

# The Campaign to End Statelessness

July – September 2018 Update



# #IBelong

Join us in our Campaign to End Statelessness



In cooperation with

UNITED COLORS OF BENETTON.

## Mobilizing governments and civil society

On 27 June, the Department of Justice of **the Philippines** issued Circular No. 26 which grants rights to **persons of Indonesian descent** (PIDs) whose nationality was previously undetermined. PIDs who are recognized as Indonesian nationals in the Philippines may now enjoy regularized migratory status and access to basic rights, including the right to work legally and to travel.

In July a meeting between UNHCR and the new Chairperson of the State Registration Services (SRS) of the **Kyrgyz Republic** resulted in **agreement to jointly resolve** the remaining 1,200 cases of statelessness by early 2019. In addition, the Chairperson agreed to pursue amendments to the law and regulations so that all births will be registered, irrespective of the parents' documentation and/or legal status.

In July, The Malawian Ministry of Home Affairs & Internal Security, Lawyers for Human Rights (LHR) and UNHCR co-hosted a **national roundtable** in Lilongwe, **Malawi** on the Prevention of Statelessness and the Protection of Stateless Persons. Participants at the roundtable agreed to work together toward the deposit of Malawi's instruments to accession to the 1961 Convention on the

Reduction of Statelessness; closing legal gaps in the Citizenship Act; and improvements to the civil registration and vital statistics system.

In July, the **UNHCR-UNICEF Coalition on Every Child's Right to a Nationality** in **Albania** presented the findings of the **Mapping study** supported by UNHCR to Parliament. UNHCR and UNICEF were requested to propose legislative and administrative amendments to address the identified gaps in law and policy, and Government Representatives reaffirmed Albania's aspiration to end statelessness by 2024.

During 3-5 July, UNHCR and the **European Migration Network** co-organized a retreat in Athens, Greece, focused on the **Platform of Statelessness**. Government and civil society participants from **20 European Union Member States and Norway** came together to develop the capacity of the platform's members on statelessness and to strengthen the cooperation between the platform and civil society.





Students during an activity to discuss statelessness at Daitobunka University, Tokyo, Japan ©Daitobunka University

In Tokyo, **Japan**, UNHCR supported two events on statelessness with academia. On 5 July, UNHCR facilitated a workshop entitled “Statelessness Academy” at Daitobunka University with young statelessness advocates to discuss how best to raise awareness. Additionally, on 3 August, the Lawyers’ Network for Foreigners and the Study Group on Statelessness in Japan, with support from UNHCR, organized an “International Standards related to Nationality Law” seminar to inspire participating lawyers, scholars and NGO staff members to evaluate Japanese nationality law in light of international standards and trends.

On 14-22 July, youth from around **40 European countries** and UNHCR discussed how to end statelessness in Europe during the **Vilnius 2018 - 87th International Session of the European Youth Parliament**. Young participants met in Lithuania and, among other things, welcomed UNHCR’s #IBelong Campaign, called for European states to accede to the two UN Statelessness Conventions and adopt statelessness determination procedures. The proposals of European youth on how to end statelessness in Europe can be found in the **Resolution booklet** of the session.

In July, UNHCR and the Female Lawyers Organization organized two advocacy events on the **acquisition of nationality for foundlings in Côte d’Ivoire**. On 17 July, twelve judges working specifically on nationality and civil registration matters participated in a workshop to discuss the challenges faced by foundlings in obtaining Ivorian nationality. On 19 July, a second workshop took place with lawyers to promote a future network of legal practitioners that would support nationality requests for foundlings.



Young participants of the EYP International session in Lithuania supporting the #IBelong Campaign ©European Youth Parliament/J. Adamski





Members of the “Citizenship Taskforce” which presented Members of Parliament in Malaysia with recommendations for gender equal nationality laws ©Star2.com

On 16 and 17 July, representatives from 58 countries and 6 international organisations, including the President of Somalia and the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs, gathered in Brussels to participate in the **2<sup>nd</sup> Somalia Partnership Forum**. The Forum’s closing **Communiqué** commended the Federal Government of Somalia’s commitment to acceding to the two statelessness conventions.

Several important meetings were held in the **Republic of Congo**. On 19 July, UNHCR organised an **information meeting** with members of Parliament in Brazzaville on statelessness and refugee issues. Over 150 MPs took part, and a Declaration was issued by the Vice President of the National Assembly promising to look into national legislation and push for the accession to the statelessness conventions. Additionally, two events were held in August. UNHCR, in conjunction with the African diplomatic corps and the Foreign Affairs Ministry, conducted an **awareness raising meeting** on statelessness, where over 60 diplomats from African countries discussed the role of the diplomatic community in the fight against statelessness, as well as a **civil society discussion on statelessness**, which resulted in the creation of a human rights defenders’ network on the prevention of statelessness.

On 24 July, the **Central Asia Statelessness NGO Network’s** annual meeting was held in Almaty, Kazakhstan, to discuss and align priorities in preparation for the 2019 High Level Event on Statelessness in Geneva. Participants agreed to proactively use the

Network’s **website** for sharing statelessness best practices and provision of online consultations to stateless persons and persons at risk of statelessness.

On 24 and 25 July, the Global Campaign for Equal Nationality Rights, in partnership with a group of **Malaysian NGOs**, organised a “National Consultation on Equal Nationality Rights for Women and Men”. The consultation resulted in the adoption and submission of **thirteen recommendations** to the Government, which include Constitutional reforms as well as policies and procedures for accountability and temporary measures to address rights violations experienced by affected persons pending reform.

On 8 August, the **Royal Thai Government granted citizenship** to three boys and their football coach who were rescued from a cave in Chiang Rai in an extraordinary operation led by Thai authorities. By providing the boys with citizenship, Thailand paves the way for them to achieve their aspirations and to participate as full members of society.

In August, UNHCR, the Ministry of Security and Social Development, the Directorate of Women’s Affairs and the Women’s Centre for Human Rights organised a workshop in Khartoum, **Sudan**, on the enhancement of **women’s rights in nationality laws**. Sponsored by the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Security and Social Development, the workshop issued a recommendation that the 1994 Sudanese Nationality Act be reformed to remove provisions that discriminate against women.

On 14 August, the **Organization of American States** (OAS) organized the **45<sup>th</sup> Course on International Law** in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. This course is organized annually by the Inter-American Juridical Committee and the International Law Department of OAS and this year for the first time it included a module on statelessness.

On 14 August, the **Malaysian** Prime Minister [announced](#) that the Government will grant citizenship to all permanent residency holders over the age of 60. As some permanent residents are stateless, this is a positive step towards achieving a commitment from the Malaysian government to **resolve statelessness** amongst the Indian community within 100 days of being in office. Although that commitment initially specified the Indian community, the Government has since pledged that the move will be applicable to affected persons from all ethnicities.



Caroline Masuki and Sara Alleluia, who spoke about their personal experiences with statelessness in South Africa at a recent Conference, pictured with Melanie Khanna, Chief of UNHCR's Statelessness Section ©S. Mahokoto

On 14 August, Lawyers for Human Rights hosted the 3rd Annual Meeting of the **Southern African Development Community Civil Society Network on Statelessness** in Windhoek, Namibia. The meeting ended with the adoption of three resolutions calling upon governments to adopt and ratify the African Union Protocol on the Right to a Nationality and the Eradication of Statelessness, ensure universal birth registration, and adopt or strengthen legal safeguards against childhood statelessness.

On 29 - 30 August, the University of Stellenbosch, the ROSA Luxemburg Foundation and UNHCR hosted a conference in Stellenbosch, **South Africa** on the role of **faith-based organisations** in the prevention of statelessness and the protection of stateless persons. The conference resulted in agreement on a number of activities to be jointly taken to raise more awareness of statelessness in local communities, advocate for the protection of stateless persons, and promote academic research on statelessness.

On 6-7 September in Washington D.C. the **World Bank's ID4D Initiative** convened a workshop entitled **"Identification for Development: Principles to Practice."** UNHCR, UNICEF, UNDP, Open Society Justice Initiative, and many other organizations participated with the objective of sharing knowledge and insights on country engagement to support implementation of SDG 16.9's promise of legal identity for all. Three pillars are key to the World Bank's engagement with governments to improve their identity systems, including their CRVS systems: inclusion, design, and governance. UNHCR is providing the Bank information on statelessness and the issues in law and practice that contribute to it so as to help ensure that no one is left behind as ID systems are improved.

On 17-20 September, UNHCR, in partnership with the **International Institute of International Law (IIHL)**, organised the second **Arabic Statelessness course** in Sanremo, Italy. The training brought together 30 government officials from countries across the Middle East and North Africa.



## Implementation of the Global Action Plan

In line with **Action 1 (Resolve existing major situations of statelessness)**, notable progress took place in Central Asia. On 12 September 1,654 persons were granted citizenship of the **Kyrgyz Republic**. They included refugees, stateless and undocumented persons residing in the Kyrgyz Republic, consistent with the Presidential decree issued on 30 July. On 24 September, a Presidential decree in **Turkmenistan [granted citizenship](#)** to 735 stateless persons residing in the country.

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 17 September, the President of the Republic in Paraguay signed a law to protect stateless persons and to facilitate their naturalization. This is the first comprehensive law adopted based on the **[UNHCR Draft Articles on the Protection of Stateless Persons and the Facilities for their naturalization](#)**. Among other things, this law eliminates the residency requirement for the acquisition of nationality by children born abroad to Paraguayan nationals where the children would otherwise be stateless.

With respect to **Action 7 (Ensure birth registration for the prevention of statelessness)**, as of August, the Chadian Directorate of Political Affairs and Civil Status, through the project “Support for Citizenship and Prevention of Statelessness,” had issued approximately 19,000 birth certificates for children of refugees and refugee-hosting communities at risk of statelessness.

On 28 August, UNHCR signed a partnership agreement with the **Sudanese Civil Registry** in order to promote the right to birth registration and facilitate access to birth certificates and late birth registration for refugee children at risk of statelessness. The project aims to raise awareness on birth registration processes with a mobile campaign and enable 13,000 children of concern to UNHCR to be registered.



The former stateless family, the Saydaliyevs, are happy to receive their Kyrgyz passports during an official ceremony on 12 September in Osh, the Kyrgyz Republic ©UNHCR/Z. Dincer



Young Burkinabes show their recently acquired birth certificates in Titao, Burkina Faso ©UNHCR

In July – August, UNHCR supported the Government of **Burkina Faso** in issuing 11,120 birth certificates to populations at risk of statelessness in Ouagadougou and in the north of the country.

UNHCR partner Au secours des Oubliés (SDO) delivered 300 **birth certificates** to populations at risk of statelessness in the **Diffa region, Niger**. UNHCR's partnership with SDO aims at identifying undocumented persons at risk of statelessness among the refugee, internally displaced and returnee populations in the area, as well as supporting the local authorities in providing civil documentation.

Also in line with **Action 7**, and in the framework of the celebration of the first **Anniversary of the Banjul Plan of Action**, on 15-17 August UNHCR organised an activity for the prevention of statelessness in the border region of **Tillabery, Niger**. The project included raising awareness of the importance of birth registration as a tool to prevent statelessness and mobile courts for registering people undocumented children at risk of statelessness from the refugee, IDP and local communities.

In line with **Actions 7 and 8 (Issue nationality documentation to those with entitlement to it)** on 6 – 9 August, the NGO Namati hosted a three-day **paralegal** training workshop in Kwale, **Kenya**, where paralegals from Garissa, Nairobi and Mombasa, working on issues of nationality and identity documentation reviewed changes in law and policy, reinforced capacity on statelessness, and exchanged work experiences. As a result, a five-year national strategy was drawn up, with paralegals committing to continue their work on statelessness and identity documentation through community empowerment approaches.

With respect to **Action 9 (Accede to the UN Statelessness Conventions)**, on 25 September, **Spain** acceded to the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness and, on 27 September, **Haiti** acceded to the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness and the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons. These accessions will bring the total number of Parties to the Conventions to 73 and 91 respectively. In addition, on 19 September, legislators in the **Burundian National Assembly** voted unanimously to approve two accession bills, committing the country to accede to both UN Statelessness Conventions.



In accordance with **Action 10 (Improve quantitative and qualitative data on statelessness)**, on 16 August, UNHCR and the Ivorian National Institute of Statistics (INS), **launched a nation-wide household survey** to map statelessness in Côte d'Ivoire, a first of its type in Africa. The exercise will last for 3 months and will allow the Government of Côte d'Ivoire to better understand the extent of statelessness within its territory and guide all interventions related to the reduction and prevention of statelessness.



Government enumerators prepare to collect information for the nation-wide survey to map statelessness in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire ©UNHCR/L. Farias

## Media Impact of the Campaign

In the Americas, as part of the **Regional Preparatory Meeting for the High Level Event on Statelessness** that took place on 13-14 June in Santiago, Chile, UNHCR produced videos to reflect progress made to date, as well as the commitment of the region towards the eradication of statelessness. Click on the numbers to watch: [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#), [7](#), [8](#).

Throughout the months of July, August and September, **large-scale awareness campaigns and sensitisation activities** took place all around **Côte d'Ivoire** on the statelessness mapping exercise, which debuted on 16 August. With the support of the Regional Directors of the National Institute of Statistics, focus groups were also organized in order to sensitize populations on statelessness, its risks and how to seek assistance.

On 31 July and 4 August, UNHCR held workshops in **Chad** on how journalists and artists can play a role in fighting statelessness. At the end of these activities, journalists and artists who participated signed the **open letter** to End Statelessness as part of the #IBelong Campaign.

On 10 September, UNHCR announced Tuenjai Deetes as this year's **Nansen Award Finalist for Asia**. Deetes is a life-long campaigner for the rights of stateless people in **Thailand** and has spent over 40 years working towards improving the living conditions for hill tribe communities in the country. Since 2008, 100,000 stateless persons have acquired Thai nationality, and the Government has shown a commitment toward resolving statelessness by 2024.

## Upcoming Events

### On 10 October in Strasbourg, France

The European Network on Statelessness (ENS) will [host a reception](#) in the Council of Europe to bring together key stakeholders and provide a forum to discuss the newly launched ENS [Statelessness Index](#), as well as recent action taken by the Council of Europe to address statelessness in Europe. On the same day, ENS, in partnership with the Institute on Statelessness and Inclusion and the European Roma Rights Centre, will hold a [regional #RomaBelong](#) workshop.

### On 16 – 19 October in Sanremo, Italy

The International Institute of Humanitarian Law (IHL), in partnership with UNHCR, will hold its 6th [Course on Statelessness](#) designed for government officials and NGOs.

### On 29 October – 3 November in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea

The African Union will organize a meeting of the Special Technical Committee on Migration, Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons which is expected to lead to the finalization of the text of the Draft Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights on the Specific Aspects on the Right to a Nationality and the Eradication of Statelessness in Africa. This is a critical step before the Protocol is submitted to the Special Technical Committee on Legal Affairs for approval before it is forwarded to the African Union Assembly for adoption, hopefully in 2019.

### On 31 October in Vienna, Austria

The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and UNHCR will hold the 2nd Practical Seminar on Sharing Good Practices on Statelessness among OSCE participating States.

### On 8 – 9 November in Dalat, Vietnam

Viet Nam's Representatives to the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children (ACWC), in partnership with UNHCR, will organize a Regional Consultation Workshop on the ongoing project, "Promoting inclusion and sustainable development in building the ASEAN Community through ensuring the recognition of the legal identity of all women and children in ASEAN".

### On 12 – 14 November in Saly, Senegal

UNHCR will organize a regional coordination meeting in West Africa on the implementation of the Banjul Plan of Action and the 2019 UNHCR High Level Event on Statelessness.

## 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.

[unhcr.org/ibelong](https://unhcr.org/ibelong)