



FAQ

FREQUENTLY ASKED
QUESTIONS (FAQS) ON
VITAL EVENTS
REGISTRATION FOR
REFUGEES IN
ETHIOPIA



VITAL EVENTS REGISTRATION

Since 27 October 2017 the Administration for Refugee and Returnee Affairs (ARRA) registers vital events (birth, marriage, divorce, death) for refugees. This information will be included into the national civil registration and vital statistics system and refugees will receive a certifying document. Birth, death, marriage and divorce certificates will be issued.

Refugee's inclusion in the civil registration and vital statistics system comes following a new law, the "Vital Events Registration and National Identity Card (amendment) Proclamation No. 1049/2017" which came into force in August 2017.

ACCESSIBLE

all refugees, foreign nationals in Ethiopia and Ethiopian nationals abroad.

FREE OF CHARGE

for the first copy. After, refugees are expected to pay the same fee as nationals

ALL VITAL EVENTS

birth, marriage, death and divorce certificates



GENERAL QUESTIONS

Q: WHAT EXACTLY IS CIVIL REGISTRATION AND WHO IS RESPONSIBLE TO DO IT?

A: Civil registration is the important act of recording and documenting of vital events in a person's life (including birth, marriage, divorce, and death) and is therefore a fundamental function of governments. In Ethiopia, the Federal Vital Events Registration Agency (FVERA) is responsible for civil registration of nationals, Ethiopian nationals abroad and foreign nationals in Ethiopia. Their work is undertaken in close collaboration with different ministries, including the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Justice, Central Statistical Agency and Ethiopian Missions abroad. NISS/ARRA is as per the new law in charge of registration of vital events associated with refugees on behalf of FVERA.

Q: IS VITAL EVENTS REGISTRATION ACCESSIBLE FOR ALL REFUGEES OR ONLY FOR SPECIFIC REFUGEE NATIONALITIES?

A: The amended Vital Events Registration and National Identity Card Proclamation No. 1049/2017 expands the right to register vital events to all refugees, foreign nationals in Ethiopia and Ethiopian nationals abroad.



Q: DO REFUGEES NEED TO PAY FOR VITAL EVENTS REGISTRATION?

A: No, vital events registration and issuance of certificates of birth, marriage, divorce or death are free of charge for refugees. However, if a refugee wishes to have a certificate replaced, he/she may have to pay a small fee similar to the fee paid by nationals for the certificate.

Q: WHERE CAN REFUGEES REGISTER VITAL EVENTS?

A: ARRA will offer vital events registration in all refugee camps, in Zonal Offices as well as ARRA offices in urban areas. Refugees are requested to register vital events in the place of their principal residence in refugee camps or the nearest registration office where they registered as refugees.

Q: WHAT IS THE ADVANTAGE OF HAVING THIS DOCUMENTATION? AND WHAT IS THE DISADVANTAGE IF REFUGEES DO NOT HAVE IT?

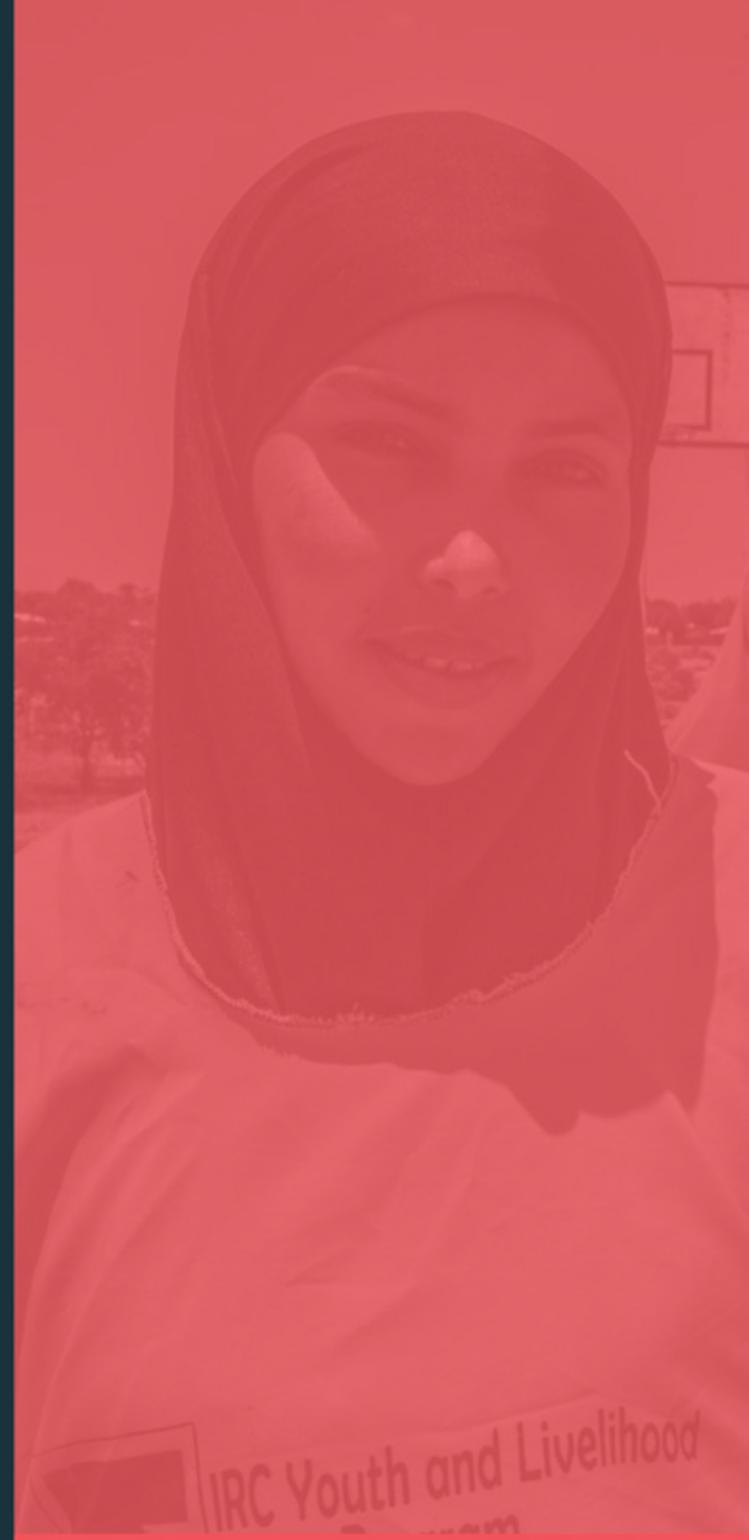
A: Civil registration provides individuals with legal identity and civil status. A birth certificate is a basic legal document that gives identity and access to basic rights to a child. It serves as an important proof of the place of birth and parentage and is often essential for acquisition of nationality. A birth certificate may be required to obtain access to basic services such as health and education and it can also help to protect children from situations of exploitation and violence, such as child marriage and child labour.

In adulthood, birth certificates may be needed for many purposes: to obtain social security or a job in the formal sector, to buy property or obtain a passport. The lack of official birth documentation can have serious, cumulative, negative effects on people's life opportunities. Particularly for refugee children, lack of birth certificates can impede their access to basic services and eventually increases the risk of becoming stateless.

Registration of marriages and divorce are also essential. Proof of marriage is key in solving matters of inheritance, management of estates and custody of children upon demise of a spouse. In addition proof of marriage can assist in acquiring certain rights for children, for instance children born of a refugee and a national may acquire citizenship by proving that one of their parents is a national. Further, marriage certificates are often required for family reunifications with spouses abroad. Divorce certificates may also be needed to solve child custody, inheritance and other related disputes.

Also registration of death is important. For the family of the deceased, a death certificate ensures their right to inherit property, to access financial entitlements, and to claim any available insurance benefits. Death certificates are often also prerequisites for burial, remarriage, or the resolution of criminal cases.

Civil registration is also important for the Government's statistics and planning. Countries need to know how many people are born and die each year – and the main causes of their deaths – in order to have well-functioning health systems. A national civil registration system is important for the government to track the size and composition of the population in order to do national planning for essential public services.

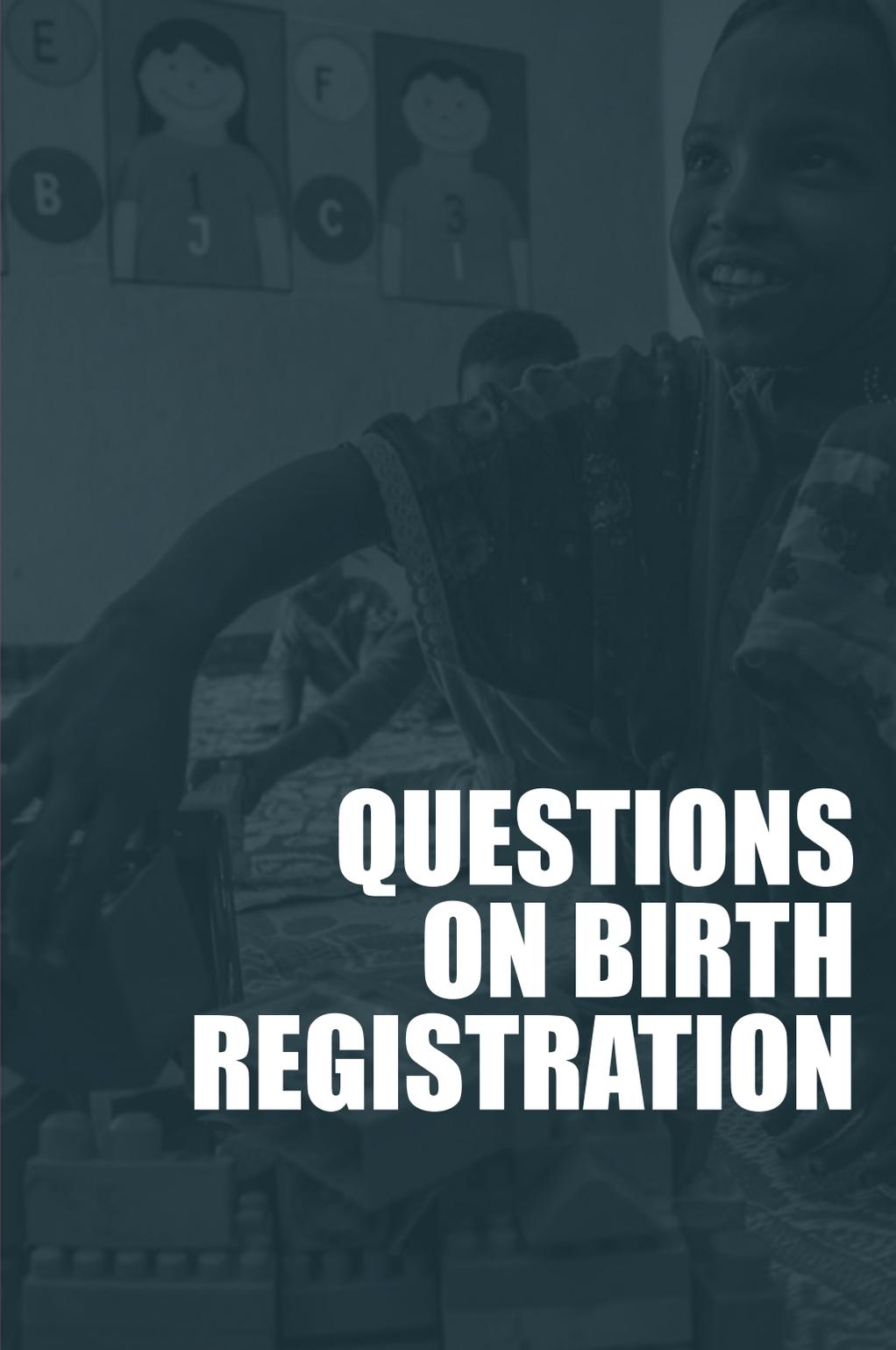


Q: IS A BIRTH CERTIFICATE NEEDED BEFORE A NEW-BORN CHILD CAN BE REGISTERED IN ARRA/UNHCR DATABASES?

A: No, a birth notification is sufficient to register a child in ARRA/UNHCR databases. ARRA/UNHCR encourage and recommend that a birth certificate for a new-born is obtained after registration with ARRA/UNHCR.

Q: WHAT IS THE PROCESS FOR REGISTERING BIRTH? WHAT DOCUMENTS SHOULD REFUGEES BRING TO GET A BIRTH CERTIFICATE FOR THEIR CHILDREN?

A: Refugees should register newborn babies within 90 days after birth at the ARRA office where they registered as refugees. Parents shall provide evidence that proves their refugee status (refugee ID card or Proof of Registration). Also, the birth notification of the child needs to be presented.

A young girl with a joyful expression is the central focus of the image. She is wearing a patterned top and has her arms raised. In the background, a classroom setting is visible with alphabet cards (A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, J) hanging on the wall. The overall image has a dark, semi-transparent overlay.

QUESTIONS ON BIRTH REGISTRATION

Q: WILL ALSO REFUGEE CHILDREN WHO WERE NOT BORN IN ETHIOPIA BUT IN ANOTHER COUNTRY BE ABLE TO OBTAIN A BIRTH CERTIFICATE FROM ARRA?

A: Yes. Refugees who were not issued a birth certificate in their country of origin can obtain a birth certificate issued by the Government of Ethiopia retroactively. Required information for the birth certificate will be extracted from the ARRA/UNHCR refugee database.

Q: CAN REFUGEE CHILDREN WHO WERE BORN BEFORE THE NEW LAW CAME INTO FORCE ALSO RECEIVE BIRTH CERTIFICATES?

A: Yes. Children who were born before August 2017 when the amendment Proclamation No. 1049/2017 came into force can also obtain a birth certificate. Since many refugee children were born in Ethiopia before August 2017, without obtaining birth certificates, ARRA will gradually work on issuing birth certificates retroactively.





Q: IS THERE ANY AGE LIMIT FOR A REFUGEE TO REQUEST FOR A BIRTH CERTIFICATE?

A: No, any refugee of any age who has not already registered his/her birth in the country of origin or any other country can register his/her birth and obtain a birth certificate. Evidence will need to be presented that proves the refugee status of the applicant (refugee ID card or Proof of Registration). Information for registering birth of adults will be extracted from the ARRA/UNHCR refugee database. Before the issuance of birth certificates to adults, ARRA will prioritize the issuance to new-borns and children respectively.

Q: DOES A BIRTH CERTIFICATE OF A REFUGEE LOOK DIFFERENT FROM A BIRTH CERTIFICATE OF AN ETHIOPIAN NATIONAL?

A: No, the template of the birth certificate is the same for nationals and refugees. Whether a person is a refugee or not is not stated in the birth certificate. Every birth certificate indicates the name of the child, father and mother, the place of birth, nationality of the mother, nationality of the father and the child's citizenship. The seal of the Federal Vital Events Registration Agency will be put on the certificate for both refugees and nationals. The seal reflects place of registration and the respective registration office.



Q: WHAT IS THE PROCESS IF THERE ARE INCONSISTENCIES OF INFORMATION

for example when an applicant wants to change name or age which he claims is wrongly captured in the ARRA/UNHCR refugee database before registering a vital event with the correct name or age?

A: Any major discrepancies in name or age which need to be correctly recorded by the ARRA vital events registrar need to be first resolved before a court of law.

Q: WHAT IS THE PROCESS FOR CHILDREN REGISTERING BIRTH WHO HAVE A PARENT WHO IS ETHIOPIAN AND THE OTHER IS A REFUGEE?

A: Children who have one Ethiopian parent and one parent who is a refugee in Ethiopia are free to decide whether to access birth registration at the VERA Office or ARRA Office.

Q: WILL A CERTIFICATE BE REPLACED IF IT HAS BEEN LOST? WHAT IS THE PROCEDURE OF IT?

A: Yes. A replacement certificate of registration can be issued if the original certificate has been lost, damaged or destroyed for different reasons. A report needs to be filed with the police. A service fee may have to be paid to ARRA for a replacement certificate equivalent to the price nationals pay for the respective certificate.

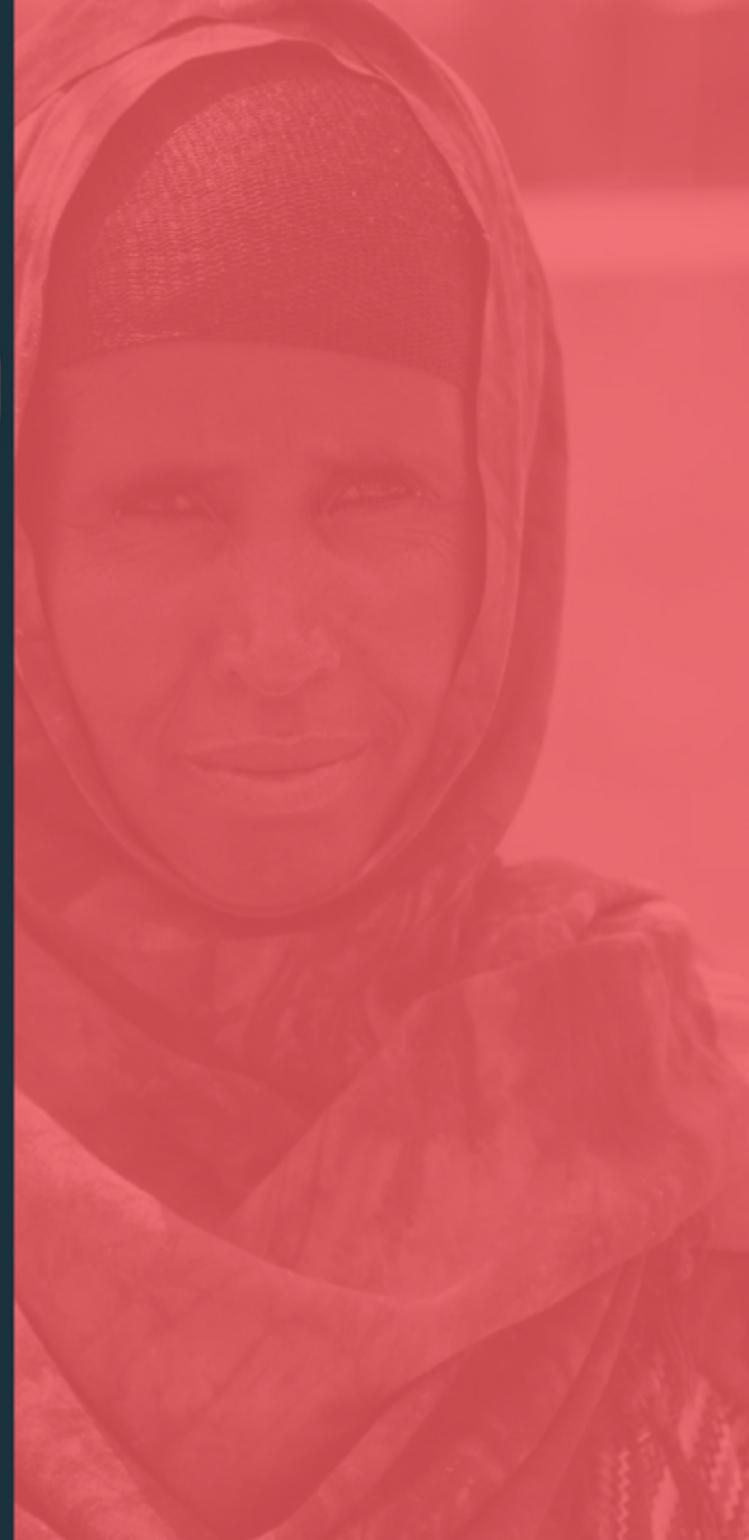
QUESTIONS ON REGISTRATION OF MARRIAGE, DIVORCE AND DEATH

Q: WHAT SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS DO REFUGEES NEED TO BRING IF THEY WISH TO REGISTER MARRIAGE?

A: Two witnesses on the side of the husband and two witnesses on the side of the wife should be present when registering marriage. The witnesses are persons who attended the marriage ceremony and can attest that the marriage was concluded. The witnesses shall provide a valid identity document. The spouses shall present an evidence that proves that they are refugees (e.g. refugee ID or Proof of Registration). They shall also produce a proof of non-married status and shall both produce two recent photographs (3 by 4 size).

Q: CAN REFUGEES WHO CONCLUDED RELIGIOUS/TRADITIONAL MARRIAGES IN THE COUNTRY OF ORIGIN OBTAIN AN OFFICIAL MARRIAGE CERTIFICATE?

A: Yes. However, evidence in form of written documentation of the religious marriage will need to be presented. For traditional marriages, written documentation is mostly not available. In such cases, witnesses who attended the marriage ceremony and can attest that the marriage was concluded need to be presented. If witnesses are not available then a new marriage can be concluded which can then be registered in presence of available witnesses.





Q: HOW CAN A DEATH CERTIFICATE BE OBTAINED FOR A PERSON WHO DIED OUTSIDE OF HOSPITAL AND WHERE NO DEATH NOTIFICATION WAS ISSUED?

A: A formal confirmation is required to register death. If the person died outside of hospital a death report by the police should be obtained.

Q: DO BOTH EX-HUSBAND AND EX-WIFE NEED TO APPEAR BEFORE AN OFFICER OF CIVIL STATUS TO REGISTER DIVORCE AND OBTAIN A DIVORCE CERTIFICATE?

A: The divorce shall be registered by the divorcing partners or by either of them or by a person to whom a power of attorney is given by the divorcing partners for the registration purpose. The divorce can be recorded from the copy of the court judgment of the divorce.



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