I BELONG

No longer invisible.
No longer stateless.

Top events and news

- 15 civil society and legal aid organizations established the **Eastern Africa Nationality Network.**

- Three pledges from the 2019 High Level Segment on Statelessness were fully or partially implemented in **Georgia, Zambia** and the **Philippines**.

- Stateless persons and formerly stateless persons launched **Unione Italiana Apolidi, the first** stateless-led organization in **Italy**.

Representatives from civil society and UNHCR after the two-day regional meeting on statelessness in Nairobi, Kenya, where the Eastern Africa Nationality Network was launched.
© UNHCR/Faith Kasina

Implementation of the Global Action Plan

In line with **Action 2: Ensure that no child is born stateless**, UNHCR's partner Nansen organized a meeting with legal practitioners and lawyers in **Belgium**, on Article 10 of the Belgium Nationality Code, which provides Belgian nationality to children born in Belgium who would otherwise be statelessness. The meeting discussed the application of this provision to children of Palestinian origin who would otherwise be stateless. Discussions focused on the international legal framework, and Nansen and the European Network on Statelessness made presentations on European practices on the prevention of statelessness and on the practical application of Article 10 by municipalities.

In **Bulgaria**, authorities issued a certificate confirming the Bulgarian citizenship of a child born in the country to stateless parents of Palestinian origin. This case is a good practice which reflects the legal right to nationality of children born on the territory of Bulgaria who would otherwise be stateless. Despite the legal right, administrative hurdles may sometimes hinder the effective implementation in practice. Foundation Access to Right, UNHCR's partner, provided legal assistance in this case. The father of the child reported that the day his son was able to access Bulgarian nationality was the happiest day of his life.

In **Algeria**, several sensitization sessions were organized targeting vulnerable groups and groups at-risk, to raise awareness on the importance of birth registration and relevant procedure to access birth certificates. Most participants were women and girls. Throughout the sessions, UNHCR identified a number of persons in need of legal assistance and made referrals for support with late birth registration and corrections on birth certificates.

In **the Philippines**, the Foundling Recognition and Protection Act was enacted on 7 May. The Act implements Article 2 of the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness and grants Filipino nationality to foundlings found on the territory of the Philippines. With this Act, the Government of the Philippines took an important step towards the implementation of its National Action Plan to End Statelessness by 2024.

In line with **Action 6: Grant protection status to stateless migrants and facilitate their naturalization** and **Action 2**, on June 14, the Constitutional Convention of **Chile**, the government body coordinating the drafting of the new constitution, approved the final text on statelessness prevention and eradication. The draft includes provisions in line with UNHCR and UNICEF's recommendations to eliminate exceptions to the *ius soli* provisions in the case of children born to foreigners "in transit", grant facilities for naturalization for stateless persons and prohibit the loss of nationality if it would render a person stateless.

In **Georgia**, the Government removed the fee for the application for statelessness status and the naturalization fee for recognized stateless persons. Through these measures, Georgia went beyond its 2019 HLS pledge, where it committed to reduce the fee by half.

Also in **Georgia**, the Public Service Development Agency and UNHCR launched a **"door to door" campaign** to raise awareness on the existing statelessness determination procedure (SDP). The campaign aims to ensure that stateless persons know how to access the SDP so they can be identified and documented. The campaign includes information meetings across the country, organized with local municipalities and regional administrative bodies. Through this campaign, the Government of Georgia fulfilled its pledge made at the 2019 HLS.

In the **Republic of Congo**, on 15 June, the Cabinet Council adopted a draft decree on the creation of a statelessness determination procedure. The draft is now pending final adoption by the Council of Ministers. It is an important step towards ensuring that stateless persons can be recognized and access protection.

Leonid (middle), 26 years old, was the first person to be recognized as stateless in the Zakarpatska region of Ukraine and was assisted by UNHCR's partner "NEEKA". Recognized stateless persons with temporary residence permits are able to work and eventually have access to naturalization. © UNHCR partner "NEEKA" / Zoltan Fegesh

In **Ukraine**, 875 applications for statelessness status were submitted to the State Migration Service, despite the ongoing war in Ukraine and the temporary suspension of the SDP from February to mid-May. A total of 175 persons have received statelessness status as of June 9.

In **the Netherlands**, the House of Representatives adopted a law establishing an SDP in May. The introduction of the SDP provides the means to determine statelessness clearly and consistently, and ensure stateless persons are protected and have access to rights. This is in line with recommendations made by UNHCR in the report **Mapping on statelessness in Netherlands.** In addition to the SDP, an important amendment to the Nationality Act was adopted, providing undocumented stateless children access to Dutch nationality after five years residence.

In line with **Action 7: Ensure birth registration for the prevention of statelessness**, in **Sudan**, the Civil Registry Department of the Ministry of Interior and UNHCR launched a birth registration campaign in eight states of Sudan (South, West, North Kordofan, East, North, Central Darfur States, Gadara and Khartoum). The campaign targeted 13,500 children without birth certificates. A total of 8,000 children so far have been registered and are awaiting their birth certificates.

In **Zambia**, the Ministry of Home Affairs with the support of UNHCR conducted a registration and certification exercise to prevent the risk of statelessness for refugees, asylum seekers and other vulnerable populations. For the first time, the Government used a new system to register and issue birth certificates on the spot. A total of 2,895 birth certificates were issued at the Mohebi and Mayukwayukwa refugee settlements. In doing so, Zambia fulfilled its 2019 HLS pledge.

In **Venezuela**, three mobile registration and documentation units, including UNHCR, the Civil Registry Office, the Office of the Ombudsperson, the Children's Protection Council, Caritas, HIAS and IOM, facilitated the late birth registration of 238 Venezuelan children, including from the indigenous Arekuna, Jivi, Piaroa and Pemon communities in Bolivar State.

UNHCR and IOM staff during a mobile birth registration mission in Venezuela. ©Luis Cardenas/UNHCR Venezuela

In **Niger**, national authorities supported by UNHCR facilitated the issuance of over 1000 birth certificates through mobile courts in the regions of Tahoua, Maradi, Tillabéri and Diffa. Community sensitization activities were also implemented in these areas, including through community radio broadcast messages, community awareness sessions and theatre performances. Key topics included the importance of civil documentation for the prevention of statelessness and provided information on the relevant services.

In **Burkina Faso**, with financial support from the US Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration, UNHCR and the government delivered over 7,000 identity and civil status documents (birth certificates, nationality certificates and identity cards) to internally displaced persons and their host communities in three regions of Burkina Faso. UNHCR also supported the municipality of Fada-N'Gourma in the Eastern region to digitize and preserve close to 70,000 birth certificates.

In line with **Action 7** and **Action 8: Issue nationality documentation to those with entitlement to it**, in **Mozambique**, as of June, a total of 23,978 internally displaced persons at risk of statelessness have been issued with civil documentation, including birth certificates. Mobile legal services provided by the Catholic University, UNHCR's partner in Pemba also supported this initiative. Access to civil documentation can reduce risks of statelessness and enables the displaced populations to access services and protection.

In line with **Action 8** and **Action 6**, in **Kazakhstan**, as part of a nation-wide identification and documentation campaign, UNHCR and partners visited eight regions to raise awareness on the issue of statelessness and provided stateless persons with legal counselling and assistance. The campaign, which came to an end in May, identified more than 8,800 persons without documentation. A total of 7,551 have since received documentation, 4,868 were confirmed as citizens of Kazakhstan and received nationality documentation and 2,683 were recognized as stateless and provided with documentation.

In **South Sudan**, UNHCR organized a targeted documentation mission to Raja in Western Bahr El Ghazal State. Nationality Officers from the Directorate of Civil Registry, Nationality, Passport and Immigration assisted cross-border communities to register for nationality documentation. A total of 2,000 vulnerable persons were financially supported. Nationality cards will be issued to those reached through the campaign, enabling them to graduate school, apply for jobs and start businesses.

In **Indonesia**, the government issued Government Regulation No. 21 of 2022 on Procedures to Obtain, Lose, Cancel and Re-Obtain Indonesian Nationality, revising the earlier Regulation No. 2 of 2007. The government regulation provides a legal basis for children born to parents from mixed descent to be registered as Indonesian nationals, where they were previously excluded.

In **Thailand**, the Ministry of Interior announced a plan to resolve legal status issues faced by vulnerable persons who are under the government's institutional care. The plan targets 23 government shelters run by the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, and persons with mental health conditions receiving treatment in the hospitals administered by the Ministry of Public Health. Efforts will include expedited registration procedures, issuance of identity documentation and confirmation of Thai nationality.

In the **Dominican Republic**, in accordance with **Action 10: Improve quantitative and qualitative data on stateless populations**, UNHCR strengthened the systemization of available data on persons at risk of statelessness, bringing the total number of cases registered with UNHCR to over 104,000. The exercise was facilitated through records provided by the Dominican Central Electoral Board. These updated records reinforce the availability of quantitative data and contribute to the analysis of the situations of affected persons, including challenges to access education, employment, and other protection concerns.

In **Indonesia**, UNHCR's partner, Universitas Diponegoro, conducted research in four border locations, identifying up to 2,000 stateless persons of Filipino descent in North Sulawesi.

Enhancing coordination on statelessness

In May UNHCR hosted the **2022 Global Statelessness Retreat**. The Retreat brought together UNHCR, members of civil society, UN Agencies and stateless-led organizations to assess initiatives to address statelessness, to identify priorities and areas in need of increased attention for the remaining years of the #IBelong Campaign, and to discuss the post-2024 agenda and the building of a multi-stakeholder global alliance to take the work forward after 2024. The Global Statelessness Retreat was preceded by preparatory regional meetings, bringing together more than 200 stakeholders globally.

Africa

In **Kenya**, during a **regional meeting** organized by UNHCR, 15 civil society organizations from Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Sudan, South Sudan and Rwanda, launched the **Eastern Africa Nationality Network**. The first civil society network on statelessness in the region, it brings together human rights organizations, legal aid service providers and minority rights organizations to work together towards ending statelessness and the protection of stateless persons. The members will collaborate towards regional advocacy efforts, awareness raising and capacity building activities and empowering stateless communities.

In **Sudan,** the Abyei Committee, joined by the Commissioner for Refugees, UNHCR, community leaders and civil society, conducted a mission to North Kordofan to coordinate and prepare for a targeted documentation campaign for members of the Dinka Ngok community. The Abyei Committee was established in 2018 by the Sudanese government to find a durable solution and pathways to Sudanese nationality for the communities living in the Abyei area which is disputed by Sudan and South Sudan. Despite efforts by the community living in the North Kordofan region, they have been unable to access Sudanese nationality documentation.

In **Niger**, UNHCR and the Ministry of Justice signed a partnership agreement to facilitate implementation of the National Action Plan to End Statelessness 2018 – 2024. The agreement covers a range of activities, including public awareness raising, strengthening birth registration systems through material support, and the revision of Niger's nationality legislation. As part of the agreement, UNHCR will be providing financial and technical support to the government of Niger for the implementation of the activities.

As part of the implementation of the partnership agreement, UNHCR and the Ministry of Justice organized an awareness-raising workshop on statelessness for representatives from the judiciary, community leaders and civil society organizations in Niger. Topics included the international legal framework on statelessness and nationality, the causes and consequences of statelessness and the need for the prevention and reduction of statelessness and the protection of stateless persons.

In **Madagascar**, UNHCR hosted a virtual workshop with Focus Development Association (FDA), a partner organization, to redefine the overall strategy to address statelessness. The workshop participants identified concrete actions to redouble efforts to end statelessness, including the finalization of the National Action Plan, the adoption of the country report on statelessness, further legal reform, and legal assistance to stateless persons.

The Ministry of Home Affairs of the **Kingdom of Eswatini** convened a roundtable to assess progress on the nationwide civil registration and documentation exercise, which started in February 2022. As of the end of April, 3,356 civil and vital events have been registered and relevant documentation issued, including birth and marriage certificates and national ID cards. Despite these successes, several challenges were identified regarding the implementation of the exercise, including the lack of resources.

Persons at risk of statelessness who received their birth certificates from authorities in the Republic of Congo. © UNHCR/Hélène Caux

In the **Republic of Congo**, the Government, with support from UNHCR, conducted an awareness raising campaign on birth registration and the prevention of statelessness. Thirty-five community volunteers were deployed in Brazzaville, Pointe-Noire, Dolisie, Sibiti and Gamboma, reaching a total of 5,000 household, highlighting the need for birth registration.

In **Kenya**, UNHCR, the Haki Centre Organization and the Refugee Coordinator of the US Embassy, organized a meeting between government authorities, the Civil Registration Services and members from the Pemba and Rundi communities in Kwale and Kilifi counties. The importance of birth registration and access to services for stateless and at-risk communities was highlighted and community representatives raised concerns related to continued discrimination. During the meetings, the government authorities committed to continue supporting community sensitization, mobile birth registration and improved access to birth registration and documentation.

In **Kenya**, the UN Legal Identity Agenda Country Team submitted a written memorandum to comment on the National Integrated Identity Management System (NIIMS)/Huduma Bill. The memorandum advocates for the inclusion of stateless individuals in the national registration system and the issuance of Huduma or service cards to stateless persons to enable access to government services.

In **Tanzania**, UNHCR and the School of Law of the University of Dar es Salaam organized an event for law students, focusing on the international legal framework on statelessness, UNHCR's mandate and the causes and consequences of statelessness. The session further included discussions with participants on the legal framework in Tanzania, and actions that may be required to prevent statelessness.

In **South Africa**, UNHCR and the Department of Home Affairs convened a stakeholder dialogue on nationality and statelessness, which followed a high-level dialogue between the UNHCR Assistant High Commissioner for Protection and the Minister of Home Affairs in January 2022. Participants developed a draft National Action Plan, validated the Terms of Reference for a qualitative study on statelessness in South Africa, and adopted concrete resolutions to be implemented by the Government of South Africa and strengthen stakeholder engagement. The Director General of the Department of Home Affairs announced that South Africa will be acceding to the UN Statelessness Conventions following national consultations.

In **South Sudan**, UNHCR organized a roundtable discussion with parliamentarians on the domestication of the Kampala convention, the South Sudan Durable Solutions Strategy and accessions to the Statelessness Conventions. A total of 40 members of parliament joined, including from relevant committees such as Humanitarian Affairs, Justice and Legislation. The roundtable was also attended by the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Management, the Commission for Refugees, ICRC and IOM. The Parliamentarians agreed on the importance of mitigating the risks of statelessness in the country and asked for a dedicated workshop on the subject.

In **Burkina Faso**, UNHCR and the government organized a two-day workshop with relevant government stakeholders to validate the draft Law on Civil Status, Nationality and the Domestication of the 1954 Convention relating to the status of stateless persons. The draft law is scheduled to be adopted by the Council of Ministers and the Transitional Legislative Assembly in the second half of 2022.

Americas

In **Chile**, UNCHR's partner Alberto Hurtado University, and the Commission of the Venezuelan Diaspora in Chile organized an awareness raising session on social media, to advise members of the community on the risks of statelessness.

In **Panama**, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs convened an inter-agency meeting to discuss the establishment of an Inter-Agency Commission on Statelessness. The meeting was attended by several line ministries, including Labour and Development, Public Affairs, Justice, Health and the Attorney General's Office and the Ombudsman's Office, the National Secretariat for Children, Adolescents and the Family and UNHCR. The Inter-Agency Commission would be an important first step towards the implementation of the pledge of the Government of Panama at the 2019 High-Level Segment on Statelessness (HLS).

Asia

In the **Kyrgyz Republic**, UNHCR and the Ministry of Digital Development convened a **national roundtable in Bishkek** to review and discuss country experiences in relation to the implementation of the 1954 and 1961 UN Statelessness Conventions. The roundtable was attended by line ministries, civil society and UN agencies and examined the way forward for the implementation of the conventions, the four pledges that were made by the Kyrgyz Republic during the 2019 High Level Segment on Statelessness (HLS) and other recommended law and policy reforms.

In April 2022 the **Central Asian Network on Statelessness** and UNHCR co-convened the **6th CANS Annual Meeting and the Central Asian Sub-Regional Consultations on Statelessness in Uzbekistan**. Civil society organizations, academia, national human rights institutions, representatives from the Ombudsperson, UN agencies and international organization from across Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan came together to discuss progress, opportunities, challenges, and strategic priorities to resolve statelessness in Central Asia by the end of the #IBelong campaign in 2024.

In **Vietnam**, the Ministry of Justice organized a workshop on the implementation of the Prime Minister's 2020 Decision on Statelessness. Topics included the identification and protection of stateless persons and persons of undetermined nationality in Vietnam, the reduction of statelessness, required legislative reform to effectively prevent and reduce statelessness and future accession to the Statelessness Conventions.

In **the Philippines**, UNHCR and the Ministry of Social Services and Development held a series of coordination meetings with municipal authorities in the island provinces of Basilan, Sulu and Tawi-Tawi. In line with the National Action Plan, these provinces are being prioritized in an ongoing birth registration initiative in 2022. The meetings were the starting point for coordinated efforts regarding digitization of birth registration, capacity development, and public awareness raising.

In **Nepal**, the Law, Justice and Human Rights Committee of the House of Representatives of Nepal's Federal Parliament and the Forum for Women, Law and Development organized a meeting with senior parliamentarians to discuss the pending Citizenship Act Amendment Bill. The Bill would introduce nationality by descent to children born to at least one parent who acquired citizenship by birth and grant Nepali mothers the right to confer nationality to their children in situations where the father is not identified. These two provisions could facilitate access to Nepali citizenship for over 1 million persons.

Europe

In April, UNHCR provided a virtual presentation to the **United Kingdom** Royal Statistical Society on the issue of statelessness statistics, specifically highlighting the ongoing work and challenges with the development of International Recommendations on Statelessness Statistics to be presented to the UN Statistical Commission for adoption in March 2023.

In **Italy**, UNHCR renewed its partnership with three Universities in Naples, Rome and Turin, to run statelessness legal clinics. Until the end of 2022, 18 law students, supported by qualified lawyers, will provide free legal advice to stateless persons.

Stateless and formerly stateless activists founded **Union Italiana Apolidi** (Italian Stateless Union), the first stateless-led organization in Italy. UNHCR financially supported the formal registration of the organization. The organization will work towards community building and empowerment and work to ensure that the voices of stateless persons are heard and to advocate for their protection and human rights.

In **North Macedonia**, the Ministry of Justice established a working group tasked with the development of a draft Law on Civil Registration. This presents opportunities to include relevant provisions, including on late birth registration which is an important safeguard to prevent statelessness.

In **Azerbaijan**, UNHCR and the State Migration Service organized a meeting of the Working Group on Statelessness (WGS). The WGS includes six key government stakeholders and UNHCR and focuses on tracking progress towards the prevention and

reduction of statelessness and the implementation of the government's 2019 HLS pledges. Out of the 545 registered stateless persons in Azerbaijan, 154 so far have applied for naturalization. UNHCR provided legal assistance to 74 persons and covered the naturalisation administrative fees for 54 stateless persons.

In **Bosnia and Herzegovina**, UNHCR organised a high-level **Round Table on eradicating statelessness in Sarajevo** in May. During the roundtable, participants discussed outstanding actions required to end statelessness. Participants included government authorities in charge of citizenship, civil registration, guardianship and free legal aid, the Institution of Ombudsmen for Human Rights, UNICEF, OSCE and the Association Vasa Prava BiH. The roundtable resulted in a set of recommendations, including access to birth registration, residence records and documentation, and access to free legal aid.

In June, UNHCR participated in the **statelessness subgroup meeting** of the Expert Group on Refugee, IDP and Statelessness Statistics (EGRISS), aimed at finalizing the draft International Recommendations on Statelessness Statistics (IROSS), ahead of submission to the UN Statistical Commission in March 2023. The event was held in Copenhagen and brought together representatives from 15 States and 11 institutions. The IROSS is aimed at collecting more and better official statistics on statelessness.

Members of the newly-established stateless-led organization, Unione Italiana Apolidi. © Unione Italiana Apolidi

Training and awareness-raising

In **Somalia**, the Director of the Civil Registration Department and the Government Focal Point on Statelessness from the Ministry of Interior, Federal Affairs and Reconciliation, organized a statelessness capacity building workshop in the South-West State. A total of 30 government officials were trained on the international and national legal frameworks on nationality and statelessness and the Somalia National Action Plan to End Statelessness by 2024.

In **Chile**, UNCHR's partner Alberto Hurtado University, and the Commission of the Venezuelan Diaspora in Chile organized an awareness raising session on social media, to advise members of the community on the risks of statelessness.

In **Cambodia**, the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children and the Cambodian Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation, together with the Ministry of Interior and the Prey Veng Provincial Office, convened a training on civil registration for 40 frontline officers in April. Good practices on civil registration procedures were shared, including on accelerated procedures for vulnerable populations.

In **Vietnam**, UNHCR, the Department of Civil Registration, Nationality and Authentication and the Ministry of Justice, signed a partnership agreement for 2022. The agreement outlines areas of cooperation between the government and UNHCR and support to the efforts to prevent and reduce statelessness, including legislative reform and accession to the UN Statelessness Conventions.

In **Jordan**, two trainings relevant to the prevention of statelessness were organized. UNHCR provided a training to government officials from the Civil Status Department on several protection topics, including the importance of documentation and birth registration in crisis situations, to prevent statelessness. Another training was co-facilitated by the Ministry of Interior. 30 officials from various governates participated in the training. The purpose was to raise awareness and capacity on issues linked to statelessness.

UNHCR participated in the **World Council of Churches Webinar on Statelessness and the "Interfaith Affirmations on Belongingness** in June. The panel discussion was a follow up on the recently adopted "**Interfaith Affirmations on Belongingness**". The event focused on the critical importance of religious and faith-based organizations in raising awareness on statelessness and addressing its root causes.

UNHCR and the International Institute of Humanitarian Law organized the **fifth Arabic language Statelessness Course** between 6 June – 1 July. The online course was facilitated by UNHCR and external experts and attended by 38 participants from 12 countries across the Middle East and North Africa, including government officials from various ministries and departments, civil society organizations, UN agencies and members of the academia. The different sessions aimed at strengthening the awareness on the international legal standards on statelessness, providing a platform to share experiences and explore solutions relevant to diverse contexts.

Media Impact of the Campaign

In the **Democratic Republic of Congo,** on 4 May, the Comité Technique Interinstutionnel de lutte contre l'apatridie (CTLA) in partnership with UNHCR, hosted a Press Lunch on statelessness. The aim of the lunch was to sensitize media corporations and journalists on issues of statelessness in the DRC, UNHCR's mandate on statelessness, and the role that the media can play in advocating for the protection of stateless persons, those at risk, and towards ending statelessness.

In **Iran**, statements by a prominent figure from the judiciary were picked up by local media, referring to statelessness as *harmful, leading to deprivation of basic rights and criminality*, and calling for coordination between relevant government departments, including the Ministry of Interior and the Civil Registration Organization, *to resolve some of the problems in this area.*

In **South Sudan**, UNHCR, ASPIRE and United Nations Association of South Sudan, organized **the first Model United Nations at the University of Juba**. Students, acting as delegates from various countries around the globe, were able to talk and engage on matters related to statelessness and climate change in the countries they represented.

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**.

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