

Lesson 3: Where's the Proof?

Grades 4 - 8

From birth all children have the right to a name, nationality and identity. What proof do we have that we are who we say we are? Identity is not only recognition of a child's individuality, but also recognition of his or her existence in society. Millions of children around the world are growing up invisible in the eyes of the law. Most live in South-East Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa. In Somalia only 3% of children under five are registered at birth. In Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Ethiopia and Tanzania, the number of children with a legal name and nationality doesn't even reach 10 %.¹ In this activity, students will examine the importance of birth registration in upholding children's rights to develop, participate and be protected.

Students will

- Develop an understanding of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)
- Identify important international organizations/agreements in which Canada participates and their purpose
- Identify personal and group responsibilities that accompany rights
- Identify services provided by the federal, provincial and municipal governments
- Identify ways in which community services can help people acquire their basic human rights
- Describe Canada's efforts in international efforts to address current global issues

Materials

- [GEAR: Rights and Responsibilities \(lessons\)](#)
- Cause and Effect Diagram
- Internet access for researching articles
- Copy of sample birth certificate

Time Two 60-minute periods

Activity I – Understanding Rights and Responsibilities

Instructions

1. Re-visit the fact that in the Vietnamese culture, the first birthday celebrates a child's survival of the first year of life. Ask students to brainstorm things they need to survive and live a healthy, happy and safe life.
2. It's important at this stage to introduce students to the concepts of rights and responsibilities and familiarize them with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Complete the activities from [GEAR: Rights and Responsibilities](#) most appropriate for your grade level.

¹ Source: UNICEF, http://www.childinfo.org/birth_registration_tables.php

Discussion

- Article 7 and 8 of the UNCRC says that from birth, every child has the right to a name, nationality and identity. Why do you think having a name, nationality and identity is so important that governments around the world agree that children should have those rights?
- If you have a right to a name and nationality, what responsibility do you have to respect other people's names and nationalities?²

Extension Activities

- **Name Games:** Have students brainstorm a list of ways to respect other people's names (e.g. don't make fun of someone's name, don't call people names, etc.). Ask them to work in groups to develop games that will teach younger students in the school ways to respect everyone's right to a name.
- **Read the poem** "And who are you?" from Sheree Fitch's book *If you could wear my sneakers*.³ Write a class poem in the style of "And who are you". Ask each student to contribute a line describing their name.
- **Brag Bags:** Select a different student every day and write their name on a ZIPLOC bag. Ask the class to write on a strip of paper "brag statements" about the selected student. Have each student read aloud their statement of appreciation before placing it in the bag for the selected student to take home.

Activity 2 – Birth Registration Protects Rights

Instructions

1. Ask: What proof do you have that you are who you say you are? Show students the sample birth certificate and discuss the information it provides. Alternatively, have students examine their own birth certificates ahead of time at home. Ask: When might it be useful or important to have a birth certificate?
2. Select one or more stories about birth registration (from the list below) appropriate for your grade level. Share the stories with students. Or, have students read/listen to different stories (e.g. the four [case studies](#)) in a [Jigsaw](#) activity and report back to their home groups: interesting findings, barriers to registration and the effects of not being registered.
3. Have students complete the *Cause and Effect Diagram* to show the barriers to birth registration and the impact of not having an official record of identity. Students doing the Jigsaw activity can complete the diagram with their home groups.

Stories of the challenges and impact of birth registration:

- Four Case Studies: <http://ourworldclass.tigweb.org/upload/brcasestudies.pdf>
These stories illustrate how birth registration protects children from child labour, trafficking and early marriage while improving their rights to education and health care.

² This could involve not making fun of people's names, calling others names, making an effort to learn other people's names, recognizing that we all have a nationality and that no nationality is superior.

³Fitch, S (1997). *If You Could Wear My Sneakers*. Firefly Books, Buffalo, NY.

- A Second Chance: Sonam's Story (Photo slideshow about child labour and education): <http://ourworldclass.tigweb.org/upload/sonamstory.pdf>
- Article and radio recording: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/8038125.stm>
- Two short video clips: <http://www.planusa.org/contentmgr/showdetails.php/id/1039379>
- UNICEF Animations (Right to a name, nationality and identity): <http://youtu.be/wqOCyEURbiE>, <http://youtu.be/FGpYgJ02GSA>, <http://youtu.be/abv0opArZnw>
- Plan International Video: http://youtu.be/2_zTQzKUSSQ
- UNICEF video: Registration and education <http://youtu.be/zXnGOMacs7k>
- Birth registration: The first step in child protection (blog) <http://blog.worldvision.org/advocacy/birth-registration-child-protection/>
- Story: How DNA is helping young "stateless" Thais get citizenship: <http://www.trust.org/alertnet/blogs/asia-views/how-dna-is-helping-young-stateless-thais-get-citizenship/>
- Statelessness: Compelling videos of those without identities around the world <http://www.trust.org/alertnet/multimedia/in-focus/statelessness/>

Discussion:

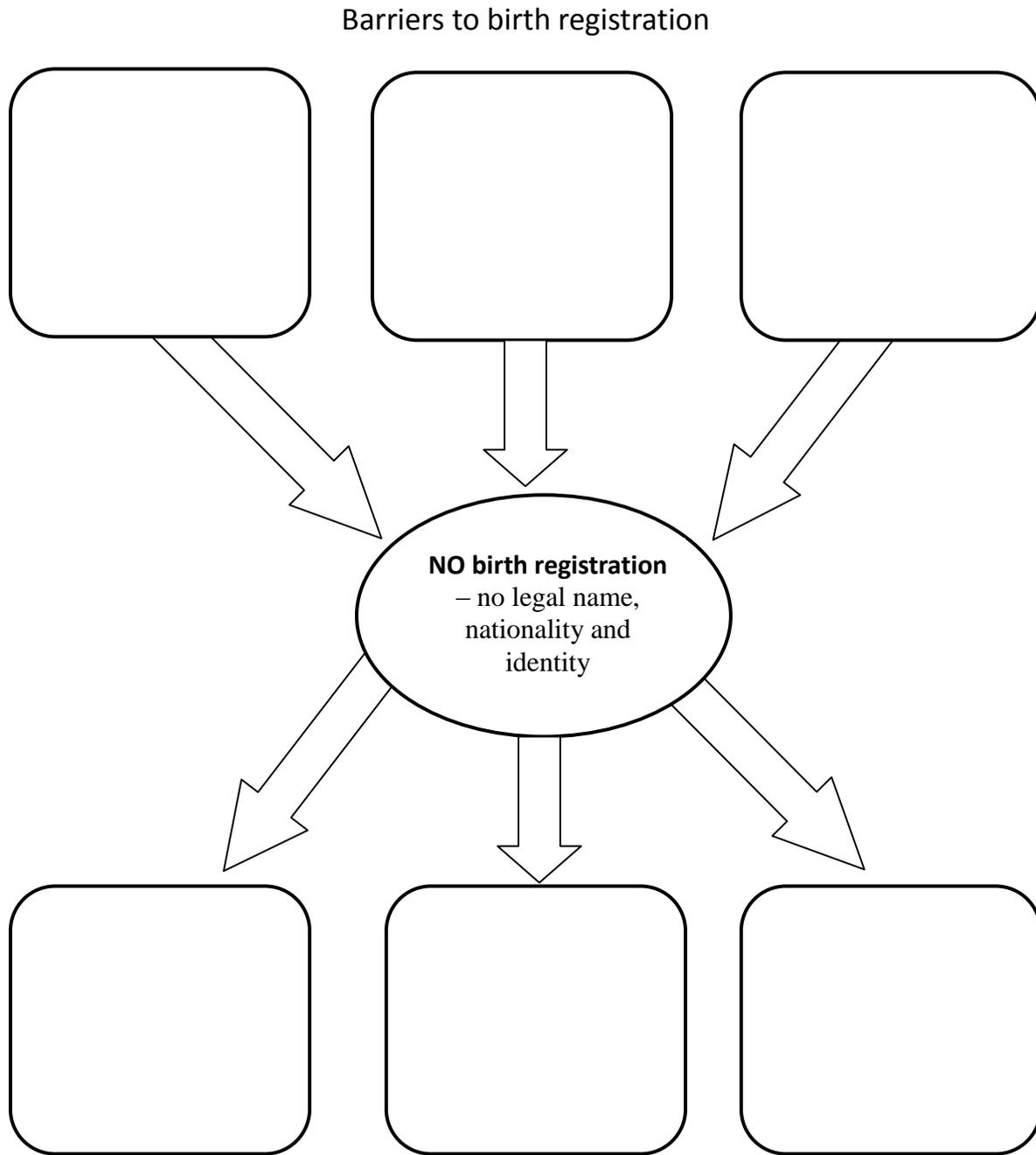
- What are the barriers facing families in getting birth certificates?
- What challenges do children without birth registration face? (Which rights are denied to children without a legal birth registration?)
- In what ways are girls at a disadvantage when it comes to birth registration (if applicable to the stories students read/listened to)?
- How can birth registration be made more accessible to families?
- Do you still exist if you don't have an official identity (i.e. a birth certificate)? What's the difference between a personal and a legal identity?⁴

Extension Activities (grades 5 – 8)

- **Create a birth registration plan:** Using the scenario from the GEAR activities [Journey to a New Planet](#) or [Forming a New Government](#), ask student to imagine they are part of a committee responsible for developing a plan to make birth registration accessible in their new community. Have students work in groups to develop and present their plan to the class. Optional: ask students to vote on the plan they think will work best and to explain why.
- **Research and compare** the process of birth registration in Canada to that of another country. Identify the level(s) of government responsible for birth registration. Make recommendations for improving the process of birth registration in developing countries. Here are useful sites to get students started: http://www.servicecanada.gc.ca/eng/subjects/cards/birth_certificate.shtml, <http://www.servicecanada.gc.ca/eng/sin/apply/newborn.shtml>

⁴ Personal identity is influenced by factors like gender, age, religion, nationality, ethnicity etc. Legal identity is official documentation of your existence and belonging to a country. It is of crucial importance because it entitles you to education, social security, health care, to leave and return to your country, to prove your age, to find formal employment, to own property, to have a bank account, to have protection from the government against war and neglect, to get married, to vote and to receive inheritance. – Source: Plan UK
(http://www.planidproject.net/teacher_resources/coreplan/1_Nature_and_Importance_of_Identity.pdf)

Cause and Effect Diagram



Sample Birth Certificate



BIRTH CERTIFICATE
BRITISH COLUMBIA

BIRTH CERTIFICATE

VISA 43020705

Jack Shewchuk
Chief Executive Officer
Vital Statistics Agency

VITAL STATISTICS ACT
BRITISH COLUMBIA
Certified extract from
Registration of Birth
filed at Victoria, BC,
Canada.

Surname **MASON**

Given Name(s) **SANDRA LEE**

Date of Birth **JUL 19, 1954** Sex **FEMALE**

Place of Birth **VICTORIA**

Registration Number **1954-59-078931**

Date of Registration **JUL 28, 1954** Date of Issue **JAN 02, 2008**

Name of Parent **HOFFER, SARCY**

Birthplace of Parent **ENGLAND**

Name of Parent **MASON, GINO ALLEN**

Birthplace of Parent **BRITISH COLUMBIA, CANADA**

B C 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 1

Source: Government of British Columbia,
<http://www.vs.gov.bc.ca/births/certificate.html?SMSESSION=NO>