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## Responses to Information Requests

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26 October 2023

#### RWA201664.E

Rwanda: Birth and death documents; content, appearance, and security features; requirements and procedures for obtaining them within the country and abroad; samples (2021–October 2023)

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada

#### 1. Overview

According to a report by the Centre of Excellence for Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) Systems [1] in partnership with the UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), the National Identification Agency (NIDA) is responsible for civil registration within Rwanda, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation has that responsibility for Rwandese living abroad (Centre of Excellence for CRVS Systems and UNECA 2021, ii, 5). The same source indicates that there are 2,148 "local civil registration offices or service points"—416 in urban areas and 1,732 in rural areas—as well as 590 service points within health care facilities (Centre of Excellence for CRVS Systems and UNECA 2021, 6).

In correspondence with the Research Directorate, the Legal Aid Forum (LAF) [2] indicated that the legal framework surrounding Rwandan civil registration documents "has undergone significant changes" over the years; most recently, the government launched a program to "boost the country's economy by modernizing civil registration" that included a series of legal reforms from 1988 to 2020 (LAF 2023-09-18).

The LAF indicated that there are two "primary" types of civil status registers or civil certificates in Rwanda: "physical or handwritten" and electronic (LAF 2023-09-18). The same source noted that beginning "mid-year" in 2020, "only the electronic register is utilized," in accordance with Article 330 bis of the Persons and Family Law (LAF 2023-09-18).

Law No. 001/2020 of 02/02/2020 Amending Law No. 32/2016 of 28/08/2016 Governing Persons and Family provides the following:

### Article 20: Electronic recording in civil registrars

In Law no 32/2016 of 28/08/2016 governing persons and family is inserted Article 330 bis worded as follows:

"Article 330 bis: Electronic recording in civil status registers

All civil status registers must be available in electronic format within three (3) years from the publication of this Law in the Official Gazette of the Republic of Rwanda.

However, the usual civil status register will continue to be used together with the electronic register during a period not exceeding six (6) months from the use of the electronic civil status register. After that period, only the electronic register will be used."

## Article 21: Validity of the content of the physical civil status registers

In Law no 32/2016 of 28/08/2016 governing persons and family is inserted Article 330 ter worded as follows:

# "Article 330 ter: Validity of the content of the physical civil status registers

The content of the physical civil status registers remains valid.

The content of the physical civil status registers is kept electronically. An Order of the Minister in charge of civil status determines the time and modalities of its electronic keeping." (Rwanda 2020a, underline and bold in original)

The LAF indicated that "all civil certificates (birth, death, marriage, etc.) are issued electronically through the Irembo services platform" (LAF 2023-09-18). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

#### 2. Birth Documentation

The LAF indicated that the Rwandan government issues two categories of birth documentation: birth records and extracts (also called birth certificates [3]) (LAF 2023-09-18). According to the same source, both certificates have "lifetime validity"; birth records are "comprehensive civil status records" that "contain all the essential details," and cost 2,000

Rwandan Francs (RWF) [C\$2.24], while extracts are civil status records that "provide only the essential information," are issued "based on the specific services required" and cost 1,000 RWF [C\$1.12] (LAF 2023-09-18).

In a follow up correspondence, the LAF stated that the process of birth registration is "not yet uniformly standardized" throughout Rwanda (LAF 2023-09-29). The same source noted that birth documentation issued by a "competent" authority is authentic, whether digital or on paper (LAF 2023-09-29). According to the same source, a paper version of a birth certificate was issued after the digitization of birth registration in July 2020 (LAF 2023-09-29). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

## 2.1 Requirements and Procedures to Obtain Birth Documentation in Rwanda

Law No. 001/2020 of 02/02/2020 Amending Law No. 32/2016 of 28/08/2016 Governing Persons and Family provides the following on the registration of births:

#### **Article 9: Declaration of birth**

Article 100 of Law no 32/2016 of 28/08/2016 governing persons and family is amended as follows:

"Every child is declared immediately after birth in the health facility where he/she was born upon presentation of a medical birth certificate issued by a medical professional from the health facility where the child was born.

In case the child was not born in a health facility, the declaration is made within thirty (30) days after the birth date of the child, upon presentation of a certificate issued by the competent authority of the child's place of

birth indicating the names of the child's parents and the date of birth and in the presence of two (2) witnesses aged at least eighteen (18) years.

The declaration of birth is made by the child's father or mother. In case both of them are not available, the declaration is made by a person they have authorized or any person exercising parental authority over the child or a close relative.

In the absence of the persons referred to in Paragraph 3 of this Article, the declaration is made by any other person having been present at the child's birth.

A director of a prison must register the birth of the children born in the prison of which he/she is director with the civil registrar of the place of location of the prison, with the permission of the child's parent.

The Minister in charge of civil status determines the requirements and the modalities for declaration of children whose birth was not declared during the period prescribed by this Law."

#### Article 10: Declaration of birth of a child born out of wedlock

Article 103 of Law n° 32/2016 of 28/08/2016 governing persons and family is amended as follows:

"In the child's parents are not legally married and the child's birth is registered with the civil registrar who is not in charge of recognition of a child born out of wedlock, the child is registered under the name of his or her mother.

The parent under whom the child is not registered first recognizes the child before the civil registrar in charge of child recognition for the child to be registered under his or her name."

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## Article 12: Issuance of a copy of birth record

Article 105 of Law n° 32/2016 of 28/08/2016 governing persons and family is amended as follows:

"Everyone has the right to be given a copy or extract of his or her birth record. The ascendants and descendants of a person on the direct lineage, his or her spouse, his or her guardian or his or her legal representative are allowed to be issued with such a copy.

No any other person may be issued with a copy or extract of a birth record without the permission of the holder or a competent court if the holder died.

If the civil registrar refuses to issue such a copy, the person who is denied the copy refers the matter to the immediate supervisor of the civil registrar. In case of unsatisfactory response, he or she petitions the competent court which decides the case under summary procedure.

Any person who wishes to be issued with a birth record but whose birth was not declared within the period provided for by this Law, his or her birth must be first recorded in civil status registers in accordance with the provisions of the Order provided for under Article 100 of this Law."

(Rwanda 2020a, underline and bold in original)

The information in the following paragraph was provided by the LAF:

Birth documents can be obtained from the civil status office of the place of birth or, because they are digital, from "any other location." They are e-certificates and can be downloaded on Irembo with the billing or application number. E-service for ordering a birth record is available to Rwandans at home and abroad. If the following criteria are met, an application can be processed "automatic[ally]" by the CRVS system:

- The applicant's birth information has already been inputted into the CRVS system.
- The applicant has a National Identification Number (NIN)
   (issued at the time of CRVS registration) or a National
   Population Registry (NPR) Citizen Application Number,
   also called a "Child ID" [or a Citizen Applicant Number],
   "depending on their age and circumstances."

In this case, all relevant birth record details are automatically retrieved, eliminating the need for further data input. Upon payment, the birth record is promptly issued, without requiring the involvement of a Civil Registration Officer (CRO). Furthermore, if applicants provide their email address during the application, the certificate is directly sent to their email without needing to download it from the IremboGov platform. (LAF 2023-09-18)

The LAF further noted that civil registrars have the "exclusive authority" to issue such certificates. The same source indicated that a civil registrar can be an official overseeing civil status for a "decentralized administrative entity," a representative of the Rwandan government abroad, or "any other individual authorized by law," and provided the following examples:

- An officer within a health care facility who records the facility's births and deaths.
- A sector's executive secretary (at the sector level).
- A district mayor (at the district level).
- An ambassador or "consu[l]" (LAF 2023-09-18).

The information on the procedure to obtain a birth certificate provided in the following paragraph comes from the report by the Centre of Excellence for CRVS Systems and UNECA:

For births occurring in health care facilities, the midwife records the birth in the facility's "maternity register" and the "data manager" enters it into the CRVS and health management information systems; the individual declaring the birth does so at the facility's civil registration office, which then registers the birth with the CRVS system. For births occurring in the community, the community health worker or village chief informs the "cell executive secretary" of the birth, and the executive secretary registers the birth in the CRVS system. In each case, a "unique" NIN is generated when the birth is entered into the CRVS system. That system then sends the birth information to the NPR, which "saves the record and automatically generates an application number

linked to that NIN." "Once requested, the CRVS system generates the birth record and makes it available to Irembo." Applicants can then use the NIN to request the birth record (certificate) through Irembo (Centre of Excellence for CRVS Systems and UNECA 2021, 7).

The information in the next three paragraphs was provided on the Irembo website:

The Irembo website offers the option to obtain a birth record or a birth certificate. In order to request either, an individual must create an Irembo account and log in to the Irembo platform or seek assistance from an Irembo agent (Rwanda 2023-10-12a; Rwanda 2023-10-12b).

The birth record application is processed automatically by the CRVS system or manually by "local government authorities at the sector level" within one business day. Applicants can pay the 2,000 RWF application fee using MTN Mobile Money, Airtel Money, the Bank of Kigali (BK), Visa or Mastercard. Application requirements include

- a national ID number, NIN, or Citizen Application Number
- a valid phone number or email address (Rwanda 2023-10-12a).

The birth certificate application is processed by "local government authorities at the sector level" within one business day. Applicants can pay the 500 RWF [C\$0.56] application fee using MTN Mobile Money, Airtel Money, the Bank of Kigali (BK), Visa or Mastercard. Application requirements include

- a NIN (for citizens "above 16 years") or a Citizen
   Application Number (for citizens "below 16 years"), and
- a valid phone number and email address (Rwanda 2023-10-12b).

## 2.2 Requirements and Procedures to Obtain Birth Documentation Outside of Rwanda

The information in the following paragraph was provided by the LAF:

Rwandans abroad can qualify for automatic processing of their birth certificate application by the CRVS system by meeting the same criteria as Rwandans within the country. The process is also the same. However, if an applicant's birth information is not already registered in the CRVS system, their application will need to be "manual[ly]" processed by the nearest embassy or consulate, which will input their birth information into the system. Once the birth information has been recorded, the applicant can proceed with the application process through Irembo (LAF 2023-09-18).

The Embassy of Rwanda in Washington, DC, states on its website that applicants who request a birth certificate must present:

- a copy of a Rwandan passport or photographic identity card;
- document(s) issued by a "competent" Rwandan authority indicating the applicant's date and place of birth and parents' names ("Birth Certificate from the Sector in Rwanda");
- a letter signed by the applicant addressed to the Ambassador, requesting the certificate;
- a [US]\$30 non-refundable money order payable to Embassy of Rwanda; and
- a prepaid return envelope (Rwanda n.d.).

## 2.3 Contents and Appearance of Digital Birth Certificate and Birth Record

According to *Ministerial Order No. 002/07.01 of 27/07/2020*Determining the Number, Type, Format and Use of Civil Status Registers, which came into force on 29 July 2020, civil status registers issued electronically do not have specific measurements (Rwanda 2020b). The same ministerial order provides a blank sample of an extract of birth record which contains the following information:

- Child's name, sex, date and place of birth, and NIN
- Father and mother's names and nationalities
- Civil status office, location, civil registrar and extract date of issuance

- Civil registrar's signature
- QR code and extract serial number (Rwanda 2020b).

According to the same ministerial order, the sample birth record contains all the same information as its extract, along with the following additional information:

- · Nationality of the child
- Mother's and father's date of birth and residence
- Name and signature of two witnesses
- Name and signature of the "declarant"
- Judgment number ("[a]pplicable only if paternity or maternity was established / denied by the court") (Rwanda 2020b).

The LAF described the following "key visual aspects" of Rwandan birth records and extracts as of July 2020:

- They feature the Rwandan coat of arms, which includes a green ring with a knot in it. Above the ring is the inscription "REPUB[U]LIKA Y'U RWANDA" and below is the national motto, "UBUMWE, UMURIMO, GUKUNDA IGIHUGU."
- They indicate the civil status office responsible for issuing the document.
- They incorporate the national colours of Rwanda, which "typically include" blue, green, and yellow (LAF 2023-09-18).

The LAF indicated that while birth records and extracts "maintain uniformity across regions and other factors," their content and appearance have gone through revisions over time due to changes in legislation and regulations between 1988 and 2020 (LAF 2023-09-18). The same source noted that the validity of a birth record or birth certificate issued through Irembo can be verified by scanning the QR code found on the certificate to authenticate it or by validating the certificate on the Irembo website using the application or billing number (LAF 2023-09-18).

Blank samples of a birth record (Attachment 1) and an extract of birth record (Attachment 2) from *Ministerial Order 002/07.01 of 27/07/2020* are attached to this Response.

## 2.4 Contents and Appearance of Paper Birth Record and Birth Certificate

According to *Ministerial Order 002/07.01 of 27/07/2020*, paper civil status certificates measure 29.7 cm in length and 21 cm in width (Rwanda 2020b). Based on a sample of a birth certificate provided by LAF, the paper version of a birth certificate issued by a civil registrar's office between 2018 and 2020 contains the following information:

- Birth certificate number
- Declaration date
- Name of Civil Registrar Officer
- Civil registrar office
- Child's name, sex, date of birth, and place of birth (district, sector, cell, village)
- Father's name, nationality, and identity card or passport number
- Mother's name, nationality, and identity card or passport number
- "Domicile" (district, sector, cell, village)
- Signature and stamp of the Civil Registrar (LAF 2023-09-18).

Based on the same sample provided by LAF, a paper birth certificate issued between 2018 and 2020 also includes the following:

- Coat of arms of Rwanda at the centre top of the birth certificate;
- Three main section titles in uppercase lettering: "BIRTH CERTIFICATE," "CHILD" and "PARENTS";
- Dotted horizontal lines for applicants to write the required information;
- Stamp of the Civil Registrar, which includes the Rwandan coat of arms, at the bottom of the certificate (LAF 2023-09-18).

A sanitized sample of the paper version of a birth certificate could not be found within the time constraints of this response.

#### 3. Death Documentation

## 3.1 Requirements and Procedures to Obtain Death Documentation Within Rwanda

Law No. 001/2020 of 02/02/2020 Amending Law No. 32/2016 of 28/08/2016 Governing Persons and Family provides the following on declaring a death:

#### **Article 13: Declaration of death**

Article 106 of Law no 32/2016 of 28/08/2016 governing persons and family is amended as follows:

"The declaration of death is done in the health facility where the death occurred upon presentation of a certificate of death issued by a medical professional from the health facility where the death occurred.

Any person who declares a death occurring in a place other than a health facility does so within thirty (30) days after the date of death upon presentation of a death certificate issued by the competent authority in the presence of two (2) witnesses aged at least eighteen (18) years." (Rwanda 2020a, underline and bold in original)

Law No. 32/2016 of 28/08/2016 Governing Persons and Family provides the following on death records:

### **Article 107: Competent persons to declare death**

Death record is drawn up according to the declaration of one of the relatives or spouse of the deceased or any other person who has sufficient information on the civil status of the deceased. In case the deceased's civil status is unknown, the death record is drawn up according to the declaration made by the authorities of Cell of the place of death.

The death record is signed by the registrant, two (2) witnesses who are at least eighteen (18) years old and the civil registrar.

. . .

### Article 109: Register of deaths in health facilities

Any death occurring in a health facility is immediately recorded in a register kept for that purpose.

The civil registrar of the place of location of the health facility as well as interested administrative or judicial authorities may require that such a register be submitted to them if considered necessary.

### Article 110: Declaration of death occurring in a prison

In case a person dies in a prison, the prison director must, within seventy two (72) hours, transmit to the civil registrar of the place of death, the death certificate issued by an authorised medical doctor.

. .

### Article 112: Issuance of a copy of death record

The death record or extract thereof is issued by the civil registrar upon request by the spouse, child, father, mother, sibling of the deceased or any other interested person.

In case the civil registrar refuses to issue such a copy, a person who is denied the copy may refer the matter to the immediate superior of the civil registrar. In case of unsatisfactory answer, he/she files a case before a competent court which rules on the matter under summary procedure.

In case the death record cannot be found for any reason, it is replaced by a judgment rendered by a competent court of the domicile or residence of the deceased in accordance with the provisions of Article 86 of this Law. (Rwanda 2016, underline and bold in original)

The LAF indicated that the procedures to obtain death documentation are the same as the procedures to obtain birth documentation, including the steps for the automatic processing via the CRVS system (LAF 2023-09-18). The same source noted that the "prerequisites and documentation" required are also the same (LAF 2023-09-18).

The information in the following paragraph was provided by the Irembo website:

A death record can be obtained if the subject's death has already been registered in the NIDA system. If the death is already entered into the CRVS system, the information is automatically retrieved. If not, the Executive Secretary must be involved. Applicants need to log in to Irembo or seek help from an Irembo agent. The death record is issued by the Ministry of Local Government (MINALOC), the fee is 2,000 RWF and processing time is 1 business day. Application requirements include

- a national ID number or child application number
- a valid phone number or email address (Rwanda 2023-10-18).

According to the Irembo website, a death certificate application is processed by the "local [g]overnment authorities at the sector level where the death has been registered" (Rwanda 2022-10-11). The same source states that the application can be processed in one business day and costs 1,200 RWF [C\$1.34] (Rwanda 2022-10-11). The Irembo website states that people applying on behalf of the deceased need to log in to "the Irembo account" [belonging to the deceased or to the applicant (LAF 2023-09-29)] or seek help from an Irembo agent and the application requirements include the following:

- NIN for the applicant
- NIN for the deceased or "child application number" for Rwandan minors if they died after the issuance of the new national ID number in 2009. If the person died before the new national ID number was being issued, "the ID is not required."
- A valid phone number or email address (Rwanda 2022-10-11).

The information on the procedure to obtain a death record or certificate provided in the following paragraph comes from the report by the Centre of Excellence for CRVS Systems and UNECA:

For deaths occurring in health care facilities, the "data manager" enters the death into the CRVS and health management information systems. The individual declaring the death does so with the facility's civil registrar, who then registers the death with the CRVS system. For deaths occurring in the community, the village chief informs the "cell executive secretary" of the death and the family of the deceased "declares the death" to the same person. The executive secretary registers it in the CRVS system. In each case, a "unique" NIN is generated for the death. The CRVS system then sends the deceased's information, NIN and application number to the NPR, which "updates the deceased's profile (vital status)." "Once the death record (certificate) is requested," the CRVS system generates it and makes it available to Irembo. Applicants can then use the NIN to request the record through Irembo (Centre of Excellence for CRVS Systems and UNECA 2021, 7–8).

## 3.2 Requirements and Procedure to Obtain Death Documentation Outside of Rwanda

Information on the requirements and procedure to obtain a death certificate outside of Rwanda was scarce among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

The LAF indicated that the procedures to obtain death documentation from abroad are the same as the procedures to obtain birth documentation, including the steps for the automatic processing via the CRVS system and the need to contact an embassy or consulate for manual processing when the relevant information is not registered in the CRVS (LAF 2023-09-18).

## 3.3 Contents and Appearance of a Death Record and Death Record Extract

According to a blank sample provided in *Ministerial Order* 002/07.01 of 27/07/2020, an extract of a death record contains the following information:

- Name, sex, nationality, residence, date of birth, and NIN of the deceased
- Date, manner and place of death
- Names of father and mother
- Civil status office and location
- Civil registrar name and signature
- Extract date of issuance
- QR code and serial number of the extract (Rwanda 2020b).

According to a blank sample in the same ministerial order, a death record contains all the information in the extract of the death record, along with the following additional information:

- Name of deceased person's spouse
- Civil status of the deceased
- "Domicile" of the deceased
- Nationality of father and mother
- Name and signatures of two witnesses
- Declarant name and signature
- Judgment number ("[a]pplicable only if the death was declared by the court") (Rwanda 2020b).

According to the LAF, a death certificate contains the following features:

- Text indicating civil status office
- The coat of arms of Rwanda
- A QR code which can be scanned for authentication (LAF 2023-09-18).

Blank samples of a death record (Attachment 3) and extract of death record (Attachment 4) from *Ministerial Order 002/07.01 of 27/07/2020* are attached to this Response.

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.

#### **Notes**

- [1] The Centre of Excellence for Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) Systems is a "global knowledge and resource hub" that "supports national efforts to develop, strengthen, and scale-up CRVS systems," established with funding from Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and Global Affairs Canada (Centre of Excellence for CRVS Systems and UNECA 2021, ii).
- [2] The Legal Aid Forum (LAF) is "a non-state legal aid provider in Rwanda made up of 38 national and international NGOs, professional bodies," university legal aid clinics, and "faith-based initiatives" (LAF n.d.).
- [3] A sample birth document provided by the LAF is entitled "Birth Certificate" in English and "Extrait d'acte de naissance" (birth record extract) in French (LAF 2023-09-18).

### References

Centre of Excellence for Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS)

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Rwanda. 2023-10-12a. IremboGov. "How to Apply for a Birth Record." [Accessed 2023-10-25]

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Rwanda. 2022-10-11. IremboGov. "How to Apply for a Death Certificate." [Accessed 2023-08-21]

Rwanda. 2020a. *Law No. 001/2020 of 02/02/2020 Amending Law No.* 32/2016 of 28/08/2016 Governing Persons and Family. [Accessed 2023-08-30]

Rwanda. 2020b. <u>Law No. 002/07.01 of 27/07/2020 Ministerial Order</u>

<u>Determining the Number, Type, Format and Use of Civil Status Registers</u>.

[Accessed 2023-09-27]

Rwanda. 2016. *Law No. 32/2016 of 28/08/2016 Governing Persons and Family*. [Accessed 2023-08-21]

Rwanda. N.d. Embassy of Rwanda in Washington, DC. "Birth Certificate." [Accessed 2023-08-21]

### **Additional Sources Consulted**

**Oral sources:** Center for Rule of Law Rwanda; lawyers in Kigali (6); Lawyers of Hope; Rwanda – Rwandan High Commission in Ottawa, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, National Identification Agency.

Internet sites, including: Australia – Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade; Austrian Red Cross – ecoi.net; BBC; Citizenship Rights in Africa Initiative; EU – Public Register of Authentic Identity and Travel Documents Online; France – Office français de protection des réfugiés et

apatrides; IGIHE; *The New Times*; Rwanda – National Identification Agency, National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda; Rwanda News Agency; *The Rwandan*; UN – Refworld, UNHCR, WHO; US – Department of State.

### **Attachments**

- 1. Rwanda. 2020-07-27. <u>Blank sample of a birth record</u>. Published in Law No. 002/07.01 of 27/07/2020 Ministerial Order Determining the Number, Type, Format and Use of Civil Status Registers. [Accessed 2023-09-27]
- 2. Rwanda. 2020-07-27. <u>Blank sample of an extract of birth record</u>. Published in *Law No. 002/07.01 of 27/07/2020 Ministerial Order Determining the Number, Type, Format and Use of Civil Status Registers*. [Accessed 2023-09-27]
- 3. Rwanda. 2020-07-27. <u>Blank sample of a death record</u>. Published in Law No. 002/07.01 of 27/07/2020 Ministerial Order Determining the Number, Type, Format and Use of Civil Status Registers. [Accessed 2023-09-27]
- 4. Rwanda. 2020-07-27. <u>Blank sample of an extract of death record</u>. Published in *Law No. 002/07.01 of 27/07/2020 Ministerial Order Determining the Number, Type, Format and Use of Civil Status Registers*. [Accessed 2023-09-27]

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