1. What is Birth Registration

Birth registration is the process by which a child’s birth is recorded in the civil register by the government authority. It provides the first legal recognition for the child to obtain a birth certificate and as a result any other legal documents and rights. In Namibia birth registration is coordinated and recorded with the Ministry of Home Affairs and Immigration.

2. Why is Birth Registration Important

It is important that the registered child receive a birth certificate, since it is this that provides permanent, official and visible evidence of a state’s legal recognition of his or her existence as a member of society.

Birth registration enables a child to receive medical treatment, go to school, inherit property, prevent child exploitation and find legal work. All these rely on birth registration to prove identity and thus entitlement to basic rights.

Namibia is among the first African countries to ratify the Convention on the Rights of a Child. The Convention states that all children have a right to be registered immediately after birth, a right to health, education and the right to care and protection. These basic entitlements underpin a person’s ability to keep healthy, be educated, stay safe and earn a living. Being denied even one of these can have a negative impact on a child’s opportunities for a lifetime.

3. What Will Happen If My Child’s birth is not Registered?

Children whose births are unregistered and do not have a birth certificate, may not be able to claim the services and protections due to them. In Namibia orphans and vulnerable children can only access Child Welfare Grants through the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare provided they have a birth certificate.

4. Where are Birth Registration Facilities Available

• From now on all children born in Katutura Hospital will have their births immediately registered and will be issued a birth certificate.
• At the same time, the normal birth registration services continue to be available at the Ministry of Home Affairs and Immigration and the Ministry of Justice through the Magistrates.
• In the near future, the Ministry of Home Affairs and Immigration together with the Ministry of Health and Social Services are planning to expand birth registration points around the country especially to hospitals with high birth rates.

FACTS!

• It is difficult for unregistered children to prove their legal identity and to access services.
• Unknown numbers of children orphaned by AIDS are being denied their right to inherit parental property because they do not have a birth certificate providing legal proof of their identity and family ties.

DID YOU KNOW

• In Sub-Saharan Africa over 70 per cent of children born every year are unregistered, which is around 17 million children.
• In Namibia 4 out of 10 Children do not have a birth Certificate