



How to register the birth of your child

Addressing YOUR questions about birth registration

The Ministry of Home Affairs and Immigration is in the process of replacing the Births, Marriages and Deaths Registration Act of 1963 with a new law that will be more appropriate to the needs of Namibia and more feasible to implement in practice. The Ministry will be engaging in public consultation around the law reform proposals, and hopes that this process will also raise the level of public awareness of the importance of registering all vital life events.

As part of this process, during the following months, the Ministry will be answering some of your questions about birth registration. This column will appear in The Namibian. You can also access the column on the MHA and LAC websites (www.mha.gov.na and www.lac.org.na). The answers are based on the 1963 law which is currently in force.

This is the final question and answer column. The Ministry thanks everyone who has sent questions about birth registration. The information has been very useful to help understand how the new law should be changed to better meet the needs of people in Namibia.

What about if both parents are foreigners and the child was born in Namibia? Can their child be given a birth certificate?

Yes. A birth certificate is a record of the fact that the child was born in Namibia. Any child born in Namibia should be registered with the Ministry of Home Affairs and Immigration. Having a Namibian birth certificate is not the same as having Namibian citizenship. This will depend on the parent's status in Namibia.

From The Namibian SMS page: I am a 21-year-old Namibian citizen. I spent years trying to get my birth-certificate but because I only have my mother's ID and I don't have my father's ID, the Ministry of Home Affairs sent me back to get my father's ID. I don't know my father, he left my mother just before I was born. What must I do?

A birth certificate does not have to say who the father is. If the mother chooses not to name the father, this section of the birth certificate will be left blank and you will be given your mother's surname.

My son is 5 years old. He does not have a birth certificate because the father will not come with me to register him. My son has been baptised in his father's name. What can I do?

You can register the child in your name. You do not have to say who the father is. This section of the birth certificate will be left blank and your child will have your surname. The baptismal certificate is not a legal document so although it says that your son has your father's name, in the eyes of the law your child will have your surname. You can add the father's details and your son can take his surname if the father provides a sworn statement saying that he agrees to be named on the birth certificate or if he comes with you to your local Ministry of Home Affairs and Immigration office in person.

My son is 2 years old. He is registered in my surname because his father did not participate in the registration of his birth. The father has now died and he has acknowledged that our child is his son in his will. Can I change my son's birth certificate to show that this man is his father?

Yes a will is a legal document. You can take a copy of the will to your local Ministry of Home Affairs and Immigration Office and ask them to add the details of the father to your son's birth certificate. There is no charge to add the father's details.

Send your suggestions for law reform or questions about how to register the birth of a child to 081 600 0098. We will select a few of the most common questions to respond to in this column, as space permits. If your question is not addressed in the column, you can contact your nearest Ministry of Home Affairs and Immigration Office for assistance.

UNICEF and the Legal Assistance Centre are supporting the Ministry of Home Affairs and Immigration in this initiative

