

1. What is baby dumping?

Baby dumping means rejecting and throwing a baby away immediately after birth exposing it to danger and death. Unfortunately, this is done by the mother of the baby.

2. Protection of children's rights

Definition of a child: In Namibian context, a child is someone between the ages of 0-18 years. And they are all protected by the constitution and other Namibian laws.

Chapter 3 of the Namibian Constitution grants protection of life for every citizen including children. This means that no one has the right to take anyone's life including that of a baby, not even its mother. It further grants specific rights to children: to have a name, to know one's parents and to be cared for by them.

* Other Namibian laws

A. **Maintenance Act No. 9 of 2003**: This Act says that both parents should take care of their child, irrespective of whether they are married or not. This is in line with Constitution's Article 6.

B. **Children Status Act 6 of 2006**: Where there is dispute as to who the father or the mother of the child is, the law provides for a paternity/maternity test at a cost; however if the couple cannot afford it, provision is made for government to meet the couple halfway in paying the costs.

C. **Children's Act of 1960 (Act 33 of 1960)**: The Children's Act of 1960 provides for the protection and welfare of children that are in need of care and protection.

Namibia is signatory to international instruments such as:

- A. **African Charter on the Rights of the Child**: **The Charter under Article V states that:** "Every child has an inherent right to life" and "States Parties to the charter shall ensure to the maximum extent possible the survival, protection, and development of the child".
- B. **Un Convention on the Rights of the child**: The UN Convention on the right Rights of the child protects children from inhuman treatment, neglect and deprivation of life or care.

3. Causes of baby dumping

Stigma: Positive aspects of tradition and religion of discouraging pregnancies before marriage are communicated negatively at family, school and community levels by using threats, insulting words "I will chase you out of my house" etc, and this can fuel baby dumping.

Ignorance: Limited information targeting young people on issues related to reproductive health (especially contraceptives) contributes to unwanted pregnancies. Sugar daddies who prey on young girls' ignorance are also a contributing factor to baby dumping.

Peer pressure: Young people may be pressured into unprotected sex by media (pornographic materials and movies) or friends. When it results in pregnancy they are laughed at and pressured into baby dumping.

Lack of communication: It is difficult for young people to communicate with their immediate family members, extended family members and even the community at large. Pregnancies are concealed until the last minute.

Coercion: Sometimes pregnancy is a result of rape or incest which goes unreported due to stigma especially if it is committed by family members.

HIV/AIDS: When people suspect that the baby might be HIV positive because they might know their own status they may decide to dump their babies.

Rejection: especially by the parents and community and the person responsible for pregnancy drives the young women to dump their babies.

Irresponsibility: Running away from responsibility of one's own actions. Young people get scared of having a baby and having to care for it day and night.

4. Alternative care for the child

A. Placement of a Child in a place of Safety: When a child is abandoned, a social worker investigates and submits a report to the court on the placement of the child. The child can be placed in a place of safety, which can be an institution, a family member or suitable individual by any Police Officer, probation officer or social worker. Placing a child in an institution is a last resort and is not permanent measure. This is done according to section 26 of the Children's Act, 33 of 1960. Any person who hinders or obstructs any Policeman/Probation Officer in the exercise of his/her powers under subsection (1) shall be guilty of an offence.

B. Foster placement: After the investigation, the child can be placed in foster care either in an institution or with an individual; according to the Children's Act, Section 1 (X), If it is found by the court that the child is in need of care as the child was abandoned or without visible means of support, is in a state of physical or mental neglect or is being maintained apart from his parents/guardian in domestic circumstances which are detrimental to his/her interests.

- C. **Adoption:** In cases of an abandoned child, adoption can happen without the consent of the parents, after reasonable efforts to place a child in other options of care have been exhausted. This is in accordance to Section 72 (1) (b) (C) of the Children's Act 33 of 1960.

5. How to avoid baby dumping?

- Abstain from sex and concentrate on own personal development, e.g., studies.
- Stop sugar daddy syndrome.
- Delay sex or use contraceptives to avoid unwanted pregnancy. Contraceptives are obtainable free of charge from Ministry of Health and social services, health centres and clinics.
- Talk to someone, there will always be help available.
- **At home:** talk to parents or a trusted family member or relative;
- **At church:** talk to a trusted Christian church
- **At school:** contact a school counsellor or any trusted teacher or a friend
- For further counselling: Visit the MGECW, MoHSS (Women and Child Protection Unit) social workers will provide counselling.
- For family planning, visit MoHSS for free family planning services country wide.

6. Where to go for assistance

Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare Regional Offices

1. Caprivi: Caprivi Regional Office, Lifasi street:
Tel: 066 252 286 Fax: 066 252 217/2533
2. Erongo: Old Alpha Koop Building: Swakopmund:
Tel: 064 462 580 Fax 064 403 294.
3. Hardap: Old Alpha Daniel Joubert Hostel Complex,
Mariental: Tel: 063 242 542 Fax: 063 342 670
4. Karas: Hampi Plichta street, Keetmanshoop:
Tel: 063 222 535/222063 Fax: 063 225 945
5. Khomas (HQ): Winco Building: Werner-list Street, Windhoek
Tel: 061 283 3111 Fax 061 227325
6. Kunene: Community Centre, Opuwo:
Tel: 065 273 086/273 426 Fax: 065 273 3730g
7. Ohangwena: Eenhana Community Centre, Eenhana
Tel: 065 263 165/263 062 Fax: 065 263 178
8. Kavango: Government Building, Rundu
Tel: 066 256 771/255 939 Fax: 066 256 776
9. Omaheke: Old Bears Building, Gobabis
Tel: 062 564 687/564 676 Fax: 062 564 650

10. Omusati: Governor's Office Block, Ombalantu
Tel: 065 251 141/251 189 Fax: 065 221 495
11. Oshana: Oshana Regional Council Office, Oshakati
Tel: 065 222 447 fax: 065 221 495
12. Oshikoto: Nampost Building, Tsumeb
Tel: 067 220 344/222 678 Fax: 067 220 924
13. Otjozondjupa: Van Riebeeck Street, Otjiwarongo
Tel: 067 301 269 Fax: 067 304 037

Other Government Ministries/Unit
(s) that may be of assistance:

1. Ministry of Education
Tel: 061 270 6304/Fax:
061 253 671
2. Ministry of Health and
Social Services
Tel: 061 203 2000/Fax: 061
23 1784
3. Women and Child
Protection Unit
Tel: 061 209 4395/Fax: 061
21 8874

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A CRIMINAL ACT"
STOP IT!**