c) Sub county 123/10/11
 - d) County 123/10/11
 - e) District 123/10/11
 - f) Region 123/10/11
14. D of 123/10/11
15. N of 123/10/11
16. P of 123/10/11
17. National Identification Number/Alien Identification Number* 123/10/11
18. M of 123/10/11
19. P of 123/10/11
20. S of 123/10/11

BIRTH REGISTRATION

BIRTH REGISTRATION AS A PASSPORT TO PROTECTION

A name and nationality is every child's right, as enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and other international treaties. Birth registration is the continuous, permanent and universal recording of the occurrence and characteristics of births in the national civil registry, in accordance with the country's legal requirements. It is the first step in securing children's recognition before the law, safeguarding their rights and ensuring that any violation of those rights does not go unnoticed. Ensuring that every child is registered is also an essential part of a functioning system of vital statistics, which is crucial for sound economic and social planning.

The births of around **95 million** children under age 5 (slightly more than half) in sub-Saharan Africa have never been recorded. One in three unregistered children live in just three countries: the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia and the United Republic of Tanzania.

Possession of a birth certificate is even less common – **120 million** of the region's children under age 5 do not have a birth certificate.

Of all infants living in sub-Saharan Africa, slightly less than **2 in 3** (just over 20 million) do not have their births registered, and around **3 in 4** (roughly 28 million) do not possess a birth certificate.

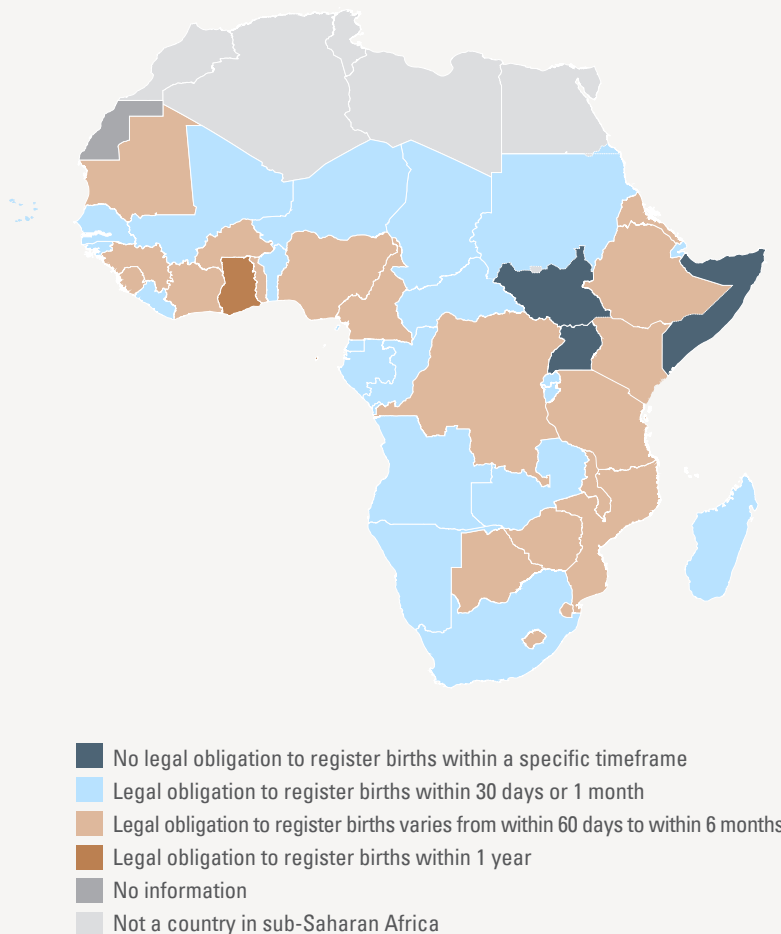
Overall, there has been **little improvement** in birth registration levels in sub-Saharan Africa as a region; slightly more than 4 in 10 children under age 5 were registered around 2000 and that figure remains unchanged today.

A rapidly growing child population coupled with slow rates of change means that if current trends continue there could be close to **115 million** unregistered children under age 5 in sub-Saharan Africa by **2030**.

Ideally, registration should take place as soon as possible after the birth has occurred, and preferably within the first year. Timely registration minimizes the risk of misreporting details or failing to report the event altogether. The need for timely birth registration is stipulated in article 7 of the CRC.

In nearly half the countries in sub-Saharan Africa, the legal time frame to register births is longer than one month

Sub-Saharan African countries according to the legal time frame for birth registration



Notes: In Cameroon, the legal period for birth registration is shorter (within 30 days) if the birth occurred in a hospital. In Guinea, the legal period for registering births that occurred outside the municipality is 8 months. In Sierra Leone, the new law sets the legal period for birth registration at 90 days, but this is not yet in use. In Uganda, the law stipulates that birth registration should occur 'immediately' but does not set a legal period for registration. This map is stylized and not to scale. It does not reflect a position by UNICEF on the legal status of any country or territory or the delimitation of any frontiers. The final boundary between the Sudan and South Sudan has not yet been determined. The final status of the Abyei area has not yet been determined.

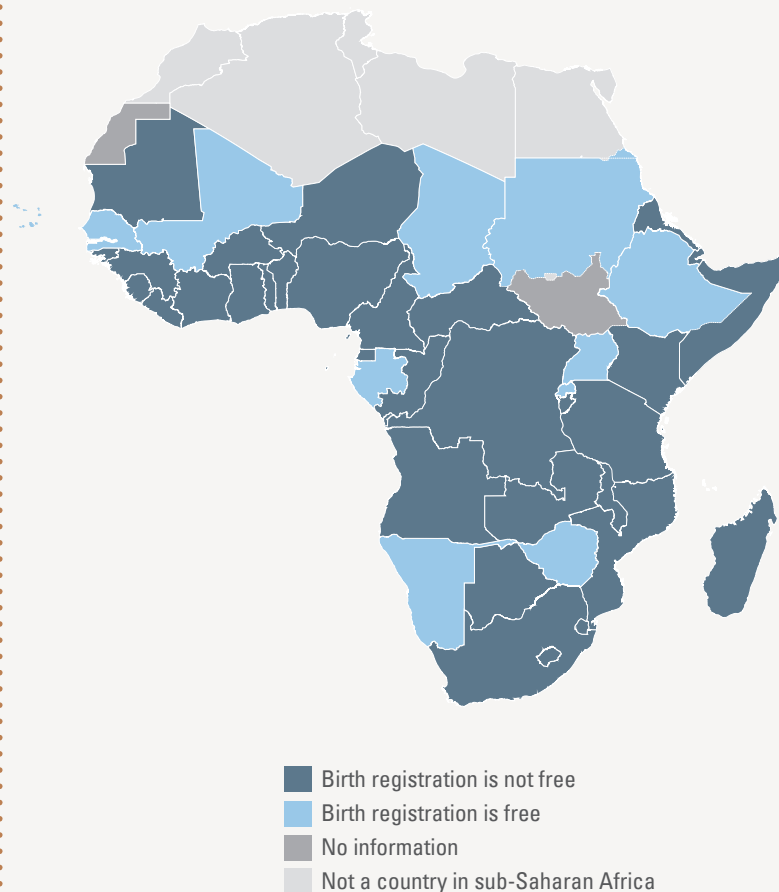
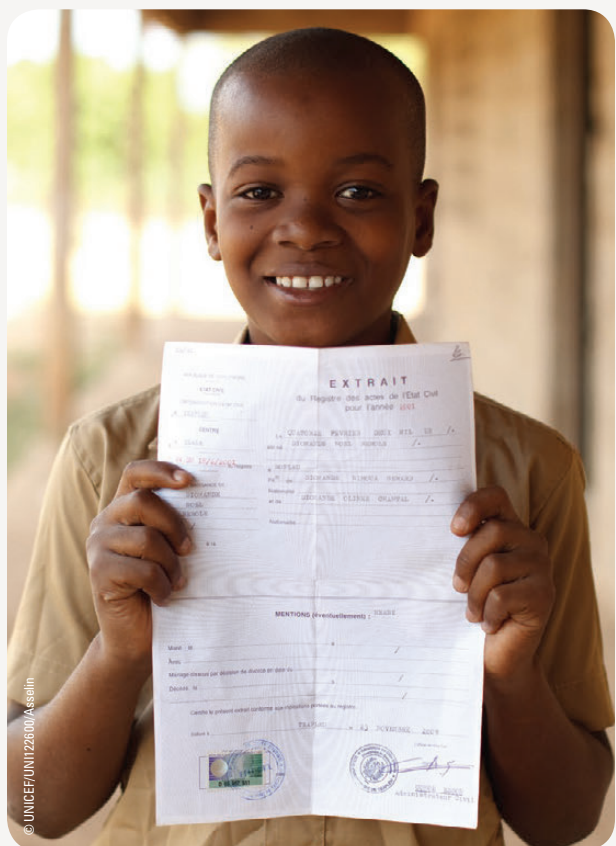
BARRIERS TO BIRTH REGISTRATION

Lack of birth registration can be the result of many barriers, including distance to the nearest registration facility, lack of knowledge on how to register a child's birth, and fees for registering a birth or obtaining a birth certificate, which can be prohibitively expensive for some families. Traditional customs and practices might not encourage or emphasize formal birth registration processes. Moreover, institutional procedures and processes sometimes treat children from certain ethnic or religious groups differently or impose restrictions, whether formally by law or informally in practice, on a mother's ability to register her child without the father's involvement.

Even in countries where birth registration is free by law, there are often hidden fees, such as judicial costs or opportunity costs including those related to travel that are difficult to measure. These added costs can directly affect registration levels.

Around 370 million children (roughly 3 in 4) live in sub-Saharan African countries where there are fees associated with birth registration, and in most cases, these reflect fines for late registration

Sub-Saharan African countries according to whether there are fees to register births including fines for late registration



Notes: The map does not reflect the fact that some countries do not impose fees for the registration of births, but fees are required to obtain a birth certificate. In the Gambia, the fee for birth registration is waived for children aged 0 to 5 years. In Liberia, birth registration fees are only applicable for children older than age 13 years. This map is stylized and not to scale. It does not reflect a position by UNICEF on the legal status of any country or territory or the delimitation of any frontiers. The final boundary between the Sudan and South Sudan has not yet been determined. The final status of the Abyei area has not yet been determined.

UNICEF'S WORK ON IMPROVING BIRTH REGISTRATION IN AFRICA

UNICEF strives to improve birth registration rates across Africa by strengthening broader civil registration systems for more effective and sustained results. A key strategy to improve birth registration is to work with health systems and services to make sure every newborn is counted and given a legal identity. This is a primary principle and recommendation of the Africa Programme on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (APAI-CRVS) that serves as the primary framework for UNICEF support.

Currently, in many African countries, immunization coverage as well as prevalence of institutional deliveries surpass birth registration levels. For example, in 16 countries the immunization coverage against tuberculosis among live births is at least two times higher than the prevalence of birth registration among children under the age of 1 year. This difference is especially striking in countries such as Guinea-Bissau and Zambia, where immunization levels exceed 90 per cent while birth registration among infants remains at around 10 per cent. Similarly, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, around

8 in 10 births occur in health facilities but only around 1 in 5 children below the age of 1 year have their births registered, while in the United Republic of Tanzania, 2 out of 3 births take place in a health facility but only around 1 in 4 infants under age 1 have their births registered.

Results of innovative UNICEF programming show that when birth registration services are integrated with health services such as immunization, as in Senegal during the annual Child Health Day, registration levels can increase significantly. UNICEF also supports linking birth registration with maternal health services to bridge the gap of high institutional deliveries and low levels of birth registration. In addition, UNICEF has found that coupling birth registration with programming in other sectors such as social assistance and education can lead to measurable results as well. For instance, pairing social policy and cash transfers in Kenya, South Africa and Zimbabwe and engaging those in the education sector and faith-based organizations in Ghana and Senegal have all proved to be effective in improving birth registration and certification.



MARRIAGE REGISTRATION

Marriage before the age of 18 is a fundamental violation of human rights. In at least 10 sub-Saharan African countries, there is no legal obligation to register a marriage. This lack of a formal record means there is no safeguard for boys and girls who marry before the age of 18.

There are 41 countries in sub-Saharan Africa that have set the minimum legal age for marriage at 18 or above for both sexes. But, for **48 million girls** living in 7 countries, marriage below age 18 is permitted. In an additional 22 countries, home to **61 million girls**, marriage before age 18 is allowed with parental consent or under certain special conditions. For **57 million boys** living in 19 countries, marriage below the age of 18 is permitted under certain conditions, while in the Sudan there is no minimum legal age for marriage.

Across sub-Saharan Africa, **110 million girls and women** alive today were married before their 18th birthday. While there are fewer child grooms in the region, nearly **15 million** men were married in childhood.

Though levels have decreased slightly compared to earlier generations, **more than 1 in 3** young women living in sub-Saharan Africa today were married in childhood, and **1 in 9** were married before their 15th birthday. By comparison, 25 years ago nearly half were married in childhood and about 1 in 6 were married before age 15.

The decline in child marriage prevalence observed over the past generation, if continued, is **not sufficient to reach the SDG target of eliminating child marriage by 2030**. At the current rate it would take at least 100 years to eliminate child marriage in sub-Saharan Africa.

BOYS	MINIMUM LEGAL AGE FOR MARRIAGE	GIRLS
Sudan	Below 18	Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Mali, Niger, Senegal, Sudan, United Republic of Tanzania
Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cabo Verde, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Africa, Swaziland, Togo, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe	18+	Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burundi, Cabo Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Africa, Swaziland, Togo, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Notes: Because there is no applicable legal framework for civil registration in South Sudan, information on legal age at marriage was not available. Countries in brown are those for which marriage below the minimum legal age is permitted with parental consent or under certain special conditions.

DEATH REGISTRATION

CHALLENGES IN ACCURATELY RECORDING DEATHS AMONG CHILDREN

The substantial challenges to registering children's deaths include insufficient coverage, in terms of an accurate count of the numbers, and lack of accuracy or completeness regarding the content of information recorded.

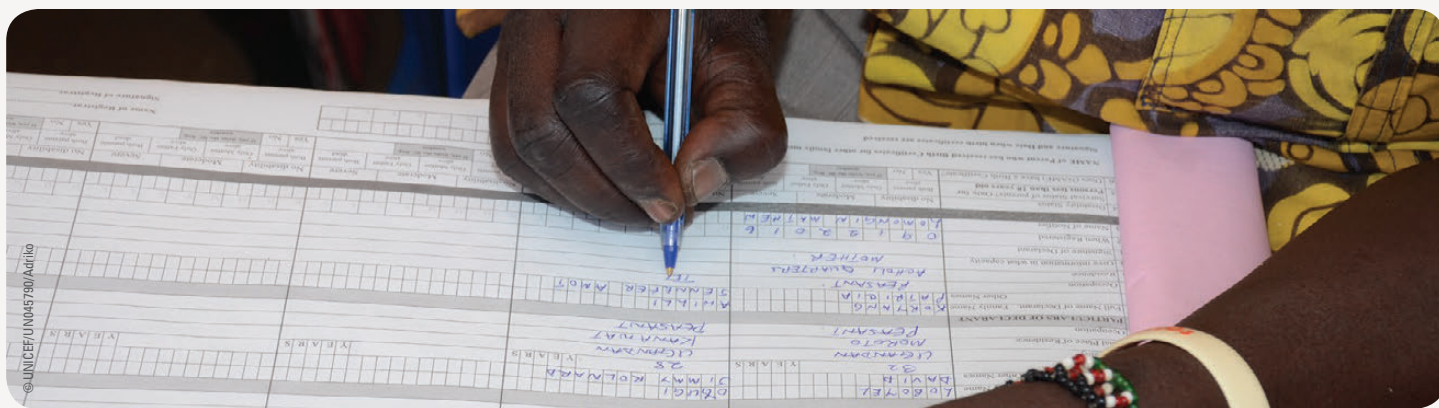
Remote geographical areas may not have access to local civil registration offices, or certain groups in a population may be excluded from the population register. While well-functioning civil registration systems are the preferred source for child mortality indicators, only about 60 countries worldwide are considered to have good-quality death registration data from vital registration systems.¹ There are no countries in sub-Saharan Africa with a high burden of child mortality and good-quality vital registration data.

Key quality issues involve misreporting of age at death, under-reporting, and omission or misclassification (sometimes as stillbirths) of deaths. Completeness of registration of child deaths often varies by age at death, and deaths among young children tend to go unreported more often than deaths occurring at later ages. As is the case with birth registration, timely registration of deaths is key to ensuring the event and

its details are accurately recorded. Among sub-Saharan African countries, the length of time legally required to register a death varies considerably from just 24 hours in Guinea-Bissau, Liberia and Namibia (in urban areas) to one year in Lesotho. Documenting the causes of death among children and producing reliable estimates of the number of deaths by cause remains difficult. Such statistics may not be systematically collected by national criminal justice, health or vital registration systems, and determining the cause of death, particularly when victims are very young, can be challenging – even in countries with advanced and well-functioning systems. In addition, the medically certified cause of death may be inaccurate due to insufficient training in classification of child deaths or insufficient reporting cards.

To ensure quality and comparability across countries, it is crucial that standard international definitions such as the International Classification of Diseases and the international definitions of fetal death and live births are used. The utilization of these definitions is an essential part of enabling the systematic recording, coding and analysis of mortality data, including the cause of death.

1 United Nations Children's Fund, *Is Every Child Counted? Status of data for children in the SDGs*, UNICEF, New York, March 2017, open PDF from <data.unicef.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/SDGs-publication-SPREADS-WEB-1.pdf>; and World Health Organization, *MCEE-WHO methods and data sources for child causes of death 2000-2015*, Global Health Estimates Technical Paper WHO/HIS/IER/GHE/2016.1, WHO, Geneva, February 2016, open PDF from <www.who.int/healthinfo/global_burden_disease/ChildCOD_method_2000_2015.pdf>.



Data sources: Estimates of birth registration and child marriage are from UNICEF global databases, 2017, based on DHS, MICS, other nationally representative surveys, censuses and vital registration systems. Information on civil registration systems in countries of sub-Saharan Africa was compiled over a period from December 2016 to November 2017 using the existing relevant legal frameworks and in consultation with CRVS experts, officials within the relevant national institutions, and UNICEF country offices. Suggested citation: United Nations Children's Fund, *A Snapshot of Civil Registration in Sub-Saharan Africa*, UNICEF, New York, 2017.

UNICEF
Data and Analytics Section
Division of Data, Research and Policy
3 United Nations Plaza
New York, NY 10017, USA
Tel: +1 (212) 326-7000
E-mail: data@unicef.org
Website: data.unicef.org