

New York, 23 February 2011 - Timor-Leste is carrying out a United Nations-backed campaign this week targeting over 200,000 children under the age of five who have not been registered at birth – an important step to ensuring that a child has proof of identity and can enrol in school at the right age.

In 2003, only 2 out of 10 children were registered at birth in the country, according to the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF). Currently, half of all Timorese children under the age of five are still not being registered, which means that there is no permanent and official record of their existence.

"I am confident, that with all of us working together, we will achieve our target of registering almost 200,000 children who are under the age of five who have not yet been registered within five days," said Jun Kukita, UNICEF Representative in Timor-Leste.

UNICEF notes that registration is an important step to ensuring that children can claim their rights. It provides children with proof of Timorese identity and ensures that they enrol in school at the right age.

It will also help ensure that the Government can plan for basic social services such as schools and health services for every child. With the birth registration, children can also be protected from illegal adoption, child labour, trafficking, unlawful arrests and detention, the agency adds.

"The Birth Registration Campaign signifies our Government's commitment to make each child registered at birth," said Acting Prime Minister Jose Luis Guterres during the launch of the week-long initiative on Monday. "This is one of way of ensuring the rights of every Timorese child."

Source: [UN news](#)