



## Top events and news

- The Philippines acceded to the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness.
- UNHCR and partners marked International Women’s Day on March 8, calling for more attention to gender discrimination in nationality matters.
- In Uzbekistan, 33,000 stateless persons or persons of undetermined nationality were granted nationality or had their nationality confirmed in 2021.



Secretary of Foreign Affairs of the Philippines, Teodoro L. Locsin Jr. (left), depositing the instrument of accession to the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness during a ceremony in New York, together with UN Legal Counsel and Under-Secretary-General, Miguel de Serpa Soares (middle), and the UN Office of Legal Affairs Chief of Treaty Section, David Nanopoulos (right). © UNOLA

## Mobilizing governments and civil society

On 21 January, in the **Philippines**, UNHCR and UNICEF co-facilitated a meeting between the Zamboanga City Civil Registrar's Office, the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples Zamboanga Sub Office and community volunteers to assess the 2021 Birth Registration Project in Zamboanga. The meeting also discussed expansion of the initiative in 2022.

On 3 February, in **Asia-Pacific**, UNHCR organized a webinar on "Preventing Statelessness among Foundlings / Children of Unknown Parents". In the key-note presentation Mai Kaneko-Iwase, a UNHCR Staff Member in Japan, presented her recently published book "[Nationality of Foundlings](#)", which focuses on Article 2 of the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness and its implementation. Country experiences on the topic were presented, including by the Government of the Philippines and UNHCR Malaysia.

From 16 to 22 February, the **Peter McMullin Centre on Statelessness** at the **University of Melbourne**, organized the 2022 Statelessness Intensive Course. Attended by 40 participants from governments, UN Agencies, civil society and academia, the course provided participants with skills and practical tools to understand and address the problem of statelessness.

On 28 February, the Government of **Cambodia** and its Representative to the ASEAN Commission on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Women and Children organized a hybrid national workshop on the report "Launching of Legal Identity of All Women and Children in ASEAN: A Regional Synthesis" translated in Khmer. The translation was supported by UNHCR, and 2,000 copies have been disseminated to civil registrar officials nationwide to raise awareness on the importance of civil and birth registration for the prevention of statelessness, especially for women and children.

In **Pakistan**, the Ministry of Planning, Development and Special Initiatives convened the final Core Working Group meeting for endorsing the report on a pilot project on CRVS systems, following the Bali Process. Assessments were done in the Islamabad Capital Territory, Karachi and Peshawar using the

### [Bali Process Civil Registration Assessment Toolkit](#).

These assessments aim to identify existing gaps in access to registration systems for vulnerable populations, including refugees, asylum seekers and stateless person. The final report includes concrete recommendations on universal birth registration, regardless of legal status.

In February, in **Kyrgyzstan**, the National Statistics Committee with support from UNHCR, conducted a series of Training of Trainers workshops for the coordinators of the 2022 population and housing census, which is planned for April and May 2022. The three-day workshops focused on building the capacity of census staff to ensure quality census data including on the size and profile of stateless populations. UNHCR experts contributed with presentations on nationality and statelessness matters. The training workshops were attended by a total of 506 census coordinators from 54 districts in Kyrgyzstan

In the **Asia-Pacific** region, UNHCR and UN Women commemorated International Women's Day by co-hosting an expert roundtable on gender equality in nationality matters and the prevention of statelessness. The event promoted a deeper regional understanding of gender discrimination as a key cause of statelessness and called on participants to step up activities to end gender discrimination in nationality matters. Experts from the Malaysian Parliament, academia, and civil society shared their ideas on the issue and women affected by gender discrimination and statelessness reflected on their personal experiences. The roundtable was attended by almost 200 participants.

On March 14, in **Kazakhstan**, UNHCR held a briefing on statelessness for Members of Parliament and representatives of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Internal Affairs, and Justice. The briefing provided an overview of the statelessness situation and eradication efforts, accessions to the UN Statelessness Conventions, and highlighted the role of members of parliament in combatting statelessness. UNHCR presented the report "[Statelessness in Kazakhstan: Analysis of National Legislation](#)" which provides an analysis on the compliance of national legislation with



Members of the Reconocido Movement with the Vice Minister of Culture of the Dominican Republic, Geo Ripley (left), and UNHCR Chief of Mission at the launch of the book “Somos Quien Somos” during “Drums Dialogue”. © UNHCR/Juan Carlos González

international standards pertaining to citizenship and statelessness. The briefing was attended by the UN Resident Coordinator, UNICEF, the Kazakhstan International Bureau for Human Rights and Rule of Law and the NGO Sana Sezim.

On 14 February, in **Kenya**, the Kenya Human Rights Commission (KHRC) in collaboration with Haki Centre Organization, Kwale Human Rights Network and UNHCR, organized a meeting in Kwale County, between [Members of Parliament who are supporting a petition to recognize the Pemba community](#) and members of the Pemba stateless community. The meeting was an opportunity to provide an update on the status of the petition and the actions that were taken since.

On 17 February, in **Somalia**, the Ministry of Interior, Federal Affairs and Reconciliation, organized a capacity-building workshop on the national legal framework on nationality and statelessness and the Somalia National Action Plan to End Statelessness 2021-2024 for Jubaland officials dealing with citizenship and documentation and representatives from civil society. Participants were able to familiarize themselves with the National Action Plan and the relevant activities to end statelessness in Somalia.

From 17 to 19 March, the Ministry of Culture of the **Dominican Republic**, along with UNHCR and other UN Agencies, organized [Drums Dialogue](#) (*Diálogo de Tambores*), an event to raise awareness of Dominican cultural diversity, highlighting the Afro-Dominican heritage and promoting the full and equal participation of Afro-descendants in the different segments of society. During the event, the book “Somos quien Somos” (“We are who we are”) was launched, which shares impactful and inspiring life stories of Dominicans of Haitian descent who were affected by the Constitutional Court ruling 168-13 and are still waiting for a solution for their issues related to documentation and access to Dominican nationality.

In **Greece**, in December 2021, the Ministry of Interior and UNHCR organized a joint conference on the legal amendments that were introduced on the acquisition of Greek citizenship through naturalization, including access to naturalization for refugees and stateless persons. Mr. Makis Vouridis, Minister of Interior, also announced the extension of the Memorandum of Understanding with UNHCR.



On International Women's Day, UNHCR published the [Background Note on Gender Equality, Nationality Laws and Statelessness 2022](#). 25 countries continue to not grant equal rights to women to confer nationality to their children. Liberia has pledged to remove sex discrimination from nationality laws, which currently do not allow mothers like Georgia to confer nationality to their children. © UNHCR/ Diana Diaz

On 10 February, UNHCR and the Government of the Republic of **Serbia** signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to continue their cooperation to resolve the remaining issues of persons without documentation. The MoU strengthens cooperation in identifying persons without personal status documents, including birth certificates, and to support them in obtaining these documents. The MoU is the third of its kind between UNHCR and the government and will run until 4 November 2024, which marks the end of the #IBelong Campaign.

On 18 February, in **Austria**, Leonhard Call, a member of the European Network on Statelessness (ENS), organized the webinar "[Statelessness in Austria – analysis and gaps in legal protection, Part 1: Naturalization](#)". The webinar focused on the statelessness definition, the work of UNHCR on statelessness, ENS and the national NGO SOS Mitmensch, and existing gaps in the Austrian Nationality Act that may lead to statelessness. The webinar was attended by 30 participants, including legal counsellors, academics, civil society volunteers and stateless persons.

On 23 February, in **North Macedonia**, UNHCR and OHCHR, with support from the UN Resident

Coordinator, organized a UN Country Team meeting dedicated to statelessness, as part of the "Call 2 Action for Human Rights" dialogue initiated by the UN Secretary General. The UNHCR Representative gave a presentation on statelessness, identifying the main gaps and discussing proposed solutions. The meeting resulted in a joint statement and a roadmap to end statelessness by 2024.

On 8 March, in **Geneva**, to mark **International Women's Day**, UNHCR organized a side event at the 83<sup>rd</sup> meeting of its Standing Committee to raise awareness on the issue of sex discrimination in nationality laws, which remains a leading cause of statelessness globally. Some 25 countries still do not allow mothers to confer nationality to their children on an equal basis as men, and more than 50 countries do not give women equal rights as men to confer nationality to their spouses or to change or retain their nationality. The event was moderated by UNHCR's Assistant High Commissioner for Protection, Ms. Gillian Triggs, with remarks by the Republic of Iran on the positive amendments to their nationality law and by the Global Coalition on Equal Nationality Rights. The side event was attended by 70 government officials and NGO representatives.

On 10 March, the **European Network on Statelessness** (ENS) released a Briefing on [Stateless people and people at risk of statelessness forcibly displaced from Ukraine](#). In the briefing, ENS explains why statelessness needs to be considered as part of the Ukraine refugee response and how frontline responders can identify and support stateless persons. It further provides an overview and analysis of available support and services for stateless persons in Poland, Hungary, Slovakia, Moldova and Romania.

On 24 March, the World Council of Churches organized a global webinar on [“Statelessness: A Product of Racialized Nationality?”](#), highlighting global trends with regards to racial discrimination and statelessness. The webinar included presentations by UNHCR, the Institute on Statelessness and Inclusion and the UN Special Rapporteur on Minority Rights.

On 24 March, the **Belgrade Law Faculty**, as part of a Specialist Course on International Refugee Protection, organized a session on the international legal framework on nationality and statelessness. The session was attended by approximately 40 students from various universities across Europe.

In **Jordan**, UNHCR provided training to government officials and legal practitioners on documentation and statelessness. From 1 to 3 March, employees from the Civil Status Department received training on core protection topics with a dedicated session on statelessness and the importance of documentation in the prevention of statelessness. From 10 to 12 March, training was also provided for Ministry of Justice employees and legal service providers, including UNHCR’s legal partners. A dedicated session on statelessness focused on documentation and the role of legal aid to prevent statelessness.

In **Iraq**, UNHCR and the Legal Clinic Network extended and broadened their partnership for 2022, and included legal assistance, capacity building and advocacy for policy and law reform. These interventions are informed by a quantitative and qualitative mapping study on Faili Kurds and Bidoons in a total of 10 Central and Southern Governates which was conducted by Legal Clinic Network in November and December 2021.

During her mission to **Zimbabwe**, from 19 to 21 January, UNHCR’s Assistant High Commissioner for Protection, Ms. Gillian Triggs, met with the Ministers responsible for Refugees and Foreign Affairs, where she encouraged the Government of Zimbabwe to accede to the 1961 Convention and implement the pledges made by Zimbabwe during the 2019 High-Level Segment on Statelessness.

On 14 February, in Abuja, **Nigeria**, **UNHCR** convened the annual partnership coordination meeting with the Directorate of Humanitarian and Social Affairs of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Commission. The meeting resulted in the development of a joint workplan for 2022. ECOWAS reiterated its support for the adoption of the *Regional Model Law on statelessness determination procedures and the protection of stateless persons*.

On 9 and 10 March, in **Burkina Faso**, in support of the Government’s efforts to ensure effective civil registration and documentation to prevent statelessness, UNHCR organized a training for 40 local government employees in charge of civil registration and documentation. The training focused on the causes of statelessness, the importance of civil registration for the prevention of statelessness and the national legal framework. Representatives from the media also attended the training, with the view to reinforce and support public communication and awareness raising efforts.

On 15 March, in **Mali**, UNHCR and the Government Committee on Statelessness organized an event to present and disseminate the study [“Risks of statelessness in Mali and for Malians residing abroad”](#). The audience was mainly composed of students and lecturers from the University of Bamako.

# Implementation of the Global Action Plan

In line with **Action 1, Resolve existing major situations of statelessness**, **Kazakhstan** extended the country-wide identification and documentation campaign until May 2022. Since the start of this campaign, more than 7,300 persons of undetermined nationality have been registered. Around 6,000 have since received documentation, 4,100 of them were confirmed as citizens of Kazakhstan, while almost 2,000 received formal statelessness status.

**Uzbekistan** has made progress on **Action 1**. Since the adoption of a progressive citizenship law in 2020 and further amendments in 2021, the Government of Uzbekistan has reduced the number of stateless cases by half. Some 62,000 recognized stateless persons were granted nationality or had their nationality confirmed, including 33,000 in 2021. Uzbekistan continues to host the largest known stateless population in Central Asia, with close to 38,000 stateless persons.

In the first quarter of 2022, further progress was made to implement **Action 2: Ensure that no child is born stateless**. In the **Philippines**, the Foundling Recognition and Protection Act was approved by the Senate on 31 January. The Bill ensures that foundlings, including those who have already reached the age of majority, are recognized as Filipino citizens. Through the Bill, the Philippines aims to formalize the 2016 court rulings on this matter and implement Article 2 of the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness. The Bill is now pending approval and enactment by the Office of the President. The Act is in line with the country's National Action Plan and the pledge submitted at the High-Level Segment on Statelessness to enhance the legal framework to effectively prevent statelessness.

In the **Philippines**, in line with **Action 6: Grant protection status to stateless migrants and facilitate their naturalization** the Supreme Court adopted the judiciary-led *Rule on Facilitated Judicial Naturalization for Refugees and Stateless Persons*. The Rule expedites the naturalization process for stateless persons and refugees, reduces the costs of the proceedings, and introduces improved procedures related to applications of

unaccompanied children. The Rule further introduces eased requirements related to documentary proof, recognizing the specific limitations stateless persons and refugees may have in this regard. The Rule is in line with the government's 2019 High-Level Segment on Statelessness pledge to strengthen its domestic legal framework in line with the 1954 Convention.

On 28 February, the President of the **Philippines** signed an executive order establishing the Inter-Agency Committee on the Protection of Refugees, Stateless Persons and Asylum Seekers with the mandate to ensure the provision of relevant services and assistance. The executive order further institutionalized access to protection services for refugees, stateless persons, and asylum seekers.

The Government of **Brazil**, with support from UNHCR, continued its efforts to facilitate access to the statelessness determination procedure. Jointly developed information materials provide step-by-step guidance on how to apply for statelessness status on the SisApatridia online applications which was launched in 2021. The material also raises awareness on statelessness, its causes, and the legislative framework in Brazil. The materials will be disseminated digitally and printed, including through civil society actors, the Federal Police and at points of entry to Brazil, such as international airports and land borders.

In line with **Action 7: Ensure birth registration for the prevention of statelessness**, efforts to raise awareness on the importance of birth registration and to facilitate access continued **in Kenya**. UNHCR, the Haki Centre Organization and the local Civil Registrar in Malindi organized a community sensitization and birth certificate distribution exercise in the Magarini area in Kilifi County. The issuance of birth certificates followed a mobile registration exercise conducted in December 2021, during which 2,356 applications were made. The exercise targeted members of the stateless Pemba community and other members of the community in the area.



A South Sudanese refugee and his daughter after they received her birth certificate issued by Sudanese authorities. © UNHCR/Sabah Elbasha

Efforts to provide birth certificates to vulnerable populations were also made in **Sudan**. The Commissioner for Refugees, the Civil Registry and UNHCR issued birth certificates to 683 South Sudanese refugee children living in the North Kordofan State. This exercise was the first time refugee children were able to access birth certificates in this region.

UNHCR in **Algeria** continued its efforts to refer persons of concern for legal assistance to facilitate access to birth registration, including through late birth registration. UNHCR also developed an information leaflet on civil registration and documentation procedures, including an overview of available assistance.

The Government of **Burkina Faso** rolled out the digital civil registration tool, Icivil, to the Gourcy municipality in the Nord region, where many populations at risk of statelessness reside. The tool facilitates birth registration for the prevention of statelessness, for example by allowing midwives to quickly create a notification of birth using a phone, thereby facilitating birth registration.

In **Zambia**, the Department of National Registration, Passports and Citizenship in collaboration with the Office of the Commissioner for Refugees, and supported by UNHCR, conducted birth registration and documentation exercises at the Meheba, Mayukwayukwa and Mantapala refugee settlements and in Lusaka. Birth registration and birth certificates are essential for children to obtain their refugee documentation and a legal status in the country. In advance of the exercise, an information campaign was organized to sensitize the target population on the importance of birth registration. A total of 1,612 births were registered and 231 birth certificates and 2,982 refugee documents were issued.

In **Venezuela**, UNHCR, the Civil Registry Office, the Office of the Ombudsperson and HIAS supported late birth registration and issuance of birth certificates for 29 children of the indigenous Pemon people, members of the community of Uroy Uaray in Bolivar State. Indigenous communities in Venezuela often face logistical barriers to effectively access (late) birth registration procedures due to their remote location. Throughout 2022, UNHCR will continue to support the organization of mobile registration brigades in remote areas of Apure, Zulia, and Bolivar States to facilitate (late) birth registration procedures and ensure access to nationality rights.

In line with **Action 9: Accede to the UN Statelessness Conventions**, on 24 March, in a historic development, the **Philippines** acceded to the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, thereby becoming the 78<sup>th</sup> State Party and the **first country in Southeast Asia** to become party to the Convention. With this step, the Philippines fulfilled one of its pledges submitted at the 2019 High-Level Segment on Statelessness and made progress in the implementation of its National Action Plan to End Statelessness. The Philippines also remains the first and only country in the region to have acceded to the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons.

In Rwanda, in accordance with **Action 10: Improve quantitative and qualitative data on stateless populations**, the National Statelessness Taskforce started training over 3,000 government officials. The training is a key-element to the implementation of a country-wide survey to identify stateless persons and persons of undetermined nationality, expected to be completed by mid-2022.

In **Lebanon**, UNHCR and its partner Siren Associates released the study “[Mapping and understanding statelessness in Akkar](#)” aimed at understanding statelessness affecting persons of Lebanese origin in Akkar Governate in northern Lebanon. Among other things, the study has improved UNHCR and partners’ understanding of affected communities in the area, with the research also highlighting the multi-faceted implications for communities whose nationality is not recognized.

## Media Impact of the Campaign

On March 8, in **India**, UNHCR marked International Women’s Day by releasing a first of three human-interest stories on stateless Rohingya refugees, focusing on the importance of [women’s empowerment](#). The three stories highlight the importance of birth registration for the Rohingya community.

On 10 February, the Government of **Serbia** and UNHCR published a [joint press release](#) following a ceremony to celebrate the signing of the third Memorandum of Understanding between UNHCR and the government. The ceremony was also covered by several national media outlets.

On 14 January, in **North Macedonia**, UNHCR posted a [video](#) explaining the need to end statelessness in North Macedonia and highlighting the impact of statelessness on an individual’s life. Further social media coverage was provided in North Macedonia, including on the [meeting with the newly appointed Minister of Labor and Social Policy](#), and on the celebration of the [International Women’s Day](#).

On 2 March, celebrating 30 years of Central Asian states’ membership of the UN, UNHCR issued a [press release commending the efforts of Central Asian States](#) to end statelessness. In 2021, over

46,000 stateless persons acquired a nationality in Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan or Uzbekistan, while Turkmenistan fulfilled one of its High-Level Segment pledges and enacted a national statelessness determination procedure.

## Upcoming Events

On the occasion of the International Day Against Racial Discrimination 21 March 2022, UNHCR, OHCHR and the non-governmental organization Freemuse, [launched a contest for minority artists who have exposed, explored, and/or addressed matters relating to statelessness through their artwork](#). The contest is organized to support minority artists’ work on statelessness and to increase the visibility of their artwork, while raising awareness on the human rights of stateless individuals and groups belonging to minorities.

**Deadline for submissions is 21 June 2022.** The award-winners will be announced on 4 November 2022, the 8th anniversary of the #IBelong Campaign to End Statelessness.



In partnership with UNHCR, the **International Institute of Humanitarian Law** will organize the 2022 **course on statelessness in Arabic**. The online course will take place between 6 June – 1 July. It is designed for government officials and NGOs dealing with stateless persons or addressing statelessness in their country. Applications can be submitted [here](#).

## 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](#).