

BASIC FACTS ON REGISTERING A BIRTH



FACT SHEET

Gender Research & Advocacy Project
LEGAL ASSISTANCE CENTRE
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What is a birth certificate?

A **birth certificate** is an official document issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs and Immigration **when a birth is registered**. The certificate proves the child's identity, date of birth, place of birth, and the name of one or both parents. You should register your child's birth as soon as possible after the birth. Birth registration is free.

Six reasons your child needs a birth certificate

1. To access health services such as immunisation
2. To access social welfare grants
3. To enrol at school
4. To get an ID card or passport
5. To get married
6. To vote

It is possible to do most of these things without a birth certificate, but it will be much harder because a birth certificate is the easier way to prove exact age.

It will take time for me to collect the documents I need to register the birth of my child. I don't think I will do it.

But it is the child's right! Every child needs to have a birth certificate as soon as possible after birth. This will help your child access services throughout life. It is your duty as a parent to make sure your child's birth is registered. It is not a difficult process.



Where can I register my child's birth?

Sometimes, you can register at the hospital where you gave birth. If the hospital does not provide this service, or if your child is more than one year old, you should register the child at the nearest Ministry of Home Affairs and Immigration office.

What documents do I need to register my child's birth?

- Proof of birth (child's health passport)
- The original or a certified copy of the ID card and birth certificate of one or both parents
- *If the parents are married to each other:* the original or a certified copy of their marriage certificate OR a statement from the village headman/woman if the parents are married under customary law
- *If you are a foreigner living in Namibia:* your passport and the permit giving you permission to be in Namibia
- *If one of the parents has died:* a certified copy of the death certificate

Note that a child born to one Namibian parent and one foreign parent can hold dual nationality, if the other country allows this.

HOW TO REGISTER YOUR CHILD'S BIRTH

Notification of Birth

When	At the child's birth, or anytime up until the child is one year old
Where	At the hospital where your child was born, or at the nearest Ministry of Home Affairs and Immigration office. Some magistrates' courts also register births.

Late Registration of Birth

When	Anytime after the child is one year old
Where	At the nearest Ministry of Home Affairs and Immigration office. <i>A late registration is not possible in any hospital.</i>

To find the nearest Ministry of Home Affairs and Immigration office, contact the Ministry at 061-2922111.

What to bring for both types of registration

1. Your child's health passport (baptismal certificate will be accepted for late registration if the health passport is missing)
2. ID card and birth certificate or passport of one or both parents
3. *If the child's parents are married:* Marriage certificate or a statement from the village headman/woman if the parents are married under customary law
4. *If the parents are not married:* The father must be present or provide a sworn statement confirming that his name should be listed on the birth certificate.

If you do not have the documents, the principal of your child's first school or the headman/woman of your village can make a sworn statement about your child's age and identity.

Children born outside marriage

Either parent can register the birth of a child born outside marriage. A mother who is registering the birth of her child outside marriage **DOES NOT** need to get permission from the father. She also does not need to identify him.

The law says that a clerk cannot force a woman to give any information about the child's father if she wants to register the child's birth in her own surname.

If the parents are not married, the father does not have an automatic right to be listed on the birth certificate. He can be listed on the birth certificate only with the mother's consent.



We will call this child John van Wyk. Van Wyk is my father's surname.

But your surname is January. We need to write your surname, or the surname of the father. If we write a different surname here on the health passport, you will have problems registering the birth of your child.



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Legal Assistance Centre (LAC)
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For more details, see the LAC's booklet pictured above. A digital version is available on the LAC website: www.lac.org.na

