

The Campaign to End Statelessness

December 2016 Update



#IBelong

Join us in our Campaign to End Statelessness



In cooperation with
UNITED COLORS
OF BENETTON.

Mobilizing governments and civil society

On the occasion of the **UN High Commissioner for Refugees' Dialogue on Children on the Move**, on 8–9 December, UNHCR and UNICEF launched the [Coalition on Every Child's Right to a Nationality](#). The Coalition, composed of UN Agencies and civil society groups, aims to develop, expand and strengthen international co-operation to raise awareness about and combat the hidden problem of childhood statelessness.

In Africa, during 24–28 October, the **International Association of Refugee Law Judges Africa Chapter Regional Conference** was organized in Pretoria in collaboration with the Centre for Human Rights of the University of Pretoria and UNHCR. Comprehensive training on statelessness was provided and access to justice in matters of nationality and statelessness was discussed. Best practice examples of domestic provisions on nationality were also promoted.

On 29 November, in Uganda, the annual [Zinduka Festival](#) included a **convening on Statelessness and Citizenship in the East African Community (EAC)**, organized by the Kenya Human Rights Commission and the Centre for Citizens' Participation in the African Union (AU). Civil society organisations from nearly all EAC countries

agreed to form a Coalition on Statelessness and to urge the EAC to pass legislation on nationality and support the draft AU Protocol on the Right to Nationality.

In Southern Africa, on 13 November, the **40th Plenary Assembly of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Parliamentary Forum** adopted a resolution "**On the Prevention of Statelessness and the Protection of Stateless Persons in the SADC Region**". The resolution envisages the legal review and, where necessary, reform of domestic provisions on nationality throughout the SADC region. It calls upon National Parliaments and Governments to accede to the 1954 and 1961 Statelessness Conventions.

On 9 November, 43 parliamentarians and high level officers from 17 countries came together at [the Ecuadorian National Assembly](#) in Quito, Ecuador for the [Regional Meeting of Parliamentarians: Ending Statelessness in the Americas through Legislative Actions](#). Participants discussed the protection of stateless persons and the importance of legislative action to prevent and resolve cases of statelessness in the Americas.



Members of the Stateless Network Asia Pacific (SNAP).

Also in Quito, on 10 November, UNHCR organized the second **Regional Meeting on Statelessness Determination Procedures and Protection of Stateless Persons**. Participants from 11 countries discussed a new draft Model Law for the region for the establishment of statelessness determination procedures, the protection of stateless persons and mechanisms to facilitate naturalization.

In Asia, on 3–5 October in Singapore, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children (ACWC) adopted a **project on the right to a nationality for women and children**. The project will include a study on the right to a nationality for women and children in ASEAN, capacity building, and facilitating practical cooperation between States.

On 26 November, in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysian civil society actors representing over 40 organisations from across the Asia Pacific region launched the **Statelessness Network Asia Pacific (SNAP)** following a 3 day conference. The conference provided an opportunity for participants to build and strengthen cooperation and capacity among civil society actors in the region to address statelessness.

On 9 December, in Viet Nam, the Ministry of Justice of Viet Nam and UNHCR co-hosted a workshop to review the implementation of Viet Nam's 2008 Nationality Law and related guidelines. The event gave central government ministries and officials from Viet Nam's provinces the opportunity to consider how Viet Nam's nationality law could be further improved to prevent and reduce statelessness.

On 15 November, in Kazakhstan, 20 government officials, NGOs and UNHCR met to discuss the results and recommendations of their joint analysis of the national legal framework. The participants committed to promoting the improvement of legislation and practice related to nationality in Kazakhstan, and to work together towards the global goal to eliminate statelessness.

On 25 October, a [European Parliament resolution on human rights and migration in third countries](#) was adopted. It refers to the importance of identifying stateless persons in order to afford them the protections available under international law, and urges states to introduce statelessness determination procedures and share good practices. It also draws attention to the ongoing need for the EU to address statelessness as part of its external relations policy, particularly given that statelessness is a cause of forced displacement.

On 22 November, in Strasbourg, France, over 40 participants from the Council of Europe, European Parliament, civil society and UNHCR gathered together to discuss how to find new ways of working together. At the event, the [European Network on Statelessness \(ENS\)](#) handed over a petition on behalf of more than 22,000 signatories to the Council of Europe and the EU Parliament. The petition calls on European States to take action to ensure that no child is left stateless.

On 29 November, in Romania, UNHCR organized a conference to share good practices on statelessness determination procedures in Europe and explore better ways to identify and protect stateless persons. The panellists included representatives from the National Authority for Citizenship and the Ministry of Justice in Romania, as well as international experts from France and Moldova.



© League of Arab States

Participants at the League of Arab States’ regional meeting on Belonging and Legal Identity.

In September, UNHCR released a new report entitled **“In Search of Solutions: Addressing Statelessness in the Middle East and North Africa”**, which explores the link between displacement resulting from the Syria crisis and the increased risk of statelessness, especially for children. The report outlines the strategies developed by UNHCR, in cooperation with States, civil society, communities and other partners, to prevent and reduce statelessness, and shares key recommendations for consideration.

From 17–18 October, in Egypt, the League of Arab States (LAS) and UNHCR jointly convened a regional meeting on **Belonging and Legal Identity**. Experts from LAS Member States examined the needs, challenges and emerging good practices to ensure that all children in the region enjoy their rights to legal identity, family life and unity, nationality and belonging. Participants developed a number of recommendations to achieve universal birth registration, enhance the capacity of civil registration and vital statistics systems (CRVS) and further align nationality laws with international standards.

Implementation of the Global Action Plan

New National Action Plans (NAPS) to address statelessness are being developed in **a number of West African countries**, including in **Nigeria** and **Togo**.

In December, a new publication **“Solving Statelessness”** was launched. The book has a solutions orientation and includes practical guidance for practitioners seeking to boost the implementation of the **Global Action Plan to End Statelessness**.

In line with **Action 1 of the Global Action Plan (Resolve existing major situations of statelessness)**, the Makonde, a stateless minority group in **Kenya** organised a **trek from Kwale County to State House**, Nairobi to meet the President and petition for citizenship. This action, following years of lobbying by civil society groups and other actors, resulted in the President issuing an edict that they were to be granted Kenyan citizenship by the end of 2016.



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Also in relation to Action 1, between 1 January and 1 December 2016, the Governments of **Indonesia** and the **Philippines** confirmed the nationality of nearly 4112 people of Indonesian descent living in the Southern Philippines whose nationality was previously undetermined. This included 1736 children.

In **Thailand**, on 24 November, Mae Fah Luang District in Chiang Rai Province organized a ceremony to distribute national ID cards to 547 formerly stateless people. **Artee**, 19 years old, was part of the group that received their ID cards. She was very happy to hear the news. In her own words, she said: **“I am no longer a lonely fish but will become a bird with wings that can soar anywhere to build my life and achieve my dreams.”** Her immediate plans are to apply for a government loan to pursue higher education. Artee is among thousands of stateless people being helped by a [UNHCR-supported project in northern Thailand](#).

On **Action 2 (Ensure that no child is born stateless)**, on 28 October, the Norwegian Ministry of Justice and Public Security issued a [new instruction](#) to the immigration authorities to permit all stateless children born in **Norway** to apply for and acquire Norwegian citizenship. Previously, stateless children born in Norway without lawful residence were ineligible for naturalization. Now, children born stateless in Norway are only required to have been continuously residing in Norway for three years before submitting their application for Norwegian citizenship.

On **Action 6 (Grant protection status to stateless migrants and facilitate their naturalization)**, in September, in the **Netherlands**, [draft legislation](#) introducing a **statelessness determination procedure** and an **improved safeguard against statelessness at birth** was issued for [public consultations](#).

On 20 October, in Helsinki, **Finland**, UNHCR organized a **Workshop on Statelessness Determination Procedures** with participants from the Finnish Immigration Service, Ministries, NGO's, Human Rights monitoring bodies, as well as academics and lawyers. The workshop discussed the findings of the study [“Mapping of Statelessness in Finland”](#), statelessness determination procedures in France and other countries, and how the existing procedure in Finland could be developed into a full-fledged statelessness determination procedure.

On 3 November, in the **United Kingdom (UK)**, the [“Statelessness and applications for leave to remain: a best practice guide”](#) was launched. The Guide was published jointly by the [Liverpool Law Clinic](#) and the [Immigration Law Practitioners' Association](#). UNHCR was part of the advisory board which oversaw the project. The Guide is aimed at legal practitioners and provides guidance to those who may wish to apply to remain as a stateless person in the UK.

On 6 December, in **Brazil**, the Chamber of Deputies passed a [new immigration bill](#). The bill provides a legal definition of a stateless person that generally accords with the international legal definition, gives stateless persons legal temporary residence on humanitarian grounds, empowers the Executive Branch to establish a statelessness determination procedure, and mandates it to set up a mechanism for facilitated naturalization. The bill is currently awaiting approval by the Senate and the Executive Branch.

On **Action 7 (Ensure birth registration for the prevention of statelessness)**, a judgment of the Court of Appeal in **Malta** on 30 September confirmed that **children born at sea on a vessel that is not registered** may have their birth registered as long as Malta is the first place of disembarkation. This is also reflected in amendments to the Maltese Civil Code in 2015. In recent years, births to refugee and migrant mothers in the Mediterranean on unregistered vessels have made headlines on a number of occasions.

On **Action 8 (Issue nationality documentation to those with entitlement to it)**, in **Burkina Faso** and **Côte d'Ivoire**, UNHCR offices are collaborating to support the government of Burkina Faso to implement a documentation project for undocumented nationals residing in Côte d'Ivoire who are at risk of statelessness.

On **Action 10 (Improve quantitative and qualitative data on stateless populations)**, on 26 October, in **Lithuania**, the main findings of the [“Mapping statelessness in Lithuania”](#) report were presented. The event was attended by 28 national experts representing 18 institutions and organisations, including representatives from the Presidential office and Migration Department. Lithuania has declared a commitment to end statelessness by 2024.



"I'M VISIBLE – Photographs: Stateless children and Youth"

Campaign Publicity

The #IBelong Campaign celebrates its second year anniversary

The **second anniversary of the #IBelong Campaign** was commemorated on 27 October at **UNHCR's Headquarters in Geneva**. The event was moderated by Carol Batchelor, Director of UNHCR's Division of International Protection. Speakers included the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Filippo Grandi, Goodwill Ambassador Barbara Hendricks, UNICEF's Director of Emergency Programmes, Sikhander Khan and youth delegate to the #StatelessKids Congress, Ivan Kochovski. More than 100 ambassadors, UNHCR staff and supporters of the #IBelong Campaign attended the event. The occasion also saw the launch of the book "**I'M VISIBLE - Photographs: Stateless Children and Youth**" which highlights images and testimonies by stateless children and youth from 7 countries.

Other [colourful events around the world](#) marked the 2nd anniversary of the #IBelong Campaign:

In **Jakarta**, UNHCR hosted a **panel discussion on "The right to a nationality and ending statelessness in ASEAN"**. UNHCR's Assistant High Commissioner for Protection, Volker Türk, highlighted the progress that has been made in eradicating statelessness in the region over the last 2 years.

A number of events were held in West Africa including:

- In **Senegal**, the music group Bideew Bou Bess launched the [video-clip 'I Belong'](#) during a press conference organized by UNHCR.
- In **Liberia**, UNHCR, in collaboration with Church Aid, the Liberia Refugee Repatriation and Resettlement Commission, the United Nations Mission in Liberia, and several local groups organized a **parade and awareness raising sessions** with students, youth and women's groups. Radio broadcasts and recreational activities for students completed the celebrations.
- In **Mali**, **text messages providing awareness raising information on statelessness** were sent to more than 5 million subscribers of a partner phone operator (Orange). **Street interviews** followed by a meeting with UNHCR were broadcast on 3 November on national TV. A **round table** on statelessness was also organized the same day on national radio.
- In **Côte d'Ivoire**, a national **slam poetry championship** took place in November and December on the theme of statelessness. Twenty-four competitors fought it out over 3 rounds following a training conducted by UNHCR on statelessness.



2nd Anniversary of the #IBelong Campaign Commemorations in Benin.

Benin, Ghana, Guinea and Togo also celebrated the 2nd anniversary of the #IBelong Campaign with special cultural events.

In **Sudan**, UNHCR in collaboration with its partner Sudanese Organization for Development organized a one day **workshop on the #IBelong Campaign for 15 journalists** representing the top dailies and social media blogs.

In Europe, UNHCR's offices in **Belgium and Luxembourg** teamed up with corporate partners to use prominent **advertising spaces to publicize the Campaign**. In Luxembourg, buses servicing the city centre displayed posters calling on people to join the Campaign. In Belgium, 125,000 leaflets in Dutch and French were distributed in cinemas, restaurants, high schools, universities, sports and cultural centers across the country.

In the Americas, UNHCR launched a quartet of videos on statelessness: [Statelessness in the Americas](#), [Protection of Stateless Persons](#), [Prevention of Statelessness](#) and [Resolution of Current Statelessness Cases](#). The videos are aimed at government officials and promote the #IBelong Campaign, the Global Action Plan and the Brazil Plan of Action.

On 29 November, Maha Mamo, a stateless refugee in Brazil, presented at a **TEDx event** held in Sao Paulo. She spoke about her experience of being stateless and the global efforts to end statelessness under the #IBelong Campaign.

Upcoming Events

In December in Senegal, two concerts by **High Level Supporter** musician, **Cheikh Lo**, will take place and will include sensitization efforts on statelessness.

Also in December, in Côte d'Ivoire, UNHCR will publish a **study on nationality and statelessness**. The report examines the historical and legal factors leading to statelessness in the country, charts the evolution of nationality and civil status laws, and identifies the main groups at risk of statelessness.

On 18 January 2017, the Platform on Statelessness of the European Migration Network (EMN), UNHCR and ENS will organize a conference on [Addressing Statelessness in the European Union, One year on from the adoption of European Council Conclusions](#). Recently, the EMN published the report "[Statelessness in the EU](#)". One year after the Conclusions were adopted, the conference will take stock of collective efforts to address statelessness in the EU and identify what further action is required.

On 20 January 2017, the UNHCR Regional Office in Almaty, Kazakhstan, will host a **Civil Network on Statelessness meeting**. The network members will launch a new common webpage.

Campaign Resources

Want to support the Campaign? Take a look at our [#IBelong website](#) 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 [self-study module](#) from the comfort of your armchair!



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