



The #IBelong Campaign:

A Decade of Action to End Statelessness,
2014-2024

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#IBELONG

FOREWORD

FILIPPO GRANDI,
UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES

Ending statelessness within 10 years.

That was the ambition when we launched the [#IBelong](#) campaign in 2014. By raising awareness and mobilizing global support around that ambition, we aimed to address a largely invisible crisis: that of millions of people around the world living in the shadows, without a nationality, unable to assert their most basic human rights. And we have made significant progress.

This report highlights the many achievements and successes of the [#IBelong](#) campaign – from policy reforms that grant women the right to confer nationality to their children to laws that prevent children from being born stateless. In Kenya, Vietnam, or Turkmenistan, we managed to find solutions for communities that had been stateless for generations. These are real, tangible changes that will bring stateless people one step closer to being able to fulfill their rights, to contribute to their communities and their societies more fully.

This progress was only possible because we worked in partnership, by bringing together States, organizations, United Nations agencies, academic institutions and others around a shared purpose. And above all, because we drew inspiration from the advocacy and strength of stateless people, who shared their stories and experiences, and helped drive [#IBelong](#) forward.

But our work is not yet done. Together, let us take this opportunity to reflect on what we have achieved, review what we have learned and forge ahead with renewed resolve.

Statelessness is solvable. Ending statelessness is possible. Let us be ambitious because solutions are within reach.



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CATE BLANCHETT, UNHCR GOODWILL AMBASSADOR

Everyone should have the right to belong. It's something that most of us take for granted: documents to prove that we were born, that we exist. Documents that allow us to navigate life's stages with relative ease.

But today a shocking number of people are stateless, denied even the basic acknowledgement of their existence, belonging nowhere. To deny a person of their nationality is to force them down a path fraught with more obstacles, dangers and uncertainties than most of us ever experience.

Last year at the Global Refugee Forum, I spent time with a young woman named Neha Gurung. Born to a single mother in Nepal, Neha was stateless from the moment she entered the world because Nepalese law doesn't allow women to pass nationality to their children on an equal basis with men. As a result, Neha was met by obstacles at every turn: denied a birth certificate, denied voter registration, and initially denied the chance to pursue her education.

While her peers were busy making future plans and setting career goals, Neha said, her time was consumed by running between government offices with her mother, pleading for documents to prove her existence and to ensure her right to a nationality. She described feeling like a prisoner in her own country.

Neha finally obtained citizenship in 2017 through a decision from the Supreme Court of Nepal, when she was in her early twenties. She passed the bar exam in 2021 and is now a lawyer advocating for thousands of Nepalis who are eligible for nationality but have faced formidable obstacles in obtaining legal identity documentation to confirm their status as citizens.

Stateless people face a life in the shadows through no fault of their own. They may be stateless because the right to nationality is determined by only male bloodlines, or due to ethnic or religious prejudice, or because the country in which they used to be nationals has ceased to exist. It could be because nationality laws fail to ensure no one is rendered stateless, or due to bureaucratic obstacles that make it difficult - or impossible - to acquire or prove one's citizenship or have a birth registered.

The good news is that statelessness is a problem that can, with political will, be solved.

In the past 10 years, there has been remarkable global progress around the world in addressing the situations that leave people without a nationality, through new laws and policies. Since 2014, more than half a million stateless people have gained citizenship around the world: 20 countries have improved rights for stateless people, 13 countries have passed laws to ensure that no child is born stateless, and one country – Kyrgyzstan – has resolved all known cases of statelessness in its territory.

The #IBelong Campaign has changed lives, but there is still more to be done to address statelessness. When we met, Neha emphasized the need for global leaders to help empower and amplify the voices of stateless individuals who have already faced so much trauma and so many obstacles.

We must make sure that anyone still living without nationality is given the right to be recognized and included, so that no child is born stateless, and everyone can unlock their potential as future citizens.

IBelong Campaign Milestones

Launch of the #IBelong Campaign and the Global Action Plan to End Statelessness

The #IBelong Campaign aims to end statelessness through legal advocacy and collaboration with governments and partners around the globe. The Global Action Plan to End Statelessness sets out a guiding framework comprising 10 key actions.

2014

Adoption of the Brazil Declaration and Plan of Action

Representatives from 28 countries and three territories in Latin America and the Caribbean adopted a road map to address new displacement trends and end statelessness.

Abidjan Declaration on Eradication of Statelessness

The [Declaration](#) contains 25 commitments to eradicate statelessness made by the States belonging to the Economic Community of West African States. In 2017, the accompanying Banjul Declaration was adopted to support the implementation of these commitments.

2015

Formation of the Friends of the #IBelong Campaign to End Statelessness

In advance of the one-year anniversary of the campaign, a [Friends Group](#) was formed, composed of Geneva-based diplomatic missions of States, dedicated to raising visibility of key issues and opportunities, as well as fostering joint action and high-level advocacy.

Release of the “I Am Here, I Belong: The Urgent Need to End Childhood Statelessness” [Report](#)

UNHCR spoke to over 250 youth, parents, government officials and civil society organization staff in seven countries about the experiences and challenges of childhood statelessness. It was the first time that many of these young people had talked about what it was like to be stateless.

2016

Establishment of the Coalition on Every Child's Right to a Nationality

Jointly led by [UNHCR](#) and [UNICEF](#), [this Coalition](#) was created to strengthen international cooperation by raising awareness of childhood statelessness and addressing key issues such as gender discrimination and birth registration.

Brazzaville Declaration and Plan of Action

Member States of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region affirmed the right to nationality as a fundamental human right, expressed joint support for UNHCR's #IBelong Campaign, and [committed to preventing and eradicating statelessness](#) by reforming laws and policies related to statelessness.

2017

Publication of “This is Our Home: Stateless Minorities and Their Search for Citizenship”

[This report](#) presented key findings from UNHCR's consultations in 2017 with more than 120 individuals who belong to stateless, formerly stateless and at-risk minority groups in three countries, relating to both the causes and impacts of statelessness.

The United Nations Secretary-General's Guidance Note on Statelessness

[This Note](#) provides guidance to the United Nations system on addressing statelessness by outlining seven guiding principles that support the development, promotion and implementation of international norms relating to statelessness.

2018

N'Djamena Initiative on the Eradication of Statelessness in Central Africa

Eight countries from the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa affirmed that the right to nationality contributes to regional peace and security, as well as social and economic development, committing to a range of actions to resolve existing situations of statelessness and prevent future cases.

I Belong Campaign Milestones

Kyrgyzstan Becomes First Country to End Statelessness

In a historic first, [Kyrgyzstan resolved all known cases of statelessness](#) in its territory, issuing critical documentation to more than 13,700 people.

High-Level Segment on Statelessness

To mark the mid-point of the #IBelong Campaign, [UNHCR convened an intergovernmental meeting](#) that gave United Nations Member States and other stakeholders the opportunity to highlight key achievements and deliver concrete pledges to address statelessness.

2019

Nansen Refugee Award Presented to Ashurov

Azizbek Ashurov – a Kyrgyz human-rights lawyer – [receives the Nansen Refugee Award](#) as a “symbol of hope” for millions without citizenship around the world.

Global Refugee Forum 2019

The first [Global Refugee Forum \(GRF\)](#) saw the announcement of 360 pledges and contributions relating to the prevention and reduction of statelessness, and protecting stateless persons, including 252 pledges by States. The Forum also enabled the active participation of stateless advocates and individuals with lived experience.

Our Common Agenda Highlights Statelessness

At its seventy sixth session of the General Assembly, the United Nations adopted the resolution on [Our Common Agenda](#), including measures to prove legal identity and end statelessness.

2021

Development of the International Recommendations on Statelessness Statistics

This [set of recommendations](#) guides how to include stateless persons in national censuses and other statistical exercises, helping collect more complete data to understand the scope of statelessness and challenges of stateless populations, and to inform appropriate responses.

2023

Global Refugee Forum 2023

The [second GRF](#) saw 135 new pledges on statelessness, as well as reports on progress or full achievement on 48 percent of pledges submitted at the 2019 GRF. Some of these new pledges included initiatives by 11 United Nations country teams to address statelessness.

Adoption of the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights

The African Union Assembly of States [adopted a Protocol](#) related to nationality rights and the eradication of statelessness in Africa.

2024

Arab Declaration for Belonging and Identity

[This declaration](#) by the League of Arab States established a framework by which States in the region can address statelessness – largely arising from conflict and displacement – through mechanisms including better access to birth registration, safeguards against childhood statelessness and strengthened gender equality in legal identity legislation.

Launch of the Global Alliance to End Statelessness

As a collaborative multistakeholder platform led by UNHCR, the vision of The [Global Alliance to End Statelessness](#) is to create “a world free from statelessness where everyone enjoys the right to a nationality without discrimination.” The initiative is part of the UN Secretary General’s ‘Our Common Agenda’ and is aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals.

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS FROM INDIVIDUALS WITH LIVED EXPERIENCE



MAHA MAMO

FORMERLY STATELESS, BRAZIL

Living as a stateless person was not just challenging; it was a constant battle for survival, filled with profound isolation, frustration, and a sense of hopelessness. The absence of a nationality meant that my future was always wrapped in uncertainty, haunted by the fear of never securing basic human rights. Witnessing my dreams—whether of becoming a doctor, playing professional basketball, or simply receiving healthcare—fade away was heartbreaking and left a lasting impact on my life.

My journey from statelessness to citizenship began with my relentless advocacy for myself and others like me. In 2018, after years of campaigning and at the age of 30, I finally became a Brazilian citizen—a moment that brought overwhelming relief and a sense of belonging. With nationality, I gained the power to make decisions about my life and future, to access opportunities, and to contribute to society in meaningful ways.

Today, as a speaker and social entrepreneur, I advocate globally for stateless individuals, with my work covering countries like Lebanon, Nepal, the United States, and currently Kenya, where I am working alongside community

leader Nosizi Dube to provide documentation for 2,000 marginalized people, focusing on restoring dignity, ensuring basic rights, and promoting social inclusion. In addition to my advocacy, I am working on my English book and working on a film adaptation that tells the story of my journey from statelessness to citizenship, as well as a documentary on gender discrimination, a leading cause of statelessness in 24 countries. My recent membership in the Stateless Network of the Americas further expands my efforts to address statelessness regionally, where my influence has contributed to the adoption of protective legislation and statelessness determination procedures in seven countries.

The #IBelong Campaign has been instrumental in bringing global attention to statelessness, influencing governments to act, and creating pathways to citizenship. While we have not yet eradicated statelessness, the campaign has made significant strides, positively impacting countless lives—including mine—and paving the way for future generations. I am honored to have contributed to this global movement and will continue to work towards a world where everyone has the right to belong.



ARMANDO AUGELLO CUPÌ

CURRENTLY STATELESS, ITALY

When I first found out I was stateless, I was very confused. I didn't understand why, despite being born and raised in Italy, I was not an Italian citizen. My parents left me when I was a baby, and I was raised by an Italian family with no documentation other than a birth certificate. I didn't learn about statelessness until I was 18, and I've spent the last decade exploring my situation.

I felt that I was living in uncertainty, because there were not many people who knew about statelessness and could give me the support I was looking for. I was very afraid that my life would stop there – no more dreams, no more ambitions.

I owe so much to UNHCR. They have been with me in so many ways, starting with the training they offer through partnerships with non-governmental organizations, to legal support and advice on statelessness cases. UNHCR has been in my heart for many years.

During one of the periodic focus groups that UNHCR organizes with stateless people, I had the opportunity to meet others who had similar circumstances to mine. We continued to meet and concluded that Italy lacked an organization that could represent those who have no citizenship. As a result, I co-founded the Unione Italiana Apolodi – a non-profit organization – in 2022, alongside three other stateless individuals. Our organization helps connect and encourage stateless people, as well as giving greater visibility to their voices, stories and memories.

Today, although I remain stateless for the time being, I am extremely motivated and committed to the cause. My greatest hope is that, with the start of the new Global Alliance to End Statelessness, more States will ratify the 1954 and 1961 Conventions. I also hope that there will be more and more talk of this issue, because the more media coverage that it receives, the greater the chance of positive action to raise awareness, prevent and resolve statelessness.



BARKE HAMISI
FORMERLY STATELESS, KENYA

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Our mothers had to give birth at home, because their lack of identity cards denied them access to medical centers. We couldn't go to school because we lacked the birth certificates that were mandatory for admission. Youth were excluded from training and job opportunities because we were stateless. We couldn't even officially marry, and therefore missed the benefits of a legally recognized marriage.

From the time we were born into Kenya's stateless Pemba community, our existence was invisible. Collectively, we struggled with statelessness for generations - that was the main reason I decided to become a paralegal and pledge my career to bringing about change.

Through my work with HAKI Centre, a human rights organization in coastal Kenya, I got the opportunity to learn and explore more on citizenship rights. We helped empower communities – including the Pemba – through door-to-door outreach, mobile birth registration and participation in radio shows. We attended community forums alongside local and regional leaders.

The information we gathered helped bridge gaps for stateless individuals. We were working hard to empower people through understanding their rights.

Our efforts – alongside UNHCR and others – came to fruition in December 2022 when the Government of Kenya announced that it would begin recognizing the Pemba as citizens. This was a milestone for the community! Children could now study as far as university, since they have birth certificates and identity cards. We can now access health facilities, start businesses and open bank accounts to keep our savings.

We highly appreciate the great work that the #IBelong campaign has done. Dreams that were long forgotten will now be achieved. I would like to encourage the global community to extend their continued support to assist those who are stateless, so that they can also be recognized by their nations.

As a formerly stateless community, we are looking forward to moving mountains together.

#IBELONG CAMPAIGN OVERVIEW:

A Decade of Vision, Collaboration and Achievement

Over the past decade, UNHCR's #IBelong Campaign has raised awareness of statelessness around the world, while urging governments to address the policy and legal gaps that leave millions of people without a nationality.

Since the start of the campaign in 2014, the international community has made significant progress through the combined efforts of States, civil society organizations, United Nations agencies, academic institutions, regional networks, and organizations led by stateless people.

#IBelong was established by UNHCR with a singular, powerful purpose: to end statelessness for millions of people around the world who are prevented from their full enjoyment of human rights by being denied their right to a nationality. Being stateless can lead to a lifetime – or even generations – of discrimination, societal marginalization, economic disadvantages, and lack of basic rights. Statelessness also hinders achievement of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals' overarching aim to "leave no one behind," since that objective cannot be achieved unless all persons are recognized as full members of society.

Here are some of the things we've accomplished together in the past 10 years:

Countries have made significant progress in resolving existing situations of statelessness – overall, more than 565,900 stateless people and persons with undetermined nationality gained nationality. For example:

- Kyrgyzstan has resolved all known cases of statelessness – the first-ever country to achieve this important milestone
- Kenya has granted nationality to members of the Makonde, Shona and Pemba minority groups
- Viet Nam has addressed statelessness among former Cambodian refugees, therefore helping resolve a protracted situation
- Turkmenistan is on track to resolve known cases of statelessness among thousands of former citizens of the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) with undetermined nationality

More States have become parties to the 1954 and 1961 UN Statelessness Conventions

- Before and during the #IBelong campaign, UNHCR stepped up advocacy efforts and calls for States to accede to Statelessness Conventions. As a result – since 2010 – there have been a total of 77 new accessions, representing a 76 per cent increase.

Governments have strengthened their legal frameworks on the right to nationality and protection of stateless persons

- More than 20 countries (including Argentina, Brazil, Bulgaria, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Ecuador, Kazakhstan, Netherlands (Kingdom of the), Paraguay, Türkiye, Ukraine, Uruguay) have adopted new laws and policies to better protect stateless persons
- Thirteen States (Albania, Armenia, Chile, Colombia, Cuba, Estonia, Iceland, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Luxembourg, Republic of Moldova, the Philippines, and Tajikistan) have enacted laws to help ensure that no child is born stateless
- Three countries (Liberia, Madagascar, Sierra Leone) have advanced gender equality by granting women the right to confer their nationality on their children on an equal basis as men, which helps prevent childhood statelessness

We have access to more reliable data to inform shared efforts to end statelessness

- The number of countries for which data on statelessness was reported or otherwise available increased from 77 countries in 2014 to 95 in 2023 (according to [UNHCR's Global Trends Report](#)), helping present a more comprehensive look at statelessness situations around the world
- Qualitative studies in several countries and regions have improved our shared knowledge of statelessness around the world through analyses of legal and policy frameworks, interviews, testimonies and other personal accounts that help increase understanding and complement statistical exercises
- The International Recommendations on Statelessness Statistics (IROSS) was adopted by the United Nations Statistical Commission in 2023, helping strengthen collection, usage and analysis nationally, regionally and globally.

These achievements form a solid foundation for future collaboration and action to end statelessness. In addition, States and other actors have made more than 400 pledges – at events such as the two Global Refugee Forums – to address statelessness. This is a critical and unprecedented statement of political will, and now is the time to act on these commitments. It is time to end statelessness once and for all.



PROGRESS ON THE GLOBAL ACTION PLAN TO END STATELESSNESS

ACTION 1: Resolve existing major situations of statelessness

Major statelessness situations are often linked to the non-inclusion of specific groups in the body of citizens at the time of independence, sometimes for discriminatory reasons. These situations generally have persisted for decades. Many States have recognized the negative impact and taken steps to resolve large-scale situations. They have shown that the key factor is political will and that relatively simple and low-cost reforms can have an immediate, permanent impact.

In addition to **Kyrgyzstan's historic first**, many other **States have achieved considerable progress** in resolving statelessness within their territory, including Azerbaijan, Côte d'Ivoire, Indonesia, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Malaysia, the Russian Federation, Philippines, Tajikistan, Thailand, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Viet Nam.

Kyrgyzstan resolves all known cases of statelessness

When the Soviet Union dissolved in 1991 and was succeeded by 15 independent countries, hundreds of thousands of former Soviet citizens were suddenly left stateless. Passports issued by the disbanded state became useless. People were left stranded and uncertain of their rights, for years or even decades, due to gaps in legislation. Women were disproportionately affected, especially those who had married someone from another nationality.

After its independence, the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic committed to working with UNHCR to end statelessness in its territory. At the outset of the IBelong Campaign, Kyrgyzstan committed to UNHCR's Global Action Plan to End Statelessness, resolving to rapid, concerted action – which resulted in the nation resolving all known cases of statelessness in 2019, halfway through the IBelong Campaign.

A significant portion of the work came through the efforts of organizations like Ferghana Valley Lawyers Without Borders, which received funding from UNHCR in 2014 to help map stateless populations and set up mobile legal clinics. Led by a lawyer named Azizbek Ashurov, who has championed the rights of stateless

people for more than 20 years, the organization's dedicated staff covered countless kilometers to meet vulnerable communities and help address their challenges. Ashurov and his team even traveled to some remote areas by foot or on horseback.

Collaboration between the Government, organizations and other partners resulted in the identification of 13,700 stateless people – including more than 2,000 children. After years of policy work and grassroots action, the last 50 known stateless people in Kyrgyzstan received birth certificates and passports in July 2019, giving them citizenship. Ashurov was awarded the 2019 Nansen Refugee Award for his hard work, and Kyrgyzstan stands as a remarkable example of how statelessness can be solved.

"We are a small country, with few resources," Ashurov says. "But we have resolved statelessness together. It is not impossible, and it can be applicable elsewhere. Citizenship is not a privilege; it is a necessity. These are not just numbers – these are people whose lives have been changed forever."



Kenya grants nationality to the Makonde, Pemba and Shona minority groups

Most of the formerly stateless populations in Kenya came from minority groups that arrived from other countries in the early to mid-20th century, before Kenya's independence. These groups – which include the Makonde, Pemba, Shona, and persons of Burundian and Rwandan decent – were not registered as citizens for a variety of factors, rendering them stateless for decades.

As a result, these communities languished on the margins of Kenyan society, unable to fully participate in economic, education and other essential systems. More than half (53 percent) of Shona people in Kenya lived below the national poverty line, and secondary school-aged Kenyans in urban areas were twice as likely be enrolled in classes as their Shona counterparts.

Following the launch of the IBelong Campaign, the Government of Kenya pledged to work with UNHCR to ease the challenges of stateless people and facilitate

pathways to nationality. In 2019, the Government created a Taskforce on Statelessness, which conducted socioeconomic surveys and other data exercises to help identify and prepare qualified individuals for citizenship.

These efforts have been very fruitful so far. Three years after the IBelong Campaign began, in 2017, then-President Uhuru Kenyatta of Kenya declared official recognition for 4,000 members of the Makonde community. In December 2020, the Government granted citizenship to 1,670 stateless Shona people and 1,300 stateless individuals of Rwandan descent. Two years later, in 2022, the Government announced that it would provide registration and other documentation to recognize the Pemba people as citizens of Kenya.

Through partnership with UNHCR, the World Bank and others – and guided by the Global Action Plan – the Government of Kenya continues to resolve long-lasting situations of statelessness.



Nosizi, formerly stateless, Kenya

When she entered classes at the University of Nairobi as a first-year economics student in 2020, Nosizi Dube already achieved something unprecedented in Kenya: she was the first Shona woman to reach this level of higher education.

Since she was born at home into a Shona family, Nosizi didn't receive an official birth certificate. This hindered her in many ways as she grew up, and she struggled for placement in classrooms after primary school. She and her mother had to work hard – using a variety of other documents – to keep her education going.

"It's like you are a ghost in the country that you are living in. You don't exist," she explained. "My mother is truly my greatest inspiration because she is not easily defeated."

However, Nosizi faced a major roadblock to finishing high school: she needed a birth certificate to register for exams. Fortunately, in 2019 – with support from UNHCR and the Kenya Human Rights Commission – the Government of Kenya issued birth certificates to Shona children for the first time. Furthermore, Nosizi was granted Kenyan nationality in 2020, alongside members of her community.

Nosizi was headed to university – a reality that seemed out of reach not long ago.

"When I found out that I got into university, it was the most joyful experience of my life. As a stateless girl, it's been a challenging but great journey to get to where I am," she said.

Other notable achievements:

- As of 2023, 5,104 people in western **Malaysia** obtained nationality out of 13,801 stateless persons registered with the Development of Human Resources in Rural Areas, a Malaysian non-governmental organization that has received technical support from UNHCR.
- **Thailand** enacted policy reform via Cabinet Resolution in 2016 to improve access to civil registration and nationality for descendants of ethnic minorities who were born in the country.
- Since 2014, **Tajikistan** has identified 60,773 individuals at risk of statelessness or already stateless within its borders; 58,204 of these individuals were documented and their cases solved, granting them essential identity documents such as residency permits, passports, and birth certificates.
- In September 2024, the President of **Turkmenistan** issued a decree that granted citizenship to the country's remaining 1,146 stateless individuals. With this action, Turkmenistan will have resolved all known cases of statelessness in its territory.







ACTION 2: Ensure that no child is born stateless

The majority of the world's stateless people have lacked any nationality since they were born. This is for two primary reasons: (a) their parents were stateless or (b) they were born in a country with a nationality law that does not confer its nationality on children, even if this means that they would be left stateless. Some children become stateless when they are born abroad, and their parents have a nationality but cannot confer it under the law of their State of nationality. Children may also become stateless when they have been abandoned or separated from their family and their nationality cannot be ascertained. Some children affected by these circumstances are refugees.

Since 2014, **12 States** have included provisions in their laws to grant nationality to children born in their territory who would otherwise be stateless: Albania, Armenia, Chile, Cuba, Estonia, Iceland, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Luxembourg, Moldova, Philippines, and Tajikistan. In addition, **16 States**¹ have introduced one of more safeguards against childhood statelessness, two States have included provisions in their laws to grant nationality to children of unknown origin found in their territory, and three States have enacted policy changes that grant nationality to children born abroad who would otherwise be stateless.

Colombia's policies help put "Children First"

The ongoing Venezuela Situation – arising from economic collapse, discrimination and other severe hardships – has driven more than 7.7 million Venezuelans from their homes. In the neighboring country of Colombia, over 2.9 million Venezuelan refugees and migrants are seeking safety and opportunity.

This kind of mass displacement – in which families flee with almost nothing, including without documentation – can threaten inclusion in communities, as well as access to basic rights and services. The danger is especially acute for displaced minors, and even more so for children born as refugees or migrants.

As part of its considerable protection measures to help Venezuelans in its territory, the Government of Colombia enacted the *Primero la Niñez* (Children First) initiative in 2019. It grants nationality to children born in Colombia to Venezuelan parents, some of whom would otherwise be stateless, and has retroactive effect from August 2015.

The initiative is designed to help prevent statelessness among a large, vulnerable population, and integrate children into Colombian society by providing them Colombian nationality and the documentation they need to receive health care and attend school. As of July 2024, the initiative has granted Colombian nationality to 110,549 children born to Venezuelan parents, helping safeguard a new generation.

Recognizing and protecting foundlings in the Philippines

The plight of children who have been abandoned, or whose parents cannot be located, is both heartbreaking and precarious. They face immense risks and uncertainties, including the possibility of statelessness if their parentage and nationality can't be determined. These children are referred to as "foundlings" under international law.

In May 2022, the Government of the Philippines adopted a new law to safeguard the rights and welfare of children who are found in the country or in its territory.

This law, the Foundling Recognition and Protection Act, establishes these deserted children as Filipino citizens.

Previously, foundlings were given certificates that didn't indicate their citizenship, which could hinder access to essential rights and services. This new law affords these children the same government programs and opportunities that all other Filipino citizens enjoy. It is a major step toward the realization of the Philippines' National Action Plan to End Statelessness, as well as progress for UNHCR's Global Action Plan.

¹ Albania, Armenia, Bahamas, Chile, Cuba, Estonia, Iceland, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Luxembourg, Mexico, Moldova, Panama, Paraguay, Philippines, Tajikistan

Other notable achievements:

- After the implementation of the ChileRecononce (“Chile Recognizes”) project, and changes in national legislation, approximately 1,400 people born in **Chile** to parents with an irregular migration status, many whom were at risk of statelessness or stateless, were able to confirm their Chilean nationality. Similarly, the country’s Proyecto Nacionalidad (Nationality Project) identified children who were born in Colombia but traveled to Chile without documentation, subsequently confirming their Colombian nationality and regularizing their migratory status.
- In 2023, amendments were adopted to the Citizenship Law in **Moldova**, providing for access to Moldovan nationality for all children born in its territory who are unable to acquire nationality from the parents, and who would otherwise be stateless. Previously, the ability of such children to acquire Moldovan nationality was dependent on the legal status of their parents in Moldova, unless one or both parents were also stateless.
- **Albania** adopted a new Citizenship Law in 2020 providing an unrestricted safeguard to grant Albanian citizenship to all children born in Albania who would otherwise be stateless.
- **Spain** has ensured very strong safeguards against childhood statelessness in its nationality law and Spanish courts have established broad criteria in the interpretation of the applicable safeguards to allow access to nationality or civil registration for migrant children born in transit.







ACTION 3: Remove gender discrimination from nationality laws

When women are unable to pass on their nationality to their children because of discriminatory nationality laws, and those children are unable to acquire nationality from the father, they are rendered stateless. This can happen where the father is stateless, unknown, or unable or unwilling to complete administrative requirements to confer his nationality or to obtain documentation to prove the nationality of the child.

Progress in this area has been slow. Some 24 States continue to maintain nationality laws which do not allow women to confer nationality to their children on an equal basis as men. Since 2014, three countries have reformed their nationality laws to allow women to pass their nationality on to their children on an equal basis to men: **Liberia** (2022), **Madagascar** (2017) and **Sierra Leone** (2017). In addition, five States – **Benin, Guinea, Lesotho, Nauru** and the **Solomon Islands** – have introduced reforms to their nationality laws to grant women and men an equal ability to confer nationality on spouses.

Regional initiatives for gender equality lead the way

Nationality laws that don't allow women to confer nationality to their children in the same way as men are not only discriminatory, but a major cause of statelessness. As a result, Action 3 has been a major emphasis throughout the #IBelong Campaign, and UNHCR has resolutely supported legislative changes and policy reforms in its consultations with States, regional networks and other key changemakers.

Progress on this action has been most notable in Africa, where regional organizations have shown great commitment to ending statelessness by prioritizing gender equality. In February 2015, member countries from the **Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)** signed the Abidjan Declaration on Eradication of Statelessness, which noted that statelessness often prevents individuals from enjoying a full range of human rights and recognized the high number of stateless people – including children – across the region. It specifically addressed the issue of gender equality as well, “underlining the importance of the principles of equality and non-discrimination, particularly as they relate to the transmission of nationality to a spouse or child.”

ECOWAS followed up these commitments in the Banjul Plan of Action, which was adopted two years later, in May 2017. This Plan set forth specific objectives, activities and timeframes for addressing statelessness in the region.

Later in 2017, member States from the **International Conference of the Great Lakes Region** signed a Declaration on the Eradication of Statelessness and presented an action plan to ensure that women and men have equal rights regarding nationality, including conferring it on their children and spouses. Similarly, countries belonging to the **Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa** endorsed the N'Djamena Initiative on the Eradication of Statelessness in December 2018, also committing to equality in nationality rights for women and men.

In February 2024, the **African Union Assembly of States** adopted a Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights, relating to the specific aspects of the right to nationality and the eradication of statelessness in Africa. The Protocol enshrines the right for both women and men to pass their nationality on to their children. These groundbreaking measures have helped advance the cause of gender equality in Africa and are key commitments towards ending statelessness on the continent.

Finally, and most recently, the **Arab Declaration for Belonging and Legal Identity** was adopted by the League of Arab States in July 2024. This Declaration sets forth an important framework that helps respond to many of the most critical challenges in the region through measures that include efforts to prevent childhood statelessness and strengthened legal identity rights, especially for women.



Reformed nationality law is an equalizer for Liberian mothers and children

When the #IBelong Campaign began in 2014, Liberia was one of 27 countries around the world that denied women the right to pass on nationality to their children in the same way as men when born outside of Liberia. Combined with the realities of the country's recent past – when thousands of women were forced to flee civil wars from 1989 to 2003, and often gave birth to children while displaced – this left a multitude of children vulnerable to statelessness.

It was estimated that up to 4,000 children in Liberia were potentially stateless, as well as up to 3,200 children outside the country with a Liberian parent, but the numbers were likely much higher. Most of these children were denied citizenship if the father was absent or unknown. These children were often unable to attend school, receive health care or travel freely.

In August 2022, Liberia took steps to rectify this situation and ensure the fundamental right that women can pass nationality on to their children. The country amended its Alien and Nationality Law, immediately addressing one of the biggest causes of stateless among children in the region.

The new amendment – which applies to children born abroad to Liberian mothers – represents a major milestone in efforts in removing gender discrimination from nationality laws. Africa has provided many examples of positive policy change since the beginning of the #IBelong Campaign. However, in countries around the world where women can't confer nationality to their children on an equal basis with men – much work remains to be done.

Other notable achievements:

- In 2017, the **United Arab Emirates** (UAE) enacted partial reforms to its law to allow Emirati women married to foreigners to confer their nationality to their children aged six years or older, subject to certain conditions.

ACTION 4: Prevent denial, loss or deprivation of nationality on discriminatory grounds

The majority of the world's known stateless people are from minority groups and other marginalized populations. Through no fault of their own, these individuals and communities frequently encounter discrimination based on ethnicity, race, religion, language, or disability. This discrimination deprives millions of people of a nationality, whether through outdated laws or intentional denial.

While there have been some significant achievements over the last decade – including Kenya granting nationality to the Makonde, Pemba and Shona minority groups and Thailand improving access to nationality for descendants of ethnic minorities born in the

country – progress on this action has been slow. In addition, over the last decade there has been a rise in conflict and targeted violence that has forcibly displaced thousands of people from minority groups, perilously increasing their risk of statelessness.

Because the social views regarding ethnic, racial, religious, and other minority groups are often deep-seated and hard to change, this remains a significant challenge to ending statelessness. We call on States and other stakeholders to refrain from depriving people of nationality based on discriminatory grounds, while also committing to introducing non-discriminatory provisions in their national policies and laws.



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ACTION 5: Prevent statelessness in cases of State succession

Emergence of new States and transfers of territory between existing States (State succession) have led to mass statelessness on numerous occasions. In the case of separation or dissolution, although most individuals automatically become citizens of newly independent States when nationality legislation is adopted, large numbers can be left stateless. Migration movements before and at the time of independence as well as discrimination against marginalized ethnic and social groups may create risks of statelessness.

New identification documents change lives in Moldova

State succession occurs for multiple reasons: when part of the territory of one State is transferred to another State, when the territories from a State separate into one or more new States, or when a State dissolves and results in the formation of two or more States. The dissolution of the former Soviet Union in 1991 led to 15 nations – and, subsequently, thousands of former Soviet nationals were rendered stateless.

One such example is the Republic of Moldova. Like many countries affected by the aftermath of state succession, a large portion of Moldova's population was left stateless. More than two decades after its independence, over 220,000 people in Moldova still held expired Soviet identification cards, which prevented them from accessing a variety of rights and services, including social assistance and voting.

One of the most marginalized groups was the elderly: without the ability to navigate complex systems to procure updated identification documents, and lacking the financial wherewithal to seek legal advice, they often languished in uncertainty and poverty. Many older people in Moldova were living on less than 1000 Lei (about 50 Euro) per month.

With support from UNHCR and its partner, the Legal Center of Advocates (LCA) – and as part of the #IBelong Campaign – the Government of Moldova made extensive changes to the process of obtaining identification. It began offering ID cards for free.

Additionally, the Government sent mobile teams to help those who couldn't visit offices in person. UNHCR distributed information leaflets to pensioners to explain the new provisions. And LCA established a telephone hotline for free legal assistance.

The revised policies and processes were enormously successful: by June 2015, at least 212,000 people benefited from new identification documents. That's one out of 20 Moldovan citizens. It remains one of Europe's biggest campaigns to prevent and resolve statelessness. Since then, the Republic of Moldova has continued to build on this success, collaborating with UNHCR and other partners. As of the end of 2023, only about 6,700 citizens of the Republic of Moldova still held Soviet-type passports, according to government statistics, with efforts to reduce this number further ongoing.

Mukhamadjon, formerly stateless, Uzbekistan

The challenges of stateless people in Uzbekistan are similar to those in Moldova: they're mostly a result of the dissolution of the former Soviet Union. Previously, Soviet citizens of all ethnicities were able to move between the republics freely with a passport. This changed with the succession of 15 new nations.

In 2014, there were more than 97,000 stateless people and people of undetermined nationality in Uzbekistan. In most cases, their plight arose from policy gaps that often-excluded people of other nationalities – including those from neighboring countries – from receiving official identification and other documents that granted them the same rights as citizens, including freedom of movement across borders.

For many years, this was the reality for Mukhamadjon, a kickboxing champion and taekwondo instructor. He was stateless for most of his first 28 years of life, and it cost him the chance to pursue athletic competition in other countries and represent his country at international tournaments.

"It felt as if I was part of a family, but nevertheless an orphan; as if this country did not accept me," he said. "I'm Uzbek. I grew up in Uzbekistan, I studied here, I love this country."

Born to Uzbek parents in the Kyrgyz Republic just four months before the collapse of the Soviet Union, he and his family moved to Uzbekistan at the end of 1992. However, they missed a critical deadline for citizenship, and so Mukhamadjon became stateless.

He trained hard throughout his youth in martial arts, hoping to become a regional champion and compete in the Olympics. But the realities of his situation prevented the travel that was necessary for those opportunities.

"I was the Uzbek champion in kickboxing and there were moments when my coach wanted to send me for international championships abroad, but ... there would always be problems with the visa," he says.

The situation finally changed for Mukhamadjon and thousands of other stateless people in April 2020, when the Government of Uzbekistan adopted a new provision in its law that granted citizenship to registered stateless people who had been permanent residents in the country before 1995. With this momentous change, 49,228 people resolved their statelessness.

Five Central Asian states – Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, the Kyrgyz Republic, and Kazakhstan – have made notable progress in addressing statelessness since the beginning of the IBelong Campaign. Uzbekistan has also amended its birth registration processes and launched a national campaign to identify unregistered births, helping prevent new cases of statelessness.

Although Mukhamadjon's competitive years are behind him, he's taking pride in coaching a new generation of martial artists – and he hopes to accompany them to tournaments in Asia and beyond, realizing his dream in a different way.





"It's impossible to describe the feeling," he explained.

"It's like being born again."



ACTION 6: Grant protection status to stateless migrants and facilitate their naturalization

Although most stateless people remain in the country of their birth, some leave and become migrants or refugees. These stateless people comprise a minority of the global stateless population, but many are not recognized as stateless and face serious human rights problems such as prolonged or repeated detention and destitution. Often, no State will grant them a legal residence and the authorities of their country of origin will not re-admit them. Although some States have introduced mechanisms to determine whether a migrant is stateless, positive determinations do not necessarily lead to a legal status that permits residence, enjoyment of basic human rights and facilitated naturalisation.

Over the last 10 years, **21 States**² have established statelessness determination procedures (SDPs), and **three States** (Italy, Hungary and Georgia) have made improvements in their existing SDPs. This brings the total of States with SDPs to at least **30**, helping facilitate legal status that permits residence and guarantees the enjoyment of basic human rights. Additionally, **16 States**³ have introduced procedures for facilitated naturalization of stateless migrants.

² Albania, Argentina, Brazil, Bulgaria, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Ecuador, Iceland, Kazakhstan, Montenegro, the Netherlands, Panama, Paraguay, Portugal Turkey, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, Uruguay

³ Argentina, Armenia, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Estonia, Iceland, Georgia, Greece, Luxembourg, Paraguay, Rwanda, Ukraine, Uruguay

Georgia converts ambitious pledges into positive actions for protection

To mark the midpoint of the #IBelong Campaign and convene a wide range of States, organizations and other partners, UNHCR held a High-Level Segment on Statelessness in October 2019. The meeting resulted in 360 new pledges to end statelessness: 70 from civil society organizations, 38 from international and regional organizations, and 252 from States.

Six of those pledges were from Georgia, which committed to:

- Facilitate naturalization for stateless persons by halving the 10-year residence period required for naturalization
- Reduce the fee for statelessness determination procedures in half to increase accessibility
- Include statelessness status applicants in emergency outpatient and inpatient care for the State's universal healthcare program
- Establish the right to free legal aid for stateless status applicants, through counselling and representation by the state-funded Legal Aid Service
- Begin a door-to-door campaign to identify and document stateless persons
- Work with UNHCR to raise awareness and foster common understanding about statelessness in an inclusive manner

With support from UNHCR, the Government of Georgia began these activities right away, and they have already produced notable results.

In 2021, Georgia implemented two of its pledges: reducing the statelessness status application fee and enacting amendments that entitle stateless applicants to access emergency healthcare. The following year, the Government conducted a door-to-door campaign that raised awareness of the statelessness determination procedure and provided critical support to vulnerable populations that lacked the wherewithal to pursue such procedures on their own.

The door-to-door campaign was led by Georgia's Public Service Development Agency with the primary goal of identifying and documenting stateless persons. It was conducted from April until December 2022 and reached a variety of regions throughout the country. Mobile teams interviewed families and individuals and provided free identification to those who lacked such documentation.

In 2023, Georgia made good on its promise to facilitate naturalization of stateless people, decreasing the residence requirement to five years. And finally, in 2024, stateless people were exempted from fees associated with the naturalization process.

Other notable achievements:

- The **Americas** region has demonstrated significant progress under this action. Since the launch of the Campaign, eight countries in the region have established statelessness determination procedures (Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Panama, Paraguay and Uruguay), bringing the total number to nine, as Mexico adopted a procedure before the Campaign. Two others (Chile and Peru) are in the process of adopting a procedure. There are multiple good practices within these procedures, which include facilitated naturalization for stateless persons, and granting range of rights including family reunification, access to work, health, education, and travel documents.
- In August 2023, The **United States** Department of Homeland Security issued new guidance to assist stateless individuals, which clarifies who is considered stateless and creates a mechanism for providing internal guidance to decision-makers.
- **Ukraine** established a statelessness determination procedure in 2020 and then adopted an amendment to its Citizenship Law in 2021, allowing recognized stateless people to apply for naturalization after three years instead of seven years.
- In 2020, **Cote d'Ivoire** established the first-ever statelessness determination procedure in Africa, which was operationalized in 2021.



ACTION 7: Ensure birth registration for the prevention of statelessness

Individuals can be at risk of statelessness if they have difficulties proving that they have links to a State. Lack of birth registration can create such a risk. This is because birth registration documents where a person was born and who their parents are – key pieces of information needed to establish which country's nationality a child can acquire. In some countries,

children may not be registered because registration procedures are complex or establish documentation or other requirements which are difficult to fulfil. Specific groups may face problems, especially children born out of wedlock, nomadic populations and the children of non-citizens, including refugees and migrants.

Chad responds to historic crises with widespread birth registrations

In November 2017 – with support from UNHCR and UNICEF – the Government of Chad convened civil society organizations, diplomats, members of other UN agencies, and others to announce its commitment to the fight against statelessness.

Recent statistics had indicated that only 12 percent of children under the age of five years old within the country were included in the civil registry, and more than 130,000 refugee children born in Chad were in the same situation. These sobering facts pointed to severe risks of statelessness for thousands of children.

For many years, Chad has been at the crossroads of regional crisis – today, it hosts more than one million forcibly displaced people, including refugees from conflicts in Cameroon, the Central African Republic and Sudan. Such overwhelming numbers speak to dire vulnerability throughout the country, especially among children who’ve been forced to flee, or were born while their parents were refugees.

In order to address these historic challenges facing forcibly displaced populations – as well as close longstanding birth registration gaps – the government of Chad committed at the 2019 High-Level Segment on Statelessness to take decisive action. Chad’s pledge was to “improve access to birth registration procedures, including late birth registration, to ensure universal birth registration.”

The Government of Chad took quick action to transform these pledges into action. Since 2019 – through the National Agency for Secure Documents

(ANATS) and in close collaboration with UNHCR – it has issued more than 120,000 birth certificates to forcibly displaced people. This includes 42,945 birth certificates provided to refugee, internally displaced and host-community children in 2023.

As regional crises intensify, it’s more important than ever to ensure that forcibly displaced people are protected from statelessness and its resulting marginalization. According to the inter-agency protection monitoring system Project 21, a significant number of those seeking safety in Chad arrive with little to no identification documents, increasing their risks of statelessness. In 2023, 22 percent of households reported not having any documents.

Alongside UNHCR and other partners, the Government of Chad is continuing birth registration and other measures to help prevent and address statelessness, in particular among vulnerable communities.

Other notable achievements:

- In 2023, the **Kyrgyz Republic** ensured that all children born in the country can be registered at birth, irrespective of the documentation status of their parents.
- The Government of **Rwanda** made two pledges regarding refugee birth and civil registration in 2019. The country instituted a new civil registration and vital statistics system in 2020, linked to the National Population Registry, that allowed for birth registration to take place at health facilities. As a result, 99 percent of refugees under five years of age have had their birth registered and certified.
- Amendments to the Law on Civil Registry in **North Macedonia** in 2023 guaranteed birth registration for all children born in the country, regardless of the nationality or documentation status of the parents.
- During the ongoing war, **Ukraine** has made significant efforts to ensure people’s access to civil status and identity documentation, including remote birth registration and provision of a mobile documentation service in host countries to acquire, exchange or renew civil status and identity documentation.
- Through reforms undertaken in 2015 and 2020, **Montenegro** has introduced cost-free judicial procedures for late birth registration of individuals born outside of the formal healthcare system, as well as new birth registration practices for the immediate registration of children abandoned by mothers or whose mothers are missing identification documents.
- The 2019 civil status census in the **Republic of Congo** identified 199,400 people without birth certificates. Starting in 2020, its government rolled out mobile registration initiatives to issue birth certificates and identity cards to children and adults, while also conducting a national awareness campaign on the importance of birth registration.
- The Government of **Tajikistan** finalized the first round of amendments to its Civil Registration Law in 2019, introducing free birth registration within three months of birth, part of a larger reform aimed at enhancing documentation accessibility and preventing statelessness from birth.
- The League of **Arab States** adopted the Arab Declaration for Belonging and Legal Identity in 2024. The Declaration provides a robust framework to respond to challenges posed by conflict, displacement and statelessness in the region, including through improved access to birth registration, efforts to prevent childhood statelessness and strengthened legal identity rights, especially for women.



ACTION 8: Issue nationality documentation to those with entitlement to it

Individuals may be left stateless because they cannot acquire documents that prove their nationality. However, denial of nationality documentation leading to statelessness can occur due to discrimination against particular groups, which are not recognised as nationals. Existing information indicates that this is a major cause of statelessness.

Kyrgyzstan has issued nationality documentation to all known persons who are entitled to it, while there have been partial achievements in **25 States** including Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Dominican Republic, Iran, Iraq, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Latvia, Malaysia, Mauritania, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Philippines, Rwanda, Tajikistan, Thailand, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Yemen, and Zimbabwe.

Boosting registration among the Philippines' indigenous Sama Bajau

For generations, the Sama Bajau, a community with a longstanding itinerant culture, has made their living as seafarers traveling between Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines. As such, they haven't always prioritized birth certificates and other civil registration. But then, during the Zamboanga armed crisis in 2013 which displaced thousands, the Sama Bajau faced challenges in obtaining documentation to prove their identity and nationality, making it harder for them to enjoy basic rights such as housing, education and freedom of movement.

When the IBelong Campaign began in 2014, the Government of the Philippines was the first country in southeast Asia to confront the challenges by adopting a national action plan to end statelessness. Soon afterward, in 2018, UNHCR began working with government authorities, the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples and Sama Bajau communities. In addition, community engagement efforts reinforced the importance of birth registration and provided counseling on the requirements, procedures and timeframes to obtain a birth certificate.

One of the volunteers leading efforts is Almalyn Akmad – a Sama Bajau herself and a mother to four children.

She went through a similar process to get a birth certificate and was integral in explaining it to community members.

"Before, when they would be interviewed, they would hide out of fear. Now, they approach us to register, they ask us for advice on how to do it," Almalyn said.

Through her efforts and those of fellow volunteers – who often spent long days going house to house – the initiative has facilitated the birth registration of more than 4,000 Sama Bajau, including 1,377 in 2023. Almalyn hopes to reach even more neighbours in the coming years, with the hope of giving more children the chance of a good education and the hope of a better life".

Building on the success of the birth registration efforts in Zamboanga, the initiative was expanded in 2021 to include the island provinces of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM), and further increased coverage to an additional 50 municipalities in 2024, with the benefit of funding from the Government of Japan.

Meepia, formerly stateless, Thailand

Meepia Chumee's birth was never registered. Born to a Thai mother and a stateless father, she was abandoned as a baby and lived every day with uncertainty for more than three decades.

She grew up in rural northern Thailand and was raised by her grandmother and uncle, who were also stateless. Because she was unregistered and unable to access the services afforded to Thai citizens, Meepia was forced to leave school after second grade. She soon went to work to help her family survive, toiling on local farms for less than US\$3 per day.

The entirety of young Meepia's world was her village. When she tried to travel farther away, she was stopped and fined by police for not having an identification card.

"It was extremely difficult," she said. "Sometimes I felt disheartened and asked myself why I didn't have the same things as everyone else."

But Meepia didn't give up. In 2018, when she was 30 years, one of her neighbours told her that her birth

mother was in a nearby area. Meepia saw it as a chance to resolve her lingering challenges and contacted her. After taking a DNA test with her mother, Meepia took a risk and travelled 17 kilometres to a district office to submit the results and other paperwork.

She waited three long years to hear some good news – but was ultimately informed that her application wasn't accepted. But there was serendipity in Meepia's unfortunate tale: Meefah, a caseworker for a grassroots legal organization, heard the story and decided to help.

Meefah, who had experienced statelessness herself, works for Legal Community Network and Legal Advocacy Walk, both of which work closely with UNHCR. She helped Meepia complete her paperwork and gather the backup they needed to resolve her situation – including Meepia's mother, a village elder, legal volunteers, and even local government officials.

With this assembled support, Meepia was finally able to procure the registration she needed, which led to Thai citizenship in August 2022. Today, she is exploring new job opportunities with confidence.



"The day I held the Thai ID card in my hand, I felt happiness and massive relief," Meepia explained.

"Even though I may not have money like others, I now have the same rights as them. I don't have to live in fear anymore."



Other notable achievements:

- The Ngäbe-Buglé ethnic group migrates between **Costa Rica** and **Panama** to work in banana, plantain and coffee plantations on Costa Rican soil. As such, births aren't regularly registered, which places the group at risk of statelessness in this context. From 2015 to 2018, both countries worked with UNHCR to implement a joint "Chiriticos" project to facilitate access to late birth registration, verification of nationality and issuance of identity documentation in the communities where the Ngäbe-Buglé population lives and works.
- Since 2021, the Government of **Mozambique** has conducted ongoing mobile registration initiatives to reach adults and children in Cabo Delgado and Zambézia provinces who are without documentation, including those who lost identity and other important documents when they were forcibly displaced by violence.
- **Burkina Faso** has issued civil registration and nationality documentation to more than 516,000 vulnerable persons at risk of statelessness – including refugees, internally displaced people and host communities – since 2019.
- The Government of **Liberia** has established a National Identification Registry and service centers throughout the country to provide civil documentation – including birth, marriage and death certificates – to refugees born in Liberia, as well as other vulnerable groups at risk of statelessness.
- In 2024, **Montenegro and Kosovo**⁴ successfully concluded a decade-long technical cooperation to address the lack of documents among more than 1,370 people living in Montenegro, who had fled conflict in the late 1990s, receiving identity documents for the first time in nearly 20 years. Mobile teams gathered biometric data from affected people and delivered civil registration documents necessary for regularizing their legal status, marking a significant milestone in resolving issues related to both long-term displacement and statelessness.
- The Government of **Mauritania** implemented an enrollment exercise between July 2023 and February 2024, through which more than 600,000 people – including populations at risk of statelessness – were registered through simplified and expedited procedures. Good practices employed for the exercise include reduced evidentiary requirements and mobile missions to isolated locations.
- Amendments to **North Macedonia's** Law on Citizenship in 2021 made it possible for former Yugoslav citizens residing in the country at the time of independence, to acquire Macedonian nationality. As a result of this and other related amendments, 608 out of 786 known persons at risk of statelessness in North Macedonia have had their nationality confirmed.

⁴ All references to Kosovo should be understood in full compliance with Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999) and without prejudice to the status of Kosovo.



ACTION 9: Accede to the UN Statelessness Conventions

While it will take the whole of society to end statelessness once and for all, the primary responsibility for solutions and action rests with States. The world's nations are ultimately accountable for making, reforming and implementing the laws and policies that will prevent and resolve statelessness, as well as protect stateless populations.

One of the primary ways that States can commit to the cause is by acceding to the two UN Statelessness Conventions. Together, they form an international legal framework on statelessness that is complemented by a range of human rights treaties and provisions.

The **1954 Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons** is designed to ensure that stateless people enjoy a basic set of human rights, including education, employment and housing, the right to identity and travel documents and administrative assistance. It also establishes the international legal definition of a stateless person as someone *“not recognized by any State under the operation of its law.”*

The **1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness** establishes a framework to ensure the right of every person to a nationality. It requires that States put in place certain safeguards to prevent statelessness at birth and over the course of a person's lifetime. It prohibits deprivation of nationality on discriminatory grounds.

In essence, the 10 actions under the #IBelong Campaign and its Global Action Plan to End Statelessness stem from these two conventions. Therefore, getting more States to accede to the conventions has been a priority. Before and during the #IBelong campaign, UNHCR stepped up calls for States to accede to the two statelessness conventions. Through concerted advocacy efforts, dialogues and engagement at events including the 2019 High-Level Segment and two Global Refugee Forums, there has been considerable progress. Since 2014, there have been:

- 14 State accessions to the 1954 Convention, bringing the total parties to 98 countries – representing 51 percent of United Nations Member States
- 18 State accessions to the 1961 Convention, increasing the number of parties to 80 countries

Counting the 2011 Ministerial Intergovernmental Event on Refugees and Statelessness – held to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the 1961 Convention – there have been a total of 79 new accessions. Through continued advocacy, UNHCR and its partners will continue to emphasize the importance of joining these two conventions.



ACTION 10: Improve quantitative and qualitative data on stateless populations

Frequently, stateless persons are not only undocumented but also ignored by the authorities and uncounted in national administrative registries and databases. Most even go uncounted in population censuses. Better data provides an overview of obstacles to and potential for solutions are all essential for States – as well as the global community – to adequately respond to statelessness.

A new roadmap for collecting data on statelessness

UNHCR's latest Global Trends reported the global stateless (stateless persons and persons of undetermined nationality) population at 4.4 million people at the end of 2023. However, the actual number of stateless people is widely acknowledged to be much higher. The primary reasons for this gap include:

- Approximately half of all countries don't report data on statelessness, including countries with known stateless populations
- Some countries that report statelessness data only provide statistics for a portion of the known stateless population in their territories
- Data is often inconsistent when comparing between countries, because of differing criteria for who is considered to be stateless or of undetermined nationality

Solving statelessness is a bigger challenge with limited data to measure its scope and scale. Ensuring reliable, comprehensive data is critical to understanding the current scope and nature of statelessness in the world, and essential to formulating policies, laws and actions to resolve it.

That's why UNHCR has prioritized the improvement of quantitative and qualitative data in the Global Action Plan to End Statelessness. Since the launch of the #IBelong Campaign, there have been many encouraging developments.

The number of countries reporting statelessness-related data has increased from 77 in 2014 to 95 in 2023. As noted above, many States have invested in robust studies to better understand the nature and risks of statelessness in their territories and have begun to add stateless-specific questions to national censuses and other statistical surveys.

One of the biggest achievements of the last decade is the adoption of the [International Recommendations on Statelessness Statistics \(IROSS\)](#) by the UN Statistical Commission in March 2023. These recommendations help guide the production of higher-quality, harmonized statistics that are consistent and comparable across countries.

Other notable achievements:

- **20 European countries** (Albania, Austria, Czech Republic, Croatia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Ireland, Lithuania, Malta, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Serbia, Slovakia, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine and the United Kingdom) have conducted mapping studies or surveys to better understand the size and profile of the stateless population in their territory.
- The 2022 censuses in **Kyrgyzstan** and **Tajikistan** included questions related to stateless people.
- **Panama's** 2023 census included questions about birth registration, and the results have allowed mapping populations that might be at risk of statelessness or of undetermined nationality.
- The 2019 Cartography of Persons at Risk of Statelessness in **Cote d'Ivoire** (CAPRA) provided a basis for reporting updated and more accurate official figures for stateless persons and persons at risk of statelessness.
- **Mozambique** is the process of conducting a qualitative study on statelessness in line with the pledge made in the 2019 High-level Segment on statelessness. The study is expected to be finalized by the end of 2024.
- Qualitative studies on statelessness have been carried out in countries including Botswana, Burkina Faso, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mali, and South Africa, helping inform identification and documentation efforts, as well as advocacy and resource mobilization activities.
- The **Socioeconomic Survey of the Stateless Shona**, conducted in 2019 as a joint collaboration between the Government of Kenya, UNHCR and the World Bank, helped to provide a baseline assessment of the socioeconomic comparisons between the then-stateless Shona minority group and non-stateless populations in Kenya, helping better understand the impacts of statelessness on communities and individuals.
- A study jointly conducted by the International Conference in the Great Lakes Region and UNHCR in 2022 investigated risks of statelessness among long-term refugees and made recommendations for addressing the situation in three countries in the region: the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda and Uganda.



AFTERWORD AND CALL TO ACTION

RUVENDRINI MENIKDIWELA,
ASSISTANT HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR PROTECTION

First of all, thank you for taking the time to read this report. I want to convey special gratitude to everyone who has been involved in the #IBelong Campaign and Global Action Plan to End Statelessness, whether through advocacy, action, support or telling your story.

Since the launch of the #IBelong Campaign, we have made important gains against statelessness. In each point of progress and milestone that we've achieved together, we have witnessed lives change for the better. And in every individual who has gained nationality from these efforts, there is the promise of a better future.

Now is the time to extend that promise to the millions of people who are still stateless. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights contends that *"everyone has the right to a nationality."* This will only be possible if the international community – including States, regional networks, civil society organizations, and others willing to help – shares that same belief and takes decisive action.

Although #IBelong is ending, there is a new initiative to continue, accelerate and expand this critical work: the Global Alliance to End Statelessness. The Alliance is a collaborative multistakeholder platform that will increase collective advocacy efforts, catalyze political commitments and offer important opportunities to showcase progress. We will also be launching an updated framework, the Global Action Plan to End Statelessness 2.0, that will serve as a new roadmap to address statelessness and accelerate action.

The #IBelong Campaign, and the actions it helped inspire, have been consequential. Your commitment, caring and action have made a world of difference. We count on your continued partnership to end statelessness.



#IBELONG

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