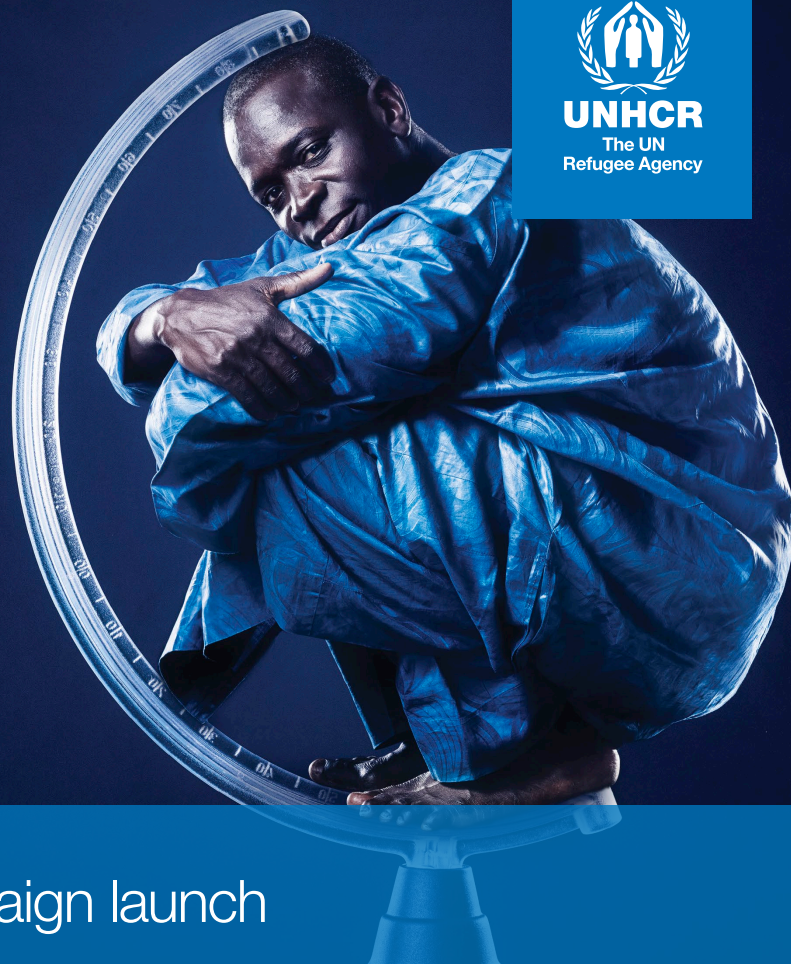


The Campaign to End Statelessness

January 2015 Update



#IBELONG

Join us in our campaign to end statelessness

Media impact of the Campaign launch

Over 1,500 articles were written about the Campaign and our materials reached up to 200 million people during the three weeks following the launch on 4 November 2014. Much of the focus was on the high profile supporters who signed the High Commissioner's [Open Letter](#), including Angelina Jolie, Desmond Tutu, Louise Arbour, Madeleine Albright and Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka. The ripple-effect of the Campaign has been far-reaching. The [BBC](#) and [Al Jazeera](#) created their own videos and infographics to explain statelessness, responding to public interest in the issue. Al Jazeera dedicated an episode of the programme "[The Stream](#)" to the Campaign.

Mobilizing governments and civil society

The Campaign is already demonstrating real potential to mobilize Governments and civil society. At the international level, on 18 December 2014, the UN General Assembly adopted by consensus a resolution in which it "*welcomes the call by the High Commissioner for action to end statelessness within a decade*". In addition, the UN Secretary-General used his annual opening address to the General Assembly on 8 January 2015 to "*urge Member States to support the campaign to end statelessness and ensure that everyone enjoys the right to a nationality*." At the 14th World Summit of Nobel Peace Laureates held in Rome from 12 – 14 December 2014, Nobel Peace Laureates and Peace Laureate Organisations demonstrated their support for

the Campaign by issuing a [declaration](#) which stated: "*We support the campaign of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to end statelessness within ten years.*"

Regionally, at a ministerial meeting in Brazil on 3 December 2014, 28 Latin American and Caribbean States adopted the [Brazil Declaration and Plan of Action](#) in which they committed to eradicating statelessness by 2024, becoming the first region to respond to UNHCR's Campaign. At a ministerial conference on [Civil Registration and Vital Statistics \(CRVS\) in the Asia Pacific](#), co-hosted by UNHCR in Bangkok, 44 States adopted a Ministerial Declaration on 24 November 2014 endorsing the goal of universal civil registration. The Declaration and accompanying Regional Action Framework emphasize the importance of including stateless persons within national baseline studies and recognize the role of birth registration to prevent statelessness.



Group photo of the closing ceremony of the Ministerial Meeting in Brasilia, which saw the adoption of the Declaration and Plan of Action of Brazil.
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The Campaign was also front and centre during a hearing on statelessness of the European Parliament's Subcommittee on Human Rights on 21 January 2015. Specific actions discussed during the hearing included adoption of a resolution by the European Parliament and development of a Framework on Statelessness by the EU to guide its foreign policy on the issue and to complement UNHCR's Campaign. UNHCR also called on EU Member States to address gaps in their respective nationality laws, introduce determination procedures to protect stateless persons and accede to the two UN statelessness conventions.

From the 8-12th December 2014, 32 participants from 14 countries came together in Istanbul to attend a regional statelessness workshop focussing on the MENA region, organised by UNHCR, Tilburg University,

Boğaziçi University and the Open Society Justice Initiative. The workshop included representatives from the governments of Jordan, Iraq and Saudi Arabia as well as from the Arab League. Government participants expressed particular interest in Actions 3 and 7 of the Global Action Plan, which relate to removing gender discrimination from nationality laws and ensuring birth registration to prevent statelessness.

Nationally, local launches of the Campaign have been held in a wide range of countries including Bangladesh, Belarus, [Benin](#), Croatia, [Finland](#), The Gambia, India, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Mali, [Montenegro](#), Senegal, Slovenia, [Tajikistan](#), the [United States](#), Viet Nam and Zimbabwe.

Implementation of the Global Action Plan

UNHCR recommends the development of National Action Plans as one of the key ways that States can implement the [Global Action Plan](#), which sets out the 10 Action strategy through which the goals of the Campaign can be achieved. Since the Campaign Launch, [Kyrgyzstan](#) has already adopted a National Action Plan, and such plans are also in the process of being developed in a number of other countries including Benin, Kenya and Senegal.

In the context of Action 3 of the Global Action Plan, which aims at the removal of gender discrimination from nationality laws, UNHCR in partnership with UN Women and OHCHR is organising a high-level side event at this year's Commission on the Status of Women (for more

details please see the Upcoming Events below). Although prior to the Campaign launch, on 16 September 2014, the [Benin Constitutional Court](#) struck down elements of the country's national code which discriminated against women in their ability to confer their nationality to their children and spouses on an equal basis as men, paving the way for adoption of a gender equal law.

Stepping up progress with respect to Action 9 of the Global Action Plan which calls on States to accede to the statelessness conventions, Niger acceded to the 1954 Convention on 7 December and both Argentina and Peru acceded to the 1961 Convention on 13 November and 18 December 2014 respectively.

[Amendments to the Citizenship Act adopted by the Estonian parliament in January 2015](#), demonstrate implementation of Actions 1 and 2 of the Global Action Plan. These reforms now enable children born to stateless parents to acquire citizenship automatically at birth, and also ease the requirements for naturalization for those who are over 65 years of age – a change that will benefit the 88,000 stateless population in the country, many of whom are elderly.

And finally, towards achievement of the goals of Action 10 of the Global Action Plan which seeks the improvement in quantitative and qualitative data on stateless populations, in November 2014, UNHCR launched its report on [Mapping Statelessness in Finland](#), which recommends improvements to procedures used to determine statelessness status and specialized training to officials responsible for making such determinations.

A study on [Mapping Statelessness in Iceland](#) was published on 15 December 2014 and is being used to discuss the possibility of Iceland adopting a statelessness determination procedure and acceding to both statelessness conventions. On 4 November 2014, UNHCR digitally launched its report on [Mapping Statelessness in Malta](#), which will be presented to the Parliament's Social Affairs Committee on 9 February 2015. The study recommends accession to the two statelessness conventions and the adoption of a statelessness determination procedure.

Moving the Campaign forward

As this is a ten-year global campaign, we must do everything we can to continue increasing visibility of campaign and promoting the necessary advocacy and action to end statelessness. Partners are encouraged to disseminate the [Special Report](#) and the [Global Action Plan](#), and to advocate for domestic action plans relevant to their own countries. If you have not done so, we strongly encourage you to sign the [Open Letter to End Statelessness](#). While we have already garnered considerable public support for the Campaign, we hope that more organisations concerned by statelessness will sign and disseminate the Open Letter.

It is unclear how many of the humanitarian emergencies we are working in today can be resolved in the near future. We believe, however, that we can resolve the statelessness for at least 10 million people who are without nationality and help put in place the necessary safeguards and procedures to prevent future statelessness. Achieving this will require sustained commitment from a broad coalition of States, civil society, UN Agencies and other international organizations. Please join us in supporting the Campaign and helping to end statelessness.



Human rights lawyer Barrister Sara Hossain shares a thought with prominent Bangladeshi photographer and human rights activist Shahidul Alam at the Bangladesh launch of the “iBelong” global campaign.

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Upcoming Events

[Economic Community Of West African States \(ECOWAS\)](#)

A Regional Ministerial-level Conference on Statelessness of ECOWAS Member States will be held from 23-25 February 2015 in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire. The conference will bring together governments, civil society and UN agencies to analyse the root causes of statelessness in West Africa, explore measures to improve the protection of stateless persons and identify ways to prevent and reduce statelessness in the region. It is hoped that ECOWAS Member States will adopt a declaration that sets out a common vision for ending statelessness in West Africa.

[UN Commission on the Status of Women \(CSW\)](#)

This year's CSW commemorates 20 years since the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (Beijing + 20) at which States committed to review their national laws to ensure compliance with the provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). On 10 March 2015, UNHCR, in partnership with UN Women, OHCHR and a number of champion States, will hold a high-level side event to encourage action by States to end gender discrimination in nationality laws, one of the major causes of statelessness worldwide.

[Organisation of American States \(OAS\)](#)

On 12 February 2015, UNHCR and the Department of International Law of the OAS will organize a workshop on statelessness for officials of Permanent Missions, academia, and civil society organizations in Washington DC. The Inter-American Court on Human Rights, the MERCOSUR Institute of Public Policies on Human Rights and the campaign manager of the Global Campaign for Equal Nationality Rights will also present at the event.

Campaign Resources

Want to support the Campaign? Take a look at our [Digital Toolkit](#) and post a digital banner on your website, mobilize your social media contacts by sharing one of our posts, download and post our Twitter cards or embed a short video that explains statelessness. Videos, photo essays and web stories can be found on our [ibelong stories page](#). Legal resources are available on [Refworld](#).

Learn More About Statelessness

Learning about statelessness is fun and easy. Take advantage of our [statelessness e-learning course](#) and [self-study module](#) from the comfort of your armchair!