

Behaviour to promote

Register the birth of a baby at the health facility of delivery or at a civil authority office. This will help to ensure their right to access education, healthcare and legal services in the future. Parents should register a baby within 3 months of their birth, to avoid paying a fine.

Reasons

When you have a baby you should be issued with a birth certificate from the health centre where they were delivered. Use your baby's birth certificate to report their birth to the civil registrar.

All children should have their birth registered in order to help ensure their right to access basic services, such as health care, education and legal and social services. Civil registration can benefit your child in the future, making it easier for them to register to vote, marry, obtain a passport, obtain professional licences and drive motor vehicles.

Birth registration provides an official record of a child's existence and nationality. Officially registering a child's birth can be used to protect them from illegal recruitment by armed forces, or from child marriage.

Figures

According to the 2014 DHS report, only a quarter of children under five years old are registered with the civil authorities in DRC and just 14% have a birth certificate. The lowest rates of birth registration (less than 10%) occur in Orientale and North Kivu provinces, with the highest (52%) in Bandundu province. There is also huge variation according to wealth: 38% of births in the highest wealth quintile are registered, compared with 16% in the lowest.

Barriers to behaviour change

There is widespread confusion about how civil registration and issuing of a birth certificate are two separate and necessary processes. The main obstacles to birth registration include: parents' lack of awareness about its importance, costs associated with obtaining a birth certificate and the distance between state offices and residential areas.

DRC has only 1200 registration offices for 2,345,410 sq km (1 per 1952 sq km). Some officials have started providing registration services to hospitals once a week, so that newborns can be registered before leaving the maternity ward.

If a child is not registered within 3 months of their birth, parents must pay 400 francs (\$2) to register the child, a fee which is high for many Congolese families. Before 3 months, it should be free of charge to register births.

Parents require their own identification documents to prove they are DRC nationals, in order to register their child's birth. However, it is possible for parents to award health workers the right to register their child's birth on their behalf.

Contributing factors to behaviour change

The whole family benefits if children are registered and are therefore able in the future to go to school, access health and social services, vote, marry, obtain a passport, and claim exemptions from certain taxes or duties.

If a mother gives birth in a health facility, she may sign a power of attorney to register her child by a third party, such as a health worker or district chief.

If a vaccination campaign is organized, births can be recorded at the time of vaccination. Interactions with health services are good opportunities to arrange for births to be recorded.