



Fátima Baronet

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To expand civil registration services

Under Fátima Baronet direction at Mozambique's National Directorate of Registries and Notaries, the country's civil registration improvements have gained momentum.

Fátima Baronet, Ag. Director of the National Directorate of Registries and Notaries, knows the value of a birth certificate because it shaped her life. As one of few people registered in Mozambique pre-independence, that certificate gave her the right to attend one of the country's few public schools, a privilege denied most of the population.

Baronet was one of the class of Mozambicans called *assimilados* – the assimilated – a status the family has been granted because her father worked in the public administration before independence. Only the Portuguese colonizers and *assimilados* had the right to birth registration and to identification.

Birth registration was made universal after independence in 1975, but 16 years of civil war and frequent natural disasters caused a massive defection of qualified personnel, the loss and deterioration of registration archives, and internal displacement. And while the government has since steadily introduced programs to increase and improve civil registration systems, a great part of Mozambique's population is still undocumented.

That is a situation Baronet is working to change.

A varied career

Born on the island of Ibo in Cabo Delgado province, Baronet was strongly encouraged to study by her parents, and by her grandmother after the death of her mother when she was eight. After secondary school in Maputo, she enrolled in teacher's college, but not by choice: the government mandated who studied what and where. During her obligatory four years of teaching service after qualifying as a secondary school teacher, she seized an opportunity to work for the Ministry of Transport, later becoming a flight attendant.

Legal studies that she undertook in 2001 at the Instituto Superior de Ciências e Tecnologia de Moçambique introduced her to civil registration. Baronet joined the Ministry of Justice in 2006 as a lawyer and registrar/public notary.

In 2015 she was called to become Deputy Director of the Directorate of Registries and Notaries and, since April 2021, she has been Acting National Director. In this post she coordinates all civil registrars and notaries and advises the Ministry of Justice and Council of Ministers on matters related to civil registrars and notaries in the country. Baronet points



out that “this is not a public service function. You are nominated based on your integrity, professionalism, technical capacity, and trustworthiness,” as well as your contributions in supporting civil registration.

Expanding services

Baronet is also mandated with expanding civil registration services. In 2018, the government of Mozambique approved a new Civil Registration Code that allows birth notification of a child without providing their name and registration of traditional and religious marriages for the first time, among other measures. Under the new code, Mozambique's CRVS system now includes the use of information technologies to integrate civil registration and health information systems, as well as of SMS messages by community leaders and health personnel to report births and deaths to civil registration authorities. For the first time, the system began attributing a National Unique Identification number at birth, improving identity and statistical data

By October 2018, births and deaths were registered and certificates processed electronically using the eCRVS platform at 74 registrar's offices and 120 registration posts throughout the country. By mid-2021, 254 civil registration offices out of the country's more than 500 were using this platform, including in some health facilities.

The benefits of e-registration are clear in Cabo Delgado province where armed conflict has led to “more than 300,000 people losing their birth certificates as they were forced to relocate,” says Baronet. And although registrar's offices have been vandalized or destroyed, computerization means that records since 2017 can be recovered. In December 2020, the Ministry of Justice launched a campaign to provide the displaced with new certificates.

Progress is slower in rural areas because people don't see the need for birth registration. “They register on an as-needed basis, like at age six because a birth certificate is a required for school registration.” Her office has undertaken several campaigns to sensitize the public about civil registration, particularly when they are expanding into rural areas, contributing to an increase in birth registration coverage.

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Providing services

Baronet's day-to-day work includes human resources management and ensuring staff have the training, materials, and equipment they need to serve the public. “Do they have the capacity to provide the services?,” she asks. “Do they have the technical know-how to handle the different clients who come?”

Coordination with other sectors is vital as “government functions cannot work in isolation,” Baronet says. The ministries of Justice, of Health, of State Administration and Public Functions, and of Interior; the National Institute of Statistics, as well as the University of Eduardo Mondlane, UNICEF, and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees all collaborate on CRVS improvements in the country.

Baronet is motivated by the scope of responsibilities carried out by her directorate. “All the aspects of life relating to a person, our department handles the registrations. If a person is born, we issue the birth certificate, if registering a business, we do the registration, if registering a car — even a marriage license — it's all under our portfolio.” She takes pride in serving others, “When someone who comes into the into the civil registration office is provided with a service, they come out satisfied.”

“Ideally,” she says, “I want a system that is functional, efficient, and accessible to the whole country; one that is inclusive and can capture all life events.” Also on her wish list: having one interoperable database that would integrate all records and provide vital statistics. ■

Learn more about CRVS in Mozambique:

Read the [country profile](#) or read a [technical brief about maintaining civil registration during the COVID-19 pandemic](#).