



Registering the Maasai girls with Birth Certificates

Why is birth registration important? It is a fundamental Human Right!

“The child shall be registered immediately after birth and shall have the right from birth to a name, the right to acquire a nationality and as far as possible, the right to know and be cared for by his or her parents.”

Article 7 of the 1989 U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)

-Birth registration is a permanent and official record of a child’s existence. The child who is not registered at birth is in danger of being denied the right to an official identity, a recognized name and a nationality.

-In legal terms, children with no birth certificate do not exist. With no document to prove how old they are – or even who they are – they are likely to join the millions facing discrimination and lack of access to basic services such as health and education.

-Unregistered children are generally the children of the poor and the excluded.

-An unregistered child will be a more attractive target for a child trafficker.

-An unregistered child does not have even the minimal protection that a birth certificate provides against early marriage, child labor, or detention and persecution as an adult.

-In later life, the unregistered child may be unable to apply for a passport or formal job, open a bank account, and get a driving license or a marriage certificate.

-But the importance of registration – or the lack of it – goes beyond the needs and the rights of the child:

Registration is also vital for a nation’s development because the process of registration means collection of data on vital statistics (number of births & deaths).

It is an essential element of national planning for children since it provides a demographic base.

Without registration, it is unlikely to have accurate knowledge of child mortality rates - a key indicator for child survival strategies.

Registration can also help identify populations at risk (Maasai), compilation of population estimates and projections, maintaining of electoral rolls and maintaining of personal identification card systems, etc.