

S. Sudan launches compulsory civil registration at childbirth

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February 13, 2013 (JUBA) - South Sudan on Wednesday launched plans for compulsory civil registration at childbirth, in an attempt to count and account for every South Sudanese citizen.

The exercise was launched at a seminar in the South Sudan capital Juba, drawing attendees from different institutions, as well as representatives from various international organisations, including the United Nations and government ministries.

“The government of South Sudan has placed great importance on the civil registration process and we are working in collaboration with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and other partners to ensure that every South Sudanese citizen is counted and accounted for,” said the undersecretary of the ministry of health, Dr Makur Maker.

The civil registration process will be a continuous, permanent and compulsory recording of live births, deaths, foetal deaths, marriages, divorces, as well as annulments, judicial separations, adoptions, legitimation and recognitions.

“This event marks an important milestone since it is the first of its kind. Without civil registration, we cannot have meaningful data and this is a major concern because we cannot plan effectively for our citizens,” said the deputy chairperson of South Sudan's National Bureau of Statistics, John Maciek Acuoth.

Birth registration is an integral part of a civil registration system. According to UNICEF, only 35% of births are currently registered in South Sudan, with many children reportedly born outside health facilities where there is no provision for formal registration.

“Birth registration is a right of every child born in a country, whether citizen, refugee or otherwise. The ‘invisibility’ of non-registered children increases their vulnerability and the risk that violations of their rights will go unnoticed,” said UNICEF's South Sudan representative, Yasmin Ali Haque.

UNICEF maintains birth registration is instrumental in safeguarding other human rights because it provides the official ‘proof’ of a child's identity and legal existence.

“Birth registration gives a sense of belonging and ownership. It also gives every child an opportunity to enjoy services such as immunisation,” said the deputy minister of health, Dr Yatta Lugor.

The outcomes of this important event will provide a road map for the development and implementation of a civil registration system, he said.

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