



Birth Registration for children born in LRA captivity in Northern Uganda

Summary

In order to participate fully in society and exercise their rights as Ugandan citizens, children born in the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) captivity need access to birth registration. At present, this is prohibited by a number of factors.

Recommendations

Members of Parliament should petition within the Parliament of Uganda for the review and amendment of the policy on birth registration in Uganda, with the following provisions:

- Children born in LRA captivity in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Central African Republic (CAR) or South Sudan who have returned home must be registered and provided with birth certificates.
- Children born in LRA captivity must be allowed to use family information from the different places of reunion to be registered for birth certificates.
- Children born in LRA captivity who have no medical records must be registered and provided with birth certificates.

Background

LRA rebels abducted many young girls and women, given to commanders to have as many children as possible during the war. As a result, many children were born in the bush and later returned home. These children were born in different places where rebel fighting took place, including Uganda, South Sudan, CAR and DRC. They were unable to participate in any of the government programs of the countries where they were born [1].

All Ugandans must register their birth to obtain a birth certificate. Having a birth certificate is essential for obtaining the national identification card, voter's card and travel documents, joining a school or institution, and gaining employment in Uganda. To ensure that everybody is registered, the government of Uganda has set up the National Identification and Registration Authority (NIRA) to carry out the exercise on its behalf.

Requirements for registration include: national identification card, medical birth certificate, citizen card showing that you are a Ugandan by birth, information about your biological parents/family clans and your original residential location.

Because children born in LRA captivity do not possess the above documents or information, they have not been able to register their births in Uganda. For that reason, they are non-citizens and cannot access government programs with ease.

Methodology

Research was conducted by the Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs through the Justice, Law and Order Sector between 3 September 2018 and 9 October 2018 in the districts of Gulu (20 participants), Nwoya (10 participants) and Amuru (20 participants). It aimed at identifying the gaps that exist in birth registration of children born of war. The research targeted children born of war, and more specifically those born in captivity during and after the LRA rebellion. Research methods used were one-on-one interviews and focus group discussions.



Findings

The results of the research indicated that most children born in LRA captivity were born in Democratic Republic of Congo, Central African Republic or Republic of South Sudan. The research has shown that:

- They are not Ugandans by birth;
- They have no medical records since they were not born at medical facilities;
- They have no proper knowledge of their parents' lineage because there was no disclosure of family information while in the bush;
- Children born as a result of the LRA war were resettled with their maternal relatives, hence they have no proper information about their paternal lineage or clan information;
- They do not have national identification cards.

Our study shows that children born in LRA captivity have become part of communities since their reintegration, and should have full rights to participate and be part of any government initiatives/programs. The government of Uganda should acknowledge their presence and provide them with a friendly environment, opportunities, and equal access to goods and services. The first step in this process is removing impediments to their birth registration.

References

1. Owacgiu, Atingo Jackline (2008) Children Born in LRA Captivity: The Case of Gulu District in Northern Uganda. A research paper presented to the Graduate School of Development Studies, ISS. The Hague, Netherlands.
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