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Socio-economic factors affecting access to birth registration among children born out of marriage: a study conducted in Harare

MAVUKA Anotida, MASHIRI Conillia and SOKO Sneddon

ABSTRACT

Africa, conceptually, geographically, politically, economically, religiously and socially is in bondage. Zimbabwe faces the problem of officially registering the births of children born out of marriage and other vulnerable children. This study explored the socio-economic barriers hindering the Zimbabwe government birth registration of children born out of marriage in the Harare central district of Zimbabwe. The impediments encountered by parents and guardians of children born out of marriage have also emerged as a global human rights issue, with over 237 million children under the age of 5 without birth registration as at 7th July 2021, following the UNICEF birth registration tracking. Using qualitative phenomenology design, the study investigated lived experiences of parents within the Harare Central district area. The participants were selected using the snowball sampling technique, while three key informants were purposively sampled by the researchers. The study findings indicated that there are a plethora of socio-economic challenges emanating from a deficient government registration system, more inclined to cater for the urban based population than the rural folk. Additionally, general poverty among the majority of the population played a significant role for the majority, who could not afford transport fees to travel to registration centre among many others. Moreover, religious and other patriarchal cultural practices hinder access to birth registration.

KEY TERMS: accessing, birth-certificates, children, impediments, socio-economic, marriage.

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INTRODUCTION

The paper explores the status of access to birth registration for children born out of marriage, looking at the impediments, and the mechanisms to address the situation. This has become one of the most crucial emerging areas in child rights advocacy around the world and in Zimbabwe. The world is still grappling with the persistent problem of deficient birth registration among children in general and those who are born out of marriage or informal family arrangements. It has become such a fast-growing social problem as children fail to get their identity documents which should open doors for other child rights benefits and privileges.

BACKGROUND

The first point of call between individuals and their states is being registered, bestowing on them all rights and privileges that the state provides. Cody (2009), described birth registration as the first ticket to citizenship without which an individual does not exist legally and could be denied privileges and rights a nation allows. This can be especially true in scenarios where a birth certificate serves as a prerequisite to access a certain service or right (Mawere & Mawere, 2010). In the Zimbabwean context, one cannot acquire an identity card without a birth certificate, the implication is that if one cannot acquire an identity card. The child therefore, cannot exercise certain rights and privileges such as registering to vote, voting, right to education or the ability to apply for jobs because identity documents serve as pre-requisites for enjoying such rights and privileges. Gerber et al. (2016)., elaborated the rights perspective by asserting that a birth certificate is the first official acknowledgment of a child's existence by the state and is essential if they are to access other rights.

Unfortunately, there are still millions of children around the world who are unregistered on yearly basis and the majority of those unregistered are in developing countries in Africa, Asia, and Southern America (Suthar et al., 2019). Suthar et al. (2019), argued that based on UNICEF's 2019 report, one in four children under age 5 (166 million) are not registered in the world today. And even when they are, they may not have proof of registration. The reasons are all too common: a lack of resources and investment in accurate and comprehensive civil registration systems, coupled with barriers to accessing birth registration services, along with policy, regulatory and institutional obstacles (Suthar et al., 2019). Timely registration of children also improves access to education because in countries such as Malaysia, Tanzania, Togo, and Zimbabwe, among others, child registration certificates are part of entry requirements into formal school systems (Amo-Adjei and Anim, 2015). This study takes a special focus on children born out of marriage because they suffer their own peculiar form of exclusion when it comes to birth registration. In the Zimbabwean context, scores of children born out of marriage are still unable to have birth certificates acquired by their fathers or mothers after they separate or if they were born out of an illegal union such as cohabitation (Mawere & Mawere, 2010).

While there are provisions in the Constitution of Zimbabwe, for the prompt provision certificates to children, Chereni (2016), argued that those constitutional provisions are just mere cosmetic glamour. This is because Zimbabwe's Births and Deaths Registration Act, 1986 (BDR Act) still provides additional requirements to be met by parents registering the birth of children born out of marriage, thereby limiting the children's rights based on the marital status of the parents. This is an affront to children's rights and flies in the face of the paramountcy principle, which requires that in all matters the best interests of children must have preeminence (Gerber et al., 2016).

While in the Births and Deaths Registration Act, there is no use of derogatory words such as "illegitimate" or "bastard," section 12 of the same Act particularly creates a distinction between children born in or out of marriage. This has the same adverse effect on the human dignity of children as the use of derogatory terms. Section 12 creates a list of requirements that must be satisfied where a child is born out of marriage and section 12(2)(a) stipulates that a registrar shall not enter in the register the name of any person as the father of a child born out of marriage, except upon the joint request of the mother and the person acknowledging himself to be the father of the child. Section 12(2)(c) provides that where the father is dead, there must be a joint request of the child's mother and a parent or near relative of the alleged father.

Thus, legally unmarried fathers of children cannot register the birth of the child where the mother does not consent, and a mother whose spouse in an unregistered customary law union is deceased cannot register the birth in the family name of the father without the consent of the deceased father's relatives (Chereni, 2016). Based on that discriminative distinction between children born in and out of marriage, this study seeks to understand the socio-economic factors that restrain children born out of marriage from getting birth registration. Moyo (2022), noted that senior citizens are failing to get birth registrations for children born out of marriage in Mutare. Such children, despite being vulnerable, fail to access Basic Education Assistance Module services and are plunged into a cycle of poverty.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Ubuntu

Ubuntu is considered a central way of understanding humanness and how that has been central to the African people. Ubuntu has often referred to the moral qualities of a person. These moral qualities include among others, central features such as empathy, forgiveness, generosity and considerateness (van Breda, 2020). These personal character traits within the Ubuntu philosophy can be taped into in order to ensure birth registration for children born out of marriage. Considering the various challenges that children born out of marriage face such as alienation and segregatory behaviours from the others, Ubuntu can be utilised through compassion, forgiveness of past acts especially for the parent relating to birth out of marriage and being considerate. Such character adaptation will reduce the vast social impediments to accessing birth certificates for children born out of marriage. van Breda (2020), further noted that Ubuntu can be understood as the presence of the divine directing a person away from bad behaviours towards good. The bad behaviours in case of birth registration for children born out of marriage become the impediments to the attainment of registration. Furthermore, Ubuntu has been associated with the social work core value of social justice which clamours for attainment of basic rights and protection for all.

The Ubuntu philosophy considers children to be a responsibility of the extended family and the community. This means that even if children have always been vulnerable, it is these traditional structures that are responsible for the protection of the child and according them their identity (Kurevakwesu & Chizasa, 2020; Kurevakwesu & Maushe, 2020). Central themes within the Ubuntu theory such as collectivism as resulted in the understanding and developing adages within the African communities such as “it takes a village to raise a child” (Mugumbate & Chereni 2015). Such collectivism would ensure that children have willing communities and adults providing for their protection which includes among other things birth registration and the right to identity. However, erosion within the local African cultures that value Ubuntu has resulted in varied child protection gaps which include failure to register children, subsequently compromising the attainment of key milestones such as going to school. If African communities are to build on the key pillars on the Ubuntu philosophy challenges within the birth registration of children born out of marriage can be sustainably removed. This theory therefore, offers microscopic insight into the impediments to accessing birth certificates for children born out of marriage.

LITERATURE SCOPE

Religious and ethnic beliefs

In traditional African cultures, people see a child’s identity as being established when they are born into a specific lineage system of clan, sub-clan and sub-sub-clan (Muchinako et al., 2013). The Somali people give precedence to their lineage and clan values and what they believe to be the establishment of identity than birth registration (Weissbrodt & Collins, 2016). As a result, most of the children in Somaliland, would grow up the adulthood without being registered. In addition, many children in Somalia are born to nomads, far from hospitals (Weissbrodt & Collins, 2016). Some people in Uganda are hesitant to register and provide the information that is required because they believed that it draws attention to situations that are at odds with their local values or customs (Gelb et al., 2018). For example, some of the unmarried women in Uganda were found to be reluctant to declare their status or that of their child, because their ethnic and religious beliefs considered it a taboo to have children out of traditional marriage and the implications were that the parents and the children would be discriminated against. Within the African cultures unmarried women are reluctant to do this in fear of possible cultural and traditional repercussions in future, such as avenging spirit if they registered children in their maiden names (World Bank, 2012).

Geographical barriers

A significant barrier to birth registration is the geographic distance to the nearest registration facility. Accessibility is influenced by location and terrain, infrastructure and the availability of transportation (Denboba, 2014). The greater the distance to the registration centre, the higher the financial and opportunity costs for the family. Urban populations are less subject to such constraints, as indicated by the differentials in urban and rural registration rates for many countries. The Comoros and Gabon are the closest to achieving parity in registration rates between urban and rural children, while Guinea-Bissau and Lesotho favour rural children, and urban children in the United Republic of Tanzania and Uganda are significantly more likely to be registered than their rural counterparts (Banik, 2019). For example, in Guinea-Bissau, 47 per cent of rural children are registered compared to 32 per cent of urban children due to significant registration campaigns carried out in rural areas (Plan International, 2019; Banik, 2019). Parents who live in rural areas and far away from the registration centres may fail to register their children in time due to distance and accessibility to the registration centres which is further influenced by terrain,

the condition of infrastructure such as roads, and availability of public transport (Chereni, 2016). Urban populations are less subjected to such constraints.

Knowledge and attitude of parents and guardians towards birth registration

The centralization of registration services is a major factor for families with offices far from rural communities. Families face a long journey and the loss of essential income to register their children hence, negative attitude by most parents towards the process (Cordy, 2009). Furthermore, Cordy (2009), argued that the main barrier to birth registration is that it is not universally perceived as a fundamental right and, as a result, is given low priority at every level. This lack of awareness and understanding leads in turn to a low demand for registration, as the short- or long-term benefits are not clear (Suthar et al., 2019). A survey by Plan International showed that the main causes of non-registration in Vietnam were poor awareness of child rights and birth registration, with individuals unaware of the benefits birth certificate brings. (Hanmer & Elefante, 2016).

A study conducted by the Research and Advocacy Unit (2008), revealed that low uptake of birth registration by some women is because of their attitude towards the whole process of birth registration. They did not realize that they have an equal responsibility on birth registration of children as much as the government and without them subscribing to those laws, they are the ones who bear the burdens of having unregistered children in their homesteads. Some blamed the government for making the registration process difficult and they end up being reluctant to register their children (Gannon et al., 2021). Buck (2011), also noted that, the official meaning of birth registration in Zimbabwe and other sub-Saharan African countries such as Malawi, Mozambique, Botswana and Zambia, is confused as most parents' record names and date of birth of their children on notebooks hence believe to have registered their children. The fact that a child's birth date is written on vaccination cards is also considered as birth registration by most parents (Amo-Adjei & Annim, 2015).

Resource constrains

Economic barriers due to a lack of State resources allocated to birth registration can in turn become institutional (Fortin, 2015). Sharp (2005), maintained that one of the major economic reasons behind low birth registration in Somalia was low budgetary allocation of funds to the department of birth and death registrations. This had in turn resulted in the lack of resources needed to procure stationary for birth registration, such as registration books, paper for standardized forms, and pens for signing the register, consequently resulting in non-registration of children. Phillips et al., (2015) concurred that birth registration in many countries in sub-Saharan Africa had been greatly hindered by resource constraints emanating from low funds allocated to the Central Registration departments. Cases in point include countries such as Zambia, Malawi, Zimbabwe and Kenya (Chereni, 2017). Many of these states do not have sufficient human resources to carry out registration, or have personnel that are poorly trained and do not know their duties (Phillips et al., 2015).

The cost of birth registration is prohibitively expensive for most families in the global south. Costs can be incurred by direct payments for registration or the birth certificate, or indirect costs for travel and opportunity costs (Southwick & Lynch, 2019). Unfortunately, while some of these direct costs are official, others are imposed illegally by registrars in an attempt to extort more money from families, a problem that is more difficult to fight (Weissbrodt & Collins, 2016). In addition, some countries also impose fees or fines if registration is delayed or late. This may discourage registration for a child once the initial period for registration has passed. Children from the poorest households are twice as likely to be unregistered as those from the richest (Chereni, 2017).

In Ghana, incorporation of birth registration into community health care, health campaigns and mobile registration activities have intensified birth registrations even for children born out of marriage. The mechanisms have reduced the indirect costs of birth registration, especially in poorer communities, and yield substantial increases in registration rates (Odame, 2013). In Ghana the reasons cited for low birth registrations were costs, lack of awareness, distances to centres and low uptake of technology. Based on a study conducted in Ghana, Amo-Adjei and Annim (2015), noted that in the global south most of the people especially in the rural areas cannot afford even the little amount charged for birth registration.

METHODOLOGY

The research adopted a qualitative approach. The study was conducted in the Harare Central district. In this research, the target population were parents and guardians who had children born out of marriage, key informants such as councillors, social workers and birth registration officers. The research utilised the snowballing sampling technique. Parents and guardians who were facing challenges registering children born out of marriage were acquainted with each other at the registration centres. The researchers identified the first participant who later gave referral to another participant until the chain was completed. This made it possible to identify individuals that were facing the same problems registering children under their care. Participants in the key informant interviews were purposively selected. The researchers targeted knowledgeable individuals such as the two birth

registration officer, a social worker and a councillor. Data was collected using in-depth interviews for parents and guardians and key informant interviews. The study made use of 12 participants. Eight were for in-depth interviews and four key informant interviews. The study adopted thematic analysis as its instrument for qualitative data reduction and categorization. The interviews were audio recorded and specific codes assigned to the interviews. The data analysis process also involved conceptualization, coding and categorization of data. This involved identifying and refining important concepts, where simple observations, comments and statements were pulled out of the huge pool of data and then put back together more meaningfully. The following were pseudonyms given to the study participants for the purposes of data collection that is Edzai, Patricia, Bonzo, Chiedza, Ngoni, Priscilla, Roberts, Chantel, Shamiso Pride, Gladys and Tendai. These do not in any way reflect the actual characteristics of the participants.

FINDINGS

Socio-economic barriers to birth registration

The study findings revealed an array of social and economic barriers to birth registration for children born out of marriage. Key findings showed that these findings include among many others discrimination, cultural and religious derogation of the children born out of marriage, corruption, lack of registration fees, competing needs, resource constraints at the civil registry among others.

Patriarchal discrimination of the girl child

The study findings showed that the patriarchal estimations on the value of the girl child were a barrier to accessing birth registration. The patriarchal society considers the male child to be important for the clan than the child who would be married away.

Edzai from the in-depth interviews noted that,

I grew up in a family where the value of the girl child was only in getting married and bringing lobola to the family. We were not given a chance to go to school because it was meant for boys. I grew into an adult girl, until I had my first child without a birth certificate. My father ended up dying, and I was later assisted by his young brother, my uncle, to acquire a birth certificate when I was already 20 years old.

One key informant Bonzo noted that:

Within the patriarchal societies the girl child is considered to be raised for marriage, therefore it is considered unnecessary for them to be registered. This is because having identity documents is associated with seeking employment. This becomes even worse when they are born out of marriage.

Cultural and religious derogation of 'illegitimate' children

The study findings showed that children are deprived of their right to birth certificates due to cultural discrimination of children born out of marriage, who are in some cases considered as "illegitimate".

Chiedza, from the in-depth interviews noted that:

I am having a challenge in acquiring a birth certificate for my son. When he was born, his father refused responsibility saying the child was not his. I took care of my child, and when he was 10 years old, I got married for the second time to a husband who allowed me to bring along my son to his house. However, he was considered as illegitimate and no one was willing to assist in birth registration, even my husband. My relatives refused to have my son registered using my surname because it was considered a taboo to give our surname to an outsider.

Roberts a Key Informant concurred that:

Children born out of marriage are looked upon with suspicion both culturally and from various religious sects. This makes it difficult to get them registered as caring for them will already be considered burdensome. One religious sect actually discourages its followers from raising children born out of marriage as they are considered as tokens of bad luck.

Corruption

Corruption was revealed as one of the key challenges impeding smooth birth registration at all civil registration offices. Participants revealed that it is highly difficult to get a birth certificate without paying a bribe to the staff members at the civil registration departments, even for those who have enough documentation required for the registration.

Ngoni, one of the participants from in-depth interviews had this to say:

Corruption is the biggest challenge barring people from acquiring birth certificates on time. One has to pay a bribe to get quick assistance, otherwise you would come for days without getting the birth certificate...

Pricilla from the in-depth interviews concurred that:

The birth registration staff creates strict requirements for them to illicit money from us. I was ones asked for my late husband's finger prints, yet he was deceased. I presented his ID card and I was told to bring my husband's relative as a witness, but if I could pay something he said he could assist me. I went back home without a birth certificate because I had no money to pay.

Roberts a key informant noted that:

Corruption thrives usually where the first line of requirements is not there. In this case one or both parents will be unavailable for children born out of marriage. Therefore, people manipulate that to corruptly ask money of prospective birth registration clients.

Lack of registration fees

Most of the participants agreed that registration fees charged by the government are the most inhibiting factor to birth registration. Participants bemoaned the harsh economic conditions that Zimbabwe is facing and revealed that they cannot afford to pay for registration fees.

Chantel from the in-depth interviews had this to say:

Another challenge is the fees that are charged for birth registration. If a child's birth registration is delayed, they charge a late registration fee of 10 dollars. I was personally charged right from getting a birth record at the hospital. So, with the economic challenges that we are facing, people cannot afford to pay that money, especially single mothers like me and children end up growing up without birth certificates.

Shamiso from the key informant said;

Registration fees are inhibitive to birth registrations because if you look at most of the people we interact with, they already have economic challenges, and they cannot afford to pay registration fees or penalties. So, they end up not registering their children.

Pride from the in-depth interviews noted that:

I am a widow, with three children and the youngest was born out of marriage and without a birth certificate. I cannot afford the money that is required for birth registration because taking care of my kids is already hard for me. I came here to seek help from Social Welfare because my child failed to register for grade 7 examinations because he doesn't have a birth certificate.

Resources constraints at the Civil Registration Department

The study findings showed that resource at the civil registration department were impeding the registration of children born out of marriage.

Ms Shamiso, a key informant interviewee, noted that

The civil registration departments around the country are not operating to full capacity as the demand due to resource constraints. Many a times people are turned away or take days at the waiting lists because of unavailability of certain resources needed for registration. Some of the equipment and machinery is imported and the government is failing to provide some of them. As a result, the civil registration departments are using outdated equipment which slows down the whole process.

Ngoni from the in-depth interviews concurred that:

Requirements for children born out marriage include bringing relatives to dispose of affidavits. Usually, these extended family members are difficult to get by. When they are finally there you get to the offices and the machines are down. I ended up abandoning getting the certificate for my child.

Competing economic and family roles

The study findings showed that competing economic and family roles hinder the registration of children born out of marriage.

In an in-depth interview, Gladys, one of the single mothers said:

I am the sole breadwinner, if I don't work my children will starve. I had no time for birth registration because I found it better to work for my children than spend time in a que until I desperately needed it to register my son for ECD.

Tendai from the in-depth interviews concurred that:

Because my child is being raised by her maternal uncles, it has been difficult to register the child. Her uncles argue that they cannot incur the cost of looking after her and registering her. They argue there are other family needs that need to be attended to and only essentials will be done.

Ms Shamiso from the key informant interviews noted that:

Children born out of marriage are already considered a burden at extended family level. Therefore, they are often treated with resentment which affects their prospects of having a birth certificate.

DISCUSSION

Findings identified that one of the social impediments to birth registration is gender discrimination, which has its roots in patriarchal values, beliefs and practices. These, as revealed by the findings, mostly affect the female children, who are given little regards in patriarchal families and religions. These findings concur with the experiences of other African countries where patriarchy and other social beliefs and practices are rife. Suthar et al. (2019) noted that in Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana and Togo male children were considered with high regard than their female counterparts because they were considered the real members of the family than girls. As a result, parents were reluctant to register the birth of girls, who in most cases could grow up to adolescents without birth certificates. This becomes even worse is the child is both a girl and born out of marriage. This demonstrate lack of Ubuntu as van Breda (2020), puts it that it considers being considerate, compassionate and forgiving, which relates to sentiments around children born out of marriage. Therefore, it can be argued that, patriarchal beliefs which discriminate against the girl child and those born out of marriage are indeed an obstruction to birth registration and not in the spirit of Ubuntu.

Cultural and religious derogation of children born out of marriage was another challenge impeding access to birth registration. As a result, children born out of marriage faced difficulties registering without extended family assistance because it is considered immoral to have children outside marriage, worse still if the father is not known. As such, it can be inferred from the findings that there are still some cultural and religious beliefs that discriminate children born out of marriage from accessing their right to identity. They face unique challenges when it comes to birth registration and also face derogatory treatment through negative names such as "mubvandıripo" (illegitimate/bustard) as the findings revealed. This is contrary to the Ubuntu views of children as being the responsibility of the family and community (Kurevakwesu and Chizasa, 2020).

The situation is even worse for children born out of marriage, because already there are additional requirements such as the identity documents of the father, if he is not physically available. This is in line with Amo-Adjei and Annim (2015)'s observation that most of the civil registration departments for most of the developing countries in sub-Saharan Africa are suffering from the deranging effects of corruption. Cases in point are countries like Zimbabwe, Zambia, Malawi, South Africa and Kenya (Buck, 2011). The study findings revealed that corruption was also another impediment to accessing birth certificates for children born out of marriage. This becomes even so because additional personnel and documents would be required for those born out of marriage. While corruption affects the country at large, socially excluded groups or those who are socio-economically less privileged suffer the most because they cannot afford to pay for bribe. As such a corrupt ridden birth registration system presents a huge obstruction to birth registration for children born out of marriage, who are in most cases less privileged.

The study findings further showed that competing economic and family needs impede children born out of marriage from accessing birth registration. This is because these children are raised by single parents and grandparents who will be struggling to provide for the family let alone paying for birth registration fees and late registration penalties. Therefore, it was established from the findings, that poverty is the biggest obstruction to birth registration for many. Poverty is a key exclusionary factor which deprives certain groups of people or certain individuals from accessing certain rights (Phillips et al., 2015). In this case poverty and lack of registration fees in particular, exclude children born out of marriage from accessing birth certificates because they are considered an extra burden. The study findings further concurred with Weissbrodt and Collins (2016), who noted that due to harsh economic conditions that most African countries are going through, much importance is given to economic activities that bring income than other responsibilities such as birth registration. As a result, parents end up delaying the registration of births for their children and this is common among children born out of marriage, who are raised by a single parent.

The study showed that resource constraints at the civil registry department was an impediment to accessing registration for children born out of marriage. Because many relatives would need to depose affidavits and be there as witnessing, if the equipment is malfunctioning on the day that all these people are gathered, it becomes difficult to bring them together again. It can therefore be deduced from the findings that low birth registration can be a result of resource constraints. This in tandem with the findings by Sharp (2005), who noted that low budgetary allocation of funds to the department of birth and death registrations made registration difficult due to resource constraints. This has resulted in lack of resources needed for birth registration, such as registration books, paper for standardized forms, and pens for signing the register, and this has ultimately been the reasons for non-registration in various centres in Somalia. Phillips et al., (2015), further concurred that birth registration in many countries in sub-Saharan Africa has been greatly hindered by resource constraints as a result of low funds allocated to the Central Registration departments.

Implications for social work practice

It has been established by this study that birth registration for children born out of marriage in Zimbabwe is obstructed by a wide range of barriers such as poverty, discrimination, stigma, cultural beliefs and practices, and legal challenges among other obstacles. All these obstacles are among the social ills that the social work profession the social work profession seeks to address and ensure that the worth of every individual is recognized. The NASW code of ethics (2008) guides the social work practice with the ethics and values which include respect for dignity, worth of a person, Ubuntu and human relations among others. Based on the findings of this study, it can be noted that social workers can take up a huge task to restore equitable birth registration in Zimbabwe. Social work practice can make a difference in the society by getting rid of the various forms of stigma that certain societies hold for certain individuals or groups within society. In the case of birth registration, findings of this study established that stigmatization of women who bear children out of marriage or to unknown fathers together with their children is among some of the social barriers to equitable birth registration. In that regard, social workers can help in building relationships with respect for human dignity and self-worth among family members and members of the society in general. This can be done through educating the society on human best practices which eliminate stigma and builds respect for the dignity and worth of others. Ultimately this would create a society access to fundamental rights, such as the right to identity, particularly birth registration can be guaranteed despite socio-economic status. This would therefore see children born out of marriage equitably accessing birth registration without barriers.

Given the exclusionary pieces of legislation that differentiates between children born to married parents and those born out of marriage, social workers should advocate for policy formulations and legal reforms that promote equity within the society. When it comes to birth registration social workers should advocate for policies that guarantee children's rights to identity without considering the marital status of their parents. Social workers can also partake in resource mobilization through donors and the government to ensure that the 'socially excluded' or less privileged individuals or groups can afford to access birth registration services. This can be done by

mobilizing donor funds or negotiating for government subsidies in birth registration for children in difficult situations, such as those born out of marriage.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- There is need to review existing birth registration system being implemented in the country with an aim of identifying areas where the system can be linked to better strategies to enable a timely and efficient birth registration process.
- Explore possibility of utilizing innovations to ensure universal registration for all children that could include community health strategy, mobile phone technologies, computerization of the registration system.
- Abolish the fee for birth registration. During the research, a substantial number of persons proposed these.
- Create more awareness on birth registration by use of media campaigns via local radio/television stations.
- Carry out mobile birth registration through community mobilization to facilitate that of civil registration department.
- Mop up of all children who have not been registered through school enrolment system, religious organisations, and community health units to have them registered.

CONCLUSION

The research concludes that failure to register children born out of marriage has extensive negative trickle-down consequences. The paper uncovered varying social and economic impediments to accessing birth certificates for children born out of marriage in Harare. The research paper recognises the profession of social work as central in ensuring the protection of these children born out of marriage. The state further has a duty to guarantee that children born out of marriage are both protected and have their right to identity safe guarded.

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