

DOCUMENTATION NEEDS AND CITIZENSHIP

Documentation

Lack of legal documentation leads to problems for displaced children (2001-2002)

- Only 5 percent of children have had their births registered, according to government estimates
- Lack of documentation reduces access to education, health services and legal assistance, while increasing the risk for young boys of being recruited into the armed forces
- Children without documents are easy targets for abuse

"The Ministry of Justice estimates that only about 5% of children have had their births registered, which means that unregistered children do not legally exist and therefore cannot enrol in schools. It also becomes difficult for young boys to prove their age and have consequently greater risk of early recruitment into the armed forces. Displaced youths are particularly vulnerable, as they may not have the family or community support to protect them. In 2001, the Government approved a campaign led by the Ministry of Justice for the registration of three million children in 18 months." (UNICEF 11 February 2002)

"Children separated from their families, in particular following attacks and/or displacement, are of serious concern. Children who lack legal documentation, particularly those who have been forcibly displaced, suffer a lack of access to health services, schooling and even legal assistance when attempting to seek redress for violations of their rights. The numerous street children also face daily various hardships and dangers. Children are exploited as labourers and are subjected to sexual violence. Their lack of documentation leads to constant harassment by police officers. They are easy and silent targets for abuse." (UNSC 11 April 2001, para. 36)

Displaced persons who have lost personal identification documents are often subject to harassment (2000-2001)

- Incidents of harassment of IDPs without documentation reported
- Lack of documents can endanger legal individual rights

"84. The [UN] Representative [on Internally Displaced Persons] was informed of incidents of harassment of displaced persons, in particular of those who have been displaced from UNITA-controlled areas, largely because they lack formal identity documents. It was noted that lack of such documents also limits access to education, health facilities and employment. The Government should take the necessary steps to issue to all internally displaced persons all documents necessary for the enjoyment and exercise of their legal rights. In particular, authorities should facilitate the issuance of new documents or the replacement of documents lost in the course of displacement." (CHR 25 January 2001, para. 84)

"Many Angolans have never had personal identification documents or have lost them during displacement. In order to ensure legal individual rights participants acknowledged the importance of making such documents available promptly and free of charge to the internally displaced. Furthermore, such effort could contribute to the establishment of improved mechanisms for establishing the whereabouts of displaced persons separated from their families." (NRC September 2000, Prevention and Protection)