

ANNUAL CONSULTATIONS WITH NGOs
3 – 5 JULY 2012 - International Conference Center Geneva

BACKGROUND PAPER

Redefining Protection for Children in Emergencies

INVISIBLE = VULNERABLE

Wednesday 4 July 2012, 16h45 – 18h30 – Room 4

Introduction:

Every year, 51 million children remain unregistered around the globe – denied their right to identity, the fulfillment of all their rights and protection as citizens.

These are the children who will be trafficked (for cheap labor or sex trade) and no one will notice; who will have no access to education and therefore not have opportunity for gainful employment especially in the formal sector; who will have no access to health and other social government services; who will not be able to participate in political movements and exercise their right and duties as citizens. These children tend to live in poverty, be discriminated against, become vulnerable to abuse and exploitation.

If you were stateless and you are a girl – your situation is exacerbated by gender inequality and violence.

Impact of not having birth certificate to children:

- difficulty accessing education and health services
- difficulty in accessing banking and financial services
- cannot obtain passport; cannot vote; cannot participate in social and civic activities
- hard to reunite with families after being separated from families due to trafficking, conflict or disaster
- child headed households can be denied inheritance

Birth Registration and Global Agenda

- Poverty alleviation – having accurate population agenda helps governments plan services for their citizenry
- Gender equality – birth registration systems can alert governments, international bodies to serious gender imbalances and gender-based rights violations
- Child protection issues – birth registration systems can prevent early marriage, recruitment of child soldiers, worst form of child labor; helps reunite families after disasters or civil unrests.
- Citizenry and democracy – with legal identification, people can vote, fostering a sense of nationality and belonging; can access financial services, get jobs in formal sector, pay taxes contributing to the national and global economy.

Whose responsibility is it?

States as duty bearers have the main responsibility to register children and to give them nationality.

Plan's Response and Strategies:

Plan started working on the issue of statelessness and birth registration back in 1998 when we were asked by UNICEF to support the Unregistered Children Project in Asia. Plan believes that every child should be guaranteed first and foremost their rights to identity. Thus, Plan set up its global campaign for universal birth registration – launched by Archbishop Desmond Tutu at the United Nations (UN) in New York in February 2005. The campaign uses the following strategies:

- **Education and legal clinics** – to make people aware of their right to identity and the procedures to obtain the same
- **Increasing capacity** – of local and national government agencies to address the statelessness issue
- **Outreach** – mass rallies
- **Children Participation**
- **Advocacy** to change the law
- **ICT4D** - Using technology/mobile phones to text birth registration to authorities

Plan Thailand, using all the above (including DNA testing as a last resort) is targeting to help register 35,000 children by 2016. Plan Thailand is also using mobile technology in UBR activities.

Gains:

- By November **2009: More than 40,000,000 people across 32 countries**, most of them children, have access to vital health and education services, resulting from Plan's Universal Birth Registration (UBR) campaign

Count Every Child Campaign:

In support of the UNHCR Goal 4 – Children can obtain legal documentation and birth registration, Plan will continue its 'Count Every Child Campaign' so that by 2015, registration rates in eight (8) countries with the lowest rates will be increased through:

1. Advocating for changes in policy and practices (increased budgets for birth registration, effective birth registration systems – using ICT4BR)
2. Improving knowledge and practice of mothers, fathers, caretakers applying COMBI (communication for Behavioral Impact) approach.
3. Improving laws and policies and at the UN level, to include Birth Registration in relevant resolutions and UN text
4. Integrating Birth Registration as a cross cutting issue in all Plan's programs
5. Strengthening relationship with UNICEF and UNHCR and develop UBR Global Coalition

Call to Action: COUNT EVERY CHILD

Sign the petition now – Count Every Child