Because there is no applicable legal framework for civil registration in South Sudan, information on legal age at marriage in the country was not available. Countries in brown are those for which marriage below the minimum legal age is permitted. In an additional 22 countries, home registration is allowed with parental consent or under certain special conditions. For countries with a legal age of 18 or above for marriage at 18 or above for both sexes. But, for countries with a legal age of 18 for marriage at 18 or above for both sexes, there is no safeguard for boys and girls.

In sub-Saharan Africa today were married in childhood, while levels have decreased slightly compared to earlier. Across sub-Saharan Africa, 1 in 9 young women living in 19 countries were married before their 15th birthday. By comparison, 25 years ago nearly half were married in the past generation. If continued, is the decline in child marriage prevalence observed over the past generation, if continued, is not sufficient to reach the SDG target of eliminating child marriage in the region. As is the case with birth registration, young children tend to go unreported more often than deaths. As stillbirths) of deaths. Completeness of registration of child deaths often varies by age at death, and deaths among young children tend to go unreported more often than deaths among older children. Completeness of registration of still deaths is key to ensuring the event and its details are accurately recorded. Among sub-Saharan African countries, the length of time legally required to register a death varies considerably from just 24 hours in some countries to more than 100 years in others. Furthermore, the medically certified cause of death under-reporting, and omission or misclassification (sometimes exchangeable). Key quality issues involve misreporting of age at death, which can occur when victims are very young, can be challenging to determine the cause of death, and in consultation with CRVS experts, officials within the relevant national institutions, and UNICEF country offices.

Data sources: Estimates of birth registration and child marriage are from UNICEF global databases, 2017, based on DHS, MICS, other nationally representative surveys, censuses and vital registration systems. Information on civil registration systems in countries of sub-Saharan Africa was compiled over a period from December 2016 to November 2017 using the existing relevant legal frameworks and consultation with CRVS experts, officials within the relevant national institutions, and UNICEF country offices.
BIRTH REGISTRATION

As a passport to protection

A name and nationality is every child’s right, as enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and other international treaties. Birth registration is the continuous, permanent and universal recording of the occurrence and characteristics of births in the national civil registry, in accordance with the country’s legal requirements. It is the first step in securing children’s recognition before the law, safeguarding their rights and ensuring that any violation of these rights does not go unnoticed. Ensuring that every child is registered is also an essential part of functioning systems of vital statistics, which is crucial for sound economic and social planning.

In nearly half the countries in sub-Saharan Africa, the legal time frame to register births is longer than one month

Sub-Saharan African countries according to the legal time frame for birth registration

- No legal obligation to register births within a specific time frame
- Legal obligation to register births within 30 days of event
- Legal obligation to register births within 6 months of event
- Legal obligation to register births within 1 year
- No birth registration in country

The births of around 95 million children under age 5 (slightly more than half) in sub-Saharan Africa have never been recorded. One in three unregistered children live in just three countries: the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia and the United Republic of Tanzania. A name and nationality is every child’s right, as enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and other international treaties. Birth registration is the continuous, permanent and universal recording of the occurrence and characteristics of births in the national civil registry, in accordance with the country’s legal requirements. It is the first step in securing children’s recognition before the law, safeguarding their rights and ensuring that any violation of these rights does not go unnoticed. Ensuring that every child is registered is also an essential part of functioning systems of vital statistics, which is crucial for sound economic and social planning.

Boys and girls under age 5 in sub-Saharan Africa by

- UNICEF on the legal status of any country or territory or the delimitation of any frontiers. The final boundary between the Sudan and South Sudan has not yet been determined. The final status of the Abyei area has not yet been determined.

- The need for timely birth registration is stipulated in article 7 of the CRC.

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Children under age 5 in sub-Saharan Africa by 2030

The final boundary between the Sudan and South Sudan has not yet been determined. The final status of the Abyei area has not yet been determined.

A rapidly growing child population coupled with slow birth registration levels in sub-Saharan Africa as a region; slightly more than 4 in 10 children under age 5 do not have a birth certificate. Around 370 million children (roughly 3 in 4) live in sub-Saharan African countries where there are fees associated with birth registration, and in most cases, these reflect fines for late registration. Not a country in sub-Saharan Africa

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Birth registration is the continuous, permanent and universal recording of the occurrence and given a legal identity. This is a primary principle frame for birth registration

BARRIERS TO BIRTH REGISTRATION

Lack of birth registration can be the result of many barriers, including distance to the nearest registration facility, lack of knowledge on how to register a child’s birth, and fees for registering a birth or obtaining a birth certificate, which can be prohibitively expensive for some families. Traditional customs and practices might not encourage or emphasize formal birth registration processes. Moreover, institutional procedures and processes sometimes treat children from certain ethnic or religious groups differently or impose restrictions, whether formally by law or informally in practice, on a mother’s ability to register her child without the father’s involvement.

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Ideally, registration should take place as soon as possible after the birth has occurred, and preferably within the first month. In nearly half the countries in sub-Saharan African countries according to the legal time frame for birth registration, and in most cases, these reflect fines for late registration.

Birth registration is the continuous, permanent and universal recording of the occurrence and given a legal identity. This is a primary principle frame for birth registration

Legal obligation to register births within 1 year
Legal obligation to register births varies from within 60 days to within 6 months
No legal obligation to register births within a specific timeframe

Notes: The map does not reflect the fact that some countries do not impose fees for the registration of births, but fees are often hidden fees, such as judicial costs or opportunity costs including those related to travel that are difficult to measure. These added costs can directly affect registration levels.
UNICEF's Work on Improving Birth Registration in Africa

UNICEF strives to improve birth registration rates across Africa by strengthening broader civil registration systems for more effective and sustained results. A key strategy to improve birth registration is to work with health systems and services to make sure every newborn is counted and given a legal identity. This is a primary principle and recommendation of the Africa Programme on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (APAC-CRVS) that serves as the primary framework for UNICEF support.

Currently, in many African countries, immunization coverage as well as prevalence of institutional deliveries surpass birth registration levels. For example, in 19 countries the immunization coverage against tuberculosis among live births is at least two times higher than the prevalence of birth registration among children under the age of 1 year. This difference is especially striking in countries such as Sierra Leone and Zanzibar, where immunization levels exceed 80 per cent while birth registration among infants remains at around 10 per cent. Similarly, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, around 8 in 10 births occur in health facilities but only around 1 in 5 children below the age of 1 year have their births registered, while in the United Republic of Tanzania, 2 out of 3 births take place in a health facility but only around 1 in 4 infants under age 1 have their births registered.

Results of innovative UNICEF programming show that when birth registration services are integrated with health services such as immunization, as in Senegal during the annual Child Health Day, registration levels can increase significantly. UNICEF also supports linking birth registration with maternal health services to bridge the gap of high institutional deliveries and low levels of birth registration. In addition, UNICEF has found that coupling birth registration with programming in other sectors such as social assistance and education can lead to measurable results as well. For instance, pairing social policy and cash transfers in Kenya, South Africa and Zimbabwe and engaging those in the education sector and faith-based organizations in Ghana and Senegal have all proved to be effective in improving birth registration and certification.
There are 41 countries in sub-Saharan Africa that have set the minimum legal age for marriage at 18 or above for both sexes. In an additional 22 countries, marriage before age 18 is allowed with parental consent or under certain special conditions. For 57 million boys living in 19 countries, marriage below the age of 18 is permitted under certain conditions, while in the Sudans, there is no minimum legal age for marriage.

Across sub-Saharan Africa, 110 million girls and women alive today were married before their 18th birthday. While there were fewer child brides in the region, nearly 15 million men were married in childhood.

The decline in child marriage prevalence observed over the past generation, if continued, is not sufficient to reach the SDG target of eliminating child marriage by 2030. At the current rate, it would take at least 188 years to eliminate child marriage in sub-Saharan Africa.

Through legal frameworks have decreased slightly compared to earlier generations, more than 1 in 3 young women living in sub-Saharan Africa today were married in childhood, and 1 in 9 were married before their 15th birthday. By comparison, 25 years ago nearly half were married in childhood and about 1 in 6 were married before age 15.

The substantial challenges to registering children’s deaths in the region, particularly when victims are very young, can be challenging, especially systematic collection of data on causes of death, and determining the cause of death, even in countries with advanced and well-functioning systems. In addition, the medically certified cause of death – even in countries with advanced and well-functioning systems – may be inaccurate due to insufficient training and utilization of these definitions is an essential part of enabling the provision of good-quality vital registration data.

Remote geographical areas may not have access to local civil registration systems. In addition, the medically certified cause of death – even in countries with advanced and well-functioning systems – may be inaccurate due to insufficient training and utilization of these definitions is an essential part of enabling the provision of good-quality vital registration data.

The lack of a formal record means a fundamental violation of human rights. In at least 10 sub-Saharan African countries, there is no legal obligation to register a marriage. This lack of a formal record means there is no safeguard for boys and girls who marry before the age of 18.

The timely registration of deaths is key to ensuring the event and its details are accurately recorded. Among sub-Saharan African countries, there is no legal framework for civil registration in South Sudan, information on legal age at marriage was not available. Countries in brown are those for which marriage below the minimum legal age is permitted with parental consent or under certain special conditions. For 57 million boys living in 18 countries, marriage below the age of 18 is permitted under certain conditions, while in the Sudans there is no minimum legal age for marriage.
The substantial challenges to registering children’s deaths include insufficient coverage, in terms of an accurate count of the numbers, and lack of accuracy or completeness regarding the content of information recorded.

Remote geographical areas may not have access to local civil registration offices, or certain groups in a population may be excluded from the population register. Where well-functioning civil registration systems are the preferred source for child mortality indicators, only about 60 countries worldwide are considered to have good-quality death registration data from civil registration systems.1 Other countries in sub-Saharan Africa have a high number of child mortality and good-quality civil registration data.

Key quality issues involve misreporting of age at death, under-reporting, and revision or misclassification (sometimes as stillbirths or deaths). Completeness of registration of child deaths can vary by age at death, and deaths among young children tend to go unreported more often than deaths occurring at later ages. As is the case with birth registration, timely registration of deaths is key to ensuring the event and its details are accurately recorded. Among sub-Saharan African countries, the length of time legally required to register a death varies considerably: from just 24 hours in Guinea-Bissau, Liberia and Namibia (in urban areas) to one year in Lesotho. Documenting the causes of death among children and producing reliable estimates of the number of deaths by causes remains difficult. Such statistics may often systematically collected by national criminal justice, health or civil registration systems, and determining the cause of death, particularly when victims are very young, can be challenging; – even in countries with advanced and well-functioning systems.

In addition, the medically certified cause of death may be inaccurate due to insufficient training in classification of child deaths or difficulties in reporting cards.

To ensure quality and comparability across countries, it is crucial that standard international definitions such as the International Classification of Disease and the international definitions of fetal death and live births are used. The utilization of these definitions is an essential part of enabling the systematic recording, coding and analysis of mortality data, including the cause of death.
