

Constraints to birth registration

Complex administrative systems and high costs are among the principal factors that have impeded universal birth registration up to now. Other constraints that have to be taken into account are:

- geographical distance to registration facilities
- lack of awareness, among families and communities, of the importance and obligatory nature of birth registration
- weak decentralized registration systems
- weak mechanisms of formal cooperation between health services and government
- discriminatory practices against certain social and ethnic minorities.



Regional Action Plan for 2005

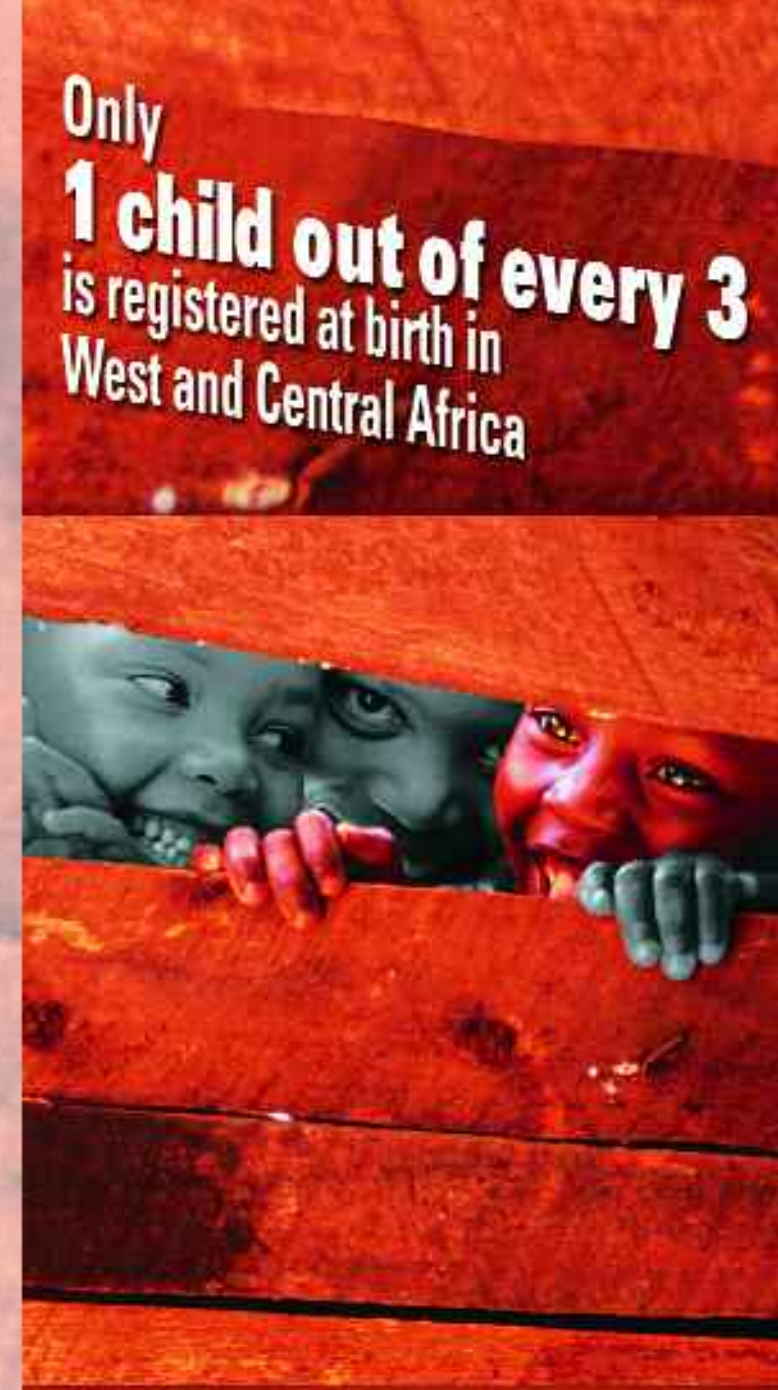
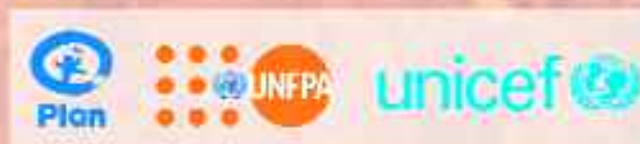
Goal: Birth registration for all children in West and Central Africa

3 objectives to achieve this goal:

1. Strengthen the partnership to promote birth registration through sensitization and social mobilization.
2. Promote sharing of experiences and mobilization of resources.
3. Develop monitoring systems to keep track of progress and evaluate it.

2005:
THE YEAR OF REGISTRATION
FOR ALL CHILDREN
FROM 0 TO 18
IN WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA

www.unfpa.org
www.plan-international.org
www.unicef.org



Register your child, it's a civic duty



To make children count, we must first count the children

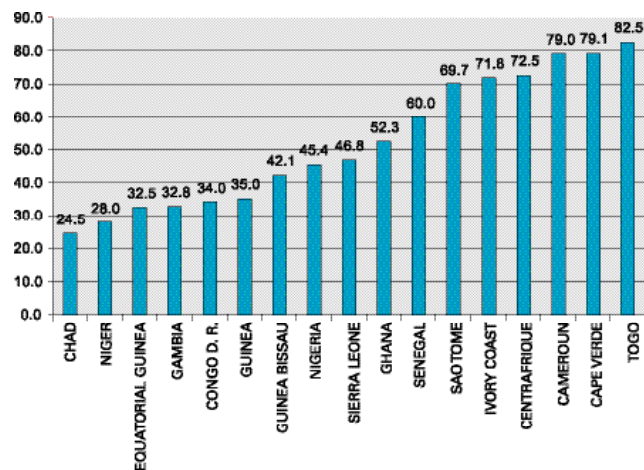
Birth registration is a fundamental right for every child, as stated in article 7 of the Convention of the Rights of the Child. By ratifying this Convention, 193 countries have committed themselves to giving their children an identity. However, there are still many children who have never been registered, and each year the births of millions of newborns go unregistered.

Only one out of every three children is registered at birth in West and Central Africa. Children who lack legal documents to prove they exist are deprived of their names, identities and of their future as citizens.

Mobilizing the region

Compulsory and free birth registration is a top priority in the region.

Percentage of children between 0 and 4 that are registered



June 2003: The African Union dedicates the Day of the African Child to birth registration. National registration campaigns are launched in every country in the region with governments, civil society and religious leaders.

February 2004: The first regional conference on birth registration in West and Central Africa is organized by UNICEF, PLAN and the UNFPA. The participants agree on the significance of:

- sensitizing the population
- installing decentralized structures for birth registration
- modernizing registration and archiving systems
- involving authorities to improve coordination at a ministerial level and funding.

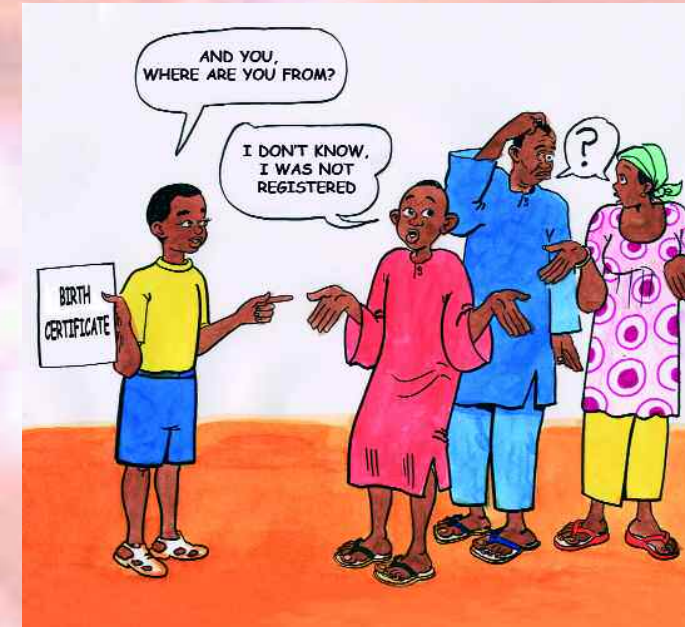
A fundamental right for children

Birth registration is the very first legal proof that a child exists. It is also a fundamental element for many other rights that children should have:

- a nationality
- access to health services
- access to school at an appropriate age
- protection from violence, exploitation and child labour



- protection from and during conflicts
- protection from early child marriages
- protection from military services before the appropriate age
- a passport, the right to vote and open a bank account, etc.



Mandate of the state

Birth registration is not only in the interest of the individual. Without accurate birth registration it is practically impossible for a government to:

- establish good governance practices
- gather accurate data on social, economic and demographic situation in a country
- establish and develop, amongst others, well-functioning health, education and employment facilities
- govern according to democratic principles.