



Ghana: Birth certificates and *certified copy of entry in register of births*

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Introduction

The following note describes the issuance procedures of the Ghanaian birth certificate and *certified copy of entry in register of births*. It also contains a description of the issuance procedure for the *certified copy of entry in register of births* and a presentation of the challenges related to the legitimacy of Ghanaian birth documents.

The note is primarily based on meetings with the Ghanaian authorities in March 2018 and in December 2021.

Legislative framework and issuing authority

According to the Ghanaian authorities, vital registration in Ghana can be traced back as far as 1888, but was at this point limited to the registration of deaths, which were regulated under the Cemeteries Ordinance of 1888. In 1912 the registration of births was introduced, and the legislation was changed to the Births, Deaths and Burials Ordinance, which was amended in 1926, and finally replaced by the Registration of Births and Deaths Act of 1965 (Act 301) that currently regulates vital registration in Ghana.¹

The Births and Deaths Registry is the Ghanaian authority responsible for the storage and management of the records pertaining to birth and death, as well as the issuance of birth certificates and *certified copies of entry in register of births*.²

Birth certificates

Ghanaian birth certificates are issued locally and free of charge for infants between the ages of 0-12 months. Birth registration is compulsory and should be conducted within the first 12 months.³ Even though birth registration is mandatory, the registration rate is 60% for births, meaning that 40% of new-borns are not registered.

¹ Births and Deaths Registry Ghana, N/A; Births and Deaths Registry, Head Office, Accra, December 2021.

² Births and Deaths Registry, Head Office, Accra, December 2021.

³ Local Births and Deaths Registry, Accra, December 2021.

Children over the age of 12 months are not issued a birth certificate and must instead apply for a late birth registration.⁴

STRICTLY FOR CHILDREN 0-12 MONTHS

No. C/15/16/7093

REPUBLIC OF GHANA

BIRTH CERTIFICATE

(Issued on 14/3/2018)

This is to Certify that the Birth of

born at

on the day of

has been duly registered in the register of Births for

in the

Registration District

The said

is the male/female Child of

and

a National of

witness my hand this day of 20

Registrar

Country

Birth Certificate Form A

Image 1: Birth certificate. (NIDC reference material)

When applying for a birth certificate for children between 0-12 months, proof must be presented. The antenatal card, a booklet, which officially is called ‘Maternal Health Record’, is accepted as proof of birth. It includes health observations about the mother and child and a list of the vaccinations (vaccination card).

⁴ Births and Deaths Registry, Head Office, Accra, March 2018.

It is also possible to use the weighing card as proof of birth. The weighing card includes information about the baby's weight, mother's health and general hygiene.⁵

Mothers who give birth outside the hospital/clinic can also obtain a weighing card. The weighing cards are issued at the hospital at the weighing centres. Sometimes the hospitals run out of weighing cards. Therefore, the birth registration office also accepts the antenatal card as proof of birth. The design of the antenatal card is changed every year or two.⁶

The registrar at the hospital fills in Form A (A4 copy paper) by hand when the informant shows up for the birth registration. The registration is based on an interview with the informant. The relationship between the infant and the informant is noted on Form A. After Form A is completed, the registrar fills in a pink birth certificate (see Image 1) by hand, based on the information from Form A.⁷

After that, the registration book (≈ A3 size), 'Register of Birth', is filled in. This book contains several hundred birth registrations and when it is full, it is sent to the regional Birth and Death Registry office and finally to the Head Office of the Birth and Death Registry in Accra.⁸

The information in Form A will also be typed into a digital system at the hospital, which is also accessible for the regional and Head Office. The digital registry was introduced in June 2009.⁹

The mother, father or any other person who was present at the delivery can inform the Birth and Death registry about the childbirth.

Certified copy of entry in register of births

Ghanaian citizens between the ages of 1-60 can register for a *certified copy of entry in register of births* at one of the 16 regional offices of the Births and Deaths Registry.¹⁰ For an example of the *certified copy of entry in register of births*, see Image 2.

⁵ Local Births and Deaths Registry, Accra, December 2021.

⁶ Births and Deaths Registry, Head Office, Accra, March 2018; Local Births and Deaths Registry, Accra, December 2021.

⁷ Local Births and Deaths Registry, Accra, December 2021.

⁸ Local Births and Deaths Registry, Accra, December 2021. Births and Deaths Registry, Head Office, Accra, December 2021.

⁹ Local Births and Deaths Registry, Accra, December 2021; Births and Deaths Registry, Head Office, Accra, March 2021.

¹⁰ Births and Deaths Registry, Head Office, Accra, March 2018; Births and Deaths Registry, Head Office, Accra, March 2021.

Manufacturer's serial
number

Certificate number

E16/ 0273492

No: 031501-20-2009



Republic of Ghana

CERTIFIED COPY OF ENTRY IN REGISTER OF BIRTHS

Entry No. 459		Registry: ODUMASE-KROBO	
CHILD's NAME (Name in full. Write first names first and surname last)	SAME SAMPLE	Sex	MALE
FATHER	Name:	SAMPLE FATHER	
	Occupation:	DRIVER	
	Nationality:	GHANA	
	Religion:	CHRISTIAN	
MOTHER	Maiden Name:	SAMPLE MOTHER	
	Nationality:	GHANA	
When Born	1ST JULY 2000		
Where Born (Write address in full)	GOVERNMENT HOSPITAL AKUSE LOWER MANYA, EASTERN		
INFORMANT (Name in full. Relationship to the child, if any)	SAMPLE INFORMANT MOTHER		
Date of Registration	23RD APRIL 2010		
Signature of Registrar	JANET ANANI		
Margin			

I, JOHN YAO AGBEKO Registrar of Births and Deaths for Ghana do hereby certify that the foregoing is a true copy of the entry No. 459 in the Register of Births for ODUMASE-KROBO in the LOWER MANYA MUNICIPAL Registration District in Ghana, and the Register is now legally in my custody.

Given under my hand and Seal in Accra in Ghana this 21ST day of MARCH 2018


 Registrar of Births and Deaths
 L.S.

Image 2: Specimen of *certified copy of entry in register of births*. (NIDC reference material)

The Births and Deaths Registry distinguishes between three different ways to have the *certified copy of entry in register of births* issued. 1) Issuance of a CCERB based on a timely birth registration before the infant turns one year 2) Person more than 12 months old who does not have an existing birth registration and 3) Reissuance with an existing birth registration.

The issuance procedure depends on the scenario.

1) Infants who have a birth certificate use this document to apply for a *certified copy of entry in register of births*. Based on the pink birth certificate (and Form A), the informant applies for the *certified copy of entry in register of births* at the local registration office e.g. at the hospital. The *certified copy of entry in register of births*

is then printed, stamped and signed at the Head Office and sent to the local registration office for the informant to collect.

2) The procedure for birth registration, when a person has not been registered within the first 12 months and it is a first time issuance of the *certified copy of entry in register of births*: In this case, the person has to go to the hospital/clinic where the birth took place to apply for the *certified copy of entry in register of births*, because the hospital has the original birth record e.g. antenatal card.

The Head Office will print the *certified copy of entry in register of births* and send it to the hospital for pick up by the applicant. If the hospital/clinic does not have any original records attesting to the birth, an interview with the Births and Deaths Registry is needed to establish proof of date of birth. If the Registry is not satisfied with the evidence provided, they will deny the issuance of the *certified copy of entry in register of births*. If the applicant is unsatisfied, the case can be taken to court.

In case of home birth, you have to go to the court for evidence.¹¹

3) When it is a reissuance of a birth registration, the applicant goes to the Head Office in Accra where the physical archive is located – the Head Office receives the registration books from the district offices/hospitals.

The *certified copy of entry in register of births* is issued based on the previous registration/entry in the archive. If the applicant is still in possession of the original *certified copy of entry in register of births*, this must be brought to the Head Office. If the original *certified copy of entry in register of births* has been lost, then an interview is conducted to identify the old registration in the archive using e.g. the old certificate number, name, mother's name.

In scenario 1) and 2) the applications for the *certified copy of entry in register of births* are submitted regionally, but the actual *certified copy of entry in register of births* documents are all printed centrally at the Head Office of the Births and Deaths Registry in Accra or at regional offices in Ashanti and Greater Accra. However, *certified copy of entry in register of births* printed in Ashanti and Greater Accra must be brought to the Head Office for signatures and stamps.¹²

The trustworthiness of documents related to birth

The legitimacy of Ghanaian identity documents is challenged by issues connected to the late birth registration of Ghanaian citizens. Like many other countries in Africa, many Ghanaian births go unregistered. Considering that birth registration is the foundation for any knowledge that a given state has about its population, and

¹¹ Births and Deaths Registry, Head Office, Accra, March 2018; Births and Deaths Registry, Head Office, Accra, December 2021.

¹² Births and Deaths Registry, Head Office, Accra, March 2018; Births and Deaths Registry, Head Office, Accra, December 2021.

birth certificates and attestations often form the basis of other types of registration with public authorities, this entails that the Ghanaian authorities have little or no knowledge about a substantial part of the country's population.¹³

Ghanaian citizens who have not been registered by the Ghanaian authorities at birth apply for a *certified copy of entry in register of births* by submitting a sworn affidavit to confirm their name and date of birth. The affidavit contains a sworn statement by an informant, who confirms the personal information submitted by the applicant. The informants are generally an applicant's parents or close family. However, it is also possible for midwives, neighbours and other witnesses of the applicants to serve as informants.

Affidavits, on which the issuance of a birth certificate are based, are stored in hard copy for a period of six months at the Accra headquarters of the Births and Deaths Registry before being discarded.¹⁴

The late registration of an applicant's date of birth often takes place many years after the applicant was born, and as a result, the information concerning the applicant's identity is often approximate. This may be because the applicant and their informants genuinely do not remember the exact details surrounding the applicant's birth; however, it may also be because the applicant has a vested interest in providing incorrect or approximate information.¹⁵

According to Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index 2020, Ghana ranks as number 75 out of 180 countries with 43 points out of 100 with zero being very corrupt.¹⁶

¹³ Landinfo, July 2007, p. 25-26.

¹⁴ Births and Deaths Registry, Head Office, Accra, December 2021.

¹⁵ Landinfo, July 2007, pp. 25-26.

¹⁶ Transparency International, 2020.

References

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