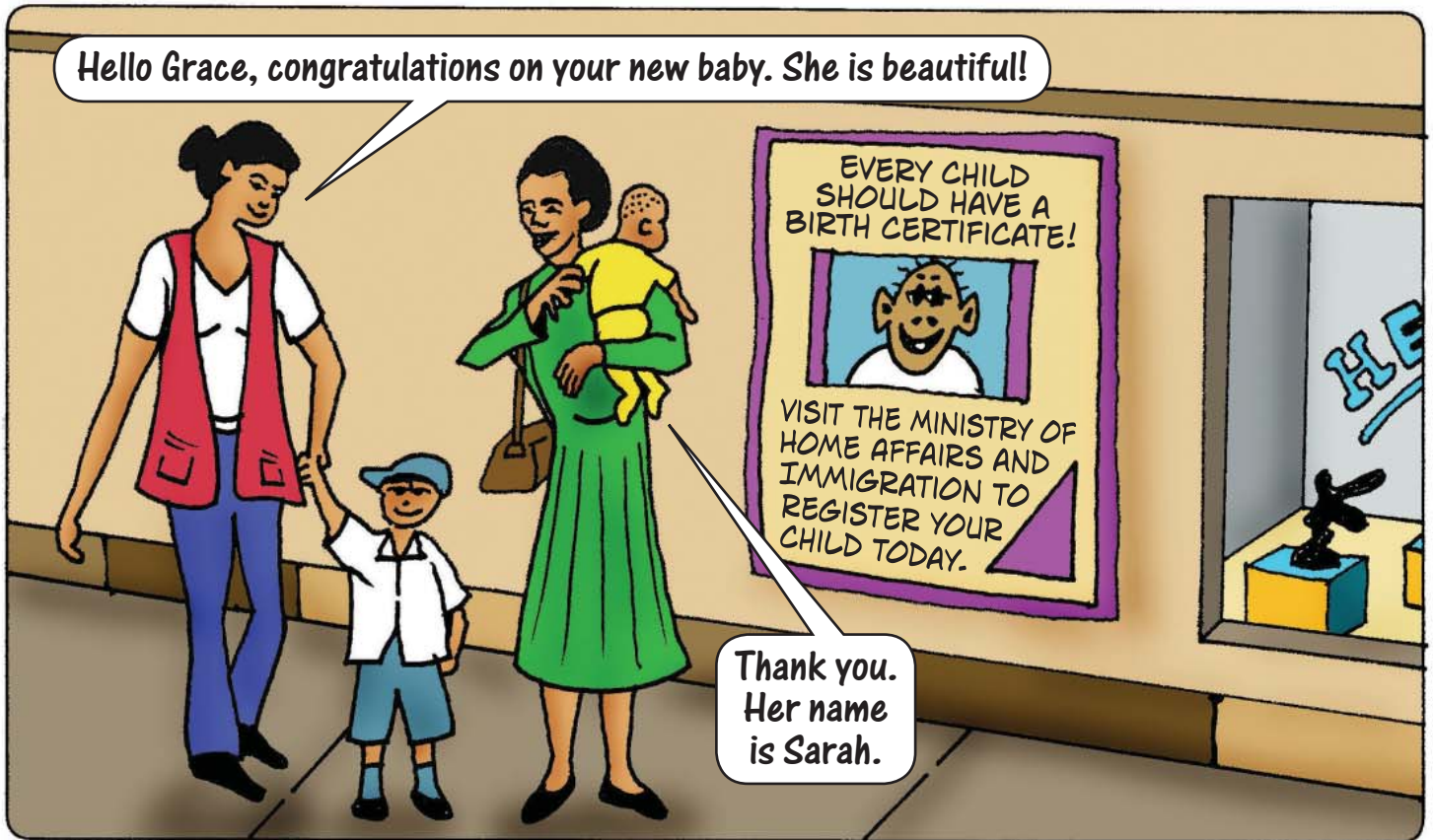


# HOW TO REGISTER THE BIRTH OF YOUR CHILD





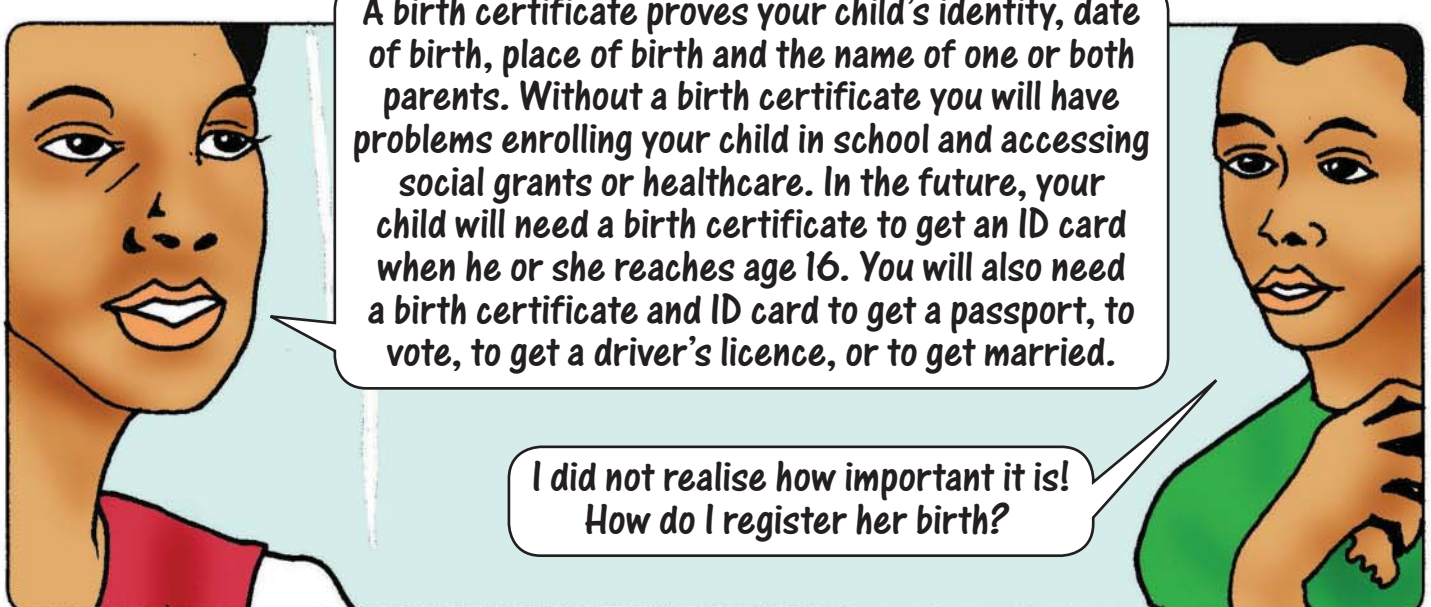
It is very important to register the birth of your child. Then Sarah will have a birth certificate. You should register your child as soon as possible after he or she is born.

Why does Sarah need a birth certificate?

## SIX REASONS YOUR CHILD NEEDS A BIRTH CERTIFICATE

1. To access some health services
2. To access social welfare grants
3. To enrol at school
4. To get an ID card or a 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.



A birth certificate proves your child's identity, date of birth, place of birth and the name of one or both parents. Without a birth certificate you will have problems enrolling your child in school and accessing social grants or healthcare. In the future, your child will need a birth certificate to get an ID card when he or she reaches age 16. You will also need a birth certificate and ID card to get a passport, to vote, to get a driver's licence, or to get married.

I did not realise how important it is!  
How do I register her birth?



In some places, you can register at the hospital where you gave birth. If the hospital where you give birth does not have a facility, you should register the child at the nearest regional Ministry of Home Affairs and Immigration office.



Does Sarah's father Luke have to come with me to register the birth? We are not in a relationship anymore.

You need to speak to him about birth registration. You both need to agree if you want to include his name on the birth certificate. If he does not want his name on the birth certificate, you can still register Sarah on your own in your surname.

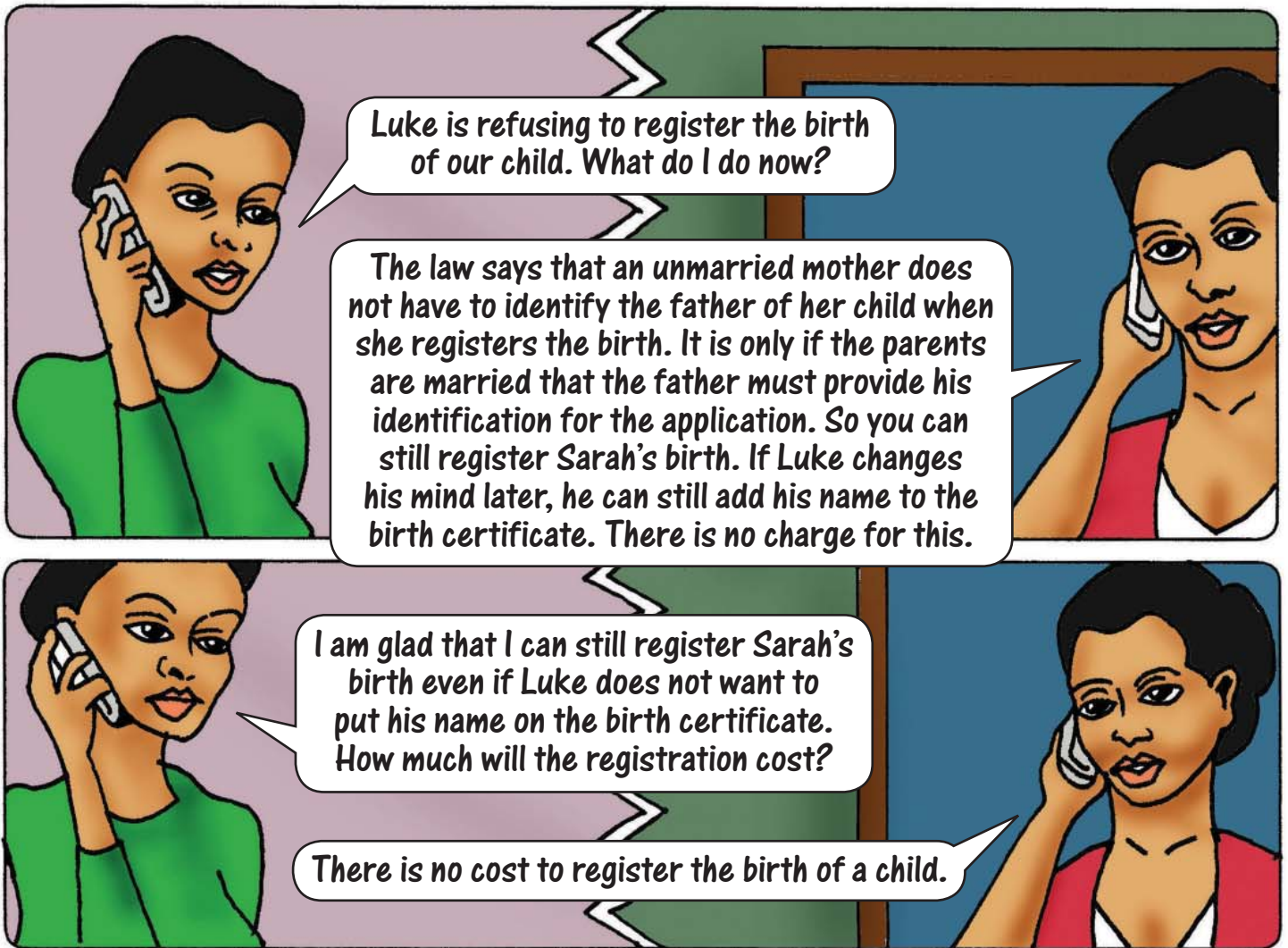
What information should I take with me?

I will write it down for you.

### WHAT TO DO IF YOU DO NOT HAVE THE DOCUMENTS REQUIRED FOR BIRTH REGISTRATION

- If you have lost your child's health passport, you can get a copy from the hospital where you gave birth.
- If you do not have a birth certificate, you should register yourself through the late registration of birth process at the nearest regional Ministry of Home Affairs and Immigration office. If you do not have an ID card but you do have a birth certificate, you should apply for an ID card. Then you can register the birth of your child.
- If you still have problems or do not have all the documents that you need, you should speak to the clerk at the Ministry of Home Affairs and Immigration office for advice.

- 
- \* Proof of birth (child's health passport)
  - \* The original or certified copy of the ID card and birth certificate, or passport for one or both parents. It is best that both parents come in person, if possible. If the other parent has died, you should also bring a certified copy of the death certificate.
  - \* If the parents of the child are married to each other, original or certified copy of marriage certificate or statement from the village headman/woman if the parents are married under customary law.



## RULES ABOUT BIRTH REGISTRATION FOR UNMARRIED PARENTS

- (1) The mother cannot name a man as the child's father on the birth certificate without his consent. If the mother wants to name a man as the father on the birth certificate, the father must be present, or provide a sworn written statement (an affidavit) that he has consented to be listed as the father on the birth certificate. If the father is deceased, his name cannot be added after the initial registration.
- (2) The mother cannot be forced to give details about the child's father. If she does not want to give any details about the father, no one will be named as the child's father on the birth certificate. You can still add the father's details to the birth certificate later if you both want to do this. There is no charge for this.



Martha, how do you know so much about birth registration?

I learnt about it when I registered my son Joseph last year. There were some problems because I did not have proof of his birth, but the people at the Ministry of Home Affairs and Immigration helped me.



But Joseph is 5 years old. Wasn't it too late to register him?

You should register your child as soon as possible after the birth - within 14 days of the birth is best. But if your child is more than one year old, you can still register the birth through a process called late registration of birth. If you do not have the child's health passport, you will need extra documents, such as the child's baptismal certificate. Late registration of birth is also free of charge, like registration at the time of birth. The hospital-based birth registration facilities do not do late registrations of birth.



## WHAT TO DO IF YOU DO NOT HAVE PROOF OF YOUR CHILD'S BIRTH

If you do not have proof of your child's birth, you can show his or her baptismal certificate. You can also get a sworn statement from the principal of the first school your child attended or the headman of your village. If you cannot provide any documentation, two witnesses who are five years older than the child must come with you to give information about your child's age and identity. The child's parents can be the witnesses if there is really no one else who can give the necessary information. If you are registering the birth of a child who is over the age of 14, the Ministry requests that you bring the child along so that the child's fingerprints can be taken as a standard security measure.

***The traditional leader is asking me to pay a lot of money for a sworn statement. What can I do?***

You can get an affidavit from another person, such as the principal of the school that your child first attended.

So even if you do not have your child's health passport, you can still register the birth?



Yes, you can bring a sworn letter called an affidavit from someone such as the local headman or the principal of the child's first school instead. I was able to use my son's baptismal certificate.

You and the father are not married. Is the father's name on the birth certificate?



Yes, we both agreed that he should be listed, and we agreed that our son should have his father's surname.

What do I write for Sarah's surname? I am not in a relationship with the father, but what if he changes his mind and wants to give the child his surname?



You cannot use his surname unless you both consent to this since you are not married. You must use your surname if he has not agreed to use his surname. If he wants the child to have his surname later, and you agree to this, you can change it on the birth certificate. There is no charge for this.





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 Namibia's needs 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.

## THE MINISTRY NEEDS YOUR INPUT

1. What **problems** do people face when registering the birth of their child?
2. What would **encourage** more people to register the birth of their children?
3. Why do some people **delay** registering their child's birth?
4. Should there be different rules for registering the birth of a child of **married and unmarried parents**? Should there be different rules for **mothers and fathers**?
5. Should a parent have to come to the Ministry of Home Affairs and Immigration Office **in person** in order to be listed on the child's birth certificate, or should it be acceptable to list both parents if one parent comes with a **signature or a sworn statement** from the other parent?
6. What should happen if **someone wants to be listed as parent** on the child's birth certificate but **the other parent disputes parentage or does not want both parents named**?
7. **Suppose that one parent can prove the other parent's identity.** For example, there may be a paternity test identifying the father or a notice of birth from the hospital identifying the mother. **Should a parent with such proof be able to register the details of the absent parent without that parent's consent?**
8. Should an unmarried mother or father be able to add the name of a **deceased parent** to a child's birth certificate? Should anyone else, such as the relatives of the deceased, be required to give permission? What proof of parentage should be required?

Remember that the new law should focus on what is in the **best interests of the child.**



### SEND YOUR COMMENTS TO:

SMS: 081-6000098

Email: [feedback@mha.gov.na](mailto:feedback@mha.gov.na)

Fax: 088-613693

Post: PO Box 604, Windhoek

Facebook: Revision of the Namibian Births, Marriages and Deaths Registration Act

For more information about the Act revision process, contact the **Under-Secretary of the Department of Civil Registration, Lydia Kandetu**, at the Ministry of Home Affairs and Immigration in Windhoek: email [lkandetu@mha.gov.na](mailto:lkandetu@mha.gov.na) or telephone **061-2922093**.

This comic was produced by the Legal Assistance Centre (LAC) in consultation with the Ministry of Home Affairs and Immigration, with funding from the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs MDG3 Fund for the first edition in 2010 and from UNICEF for this 2013 edition.



**unicef** unite for children

A digital (PDF) version of this comic is available on the websites of the LAC and the Ministry: [www.lac.org.na](http://www.lac.org.na) and [www.mha.gov.na](http://www.mha.gov.na)