

The Campaign to End Statelessness

July 2018 Update



#IBelong

Join us in our Campaign to End Statelessness



In cooperation with
UNITED COLORS
OF BENETTON.

Mobilizing governments and civil society

To mark the mid-way point of the **#IBelong Campaign to End Statelessness**, UNHCR will convene a **High Level Event on Statelessness** as part of its annual **Executive Committee** meeting in October 2019 in Geneva. States will be invited to showcase achievements since the launch of the Campaign, in line with the **Global Action Plan to End Statelessness**. In addition, States will have the opportunity to deliver pledges to address statelessness during the remaining five years of the Campaign.

In preparation for the 2019 High Level Event, two regional preparatory meetings have taken place. On 13-14 June, a **Regional Preparatory Meeting for the High Level Event on Statelessness** took place in Santiago, Chile. During the meeting, Government representatives from twenty-five different Latin American States highlighted their achievements to date and identified possible commitments to present at the 2019 High Level Event. In addition, UNHCR presented an innovative evaluation and follow-up mechanism called **“Towards Zero Statelessness”** and invited all participating countries to endorse it. This mechanism helps States to determine their progress towards the eradication of statelessness at the national level as well as to identify challenges and measures to address them.



Americas Regional Preparatory Meeting for the 2019 High Level Event on Statelessness in Santiago, Chile
©UNHCR/E. Paz



Representatives from ESCAP, UNICEF, the Government of Kazakhstan and UNHCR during the regional meeting on “The Right to Legal Identity and Prevention of Statelessness in Central Asia” ©S. Gurzhin

On 7-8 June, the **Ministry of Justice of Kazakhstan** and UNHCR convened a regional meeting with Government and civil society representatives from **Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan** on “The Right to Legal Identity and Prevention of Statelessness in Central Asia.” States reaffirmed their partnership with UNHCR, UNICEF and ESCAP to ensure birth registration for the prevention of childhood statelessness. Government representatives expressed their intention to participate in the 2019 High Level Event and to share achievements and, insofar as possible, present pledges to help end statelessness by 2024.

On 10 April, in Antananarivo, Madagascar, UNHCR and UNICEF co-hosted the **Indian Ocean Islands Roundtable on the Prevention of Statelessness**. The roundtable, which included the participation of Government focal points from the Comoros, Madagascar and Mauritius, focused on the [Coalition on Every Child’s Right to a Nationality](#), the 2019 High Level Event, and the draft [African Union Protocol on the Right to a Nationality and the Eradication of Statelessness](#). During the roundtable, participants agreed to enhance regional cooperation related to statelessness and UNHCR encouraged early consideration of pledges that States could make at the 2019 High Level Event.



Indonesian Consul for Immigration, Majid Agus, presents an amended birth certificate to an applicant who filed for administrative correction his birth documents ©UNHCR/M.Palma

On 17-18 April, UNHCR conducted a **Stakeholders Forum for Local Civil Registrars (LCRs)** in South Cotabato, Sarangani and Davao Occidental in **the Philippines**. The forum created a platform for LCRs to develop ways of facilitating late birth registration and administrative correction of birth certificates for persons of Indonesian descent. On 24 April, a Strategic Planning Meeting on the **National Action Plan to End Statelessness (NAP)** was held in Manila. Participants included Government agency representatives who developed and agreed on concrete and strategic approaches towards achieving the goals in the NAP, including accession to the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness and elaborating a process for registration that would confirm citizenship of the Sama Bajau population.

On 24-27 April, the newly nominated **Government Focal Points on Statelessness** from 11 Member States of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) convened in Naivasha, Kenya for the first [regional strategic workshop](#) to advance the [Brazzaville Declaration](#) and [Action Plan](#) adopted in October 2017. The Focal Points **endorsed a Roadmap**, in which each Government committed in principle to forming a statelessness task-force by June 2018, preparing a draft National Action Plan by August 2018, and initiating the process of accession to the Statelessness Conventions by no later than August 2019.

On 6-9 May, the World Council of Churches (WCC) organized a Workshop on [Statelessness in the Caribbean Context](#). The workshop brought together churches and NGO representatives from the Caribbean to promote civil society initiatives aimed at ending statelessness in the region. Participants shared advocacy tools and resources, and discussed ways in which WCC member churches and partners can contribute to the implementation of the [Global Action Plan](#) and the [Brazil Plan of Action](#).

On 8 May, UNHCR hosted a seminar on “**Strengthening South African Academia in Preventing Statelessness and Protection Stateless Persons in Southern Africa**” at the University of Cape Town. The sessions, which were facilitated by UNHCR, the University of Cape Town and Lawyers for Human Rights, brought together students, academic staff and representatives from civil society organisations to discuss existing gaps in statelessness research.



Government Focal Points on Statelessness from ICGLR Member States come together to drive forward the Brazzaville Declaration and Action Plan, Naivasha, Kenya © S.Mwangi

On 11 May, UNHCR and the Scalabrini Centre of Cape Town, South Africa, hosted a **roundtable with persons who are stateless or at risk of statelessness**. Participants shared their daily challenges in grappling with their lack of citizenship and highlighted the need for a regional approach to address statelessness in Southern Africa. The roundtable will help to shape UNHCR's advocacy strategy and activities in the region.

On 15-17 May, a **Georgian delegation** conducted a study visit to **Bosnia and Herzegovina** under the framework of the [joint OSCE/ODIHR-UNHCR project on statelessness](#). The delegates exchanged good practices on outreach, communication and provision of free legal aid to stateless Roma communities.



Georgian delegation during a study visit to Bosnia and Herzegovina © UNHCR/V. Pilav



Annual Global NGO Statelessness Retreat, France ©UNHCR

On 25-26 June, UNHCR convened the **7th Annual Global NGO Statelessness Retreat**. Participants from 27 NGOs based in 20 different countries and UNHCR staff working in different locations met in Divonne-les-Bains, France. There were many first-time participants, including both grassroots and global NGOs, who shared their achievements, challenges and future outlook in advancing the goal of ending statelessness. Aside from exchanging insights and updates from their respective regions, participants discussed NGO participation in the 2019 High Level Event, and made commitments to engage in concrete advocacy activities before, during and after the event.

On 27 June, UNHCR and the European Network on Nationality organized a session called **“Addressing statelessness through a whole-of-society approach”** at UNHCR’s [Annual Consultations with NGOs](#) in Geneva, Switzerland. The session explored means to ensure that stateless persons and community groups play a prominent role in responding to statelessness, as well as new tools to prevent and resolve statelessness, including a [Community Based Practitioner’s Guide on Documenting Citizenship and Other Forms of Legal Identity](#) and a [Statelessness Index for Europe](#). Panelists included members of the Open Society Justice Initiative, the European Network on Statelessness, the Haki Centre and Mr. Thomas Nguli, the Chairman of the formerly stateless Makonde community in Kenya.

Mr. Filippo Grandi, UN High Commissioner for Refugees and Mr. Thomas Nguli display the Kenyan passport Mr. Nguli recently received ©UNHCR/S.Hopper



Implementation of the Global Action Plan

In line with **Action 2 (Ensure that no child is born stateless)** and **Action 6 (Grant protection status to stateless migrants and facilitate their naturalization)**, on 9 May, **Paraguay's Chamber of Deputies** approved a draft law on the "Protection and Facilitation of Naturalization of Stateless Persons". The draft bill, if adopted, would introduce a number of reforms, including a statelessness determination procedure and facilitated naturalization for stateless migrants. The bill also provides for the right of children of Paraguayan parents born abroad to acquire Paraguayan nationality, in case they cannot acquire any other nationality.

Also with respect to **Action 2** and **Action 6**, in June the **Icelandic Parliament** adopted a bill aligning the Nationality Act with the standards set out in the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness. The new law entered into force on 1 July and provides, among other things, that a person born stateless in Iceland may acquire citizenship after 3 years of habitual residence in the country, and it reduces to 5 years the residency period required for naturalization applications from stateless persons. This achievement builds upon a series of previous efforts, most notably the 2014 study "[Mapping Statelessness in Iceland](#)", the establishment of a National Action Plan to end statelessness, and provisions of the 2016 Aliens Act which aligned Icelandic legislation with the standards of the 1954 Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons.

With respect to **Action 2** and **Action 7 (Ensure birth registration for the prevention of statelessness)**, on 3 May, the **European Parliament** adopted a [Resolution on the protection of children in migration](#). The Resolution calls for the EU and its Member States to ensure that the prevention of childhood statelessness is adequately addressed in national laws, in accordance with Article 7 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

In line with **Action 5 (Prevent statelessness in cases of State succession)** and **Action 8 (Issue nationality documentation to those with entitlement to it)**, the **European Court of Human Rights** issued its judgment in the case of [Hoti v. Croatia](#), in which UNHCR submitted a third-party [written intervention](#). The case concerned a

stateless migrant living in Croatia who had been unable to regularize his residence status since arriving in the country in 1979. The Court ruled in favor of the applicant, finding that the Croatian authorities had failed to provide a procedure for the regularization of the applicant's temporary residence, contrary to Croatia's obligation under the 1954 Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons.

To promote the implementation of **Actions 7 and 8**, on 28 June in Geneva, Switzerland, the Open Society Justice Initiative, Namati and UNHCR launched a new [Community-Based Practitioner's Guide on Documenting Citizenship and Other Forms of Legal Identity](#). Drawing on the experience of more than 30 organisations engaged in individual assistance, the Guide is aimed primarily at capacitating organisations to help clients access documentary proof of citizenship and other forms of proof of legal identity, such as birth certificates.

In accordance with **Action 9 (Accede to the UN Statelessness Conventions)**, on 11 April, Chile deposited its instruments of accession to both statelessness conventions, bringing the total number of Parties to the 1954 Convention to 90 and the total number of Parties to the 1961 Convention to 71. Both treaties will enter into force for Chile on 10 July 2018.

With regard to **Action 10 (Improve quantitative and qualitative data on stateless populations)**, UNHCR and Forcier Consulting launched a [Study of Statelessness in South Sudan](#), which examines the legal and administrative causes of statelessness in the country. The report looks at practices of the Directorate of Nationality, Passports and Immigration, examines shortcomings in the nationality legislation, and considers how factors such as displacement and lack of birth registration may increase risks of statelessness in South Sudan. Furthermore, the report highlights the situation of nomadic and trans-boundary communities at risk of statelessness, including their limited access to basic rights and services. The study's conclusions will inform the development of South Sudan's forthcoming National Action Plan to end statelessness.

The Impact of Media

On 7 June, an [information portal](#) and a [video on statelessness in the Great Lakes region](#) were launched to showcase research, news, and testimonies on statelessness in the region. Among other things, the portal features [materials from the Brazzaville Declaration process](#) in the four ICGLR languages (English, French, Arabic and Portuguese). The new video highlights the situation of people affected by statelessness in the region and documents commitments made by governments to address their plight.



Study of Statelessness in South Sudan recently launched by UNHCR and Forcier Consulting

Upcoming Events

On 17 July in New York, the United States

The [Global Campaign for Equal Nationality Rights](#), UNHCR, UNICEF, UN Women and others will organize a High-Level Side Event on “Achieving Gender Equal Nationality Laws: Regional Lessons and Opportunities” during the [High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development](#). The event is co-sponsored by the Permanent Mission of Tunisia and the Office of the Permanent Observer Mission of the League of Arab States and will highlight momentum towards ending gender discrimination in nationality laws in the Middle East and Africa.

On 24 – 25 July in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

The Global Campaign for Equal Nationality Rights, in partnership with a group of Malaysian human rights NGOs and the Malaysian Bar Association, will hold a regional workshop on ending gender discrimination in nationality laws that will highlight the benefits of gender-equal nationality laws and practices.

On 30 July – 3 August in Tilburg, the Netherlands

The annual [Statelessness Summer Course](#) will take place at Tilburg University in the Netherlands. The course covers statelessness globally and draws participants from all regions of the world, including government officials, NGO representatives and UNHCR staff.

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!



In cooperation with

UNITED COLORS
OF BENETTON.