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PRESS RELEASE

REGISTRATION OF MARRIAGES IN UGANDA

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Uganda Registration Services Bureau (URSB) is the Government Agency mandated to register all marriages that take place in Uganda. Uganda Registration Services Bureau has noted with concern, the recent media /public debate with respect to the validity of Customary Marriages, and now issues clarification as follows;

A marriage is defined as a formal union between a man and woman recognized by law by which they become husband and wife and creates legal rights and obligations to the spouses. No matter the form of marriage, it is mandatory for all marriage celebrants to register the marriages that they officiate over with URSB.

Marriage registration has various purposes:

- Every certificate of marriage that has been filed with URSB is admissible as evidence of the marriage to which it relates; in any court of law or before any person having by law or consent of the parties, authority to receive evidence on it.
- A registered marriage is a safeguard for spousal benefits like insurance, pension, citizenship, immigration, emigration, family resettlements as well as inheritance of estates upon the demise of a spouse.
- Marriage records provided to URSB by marriage celebrants are used to compile a marriage data bank. A credible marriage data base is a safe guard against bigamy, polygamy and polyandry in the case of Church and Civil marriages. Many people spend huge sums of money contracting marriages to parties that have subsisting marriages and have no legal capacity to remarry. For these reasons above, marriage registration is continuous, permanent, compulsory and universal.

Uganda has got several forms of recognized marriages. These are customary, Muslim, Church, Civil and Hindu marriages.

Customary marriages are celebrated according to the rites of an African Community and one of the parties to the marriage must be a member of that community. **Muslim marriages** are celebrated in accordance with the rites and observances of the Moslem faith, between persons professing the Moslem religion. **Church marriages** are celebrated in any licensed place of worship according to the rites or usages of marriages observed by a particular religious denomination. **Hindu marriages** are celebrated between Hindus whereas **Civil marriages** are celebrated in the offices of the Registrars of Marriages. The Registrar General is the Registrar of Marriages for the Kampala Capital City, whereas the Chief Administrative Officer of a District is the Registrar of Marriages in the District.

Registration of customary marriages is effected by the Sub County chief or Town Clerk of the area where it took place, and a Customary Marriage Certificate duly signed and issued by the Sub County chief or Town Clerk. *This certificate, however, must then be registered with URSB.*

Unlike Church and Civil marriages that are monogamous in nature, customary and Muslim marriages are potentially polygamous. A customary marriage can however, be converted into a Church marriage if still monogamous in nature.

Upon completion of a marriage in the CAO's office, duly licensed Church, Mosque, Temple or other authorized establishment, the couples are issued with a marriage certificate by the person who officiated over their ceremony.

The marriage celebrant should file marriage returns with the Registrar of Marriages within one month of conducting the marriage ceremony. This is done by the marriage celebrant transmitting an official letterhead from the CAO's office, duly licensed Church, Mosque, Temple or other authorized establishment; and a certified copy of the marriage extract to URSB.

Marriage registration is aimed at ensuring that the end users of these marriage records are equipped with evidential value for the protection of related rights as well as to assist the Government of Uganda to build a credible marriage data base.

URSB remains committed to supporting the implementation of Government of Uganda's strategic aspirations and efforts with respect to decentralized public service delivery.

BEMANYA TWEBAZE

REGISTRAR GENERAL

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