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## Position Statement

# Birth Registration

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### Background

Birth registration, "the official recording of a child's birth"<sup>i</sup> is mandated by Articles 7 and 8 of the UN convention on the Rights of the Child<sup>ii</sup>. Birth registration should be made available by governments, free of charge or fine in case of late registration, to all children, regardless of the situation (e.g. war, asylum seeker) in which they are born. However, almost 230 million births of children (45% of all children under five) worldwide have not been registered<sup>iii</sup>. Unregistered and/or undocumented children do not have legal recognition of their existence, identity or nationality<sup>iv</sup>.

Birth Registration is essential for protection of Human Rights and as a prerequisite for the welfare of the child. Possession of a birth certificate can protect a child from exploitation such as child labour, forced participation in armed conflict, child marriage, and sexual exploitation<sup>v</sup>.

Birth registration assists governments in calculating accurate population statistics<sup>vi</sup>, and planning for health, education and other services. It contributes to equity in access to these services, (social) rights and other needs of children<sup>vii</sup>.

### Position

ICM recognises the right of every child to be registered at birth, and the potential protective effect of birth registration for children. The ICM further underlines the importance of birth registration for maternal, neonatal and child health outcomes.

ICM believes midwives have a responsibility to:

- Raise awareness of the importance of birth registration at individual, community and national level,
- Initiate and support action to determine the extent of birth non-registration in their countries,

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- Take part in developing and implementing plans to facilitate easy and free birth registration for all children.

### **Recommendations**

Midwives Associations are urged to:

- Raise awareness of the importance of birth registration among their members and the public.
- Ensure that the importance of birth registration is part of education programmes of midwives and other health professionals
- Ensure that midwives are legally eligible to be part of the birth registration procedure in all birth settings.
- Ensure that midwives are familiar with their national birth registration procedures/process to ensure that they can use all opportunities to promote, or - where necessary- directly assist parents to register their child.
- Assess the registration processes/procedures in their country, in order to determine the scope of the non-registration of births in their country, and take appropriate action
- Influence/lobby policy makers to facilitate and simplify the registration procedures if needed.

### **Relevant ICM Documents**

ICM. 2011. Position Statement. Midwives, Women and Human Rights

ICM. 2014. Position Statement. Women, children and midwives in situations of war and civil unrest.

### **Other Relevant Documents**

Muzzi, Mariana 2010. [UNICEF Working Paper: Good Practices in Integrating Birth Registration into Health Systems \(2000-2009\)](#), UNICEF.

PLAN. 2009. Count Every Child - The Right to Birth Registration

Save the Children. 2013. Position paper for an UNHCR Conclusion on Birth Registration.

UN. 1989. Convention on the Rights of the Child.

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UNICEF. 2007. Birth Registration and Armed Conflict, Innocenti Research Centre, Florence, Italy.

UNICEF. 2005. The 'rights' start to life: a statistical analysis of birth registration.

UNICEF. 2011. State of the World's Children, Statistical table on birth registration.

UNICEF. 2013. A Passport to Protection: A Guide to Birth Registration Programming.

UNICEF. 2013. Every Child's Birth Right: Inequities and trends in birth registration.

### **Adopted at Prague Council meeting, 2014**

*Due for next review 2020*

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<sup>i</sup> Save the Children. Position paper for an UNHCR Conclusion on Birth Registration. <http://resourcecentre.savethechildren.se/sites/default/files/documents/3465.pdf> [accessed 11 February 2014]

<sup>ii</sup> Convention on the Rights of the Child. 1989 <http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/44/a44r025.htm>

<sup>iii</sup> UNICEF website 2014 [http://www.unicef.org/protection/57929\\_58010.html](http://www.unicef.org/protection/57929_58010.html)

<sup>iv</sup> NGO Position paper for an UNHCR Conclusion on Birth Registration <http://resourcecentre.savethechildren.se/sites/default/files/documents/3465.pdf> [accessed 11 February 2014]

<sup>v</sup> UNICEF (2007) Birth Registration and Armed Conflict, Innocenti Research Centre, Florence, Italy.

<sup>vi</sup> PLAN. 2009. Count Every Child - The Right to Birth Registration

<sup>vii</sup> UNICEF (2007) The "Rights" Start to Life - A Statistical Analysis of Birth Registration ,