

Birth Registration in Zambia

Country Report 2005

Table of contents

Executive Summary	2
Country profile	5

I. Background

A.	Situational Analyses	9
B.	Impact of not having children registered	11
C.	Existing Birth Registration Process	12
D.	Current Coverage.....	12

II. Progress towards Universal Birth Registration

A.	Initiatives taken or planned.....	13
B.	Recent Achievements.....	13
C.	External Co operation and Funding.....	17

III. Challenges and Lessons Learned

A.	Major barriers to progress and efforts to redress them.....	17
B.	Reaching the most difficult to reach.....	20
C.	Awareness and participation of society including role of civil society and cultures affecting birth registration	20
D.	Scaling up to achieve Universal Birth Registration.....	21

IV. The Way Forward/Recommendations

Appendices

I.	Focus group discussions.....	26
II.	Interview.....	23
III.	Facts and figures.....	25

Executive Summary

In Zambia, of the 1.9 million children under five years, over 90 percent (or about 1.7 million) do not have a birth certificate. The situation is particularly worse in rural areas where only 6 percent of births are registered. .

In addition to being the first State’s official acknowledgement of the child’s existence, a birth certificate is also important in ensuring the fulfilment of other rights of children. Birth registration represents recognition of each child’s individual importance to the state and of the child’s status under the law. Failure to register births implies the non-recognition of these children as persons before the law, which will affect the level of enjoyment of their fundamental rights and freedoms. In addition such children are not included in relevant statistical and other information on children and their situation, therefore, cannot be properly monitored.

If the existence of children is not officially confirmed in the first place, there can be no confidence that their disappearance will be recorded either.

Until 1973, birth registration was restricted to only Whites, Coloreds and Asian races without provision for the registration of native (black Africans) births. This was according to the European, Aliens and Colored Birth Registration Act of 12th June, 1898, which was later repealed and replaced by the Birth and Death Registration Act, 1973 that provided for the registration of every live or still birth as well as every death occurring throughout Zambia.

Parents and guardians give various reasons for failing to register their children ranging from ignorance about the procedure to transport difficulties as a result of the long distances between their homes and registration points such as medical centers or local councils. For people whose options are severely limited, due to poverty, HIV/AIDS and other constraints, birth registration does not appear to be of much importance especially in the face of many competing priorities to obtain basic necessities. In rural areas many parents are reluctant to put their efforts in applying for birth certificates because they do not see any accompanying benefits. This lack of enthusiasm on the part of parents seriously undermines efforts to increase birth registration. Even more, the availability of alternative registration documents such as affidavits, immunization cards and under five cards, which are legally acceptable in the absence of birth certificates, further weakens the case for birth registration.

The process of issuance of birth certificates remains centralized to Lusaka, long and bureaucratic. However, the Government is working on the enactment of a Decentralization Bill that will enable the issuance of birth certificates to be decentralized to the provincial and later district level. The Department of Registration is also working on a pilot project to computerize the issuance of birth certificates which is slated to begin in Lusaka soon and later roll out to all provincial offices of the Department.

The Department of Registration intends to strengthen its collaboration with other Government departments, cooperating partners such as UNICEF, Plan and civil society to scale up its advocacy campaign on birth registration, targeting local communities including the traditional, political and religious leaders at the district level. Plans are also underway to mobilize resources to conduct mobile birth registration exercises to reach the remotest parts of the country.

It has been shown that civil society organizations can contribute positively to the promotion of birth registration through their outreach activities as demonstrated by ZCEA and Salem Children's Village. Their presence and networks at the community level can effectively be utilized by the Department of Registration to sensitize parents about the importance of birth registration and to freely distribute birth registration forms.

In order to effectively implement universal birth registration in Zambia, Government with the collaboration of its partners will have to implement a set of key recommendations including among others: decentralization of the issuance of birth certificates; including children's rights in the new constitution; increasing funding to the Department of Registration; and reviving village registers at both the chief's and village headman's palaces that existed in the past.

Overview of the context of children in Zambia

Zambia's children live in a country rich in potential, but poor in performance and in terms of what the vast majority of them are able to access. Basic services, basic needs and children's rights are all insecure – the lack of security threatening the well-being of all children, even those that are being brought up in relative comfort. This section provides a brief overview of national conditions, describing the historical and demographic background, and providing a brief commentary on key issues including education, HIV/AIDS and health.

The population of Zambia is approximately 11,090,000, of which 45% is under 15, and 55% is 15 years and over. The population in 2000 was 65% rural – an increase from 60% in 1990 and 1980. The average household size in 2000 was 5.2, which had fallen from 5.6 in 1990.

HIV/AIDS is a major cause of the current OVC crisis, having multiple effects on individuals, families and communities, and on national development. The first cases of HIV/AIDS in Zambia were reported in the 1980s. Since that time, the epidemic has spread throughout the country, and has affected all social groups. It is estimated that currently, around 920,000 people in Zambia are living with HIV, with about 94,000 deaths as a result of AIDS per year.

An orphan is defined in Zambia as a child below the age of 18 years who has lost one or both parents. A single orphan has lost one parent, while a double orphan has lost both. A maternal orphan has lost their mother (but may or may not still have their father), whilst a paternal orphan has lost their father (but may or may not still have their mother). In 2002, over 15% of children under the age of 15 had lost one or both of their parents (amounting to over 710,000 children). Projections suggest that by 2003, 19% of Zambian children under the age of 18 had been orphaned, totalling 1,100,000 children. Since many of Zambia's orphans lose their parents as a result of HIV/AIDS, they usually experience the death of one parent, and later the other. This is reflected in the rapidly growing proportion of "double" orphans. In 1992, 8% of all orphans were double orphans. By 1996, this had risen to 13%, and in 2002, 19% of all orphans were double orphans. Having lost both parents, double orphans are particularly vulnerable to the hazards that threaten Zambia's OVC, and this trend is therefore of great concern.

As they grow older, greater proportions of children have been orphaned. Even so, significant numbers of very young children lose a parent before the age of five. In 2002, 12% of 5-year-old children had already been orphaned. Even more children lose parents during middle childhood and early adolescence. For the 14-year-olds of 2002, 31% of urban children and 27% of rural children had lost one or both of their parents.

Disabled children suffer substantial problems in Zambia today. Special education services are extremely limited, and access to wheelchairs, prostheses, occupational therapy and physiotherapy is usually only through one of a small number of missions,

charities and NGOs. Information on disability is virtually non-existent, and there is no active national policy or programming addressing their needs.

Assessment of children's rights

In 2002, the Government of Zambia prepared the Initial Assessment of the Implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, known as the State Party Report. This report examined the status, achievements and challenges with regard to the implementation of the CRC, assessing progress in relation to the rights and needs of all Zambian children. The report identified a range of challenges facing Zambia in complying with the provisions of the CRC, including the need for legal review, improved basic service delivery by Government, and the need to build family and community capacity to meet the changing needs of children.

In response, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child prepared a comprehensive response to Zambia's submission where the need to increase birth registration was underscored.

Birth registration in Zambia

I. Background

A. Situation Analysis

The Zambian National Registration system can be traced to the European, Aliens and Colored Birth Registration Act of 12th June, 1898. In this Act, birth registration was restricted to Whites, Coloreds and Asian races without provision for the registration of native births (black Africans).

The above Act was later repealed and replaced by the Birth and Death Registration Act, 1973. Since the coming into force of this Act, every live or still birth as well as every death occurring throughout Zambia is supposed to be registered.

The issuance of births and deaths certificates is the responsibility of the Department of National Registration, Passport and Citizenship under the Ministry of Home Affairs. In addition, the Department is also responsible for issuance of the following documents:

- National Registration Cards under the National Registration Act Cap 126;
- Passports and travel documents;
- Marriage Certificates under the Marriage Act Cap 50;
- Adoption certificate under the Adoption Act Cap 54; and
- Citizenship certificates under the citizenship Act Cap 124 of the laws of Zambia.

According to UNICEF's State of the World's Children Report (SWCR) 2005, over 48 million new borns a year, representing over 36 percent of all estimated births worldwide went unregistered. These unregistered children were almost always from poor, marginalized or displaced families or from countries where systems of registration are not in place or functional. In Sub Saharan Africa, 70 percent of all births went unregistered in 2000.

In Zambia, of the 1.9 million children under five years, over 90 percent (or about 1.7 million) do not have a birth certificate. The situation is particularly worse in rural areas where only 6 percent of births are registered. .

Population Profile - Zambia

Population data in thousands

	2004	2003	2002	2001	2000	1990	1980
Total population	10'987	10'666	10'356	10'060	9,886	7,759	5'662
Live births	490	479	468	457	335	326	212
Surviving infants	407	405	403	402	318	301	199
Pop. less than 5 years	1'973	1'877	1'799	1'734	1'695	1'200	1'033
Pop. less than 15 years	2,987	2,942	2,886	2,824	2,783	2,149	1,776

There has been a 30% increase in birth registration from 8,014 in 1991 to 11,758 in 2002. However, considering Zambia's birth rate of 41.38 births per 1,000, this increase is woefully inadequate.

In 2004, Plan Zambia conducted a survey in three rural districts which revealed that less than 1% of over 2,000 children of primary school leaving age, had a birth certificate. Of the 491 adult respondents, comprising parents, teachers, medical personnel and Victim Support Unit (Zambia Police) officers, only 15 had birth certificates.

Apart from the birth certificate being the first legal acknowledgement of a child's existence, the registration of births is fundamental to the realization of a number of rights and practical needs including:

- Effective planning
- Providing access to health care and immunization
- Ensuring children enroll in school at the right age
- Enforcing laws relating to the minimum age for employment, including efforts to prevent child labor.
- Effectively countering the problems of girls forced into marriage before they are legally eligible, without proof of age.
- Protecting young people from harassment by police and other law enforcement officials

Securing the child's rights to a nationality at the time of birth or at a later stage
Getting a passport, opening a bank account, obtaining credit, voting and finding employment.
Being able to inherit their parents' property

B. Impact of not having children registered

Birth registration represents recognition of each child's individual importance to the state and of the child's status under the law. Failure to register births implies the non-recognition of these children as persons before the law, which will affect the level of enjoyment of their fundamental rights and freedoms. In addition such children are not included in relevant statistical and other information on children and their situation, therefore, cannot be properly monitored. If the existence of children is not officially confirmed in the first place, there can be no confidence that their disappearance will be recorded either.

Some children are even denied their right to inherit their deceased parent's property due to lack of proof of paternity. During one interview with youths, it was learnt that an orphaned family of six, the oldest of whom was 10, were turned out of their family home by their fathers' relatives because they had no proof that the man who died was their father, none of them had birth certificates. It was only after the Police Victim Support intervened that the children were allowed back into their family home. The children have since been assisted in applying for birth registration.

Children without birth certificates also encounter other problems later on in life, when their parents want to have them admitted into school, when they want to apply for a national registration card at the age of 16 (which is compulsory) or when they want to apply for a passport, or find employment.

When children are not registered it makes it difficult for the government to plan for the country's economic and social development. This is because disaggregated population data helps identify geographical, social-economic and gender disparities within the country. This in turn, improves a state's ability to plan, implement, monitor, evaluate and report on the impact of its social and economic policies. It will also ensure that resources are allocated to where they are really needed within different geographical areas or different groups in society. While the costs of securing universal birth registration may be high, the benefits are substantial, not least in relation to efficient use of resources.

C. Existing Birth Registration System

Every child in Zambia has a right to a name and it is generally believed that a child should be named within the first week of birth. In recognition of a child's right to a name, the registration of birth procedures requires a child's forename and surname. Although it is possible to register a child before a name is given, the parents or guardian have two years to register the child's name.

The law permits natural or adoptive parents or a legal guardian to change a child's name. An adopted child may change his or her name to that of the adoptive parents or may retain his or her original name after the adoption order. These procedures are done in accordance with the English Rules of the Supreme Court (White Book, 1998).

The Births and Deaths Registration Act, Chapter 51, provides for compulsory registration of all children born in Zambia, without distinction of origin or descent. This registration is free if done within the prescribed period of one month after the birth of the child.

The law requires that the birth of a child must first be registered in the district where the child was born before the information is entered into the central register. Zambia has 72 registration districts, which are identical to the current administrative districts identified in the Provincial and District Boundaries Act, Chapter 286. All District Secretaries can act as Registrars of Births and Deaths in their respective districts.

Parents have primary responsibility for informing the appropriate authorities of the birth of a child. If the mother or father fails to carry out this responsibility, the duty is placed upon a prescribed list of others. The father of a child born out of wedlock is under no obligation to give notice of the birth of the child.

It is an offence to fail to give notice of a child's birth. This is punishable by a penalty of 200 penalty units and/or one-month imprisonment, with or without hard labour. However, a person will be excused if the circumstances of the case made it unreasonable or impracticable to give such notice.

Failure to give notice will also be excused in situations where the parents, guardians or other responsible persons could not reasonably be expected to have sufficient knowledge of this obligation because of educational status, general knowledge and understanding of laws, or the social environment in which he or she resides. This provision acknowledges that in rural areas of the country facilities are not readily available and, also, the level of education of the people is relatively low, to such an extent that they may not be aware of their obligations.

As stated above, the processing of a birth certificate begins with the local council who registers the birth in the respective district's birth register. The Notice of Birth is then signed, stamped and forwarded to the office of the Registrar General in Lusaka which issues the birth certificate.

If a child is born at a hospital or clinic, (whether government or private) a Record of Birth or Under Five Clinic Card is attached to the Notice of Birth. The two documents are then submitted to the Registrar of Birth at the District council.

If a child was born at home or in a village, the Notice of Birth should be accompanied by an affidavit which is signed by the Registrar in the district where the child was born confirming the birth. In addition, a letter from the Village headman or chief is also required. The form has to be commissioned by a magistrate or commissioner of oaths.

For children of Zambian parents born outside Zambia, the person or persons registering the child will have to bring the father's or mother's identity card, a foreign birth certificate or a foreign birth confirmation record, a marriage certificate if any, and if there is no marriage certificate, the father and mother will have to be present to sign the form.

In accepting and signing notices of births, Registrars are responsible for checking each item on the notices in the presence of the informant to seek clarification with regard to any unclear information on the form.

The Notices of Birth must be completed and submitted within a month of the date of birth by either the father or mother of the child. The registrars usually prefer parents as opposed to secondary informants, for notices of birth, because their information is deemed more reliable.

However, there are times when information will be permitted from other qualified persons like the head of household, a person present at birth or the person having charge of the child.

The biological father is not qualified to be an informant unless he is the 'qualified' occupier of the house in which the birth occurred or has taken responsibility for the child or is present at the birth.

It is a law that every birth must be registered within 12 months. If the birth is registered after twelve months, an affidavit is completed for late registration. There is a provision on the form for applicants to give reasons why the birth was not registered within the stipulated period. The Registrar then forwards these documents to the Registrar General's office for the issuance of a birth certificate. However, parents are asked to pay K25, 000 (about USD\$6). In a country where 80 percent live on less than a dollar a day, people cannot afford to pay this amount and thus do not register their children.

The issuance of birth certificates is currently centralized as these are signed by the Registrar General or Deputy Registrar General who are both based in Lusaka, the Head Office. The certificates are sent to respective districts where the forms

originated for distribution through various local registrars.

When parents apply for their children's registration, they fill out a vital statistics card for the purpose of population statistics. Names are required to ensure that there is no duplication that would render the data invalid. However there is no legal requirement that these cards should be completed and in cases where the parents do not want to fill out this form, a blank card can be submitted with the notices and sent to the Registrar General.

D. Current Coverage

As mentioned earlier, of Zambia's 1.9 million children, only 10% have birth certificates. Zambia comprises of seventy two districts in nine provinces. The department of national registration, passport and citizenship has offices in all the seventy two districts. The process of Birth Registration begins at the district level where a notice of birth is given by the informant to the district registrar.

After all formalities have been done the notice is forwarded to the office of the registrar general in Lusaka for issuance of a birth certificate. The registrar General is the only one mandated by law under CAP 50 to issue birth certificates.

The centralization of issuance of birth certificates has had a negative effect on the coverage of birth registration. About 90% of births accruing in the country are unregistered. The coverage in rural areas is particularly of concern. This is because there is no system in place at the district level to issue birth certificates.

However Government has realized the importance of birth registration and intends to cast its net on birth registration wide enough to cater for both the rural and urban areas. It is the vision of the Department and Government to introduce and develop a system that will ease the accessibility of obtaining birth certificates by all citizens and foreigners alike born in the country. The department in its five year action plan intends to capture 90% of the births occurring in the country by the year 2011.

It is the vision of the Government to introduce the village concept that enables the registration office to capture the births occurring in the villages. This will create a wider coverage for birth registration in the country. Once a proper system is in place, the other stakeholders concerned with the welfare of children can then partner with Government to intensify their campaign on birth registration in the rural and urban areas.

II Progress towards Universal Birth Registration

A. Initiatives taken or planned

The Day of the African Child (DAC) on 16th June 2003 brought together some 50 child delegates from all Zambia's nine provinces to Choma, a small southern town, to celebrate the Day whose theme was '*the importance of birth registration*'. The Ministry of Youth, Sport and Child Development (MSYCD) officially launched the National Birth Registration Campaign with the aim of registering 100,000 children in seven of Zambia's nine provinces and 150,000 in the more populated Copperbelt and Lusaka provinces. The campaign was aimed at ensuring that all provinces have birth registration forms and that all hospitals are using these forms as of 16th June 2003. UNICEF supported the Ministry of Youth, Sport and Child Development who hosted this celebration at which other government departments, Plan, and ZCEA also participated. The government also committed itself to work on decentralizing registration to the provincial level to make obtaining birth certificates easier.

The children held discussions about issues that affected them, with particular emphasis on birth registration, with the Deputy Minister of Sport, Youth and Child Development, UNICEF Representative, Director of Child Affairs and members of the Permanent Human Rights Commission.

As part of the birth registration campaign launch, UNICEF supported the Government with the printing of 100,000 birth registration application forms, along with posters and leaflets on how to obtain a birth certificate which were developed in collaboration with Plan and other stake holders.

Subsequent to the launch, all child rights clubs decided to adopt birth registration as the theme for their community outreach activities under the motto, “*Do You Have a Birth Certificate?*”

At the end of the summit, a declaration, “the Choma declaration” was passed. The Declaration contained the following resolutions:

Registration offices should be created at health centers to ease the process of registration;

Birth certificates and not clinic cards should be the key identity documents for children under 16 years;

Government includes a Bill of Rights for children in the national constitution;

Customary (traditional) law and statutory law should be harmonized into one piece of legislation to avoid contradictions and ensure the full domestication of the CRC.

As a follow up from its Global launch of Universal Birth Registration (UBR) on 22nd February 2005 in New York, Plan launched its two year UBR Campaign on 22nd April 2005, in Zambia with several launches in different communities where Plan operates. Plan’s UBR Campaign is aimed at creating community awareness on the importance of birth registration and lobbying government to remove impeding factors in implementing the universal registration of births. Universal birth registration ensures that every government that has ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) lives up to its responsibility to register all children at birth.

Plan’s national level activities have been centered around working with the Department of Registration in the decentralization of registration to provincial and district levels, and allow for adequate staffing to promote efficient service and also strengthen the capacities at community level to enhance their birth recording systems while working with religious and traditional leaders, community based organizations, teachers, health center staff and traditional birth attendants.

In Mazabuka, another small town in the Southern part of Zambia where Plan operates, the UBR campaign was launched at district level with all NGO partners including Heads of Government line ministries in attendance. The district launch was followed by launches in all the 13 Plan communities in Mazabuka and other launches followed in two districts, Chibombo and Chadiza where Plan is also working.

The Plan Mazabuka office has been working closely with the Community Child-rights Campaigners who will incorporate awareness raising on the importance of registering children at birth in their daily child rights community outreach programmes. Some of these awareness raising activities will include;

Producing teaching aids;

Explaining birth registration issues to the community;

Holding educational sessions for traditional birth attendants, community health workers, health staff as well as teachers;

Assisting children’s clubs/groups with information dissemination material as they work with their peers and parents;

Publishing and distributing brochures and booklets in public places such as shops, markets, health centers, schools, etc

Developing and broadcasting on radio, a series of programmes on birth registration successes to encourage registration of all children.

The National Registration department is aware of the fact that there are bureaucratic challenges that people face in obtaining birth certificates for their children and is in the process of formulating a National Decentralization Action Policy to streamline government operations. This policy will enable the department to decentralize its operations to all the provinces and later, all districts. Meaning that certificates will be signed by the local authorities rather than sending them to the Registrar General in Lusaka.

Currently, birth certificates are issued manually. The department is in the process of computerizing the system so that certificates are generated electronically. The pilot programme will begin with the headquarters in Lusaka and later spread to all provincial offices of the department and is envisaged that it will speed up the production of birth certificates.

In collaboration with other partners, like Plan and UNICEF, the Zambian Government has embarked on a country wide campaign to achieve 90 percent birth registration. This is being done by use of posters, handouts, brochures and other materials. Target groups include local communities, foreign and local investors traditional, political, and religious and opinion leaders. The Government is also supporting the department's participation in programs related to children's rights.

With support from UNICEF, the Zambia Civic Education Association (ZCEA) finalized a Child Rights Manual. The manuals are being used by the Child Rights Clubs which have grown from just 80 in 2003, to over 300 in 2005. ZCEA co-ordinates and facilitates all the programmes of the Child Rights Clubs. During their school holidays, the youths have been going round different communities talking to adults and children about the importance of birth registration.

In Kitwe, one of Zambia's biggest mining towns, the Salem (Peace) Children's Village, a child care center for street children and orphans has embarked on an ambitious programme to have all children in the town under the age of 14 registered. The Center, which supports over 400 OVCs with 65 of them in residential care, is supported by UNICEF and the Rembo OVC project (Pope John Paul the 23rd). It has conducted door to door campaigns talking to people about the value of birth registration.

Recently, under an agreement with UNICEF, government waived the K25, 000 late registration fees. This enabled Salem to send 1,500 birth registration forms for signing to the district office. These included applications for the children at the orphanage and other members of the community who had hitherto failed to get their children registered.

Pastor Elvis Mwewa who runs the orphanage provides his own testimony when he says his own 14 children were not registered until recently. His explanation is that like many people, as soon as he gets home he forgets about registration and throws away or has misplaced the registration forms the hospital or clinic had given him. During his birth registration campaigns, he found that many people forget about applying for birth registration once they got home with their babies, because they had so many other matters to attend to.

Because of their tenacity, the 1,500 forms were returned to Salem at one point because they were not properly filled in and the process had to start all over again. Salem has been identified as a mini *Boma* (local council office) for birth registration and parents from the community feel comfortable going to the Center for information and assistance in applying for birth registration.

As part of the strategy of the Ministry of Community Development and Social Services to promote minimum standards of care, UNICEF supported the Ministry to develop a booklet entitled '*how to run a child care facility*' with birth registration listed as one of the key requirements.

B. Recent achievements

Through the partnerships created between Government, collaborating partners such UNICEF and Plan, and the Civil Society, there has been an increase in awareness on birth registration among communities, both urban and rural. Advocacy efforts of ZCEA and Salem Children's Village resulted in the completion of 3000 birth registration application forms which are currently with the local council authorities waiting to be forwarded to Lusaka.

C. External co operation and funding support

The Zambian economy is in decline and relies heavily on donor aid and support. Its national budget is heavily funded by donors,

over 50 percent and allocations are slow in disbursements. On the birth registration campaign, the government relies on the support of UNICEF and Plan.

There is hope that there will be more budgetary allocations to the Department of Registration now that the country has achieved its High Indebted poor Countries (HIPC) completion point and gained some debt cancellation which will free up resources for development programmes.

III. Challenges and lessons learned

A. Major barriers to progress

Like many developing countries, Zambia's birth registration process is very bureaucratic and under resourced. In the past decade, the Department of Registration has suffered diminishing budgetary allocations as the country struggled for seven years to achieve the HIPC completion point in order to qualify for debt cancellation. Measures to reach the HIPC completion point meant that budgetary allocation to all Government departments was severely cut.

Parents and guardians give various reasons for failing to register their children ranging from ignorance about the procedure to transport difficulties as a result of the long distances between their homes and registration points such as medical centers or local councils. In a Focus Group Discussion with youths one boy said that his mother was not aware that she was authorized to make an application for his birth certificate.

For people whose options are severely limited, due to poverty, HIV/AIDS and other constraints, birth registration does not appear to be of much importance especially in the face of many competing priorities to obtain basic necessities. In rural areas many parents are reluctant to put their efforts in applying for birth certificates because they do not see any accompanying benefits. This lack of enthusiasm on the part of parents seriously undermines efforts to increase birth registration.

Sometimes parents, for their own personal reasons, are suspicious about the motives behind birth registration. Some mothers are reluctant to give family details to strangers, while others might link the death of their child to obtaining a birth certificate.

The availability of alternative registration documents such as affidavits, immunization cards and under five cards, which are legally acceptable in the absence of birth certificates, further weakens the case for birth registration as was confirmed by several respondents in all the Focus Group Discussions.

As earlier seen, the process of obtaining a birth certificate is a long and bureaucratic one. Being centralized, all applications have to be sent to Lusaka for issuance of the birth certificates. This causes long delays, and the process can take up to one year. At times it requires parents to physically travel to Lusaka to follow-up on the issuance of their children's birth certificates, which makes the exercise expensive and unaffordable by many. Those parents who cannot afford traveling to Lusaka, who comprise the majority, simply lose interest.

Parents applying for late birth registration are required to pay a ZMK 25,000 (about USD\$5) fee, which many especially in the rural areas cannot afford. There are also other accompanying fees that are arbitrarily set by the local councils. For instance, while the Department of Registration maintains that the forms are free, the local council which endorses the forms before they are forwarded to the Department in Lusaka, charge a fee of ZMK 2,500 (less than USD\$1) as an administrative cost. This financial requirement and the lack of uniformity in the fees charged create confusion and discourage many parents from registering the births of their children.

At the Department of Registration, birth certificates are prepared manually using typewriters. This requires an adequate number of staff to type out the numerous birth certificates yet the Department remains understaffed, further contributing to the slow pace of the registration process.

B. Reaching the most difficult to reach

Zambia's epidemic of HIV/AIDS has created many orphans. The proportion of orphans is increasing estimated at 1.1 m orphans currently and 1.3 m by 2010 of which 10-14 years old group being the highest number of orphans with some ending up on the streets. Most of the orphans live in poverty and are in rural areas. Widowed mothers overwhelmed with burden of care to register their children

In the face of competing priorities for basic necessities, grand parents are left with little time to follow up on registration. Most orphans are looked after by poor households who can't see the accompanying benefits of birth registration. Access to rural areas where most orphans live with their grand parents is problematic and no one to provide details of children in child headed households. The other challenge has been on registering children living on the streets and those cared by widows and grandparents who can not afford the fees charged.

The Department of Registration intends to collaborate with other Government departments to scale up its advocacy campaign on birth registration, targeting local communities including the traditional, political and religious leaders at the district level. Sensitization will be done through drama groups, community and church discussions, distribution of news letters and other IEC materials, radio and television announcements and mobile video announcements. Traditional, political and religious leaders will be engaged through workshops on birth registration. Plans are also underway to mobilize resources to conduct mobile birth registration exercises to reach the remotest parts of the country.

With presidential and parliamentary elections around the corner the Department of Registration is currently conducting a mobile national registration exercise to enable voters obtain their voting cards in time before the polls. The Department has taken advantage of this exercise to continue sensitizing communities about the importance of birth registration and to distribute birth registration forms.

C. Awareness and participation of society including the role of civil society and cultural issues affecting birth registration

It has been shown that civil society organizations can contribute positively to the promotion of birth registration through their advocacy work as demonstrated by ZCEA and Salem Children's Village. Their presence and networks at the community level can effectively be utilized by the Department of Registration to sensitize parents about the importance of birth registration and to freely distribute birth registration forms.

With the support of UNICEF, ZCEA will continue sensitizing communities on the importance of birth registration through Child Rights Clubs whose activities are entirely implemented by the children themselves. Likewise, Salem Children's Village will continue its awareness raising activities on birth registration including distribution of birth registration application forms to rural communities.

Plan is targeting traditional birth attendants (TBAs) to make sure that they give mothers birth records for their children as soon as they have delivered, and to remind them on their follow up visits. They also are encouraging traditional leaders to reinforce the use of the village registers which have proved to be very instrumental in preserving important records about its inhabitants. Other stakeholders included are teachers in schools through the child-to-child groups.

Christian Children's Fund (CCF) Zambia has a Community Based Project Management Tool (PMT) that helps the agency continuously collect data from the communities it serves, which helps measure the impact of its programs on these communities. One such piece of information collected is "vital events" that includes births, deaths and migrations in and out of the community. While this information helps maintain demographic records, it could also be used to track new births and thus ensure that those parents are facilitated with the application process.

NGOs such as Justice and Widows Project (JOWP), Care International and Scope OVC are all working mainly with people affected or living with HIV/AIDS. They encourage their members to keep a memory book. In this book, the parents record various information including their genealogy. The book serves a variety of purposes such as enabling children to inherit property in the absence of a will, and enabling them to trace their family roots. These memory books can also enable guardians to obtain relevant information about the deceased parents of children in their care in order to apply for late birth registration.

In areas where traditional authorities have some form of record keeping on new births, NGOs can play an important role of strengthening their capacity through training and provision of required materials such as stationery. In remote areas where transport is very difficult, NGOs can also assist in collecting and delivering completed birth registration forms to the nearest local councils.

D. Scaling up to achieve Universal Birth Registration

Government is currently undertaking a restructuring exercise of the entire public service to ensure effective delivery of services. For this purpose, the Government is formulating a National Decentralization Policy which will streamline government operations. Once this policy is in place, the operations of the Department of Registration will be decentralized, firstly to the provincial level and later to all the districts. Decentralization of birth registration will enable the Department of Registration to recruit more staff in order to reduce on the long period for issuance of birth certificates.

The Department of Registration is working on a pilot project to computerize the issuance of birth certificates which is slated to begin in Lusaka soon and later roll out to all provincial offices of the Department. This will further improve the processing of birth registration applications.

The Department of Registration also intends to involve health workers and traditional birth attendants (TBA) in the promotion of birth registration. Health workers and traditional birth attendants can play a critical role in encouraging mothers to register the births of their children and the timely distribution of application forms, as well as assisting in the completion of the forms.

UNICEF and Plan intend to strengthen their support to Government's efforts towards universal birth registration and to continue supporting activities of implementing partners such as ZCEA and Salem Children's Village on birth registration. Special attention is going to be given to supporting the timely enactment of the Decentralization Bill. Government will also be supported in decentralization of birth registration, assessment of current system and training of staff of the Department of Registration.

VI. The Way Forward/Recommendations

In order to effectively implement universal birth registration in Zambia, Government in collaboration with its partners will have to implement the following recommendations:

1. Decentralize the issuance of birth certificates to the provincial and later district levels. This will have to be accompanied by training of provincial registrations officers at the provincial and district levels. This will ease the workload of the central office of the Department of Registration in Lusaka, as local authorities will be able to issue birth certificates.
2. The Department of Registration and collaborating partners should lobby Government to include children's rights in the new constitution. Efforts should be made to ensure that the clause in the draft constitution which spells out a child's right to a name and nationality is adopted.
3. Government must increase funding to the Department of Registration to enable it attain its goal of 90 percent birth

registration.

4. Increase and intensify birth registration advocacy. In addition to sensitizing communities and other stakeholders, sensitization programmes should also target traditional leaders. Likewise, popular national leaders (such as former President Kenneth Kaunda and current patron of Plan Zambia’s UBR Campaign) and sports stars should be involved in awareness raising activities to raise the profile of birth registration advocacy. Child participation in advocacy activities should also be encouraged and promoted.
5. The Ministries of Home Affairs should work together with the Ministries of Education and Health to strengthen the capacity of teachers and health workers, including traditional birth attendants to play a role in assisting mothers to register their children. Mothers should be able to obtain information on birth registration when they attend under-five clinics and during school registration of their child in grade one.
6. Revive village registers at both the chief’ and village headman’s palace that existed in the past. Village registers are important in storing vital information required for birth registration.
7. Government should make birth registration fees uniform and consider waiving late registration fees for some parents who cannot afford it in order to reach their desired percentage of birth registration. In addition, information on birth registration should be translated into local languages and thumb-prints should be accepted as a form of signature for those who cannot write.
8. The Department of Registration should consider combining birth registration with the on-going mobile national registration exercise to maximize resource utilization.
9. The Central Statistics Office should include birth registration indicators in their periodical surveys. Without such indicators it is difficult to monitor the progress of universal birth registration.

Appendix I

Focus group Discussion 1 - 20th August 2005

Ante-Natal Clinic - Luangwa Health Centre, Lusaka

All the respondents were traders in varying degrees. Only two had reached seventh grade, the others dropped out in grades five - six.

Name	Age	Number of children	Registered
Anilese Zunda	32	4	all
Margret Hamuchila	25	3	1
Gertrude Banda	22	2	1
Munandi Mwape	30	3	2
Anayawa Liwena	41	6	4
Petty Ndlovu	18	2	none
Prudence Phiri	19	3	none
Jainess Bwingu	22	3	none
Grace Mainess	25	4	none

Table 1

Discussions

Question: Has anyone talked to you about birth registration? Do you think it's important

“Yes. But it's not important otherwise the politicians would be talking about it.”

“I have heard talk on the radio and it appears quite important.”

“The nurse was talking about it, but I do not understand it too well, she was speaking English.”

“Yes I have heard about it, you need it if you are taking your child to school.”

“Have not heard about it.”

“My husband has mentioned it but I don't know what exactly it is.”

“It's a government document and you have to pay for it. It's an expensive document.”

Question: How many of you have registered your children (if not why, if yes why)

“Only some of the children are registered my husband said the process was too cumbersome so the others do not have. I tried to do it myself, but the people at the office kept telling me to bring the father of the children and my husband was not interested.”

“I have no time to stand in queues or spend the whole day at the registration office, but even so, I don't know how to write in English so I am shy to go to the office.”

“The children who were born in another province, do not have. I do not have transport money to go back to start filling in forms and bringing them back here for signing. I am using the birth record for school admission and I hear I can use an affidavit for other things. There is no rush for me.”

“My children are already big, I do not think they need the certificates now, but I might try for the small ones. The older ones used affidavits to get their NRCs and passports.”

“I do not have the money to get certificates for all them, so I do it one by one when I have transport money and the fees to pay for them.”

“I am uncomfortable about giving details of my children to strangers. The officer asked so many questions. We do not give out the middle names or family names to just anyone, they can wish bad luck on the children.”

“The last child I had a birth certificate for died soon after I got the paper, I think that giving information about your children to strangers is not good.”

“I got birth certificates for two of my children because a cousin works for the Registration Department but she has since left and now I don't know how to get certificates for the rest.”

“The only way to get a certificate quickly is to bribe someone. I did it for the first born, but now I have no money.”

Focus Group Discussion 2: 1st September 2005

Child Rights Clubs: Zambia Civic Education Association - Lusaka

Name	Age	Male/Female
David Kapata	17	Male
Charity Shenda	17	Female
Mutinta Shiselenga	15	Female

Table 2

Question: What kind of activities has your club been doing in terms of birth registration?

DK: During the April holidays we took 10 days off to organize ourselves and went into three communities in Lusaka in small groups, talking to both youth and adults about the importance of birth registration

CS: We distributed some of our brochures and posters in the communities

MS: We targeted churches, markets bars and other public places and spoke in the local language

Question: What were your experiences

DK: People were generally receptive although it became apparent that many were ignorant about the birth registration process and the need to register children.

MS: For people who knew the process, they were scared off by the by the K25,000 late registration fee. Also, people said it depended on who you knew at the registration office to get a birth certificate.

DK: Because we were wearing our Child Rights Clubs yellow t shirts, and caps, some people thought we were a church group and ran away from us because they did not want to discuss religion.

MS: Some people chased us away because they thought we were Satanists, others thought we were from a political party looking for votes, they kept running away from us.

CS: There were some people who thought under five cards, birth records and horoscopes were birth certificates.

MS: Generally, what we found was that a lot of people did not consider birth registration important and therefore did not see it as a priority.

CS: We hope to carry out more door to door campaigns during our next school break

Focus Group Discussion 3

Youths' Peer-to-Peer Educators - Chawama STD Clinic, Lusaka

Name	Age	M/F
Njona Hamusangu	16 years	Female
Clifford Mwenya	14 years	Male
Njase Mukanta	13 years	Female
Rueben Phiri	16 years	Male

Table 3

Question: Do you have a birth certificate? Do you think it is an important document?

NM: Yes I do because I was forced to get one . My fathers relatives threw me and my six siblings out of our house when my father died (my mother was already dead). They said we were not the children of my father because we did not look like him. A neighbor took us to the Police Victim Support, who helped all of us get birth certificates and also made us get our house back. It is so important. I was just telling my friends here that they should get one also.

CM: I don't have a birth certificate, I think my parents don't know about it, but I would like to have one because next year, I want to apply for a national registration card, and they will need some form of identification. I will tell my father when he comes from the Copperbelt to apply for me and my brothers and sisters

NH: My mother has applied for a birth certificate for me recently. She did not apply earlier, because she did not know that she could be considered my legal guardian. She thought she had to get the signature of my father who has refused to have anything to do with us since he has his own family.

RP: I don't have a registration certificate. I actually think I do not need it because I already have my registration card which I got through using an affidavit. I don't know if there is any point for me to get the certificate, because I applied for a passport with my registration card and an affidavit of birth. I think birth certificates are important for those being born now, where it appears to be a requirement for everything official.

Appendix II

Interview - 8th September, 2005

Salem - Pastor Elvis Mwewa

It is really a problem to get people to understand birth registration when there are so many other conflicting priorities like food, education and housing.

We have really tried and it is showing, because we are now like an office of the Registrar, people prefer to come to us for assistance in birth registration because they complain the boma is too crowded, there is a shortage of staff, so people are not very helpful.

Ever since it became known that we were assisting 1,500 applicants to get birth registration, people have been flocking to us. I can understand why people do not register their children's birth, I can give you an example of myself. I have 14 children, whenever they gave my wife and me the registration forms we would forget as soon as we arrived home. This happens to a lot of people. It is only recently that I managed to get birth certificates for all of them. Also, it is not easy to fill out the forms, when we were applying for the 1,500, the forms were thrown back at us because we did not fill them out properly, so I can understand people's frustration if, after applying, than one year later, the forms are sent back for re application. But at least now, we know what to do, so we can help a lot more people.

I have applied for registration for all the children at the orphanage. Once I get these 1,500 certificates, I will begin again to help another 1,500 until all children under the age of 14 years in Kitwe have birth certificates.

Appendix III

Facts of figures

Zambia faces a triple threat: poverty, HIV/AIDS, and the issue of governance

- Population: 11,089,691 (2004)
- Total child population (below 18): 5.9 million
- Total child population (under-5) 1.99 million

- Population under the poverty line: 67 per cent
- National HIV prevalence rate: 15.6 per cent (2001)
- Number of adults currently infected with HIV: 917,718 (2004)
- Number of children infected with HIV/AIDS per year: 22,145
- Under-five mortality (2002): 168 per 1,000 live births
- Malnutrition (2003): 11.9 per cent of children under5 are stunted
- Enrolment in school (2004): 293,015 children (age 7-13) are not enrolled in school
- Percentage of the population unemployed: 79 per cent (only 21 per cent employed in formal sector)
- Budgetary allocations are not sufficient enough to provide adequate social services as more families slip under the poverty line
- HIV/AIDS is decimating the workforce and straining the provision of social services

Children and HIV/AIDS

Zambia national Child Policy defines an orphan as a child under 18 who has lost one or both parents. Children have mainly been seen in the context of orphans, but more attention has to be given to uninfected but vulnerable children whose voices are rarely heard.

- Total number of orphans (2004): 1.15 million (20 per cent of population are 18 years old)
- Projected number of orphans and vulnerable children by 2010: 1,328,000
- Highest number of orphans: 10-14 years age group
- Number of registered organizations providing services: 418 to an estimated 286,000 children
- Number of children under-5 with a birth certificate (2004): 10 per cent (1.8 million children are not registered)
- The proportion of orphans living in urban areas significantly higher than in rural areas
- Paternal orphans are more than maternal orphans
- Maternal orphans drop out of school more than paternal orphans
- There is an alarming increase of reported child sexual abuse cases and girls are more vulnerable to early pregnancy
- Grandparents are now the largest group of caregivers, 33% OVC live with them
- Caregivers have limited capacities to cope with daily burden of care
- Care and psychosocial support for orphans are inadequate
- Poorest households continue to care for largest proportion of orphans
- Bottom-up development and community ownership of the interventions was crucial for successful intervention
- Model activities are based on long-term strategies with components to address short-term needs (i.e. household food insecurity)

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