



ACCESS TO VITAL RECORDS

*Birth, Marriage, Divorce, and Death Certificates
& Police Records*

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

About this document

Introduction

Established in 2018, the Vance Center's Keep Families Together (KFT) initiative connects pro bono lawyers abroad with legal service providers and immigration attorneys in the U.S. representing migrant individuals and families. Through this program, volunteer counsel assists in obtaining vital records, police and medical records, and other official documentation from migrants' countries of origin or transit to support the legal and administrative processes that lead to family reunification and long-term immigration relief.

Today, the KFT initiative collaborates with more than 150 law firms, pro bono clearinghouses, non-profit organizations, bar associations, and university legal clinics across five continents. Together, we have supported the legal representation of more than 500 individuals and families, contributing to numerous reunifications and durable forms of immigration relief.

As the immigration policy landscape in the U.S. continues to shift, legal service providers must adapt to address their clients' needs, and tools that can support overburdened and under-resourced service providers are more important than ever.

In 2025 alone, KFT received more than 186 requests for assistance. Looking ahead, we anticipate sustained demand for these services. As cases have increased, our team has noted that immigration attorneys frequently encounter some of the same questions and procedural barriers, many of them related to the essential vital records their clients need for their cases. These questions include: **how to obtain birth, marriage, and divorce certificates; how to secure death certificates; and how to access police records.**

The relevant information about how to access these documents is often fragmented, difficult to navigate, or not immediately accessible to practitioners, who have limited time to devote to these proceedings. This information gap has critical consequences – we know that delays or uncertainty in obtaining such documentation can materially affect the pace and outcome of immigration proceedings.

In response to this gap, the Vance Center has developed this practical reference tool covering an initial group of 31 jurisdictions for which we frequently receive requests. The guide includes countries in Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America, and the Caribbean. The chapters for three countries (Brazil, India, and Mexico) include sub-sections with state-level information for a selection of states. This guide complements the Vance Center's previously published resource, [*Accessing Vital and Official Records in Latin America: A Guide for Immigration Practitioners*](#), published in March 2026. While that guide focused on 14 jurisdictions in Latin America and covered a broader range of procedures related to obtaining and correcting official records, this new version expands the geographic scope significantly and narrows the focus to the official documents most frequently requested in immigration matters.



The Guide covers:

- **Procedures to request and obtain birth, marriage, divorce, and death certificates**
- **Locating and obtaining criminal, police, or arrest records**

Each country chapter includes information about the appropriate authorities or agencies responsible for these records, the processes to request them, timing and associated costs, and other relevant information. When applicable, it also includes information about available digital or remote procedures that can enable practitioners to more efficiently assist migrant clients.

Access to these documents is often essential to ensure immigration processes can move forward. By providing more clarity around cross-border procedures, services, associated costs, and digital options, we hope this Guide will support immigration service providers to offer more timely, informed, and effective legal representation to their clients.

Note

This Guide is based on information compiled in early 2026. This information is for general reference only and is not legal advice. Requirements, fees, and procedures may change over time and may vary within regions of each country. Whenever available, we have included references to official sources so that attorneys may verify and obtain the most up-to-date information directly. Accordingly, this Guide should be used as a general reference tool, with the understanding that local regulations and administrative practices may evolve at any time.

This chapter covers Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The full Guide with information on all 31 countries is available [here](#).

Acknowledgments

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DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

Birth certificate

What is the government authority or agency responsible for issuing this document?	Civil Status Officer (Officier de l'État Civil). <i>Source:</i> https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/Visa-Reciprocity-and-Civil-Documents-by-Country/CongotheDemocraticRepublicofthe.html
Can the document be obtained online?	No
Please provide the link.	Unclear from available sources.
Please provide a brief description of the process.	Unclear from available sources.
Must the application be done in person?	Yes
Can a third party apply on behalf of the person?	No
Must the third party be a lawyer or have a notarized power of attorney (POA)?	Unclear from available sources.
What are the typical documents or information required to request this certificate?	- Evidence of birth, typically a hospital's birth certificate, is required. - If parents failed to file for a birth certificate within 90 days of birth as required by Article 116 of Family Code, parents or the applicant can apply at the nearest Children's Court/Peace Court in their birth city, and be issued a Supplemental Court Order for Birth Certificate (Jugement Supplétif à l'Acte de Naissance) which can be used to get a birth certificate from the nearest Commune's Civil Status Office. <i>Source:</i> https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/Visa-Reciprocity-and-Civil-Documents-by-Country/CongotheDemocraticRepublicofthe.html
Is there a fee to obtain the certificate?	No
How much is the fee?	Unclear from available sources.
What is the average time it takes to receive the document?	Approximately two weeks.

	Source: https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/Visa-Reciprocity-and-Civil-Documents-by-Country/CongotheDemocraticRepublicofthe.html
Is the certificate provided digitally, by mail or must it be picked up in person?	In person
Is the issuance centralized at the national level or is it handled locally (e.g., by municipality or state)?	National
Please describe how to identify the appropriate local office.	Unclear from available sources.
Are there any known challenges to accessing this document (e.g., bureaucratic delays, corruption, limited online access)?	• There are typically no fees for birth certificates that are filed within 90 days of birth as per Article 116 of the Family Code. However, there are financial penalties, delays, complexity and additional legal costs for late registration as per Article 114 of the Family Code. Also, hospital birth certificates are issued for a fee that varies by health facility. ◦ Source: https://data.unicef.org/crvs/democratic-republic-congo/ • Loss of original documents: because of the decades-long conflict, birth registration is difficult to obtain, for various reasons among which: people have to flee, papers get lost or the hospital lacks the supplies or personnel needed for registration. ◦ Source: https://www.helpachild.org/actueel/a-good-start-in-life-birth-registration-in-drc/ • Bribes and corruption: Only 25 percent of children in the Democratic Republic of the Congo have a birth certificate, and this is mainly due to lack of manpower in some remote areas, corruption and bribes. • Source: https://fundhumanrights.org/stories/only-25-of-kids-in-the-drc-have-birth-certificates-mothers-are-changing-that/ • Stigma: Children born from rape face additional challenges, as Article 118 of the Family Code requires

	both parents' names on the certificate and societal stigma can be a major barrier.
Please list any methods for contacting the relevant agencies and organizations (e.g., WhatsApp, email, online contact form, telephone numbers, postal address, etc.).	• For applicants residing in the US utilizing the Civil Affairs services offered by the Embassy in Washington, DC, the birth certificate application should be delivered in person. • Address: Embassy of the Democratic Republic of the Congo 1100 Connecticut Ave., NW, #725, Washington, DC 20009 • Email: info@ambadrcusa.org • Phone number: +1 202 234-7690 • Hours of operation: ○ Monday through Thursday: 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. ○ Friday: 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. • The processing time for all consular service requests takes between five and seven business days and there are no expedited services. • Procedure for obtaining the birth certificate from Civil Status Officer: ○ Within 90 days of birth, at least one of the parents should take the child's identity to the nearest Commune's Civil Status Office with evidence of birth, such as the hospital's birth certificate. ○ After approximately two weeks, the birth certificate is picked up by the parent in person.
Please share any additional information that may be helpful.	The Embassy of the Democratic Republic of the Congo does not issue birth certificates according to their official website. However, they help facilitate the process by delivering these certificates to their citizens residing in the US. Source: https://www.ambacongo-us.org/en/embassy-services/consular/legal-documents

Marriage certificate

What is the government authority or agency responsible for issuing this document?	Civil Status Officer (Officier de l'État Civil) Source: https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/Visa-Reciprocity-and-Civil-Documents-by-Country/CongotheDemocraticRepublicofthe.html
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Can the document be obtained online?	No
Please provide the link.	Unclear from available sources.
Please provide a brief description of the process.	Unclear from available sources.
Must the application be done in person?	Yes
Can a third party apply on behalf of the person?	Yes
Must the third party be a lawyer or have a notarized power of attorney (POA)?	Yes
What are the typical documents or information required to request this certificate?	• To obtain a marriage certificate from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, at least one spouse should book seats at the nearest Commune's Civil Status Office at least two weeks before the planned wedding date. • After the civil ceremony, the couple is typically issued the marriage certificate immediately upon the official register's signature. • The couple must be at least 18 years of age as per Article 352 of the Family Code. To obtain a copy of the marriage certificate, contact the office of the mayor in the town where the marriage was registered and provide necessary documents. • Contacting the office in person is preferable, as officials may not respond to mail-in requests. • Required documents usually include copies of birth certificates and proof of identification. • For marriage certificates, the Embassy requires: ○ Copy of the husband's and wife's passports. ○ Marriage certificate established in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. • The Embassy of the Democratic Republic of the Congo located in Washington, DC offers Civil Affairs services (consular services) to its US-residing citizens. Embassy of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Washington, DC), Civil Affairs (Consular Services). • <i>Sources:</i>

	○ https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/Visa-Reciprocity-and-Civil-Documents-by-Country/CongotheDemocraticRepublicofthe.html ○ https://secure.ssa.gov/poms.nsf/lnx/0200312098 ○ https://www.ambarD.C.usa.org/consular-affairs/consular-services/civil-affairs
Is there a fee to obtain the certificate?	Yes
How much is the fee?	• Fees vary widely and depend on the field office processing the wedding, and information on fees is unclear from official websites. • The Embassy of the Democratic Republic of the Congo charges US\$100 for marriage certificates. • It is better to contact the local civil registration office for precise domestic fees. Sources: • https://www.ambarD.C.usa.org/consular-affairs/consular-services/civil-affairs • https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/Visa-Reciprocity-and-Civil-Documents-by-Country/CongotheDemocraticRepublicofthe.html
What is the average time it takes to receive the document?	Unclear from available sources.
Is the certificate provided digitally, by mail or must it be picked up in person?	In person.
Is the issuance centralized at the national level or is it handled locally (e.g., by municipality or state)?	Local
Please describe how to identify the appropriate local office.	The local office where the marriage was legally performed usually occurs at the usual residence of the bride or the place of occurrence of the marriage as per Article 97 of the Family Code.
Are there any known challenges to accessing this document (e.g.,	Late registration of customary marriages:

bureaucratic delays, corruption, limited online access)?

- There is a legal obligation to register marriages under Article 82 of the Family Code.
- The Customary Marriage Certificate (Attestation de Mariage Coutumier Monogamique) is valid for immigration purpose when the customary wedding is filed within 30 days of the event.
- Beyond this timeframe, a request can be filed by the couple at the nearest Peace Court in the city where the wedding occurred, and a Supplemental Court Order can be issued for the Marriage Certificate (Jugement Supplétif à l'Acte de Mariage) so a marriage certificate can be obtained from the nearest Commune's Civil Status Office.

Persistent political instability and natural disasters:

- Difficult to access administrative offices disrupting governmental services.

Lack of civil presence in rural areas:

- Many rural areas lack a Civil Status Office, making marriage registration difficult for some couples.

Documentation requirements difficult to obtain:

- As discussed before, a marriage certificate requires birth certificate and identification documents for both spouses, which can be difficult to obtain.

Expenses:

- The process can be expensive for some couples due to the inconsistency in the fees required for marriage certificates.

Sources:

- <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/Visa-Reciprocity-and-Civil-Documents-by-Country/CongotheDemocraticRepublicofthe.html>
- <https://www.iom.int/crisis-democratic-republic-congo>

Please list any methods for contacting the relevant agencies and organizations (e.g., WhatsApp, email, online contact form, telephone numbers, postal address, etc.).

- Typically, the process to acquire a marriage certificate requires in- person presence at the Civil Status Office, and mail-in requests are unreliable.
- As per their official website, the consular services provided by the Embassy of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in Washington, DC requires delivering copies of passports for both spouses, as well as a marriage

	certificate established in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. • A fee of US\$100, which can only be made via a money order, certified check or company-issued checks made payable to the Embassy of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. • Address: 1100 Connecticut Avenue NW, Suite 725 Washington, DC 2003 • Source: https://www.ambadrcusa.org/consular-affairs/legalization-of-documents/
Please share any additional information that may be helpful.	

Divorce certificate

What is the government authority or agency responsible for issuing this document?	Civil Status Officer (Officier de l'État Civil). Source: https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/Visa-Reciprocity-and-Civil-Documents-by-Country/CongotheDemocraticRepublicofthe.html
Can the document be obtained online?	No
Please provide the link.	Unclear from available sources.
Please provide a brief description of the process.	Unclear from available sources.
Must the application be done in person?	Yes
Can a third party apply on behalf of the person?	Yes
Must the third party be a lawyer or have a notarized power of attorney (POA)?	Yes
What are the typical documents or information required to request this certificate?	• At least one spouse should file a complaint at the nearest Peace Court in order to obtain the divorce. • After the court is convinced that all means to save the marriage failed, which may take several years, the couple is issued a Divorce Court Order (Jugement de Divorce).

	- Any of the spouses may take that court order to the nearest Commune's Civil Status Office, so they can be issued the divorce certificate. - Required documents: - The divorce court order. - Certificate of no appeal (confirming that the judgment is final). - Official copy of civil status record (from the Civil Status Office based on the divorce court order and the certificate of no appeal). - Sometimes birth certificate, and some identification documents are also required. - Source: https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/Visa-Reciprocity-and-Civil-Documents-by-Country/CongotheDemocraticRepublicofthe.html
Is there a fee to obtain the certificate?	Yes
How much is the fee?	- Fees vary widely because it is mainly a judicial rather than an administrative process. - Aside from the judicial process to obtain the divorce court order, the administrative fees depend on the field office processing the wedding. - The best way to determine the current cost is to consult directly with a local attorney specializing in family law in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.
What is the average time it takes to receive the document?	- There is no official source guaranteeing an average time to obtain the certificate. - However, some sources mention that it depends on whether the divorce is contested v. uncontested, meaning whether both parties consent to all the terms of the divorce over custody, assets and other issues. - Uncontested divorces generally are much quicker. - Once the court order is finalized and ready for collection, it could take a few days to a week to get the certificate issued. - Source: https://www.facebook.com/groups/672155363342806/posts/1347403772484625/

Is the certificate provided digitally, by mail or must it be picked up in person?	In person
Is the issuance centralized at the national level or is it handled locally (e.g., by municipality or state)?	Local
Please describe how to identify the appropriate local office.	- After a divorce court order is obtained, one of the spouses must take this court order along with other documents mentioned above to the nearest communal civil status office to be issued the divorce certificate. - Source: https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/Visa-Reciprocity-and-Civil-Documents-by-Country/CongotheDemocraticRepublicofthe.html
Are there any known challenges to accessing this document (e.g., bureaucratic delays, corruption, limited online access)?	Physical presence requirement: - Civil registration offices that keep civil status records are often manually operated and lack a centralized, digital system. - An individual must retrieve the record from the specific local office where the divorce was processed, which is often difficult if the person is living abroad. Missing documents: - The registration of marriages and divorces is not given the same priority as births and deaths, which can result in poor record-keeping. - If a civil status certificate is unavailable, a court order known as a "substitute certificate of notoriety," is required, which attests to the existence of a vital event like a divorce in the absence of a registered record. - The process can be cumbersome, requiring the applicant to provide evidence and pay court fees to the Peace Court or Children's Court. Verification of foreign divorce: - If a divorce is sought in another country, foreign divorce judgments may not be recognized without proper verification, especially if the foreign country does not have a treaty with the DRC regarding divorce. Societal norms:

	While the Family Code allows either spouse to initiate a divorce, customs may influence the process. For instance, a divorced woman may be required to repay the dowry.
Please list any methods for contacting the relevant agencies and organizations (e.g., WhatsApp, email, online contact form, telephone numbers, postal address, etc.).	- Generally, the process requires physical presence at the Civil Status office to get the required documents. - The Embassy of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in DC can help facilitate the process but not issue the actual certificate for US\$50 in fees, as mentioned on their official website. - Address: 1100 Connecticut Ave NW #725, Washington, DC. 20036 - Monday to Thursday: 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. - Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. - Source: https://www.ambadrcusa.org/consular-affairs/legalization-of-documents/
Please share any additional information that may be helpful.	Unclear from available sources.

Death certificate

What is the government authority or agency responsible for issuing this document?	Civil Status Officer (Officier de l'État Civil). Source: https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/Visa-Reciprocity-and-Civil-Documents-by-Country/CongotheDemocraticRepublicofthe.html
Can the document be obtained online?	No
Please provide the link.	Unclear from available sources.
Please provide a brief description of the process.	Unclear from available sources.
Must the application be done in person?	Yes
Can a third party apply on behalf of the person?	Yes
Must the third party be a lawyer or have a notarized power of attorney (POA)?	No

What are the typical documents or information required to request this certificate?	- Evidence of death is required. - Within 30 days of death, family members or friends take the identity of the deceased to the nearest Commune's Civil Status Office with evidence of death, such as the hospital's death certificate or witnesses. - Source: https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/Visa-Reciprocity-and-Civil-Documents-by-Country/CongotheDemocraticRepublicofthe.html
Is there a fee to obtain the certificate?	No
How much is the fee?	Unclear from available sources.
What is the average time it takes to receive the document?	- Approximately two weeks. - Source: https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/Visa-Reciprocity-and-Civil-Documents-by-Country/CongotheDemocraticRepublicofthe.html
Is the certificate provided digitally, by mail or must it be picked up in person?	In person
Is the issuance centralized at the national level or is it handled locally (e.g., by municipality or state)?	Local
Please describe how to identify the appropriate local office.	- There is no particular office, just the nearest Commune's Civil Status Office. - Source: https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/Visa-Reciprocity-and-Civil-Documents-by-Country/CongotheDemocraticRepublicofthe.html

Are there any known challenges to accessing this document (e.g., bureaucratic delays, corruption, limited online access)?	• Lack of central registry for vital statistics. • Corruption and fraud: High prevalence of fraudulent certificates. • Longer process if family is unable to obtain all necessary documents. • Location of death can complicate the issuance of the certificate. Death certificates are less likely to be issued if the death occurs at home or in rural areas rather than a hospital. • Lack of offices in rural areas: There can be large distances to cover to reach a civil registration office, and transport can be difficult, especially in rural areas. • Ongoing conflict has undermined the administrative system in some parts of the country, leading to loss or destruction of records. • Hospital loss of records: If a person dies in a hospital, the coroner has a legal obligation to complete a certificate, but if no family member is present, it may be filed in the hospital archives and difficult to retrieve later. • Sources: ◦ https://www.irb-cisr.gc.ca/en/country-information/rir/Pages/index.aspx?doc=458568 ◦ https://www.justice.gov/sites/default/files/eoir/legacy/2014/08/04/COD103932.FE.pdf
Please list any methods for contacting the relevant agencies and organizations (e.g., WhatsApp, email, online contact form, telephone numbers, postal address, etc.).	• Generally, the process requires physical presence at the Civil Status Office to obtain the required documents. • The Embassy of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in DC can help facilitate the process, but cannot issue the actual certificate for US\$50 in fees, as mentioned on their official website. • Source: https://www.ambadrcusa.org/consular-affairs/legalization-of-documents/
Please share any additional information that may be helpful.	Unclear from available sources.

Police record

What is the government authority or agency responsible for issuing this document?	Ministry of Justice. <i>Source:</i> https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/Visa-Reciprocity-and-Civil-Documents-by-Country/CongotheDemocraticRepublicofthe.html
Can the document be obtained online?	No
Please provide the link.	Unclear from available sources.
Please provide a brief description of the process.	Unclear from available sources.
Must the application be done in person?	Yes
Can a third party apply on behalf of the person?	No
Must the third party be a lawyer or have a notarized power of attorney (POA)?	Unclear from available sources.
What are the typical documents or information required to request this certificate?	• Fingerprint form. • Filled and complete application for Police Clearance Certificate Old passport copy with stamp and visa pages. • New passport copy (front and back). • Passport-size photograph with white background. • PCC / Police Clearance Certificate processing fee. • <i>Source:</i> https://www.policeclearancecertificates.com/democratic-republic-of-the-congo-pcc/#:~:text=Get%20you%20fingerprint%20done%20from,Police%20Clearance%20Certificate%20processing%20fee
Is there a fee to obtain the certificate?	Yes
How much is the fee?	US\$50 to US\$100, depending on whether or not an expedited case. <i>Source:</i> https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/Visa-Reciprocity-and-Civil-Documents-by-Country/CongotheDemocraticRepublicofthe.html

What is the average time it takes to receive the document?	Three days to two weeks. <i>Source:</i> https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/Visa-Reciprocity-and-Civil-Documents-by-Country/CongotheDemocraticRepublicofthe.html
Is the certificate provided digitally, by mail or must it be picked up in person?	In person
Is the issuance centralized at the national level or is it handled locally (e.g., by municipality or state)?	National
Please describe how to identify the appropriate local office.	Unclear from available sources.
Are there any known challenges to accessing this document (e.g., bureaucratic delays, corruption, limited online access)?	Corruption and fraud: • Officers often demand bribes for services that include processing official documents. • Forging documents is also a major problem managed by organized criminal networks. Lack of organization: • The overall administrative system is disorganized and lacks efficiency. • Police operations are often uncoordinated, and the bureaucracy needed to process records is plagued by administrative failure. Compromised judicial system: • The national justice system is deeply compromised, with reports indicating it is corrupt, subject to influence and lacking independence. • This significantly undermines the reliability of judicial and police records. Limited capacity: • The judicial system has limited capacity, resulting in issues including lengthy pretrial detentions and slow case processing. • This lack of institutional strength can directly impact the ability to retrieve accurate and timely police records. Long processing times:

	Delays are common, and in some cases, the consular service can take a significant amount of time to process a request. Source: https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/drc0104.pdf
Please list any methods for contacting the relevant agencies and organizations (e.g., WhatsApp, email, online contact form, telephone numbers, postal address, etc.).	This website provides five steps to help obtain the police record from the Democratic Republic of the Congo with a processing time of 30 to 35 working days: https://www.policeclearancecertificates.com/democratic-republic-of-the-congo-pcc/#:~:text=Get%20you%20fingerprint%20done%20from,Police%20Clearance%20Certificate%20processing%20fee
Please share any additional information that may be helpful.	Unclear from available sources.