



“Il n’est nullement question de faire gouverner la société par les femmes mais bien de savoir si elle ne serait pas mieux gouvernée par les hommes et par les femmes.”

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Une association pour
ré-agir au féminin

Children with NO birth registration, women with NO rights **Saturday, October 12 2013 – Bourg-en-Bresse (Ain) France** Fifteen days of equality for women and men - Rhône-Alpes Region

1. Issue

60 million children worldwide don't have a birth registration (UNICEF). The absence of any birth certificate creates a mechanism of social exclusion.

In some countries, birth registration is hindered by the patriarchal laws concerning a child's nationality, sexist discriminations forbidding a mother to register her child and forbidding girls to enroll in school or accessing health care.

Girls without birth certificates are at greater risk not to be granted education or health care. Without an identity, they are invisible and excluded from all fundamental and universal rights and they are more likely to become victims of human trafficking.

Their existence is denied. These girls are not mentioned in the civil registration. They are civilly dead. Their rights are violated. In general, these girls come from ethnic minorities, living in rural areas where their mothers haven't had access to basic education. Exclusion and poverty carry on this way.

Getting out of this vicious circle and replacing it by a virtuous one enables a sustainable development of humanity. It is essential to make visible these invisible girls, so they might access many action programs targeting different traditional, patriarchal, financial and geographical constraints. Such programs allow their security and emancipation. In 2011 and 2013, during the 55th and the 57th Commission on the Status of Women at the UN in New York, we organized workshops to:

- Alert and inform States, NGOs and the public opinion on this crucial violence,
- Demonstrate the importance of a public service of civil registration for the States and for the population from a legal, social and demographic point of view,
- Pinpoint how to identify the absence of birth registration,
- Introduce good practices to ease birth registration.

The reports from the workshops can be found on our website: www.partagider.fr.
It seems essential to us to take action as well, in France:

- The children in metropolitan France but also in France's overseas territories and departments are concerned by this problem, namely Roman is and isolated minors without documents of birth certificates (According to UNICEF's 2010 report it is estimated that more than 4000 children are left to themselves¹ in France, among which 10 to 20 % are girls and 3000 minors arrive here each year.).
- The autonomous regions have to be informed about this problem to be able to help, in the actions of co-development, and support France to install a system of public services of civil registration in developing countries.

¹ Exiled children (minors coming from all regions ravaged from war and ethnic conflicts), mandated children (China), exploited children (victims of human trafficking, eastern Europe), runaways, vagrants (street children), or children joining another adult

2. Context

Although every child has the right to a name, a nationality and to be registered at birth, one in two children in the world do not have a birth certificate: in South Asia, the proportion reaches 64 percent, in Sub-Saharan Africa 62 percent, whilst in Afghanistan and in Ethiopia only 6 or 7 percent of the children are registered.

In legal terms, these children do not exist. As their age is not known, they will not have the minimal protection conferred to minors against early marriage, child labor, detention, legal proceedings and recruitment of the armed forces. They do not benefit from any protection against abuse and/or exploitation. To a child trafficker, an unregistered child will be a more attractive commodity. The discrimination, neglect and the abuse that unregistered children may be the victims of is more likely to remain unnoticed. Later on, it will be impossible for an unregistered child to apply for a passport or formal job, open a bank account, get a marriage license, vote or stand for elective office.

Huge disparities have been observed between rural and urban zones. Women in a rural area give birth in their village, even if in the urban area they would have easier access to a maternity hospital where the registration is simplified. In West Africa, the rates are respectively in The Ivory Coast 36 % and 80 %, in Mali 42 % and 72 %, in Senegal 40 % and 72 %.

Beyond the political, administrative, economic and geographic barriers, the discriminations between men and women prevent birth registration. The banning of women to intervene during the process results in an impossibility to register if the father is absent, and a difficulty for single mothers to do so.

One can also observe the exclusion of children from a second or third spouse while polygamy is authorized.

Within societies who give preference to the male sex, boys are more often registered than girls, increasing female infanticides.

3. Conference Guidelines, Saturday, October 12 in Bourg-en-Bresse, Ain, France

During the conference, we will measure the extent of this phenomenon, analyze the causes, show recent good practices to ease birth registration in the regions concerned by this unknown problem and often affecting marginalized populations. And at last, we will also offer recommendations to States.

a- Global report

b- The importance of birth registration: the right to exist

- The importance for States and population of registration from a demographic and legal point of view.
- The importance, for States and population, of a public service for civil registration.
- The importance of certificates (birth, marriage, death) in order to attain fundamental rights for women.
- Debate with the audience.

c- Examples of good practices to simplify birth registration

- Diverse strategies to obtain a certificate, with women and girls as a priority, including the context of an armed conflict. Examples in Africa, Central America and Asia will be given by representatives from States and NGOs in different countries.
- Debate with the audience.

d- Conclusion: For every child to count, the right for women to register birth is essential

- **Recommendations** to states to organize a public service of civil registration with the involvement of international organizations, NGOs and families.
- **The launch of an international campaign**