Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada

Responses to Information Requests

Responses to Information Requests (RIR) respond to focused Requests for Information that are submitted to the Research Directorate in the course of the refugee protection determination process. The database contains a seven-year archive of English and French RIRs. Earlier RIRs may be found on the UNHCR's Refworld website. Please note that some RIRs have attachments which are not electronically accessible. To obtain a PDF copy of an RIR attachment, please email the Knowledge and Information Management Unit.

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Liberia: Appearance and security features of birth certificates and death certificates; how to obtain these documents

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

1. Birth Certificates

Information on the appearance and security features of Liberian birth certificates could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

1.1 How to Obtain a Birth Certificate

Information on how to obtain a birth certificate was scarce among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

Sources report that Liberian birth certificates are issued by the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare (MOHSW) (AHO n.d.; US n.d.), in Monrovia only (US n.d.). Sources indicate that birth certificates are free for children aged 12 and under (UN 14 Dec. 2015; US n.d.), that they cost 500 Liberian dollars (LD) [approximately CA$7] for the rest of the population and that they "are generally processed in about three (3) business days" (US n.d.). According to the Reciprocity Schedule of the United States (US) Department of State, documents are required to obtain a birth certificate "such as medical facility records or sworn affidavits" (US n.d.). According to the same source, the origins of this documentation are "rarely investigated“ (US n.d.). The Liberia Reciprocity Schedule goes on to state that applicants can "easily" procure a birth certificate with any information desired, such as "date of birth, location of birth, parents" (US n.d.). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

1.2 Registration of Births

The Liberia Reciprocity Schedule reports that, under Liberian law, anyone with knowledge of a birth of a child can register that birth (US n.d.). Many sources report that, by law, births must be registered (AHO n.d.) within 14 days (US 13 Apr. 2016, 21; The Guardian 5 Aug. 2016), but that "fewer than 5 percent of births were registered" (US 13 Apr. 2016).

Sources report that birth are registered at the Bureau of Vital Statistics (Liberia 2014, 46) in Monrovia, which was, until recently, the only registration bureau in the country (The Guardian 5 Aug. 2016). The MOHSW indicates in an annual report from 2014 that it decentralized the registration of births to increase access (Liberia 2014, 46). According to the same source, the following measures were instituted to “achieve universal
birth coverage": the routine registration of children at various public health facilities, registration campaigns, collaboration with other institutions, resources mobilization and awareness creation (Liberia 2014, 46).

Plan International, an organization that has been working for 80 years to improve the lives of "the most vulnerable and excluded children while promoting greater equality for girls" (Plan International n.d.), announced in 2011 that it was launching, in collaboration with other partners, including the Government of Liberia, UNICEF and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), "a decentralized, computerized birth registration and certification system" in Liberia, which enables parents across Liberia to register their children’s births "easily and inexpensively" (Plan International 2 Apr. 2011). Without providing additional information, an article published in 2013 by UNICEF cites a MOHSW representative who stated that, after having "revitalized" the birth registration system in 2010, birth registration centres have opened in all of Liberia’s fifteen counties (UN 11 Dec. 2013). Similarly, an article published in 2016 in The Guardian reports that registration centres are being set up across the country so that people only need to travel to their "nearest town" rather than to the capital (The Guardian 5 Aug. 2016). The same source reports that, as part of a joint programme, the government and UNICEF "[have] trained vaccinators in health clinics to register births, and community volunteers are also being instructed in how to do so … in rural villages" (The Guardian 5 Aug. 2016). The Liberian Observer, a daily published in Liberia, reported in 2016 that "[t]here was a high turnout" in the "mobile birth registration" for children aged 0-12 years, which kicked off in March 2016 in Ganta City, Nimba County (Liberian Observer 1 July 2016). According to the same source, an operations officer of the Liberia Environment Care Organization, the NGO that is implementing this birth registration exercise, explained that, upon registration of the child, the birth certificate is provided that same day to the parents (Liberian Observer 1 July 2016). According to the operations officer, mobile birth registration "has been going on across the 17 administrative districts in Nimba, but at the clinical level under the supervision of the [MOHSW]“ (Liberian Observer 1 July 2016).

According to many sources, the birth registration rate in Liberia is “low” (UN Sep. 2014, para. 43; AHO n.d.) or “the second lowest … in the world” (The Guardian 5 Aug.2016). Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2015 from the US Department of State reports that, according to UNICEF, only 700 births were recorded between January and May 2015, and during that time up to 12,000 children did not receive birth certificates (US 13 Apr. 2016, 21). According to a report by the UNHCR, the birth registration rate in Liberia is seven percent and there are “regional and gender disparities in birth registration” (UN Sep. 2014, para. 43).

2. Death Certificates

No information on the appearance and security features of death certificates could be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

2.1 How to Obtain a Death Certificate

Information on how to obtain a Liberian death certificate was scarce among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

According to the Liberia Reciprocity Schedule, Liberian death certificates are only available from the MOHSW, in Monrovia (US n.d.). The article published by The Guardian in 2016 explains that, until recently, the only place to register a death was in Monrovia (The Guardian 5 Aug. 2016). According to the Liberia Reciprocity Schedule, applications for death certificates must be made in person and the applicant must have either an official record of death from a medical facility or a confirmed record of the disposition of the body, i.e. funeral home record, photographs of burial (US n.d.). According to the Liberia Reciprocity Schedule, death certificates carry a LD$500 fee and are “generally processed in about three (3) business days” (US n.d.). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

2.2 Registration of Deaths

Information on the registration of deaths was scarce among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

According to the MOHSW 2014 annual report, the Liberian Public Health Law of 1976 mandates the MOHSW to register all deaths within 24 hours after their occurrence (Liberia 2014, 47). The same source explains that the MOHSW is unable to implement this regulation due to limited access to death registration services and information on the importance of the procedure (Liberia 2014, 47). Sources report that the death registration rate in Liberia is less than five percent (Liberia 2014, sec. 3.2.5; The Guardian 5 Aug. 2016).

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as
to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

References


Additional Sources Consulted


**Internet sites, including:** ecoli.net; Liberia – Ministry of Health and Social Welfare; United Nations – Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights; ReliefWeb.

*Tips on how to use this search engine.*

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