



**#IBELONG CAMPAIGN  
TO END STATELESSNESS:**

**Accelerating action  
in the final two years  
of the Campaign**

**NOVEMBER 2022**

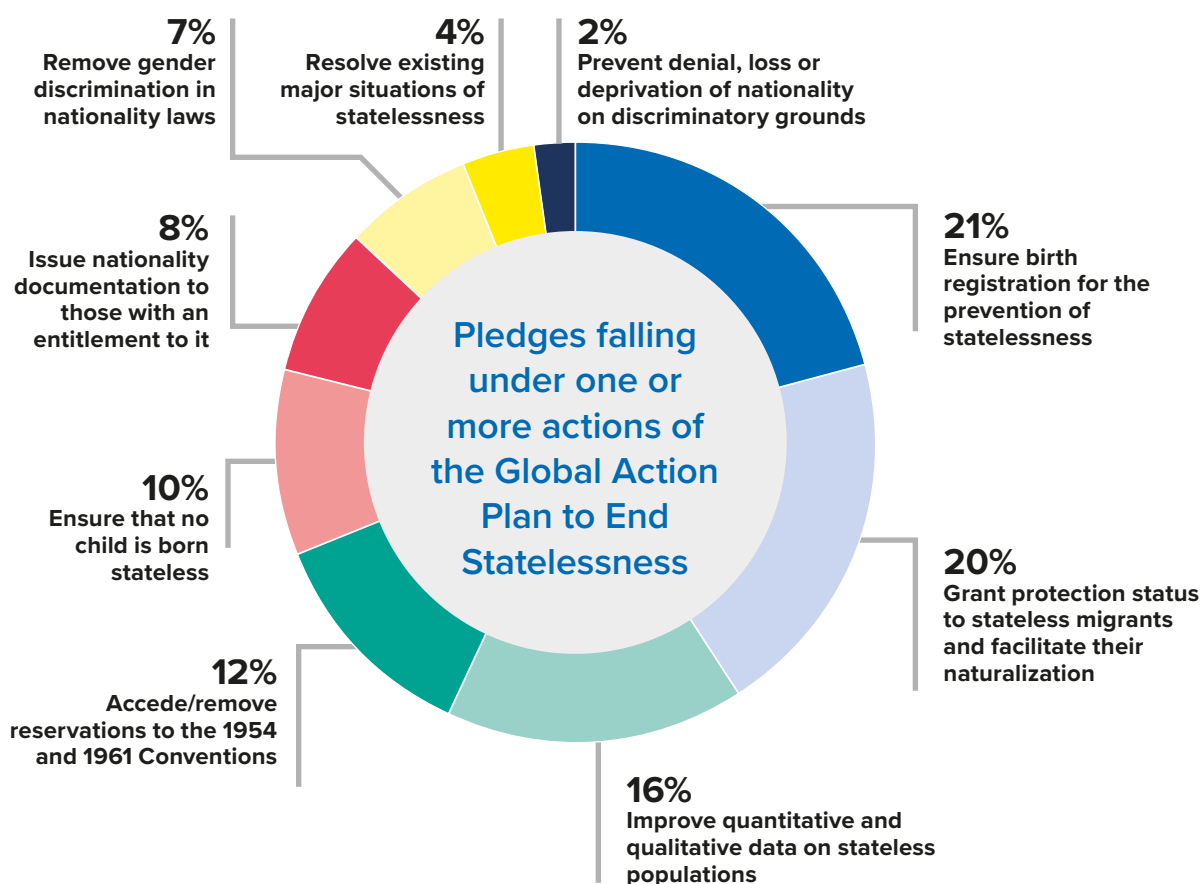
UNHCR launched the #IBelong Campaign to End Statelessness on 4 November 2014 to galvanize States, partner agencies and civil society around ten concrete actions defined in the [Global Action Plan to End Statelessness](#) to identify, prevent and reduce statelessness, and enhance the protection of stateless people. The Campaign has been a powerful platform to advance efforts against statelessness, but more action is required by States to address legal and policy gaps that continue to leave millions of people stateless.

## Key achievements since the start of the #IBelong Campaign:

- **448,300** formerly stateless people acquired a nationality or had it confirmed.
- At least **21** States have adopted National Action Plans.
- **Kyrgyzstan** resolved all known cases of statelessness and **12** other States made considerable progress in eradicating statelessness on their territory.
- **13** States introduced safeguards in their nationality law to prevent childhood statelessness.
- **3** States removed gender discrimination from their nationality law allowing mothers to confer nationality to their children on an equal basis as fathers.
- **21** States have established statelessness determination procedures and **16** States introduced procedures for facilitated naturalization for stateless migrants.
- **13** States acceded to the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons
- **17** States acceded to the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness.

# Advancing the implementation of statelessness pledges

The 2019 High-Level Segment on Statelessness and Global Refugee Forum generated a total of 279 pledges by States. The majority of pledges fall within the scope of one or more of the ten Actions contained within the Global Action Plan (see chart below). Thus far, **34 pledges have been fully implemented and 54 partially implemented**. Some notable achievements include the removal of gender discrimination from the nationality law of Liberia, the establishment of statelessness determination procedures in Albania and Côte d'Ivoire, and the accession to one or both of the UN Statelessness Conventions by Malta, Iceland, North Macedonia and the Philippines. While these are important and consequential advancements, two-thirds of the pledges are yet to be acted upon. The implementation of these pledges would significantly advance efforts to close legal and policy gaps that lead to statelessness. UNHCR will continue to advocate with States and provide technical and operational assistance towards the implementation of pledges.



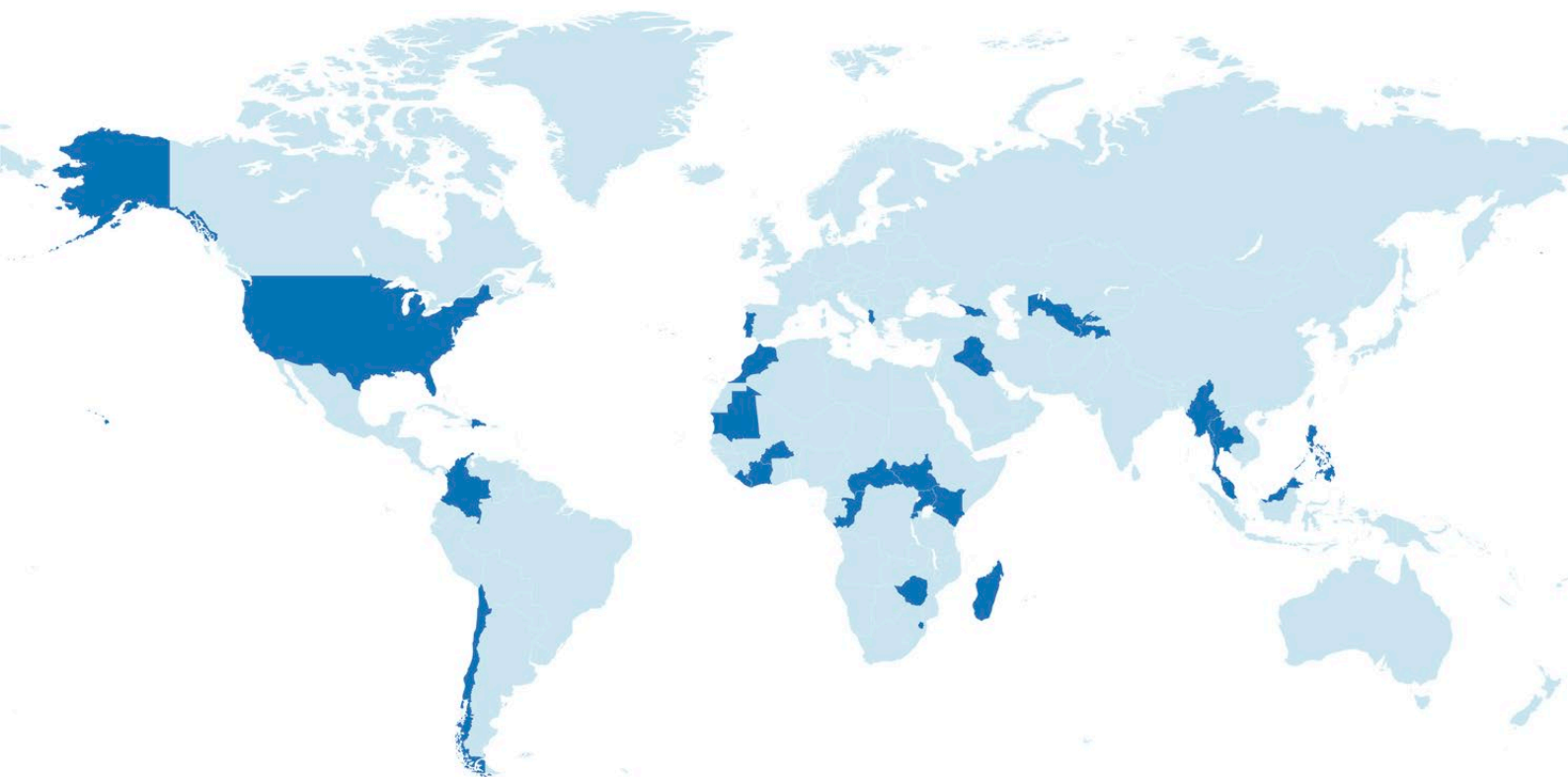
# Eight years into the Campaign: Key approaches that have propelled change

Drawing on lessons from countries that have made significant progress on statelessness, the below strategies and actions have proven to be important for affecting change:

- **Government-led coordination mechanisms to address statelessness**, engaging a wide range of government authorities and institutions, and appointment of government focal points on statelessness.
- Developing and implementing **national action plans** on ending statelessness.
- **Generating data on statelessness** and identifying stateless persons and persons at risk of statelessness to guide responses on the reduction and prevention of statelessness.
- Inclusion of statelessness issues in **national development programs**.
- Engagement of UN agencies and United Nations Country Teams on statelessness and integration of statelessness in **UN-wide processes** and frameworks.
- Mobilization and capacity building of a wide range of **civil society actors**, including NGOs, academia, and faith-based organizations to engage on statelessness.
- **Consulting stateless persons and persons at risk of statelessness** in planning and design of programs.

# UNHCR Priority Operations in 2023-2024

For the final two years of the #IBelong Campaign UNHCR will continue working in all its operations to support States to address statelessness, including through pledge implementation. Additionally, 28 priority operations have been selected for amplified advocacy efforts and operational support. The operations have been selected on the basis of expressed political will to address statelessness, demonstrated through pledges, and/or because there are critical statelessness issues in the country.



UNHCR's priority operations for 2023-2024: Albania, Burkina Faso, Central African Republic, Chile, Colombia, Republic of Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Dominican Republic, Eswatini, Georgia, Iraq, Kenya, Liberia, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mauritania, Morocco, Myanmar, the Philippines, Portugal, Rwanda, South Sudan, Tajikistan, Thailand, United States of America, Uganda, Uzbekistan, Zimbabwe.

# Targeted actions of the 28 priority operations

In the final two years of the Campaign, UNHCR's priority operations are focusing efforts to achieve progress on the below Actions of the Global Action Plan to End Statelessness. To ensure a coherent approach to addressing statelessness and encourage ongoing action, UNHCR is working with States to develop National Action Plans to End Statelessness where they do not yet exist and support the implementation of existing ones. UNHCR is also supporting the creation and strengthening of national and regional civil society organization networks to foster the engagement of stateless activists and civil society.

## Action 1:

### Resolve existing major situations of statelessness

Most of the major statelessness situations involve *in-situ* stateless populations, people who are born in and have links with the country in which they live without a real connection to another country. Often these populations have been stateless for generations. The only solution to their plight is usually the grant or confirmation of nationality by the country of residence. Implementing this action typically involves changes to legislation or government policy, as well as one-off measures to recognize identified groups of stateless people as nationals.

#### Examples of relevant targeted actions

- In the **Philippines** UNHCR is supporting efforts to confirm nationality of people of Indonesian and Japanese descent who have lived in the Philippines for generations.
- UNHCR is supporting the government of **Uzbekistan** to grant nationality to recognized stateless people following the adoption of a progressive nationality law in 2020 and further amendments in 2021.

**Action 2:****Ensure that no child is born stateless**

The majority of the world's stateless people have lacked nationality since birth. Their parents could not confer their nationality or were stateless themselves, or the child was abandoned and the parents were unknown. The introduction of three key safeguards in the nationality law averts statelessness in these situations. The safeguards prevent statelessness by granting nationality to (a) children born on the territory who would otherwise be stateless, (b) abandoned children, and (c) children born abroad to nationals who would otherwise be stateless.

*Examples of relevant targeted actions*

- UNHCR, IOM and UNICEF continue working with the Government of **Colombia** to remove barriers to the acquisition of nationality for children born in the country to Venezuelan parents.
- UNHCR is supporting the Government of **the Philippines** in implementing a recent law reform which stipulates that foundlings are presumed natural-born Filipino citizens.
- UNHCR is advocating with the government of the **Central African Republic** to insert a safeguard in the nationality code to grant nationality to children born in the country if they would otherwise be stateless.

**Action 3:****Remove gender discrimination from nationality laws**

A key cause of statelessness is gender discrimination in nationality laws which prevent women from passing on their nationality to their children. This leads to statelessness where the father is stateless, unknown, unable or unwilling to complete administrative requirements to confer his nationality. Addressing this cause requires law reform which grants women equal rights in conferring nationality to their children as men. Such a measure should have retroactive effect.

*Examples of relevant targeted actions*

- UNHCR is reinforcing its advocacy efforts for the removal of gender discrimination in the nationality laws of **Eswatini** and **Malaysia**, in order to allow mothers to confer their nationality to their children on an equal basis as fathers.

**Action 6:**

## Grant protection status to stateless migrants and facilitate their naturalization

While most stateless people remain in the country of birth, they may also become migrants or refugees. Many are not recognized as stateless, face serious human rights problems and lack legal residence. The 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons establishes a regime to protect the rights of stateless people. By introducing a dedicated statelessness determination procedure, States can effectively identify stateless persons and grant them protection status. To resolve their plight, States are urged to facilitate the naturalization of stateless people.

*Examples of relevant targeted actions*

- UNCHR is supporting the introduction of statelessness determination procedures in countries hosting stateless migrants and refugees, such as **Chile, Colombia** and **Portugal**.

**Action 7:**

## Ensure birth registration for the prevention of statelessness

Lack of birth registration can put people at risk of statelessness as a birth certificate provides proof of where a person was born and parentage – key information needed to establish a nationality. Minorities whose ties to a country may be disputed are at particular risk of statelessness if their birth is not registered. Depending on the context, implementing this Action requires States to remove barriers to birth registration, undertake targeted campaigns to address low levels of birth registration among minorities and establish procedures for late birth registration.

*Examples of relevant targeted actions*

- UNHCR, UNICEF and UNDP are advocating with the Government of **Tajikistan** to enhance access to birth registration regardless of the legal status of parents.
- In **Kenya**, UNHCR and partners support the civil registration authorities to facilitate access to late birth registration for persons at risk of statelessness, including the Pemba people born in Kenya, to further establish an entitlement to a nationality.
- UNHCR works with the Government of **Rwanda** to ensure that by 2024, all refugees born in Rwanda, irrespective of their age, have a birth certificate to mitigate risks of statelessness and facilitate access to durable solutions.



**Action 8:**

## Issue nationality documentation to those with entitlement to it

Some individuals may have an entitlement to a nationality but are left stateless because they cannot acquire documents to prove their nationality, including due to discrimination. To facilitate access to nationality documentation, States need to ensure that procedures to obtain such documents are accessible, affordable and implemented in a non-discriminatory manner.

*Examples of relevant targeted actions*

- UNHCR is working with the Government of **South Sudan** to ensure fair and efficient access to nationality documents for populations at high risk of statelessness.
- In **Burkina Faso**, UNHCR supports the Government to issue proof of nationality documents to border populations who are at high risk of statelessness.
- UNHCR is working with the Government of **Iraq** to ensure the issuance of nationality documentation to stateless people and those at risk of statelessness, including internally displaced populations.

**Action 9:**

## Accede to the UN Statelessness Conventions

The 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness are the key international conventions on statelessness. The 1954 Convention establishes minimum standards of treatment for stateless persons and the 1961 Convention requires States to establish safeguards in their nationality laws to prevent statelessness at birth and later in life. Implementation of these Conventions and the broader range of international legal standards is key to addressing statelessness.

*Examples of relevant targeted actions*

- UNHCR is advocating with the Government of **Madagascar** to bring its nationality legislation in line with the 1954 and 1961 Conventions and accede to both Conventions.
- UNHCR is advocating with the Governments of the **Central African Republic** and **Morocco** for accession to the two UN statelessness conventions.

**Action 10:**

## Improve quantitative and qualitative data on stateless populations

Quantitative and qualitative data on stateless populations is essential for States to adequately address statelessness. It allows States to understand the profile of the affected populations and the causes of their lack of nationality. Information on the situation of stateless population can be gathered using a range of methods, including analyses of civil registration data, population censuses, targeted surveys and studies.

### *Examples of relevant targeted actions*

- UNHCR is supporting the Government of **Georgia** to finalize a countrywide campaign to identify stateless people and those at risk of statelessness and facilitate the issuance of documentation to them.
- In **Eswatini**, UNHCR is supporting a qualitative study on statelessness.
- In Liberia and the **Philippines**, UNHCR is advocating with the Government to include questions on statelessness in the national population census.
- In **Rwanda**, UNHCR is working with the Government to complete a nation-wide identification survey for stateless persons and people with undetermined nationality and to develop a strategy to resolve their plight.

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## The 28 priority operations will be working towards the following results:

- The **resolution of (risks of) statelessness** of specific groups in 6 states and the introduction of procedures for **facilitated naturalization** for stateless people in 5 states.
- The amendment of nationality laws to **prevent childhood statelessness** in 6 states either by removing gender discrimination to allow women to confer nationality to their children on an equal basis with men or by introducing legal safeguards to prevent a child from being born stateless.
- The introduction of **statelessness determination procedures** to grant protection status to stateless people in 5 states and the improvement of the enjoyment of rights of stateless people in 3 states.
- The **removal of barriers to birth and nationality documentation** for specific groups at risk of statelessness in 12 states.
- The **establishment of National Action Plans to End Statelessness** by 3 states.

## Supporting regional and global pledges and initiatives

UNHCR is also supporting global and regional-level work to address statelessness, including pledges made by inter-governmental entities, regional civil society networks, and other UN agencies. UNHCR for instance supports the African Union Commission to implement its pledge on the adoption of the draft Protocol to the African Charter on Human Rights on the Right to a Nationality and the Eradication of Statelessness in Africa. UNHCR is also supporting the Pan African Parliament with the development of a model law on nationality which is drafted in light of the draft Protocol. Other global and regional entities that UNHCR is working with to implement their pledges include the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Central Asian Network on Statelessness, the European Network on Statelessness, and the World Council of Churches, among other entities. To improve statelessness statistics, UNHCR is supporting the development of the International Recommendations on Statelessness Statistics, which is led by the Expert Group on Refugee, IDP and Statelessness Statistics.

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