

Yulin, 25, and her young son Ryan are among tens of thousands of people of Haitian descent born in the Dominican Republic who were deprived of their Dominican nationality by a Constitutional Court decision in 2013. As they do not possess any other nationality, they were rendered stateless. While some steps were taken in 2014 to address this issue, the resolution of the situation through restoration of nationality remains uncertain for the majority of the affected population.

A photograph of a woman with dark hair and a pink top, holding a young child with curly hair. The woman is holding a document in her left hand. The document is a Dominican Republic voter ID card (Cédula de Identificación Electoral) for Yulin Espinal Pie, born on 10/02/2012. The card includes a photo of the woman and a barcode. The text on the card includes 'Central Electoral', 'Identidad y Democracia', 'No. 2011-18-0009635', 'NUEVO INSCRITO', 'DOMINICANO MAYOR DE 18 AÑOS', 'YULIN ESPINAL PIE', and '10/02/2012'. The woman and child are sitting on a wooden structure, possibly a porch or a window frame, with a blue-painted wall in the background.

Ending Statelessness



In 2014, UNHCR launched a 10-year global campaign to end statelessness, which has been receiving broad international support. With strong leadership and the commitment of governments, civil society and international organizations, solutions for over 10 million people without a nationality are within reach. ●●●

#IBELONG campaign

On 4 November 2014, UNHCR launched the #IBELONG campaign to end statelessness within 10 years, along with the corresponding 10-point Global Action Plan to End Statelessness 2014-2024. The Global Action Plan highlights a number of practical steps that governments can take to address statelessness, including on deciding to whom to grant nationality. It proposes 10 measures for resolving existing situations; preventing new cases from emerging; strengthening the international legal framework governing statelessness; and gathering better baseline data on stateless populations.

States are encouraged to undertake these measures by developing and implementing national action plans, which focus on concrete steps to resolve statelessness according to country-specific contexts. Since the launch of the campaign, States in Central Asia and West Africa have adopted

national action plans, and more plans are underway in countries such as Iceland, Kenya and Senegal.

The campaign has also garnered strong media coverage. Media outlets, such as the BBC and Al Jazeera, created videos and infographics to explain statelessness, and an episode of Al Jazeera's television programme "The Stream" was dedicated to the campaign. During the three weeks following the launch, UNHCR materials reached up to 200 million people. These materials included the *Special Report on Ending Statelessness Within 10 Years*, which highlights the human impact of the phenomenon, as well as an open letter calling on States to take action and address the problem of statelessness. The open letter was jointly signed by the High Commissioner for Refugees, Special Envoy Angelina Jolie Pitt, Lifetime Goodwill Ambassador Barbara Hendricks and 30 other global opinion leaders.



Global Action Plan to End Statelessness 2014-2024

- A guiding framework of 10 actions that States can take to:
 - resolve existing major situations of statelessness;
 - prevent new cases of statelessness from emerging;
 - better identify and protect stateless populations.
- Because of the many causes and magnitude of the statelessness problem, not all actions are required in all countries. For this reason, the actions are presented in no particular order.

Action 1: Resolve existing major situations of statelessness.

Action 2: Ensure that no child is born stateless.

Action 3: Remove gender discrimination from nationality laws.

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

Action 5: Prevent statelessness in cases of State succession.

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

Action 7: Ensure birth registration for the prevention of statelessness.

Action 8: Issue nationality documentation to those with entitlement to it.

Action 9: Accede to the UN statelessness conventions.

Action 10: Improve quantitative and qualitative data on stateless populations.

Achieving a world without statelessness

The launch of the Global Action Plan was one of the highlights of UNHCR's work to promote the eradication of statelessness in 2014. However, the Plan must receive full endorsement from States to achieve results. In 2014, relatively few governments undertook legal and procedural reforms to reduce or end statelessness on their territory, and a lower than average number of stateless people acquired nationality. Key activities and progress achieved in 2014 are presented in the matrices.

Crucial to the global campaign are ongoing operational efforts, regional partnerships, awareness raising and training. In 2014, UNHCR operations across the world undertook a number of initiatives, as presented below.

OPERATIONAL RESPONSES

UNHCR continued to advocate for and provide technical advice to governments on reforms of nationality laws, and promoted accessions to the two United Nations conventions on statelessness. There were 13 accessions to the conventions in 2014. Reforms to remove gender discrimination from nationality laws are underway in a range of countries, including the Bahamas, Madagascar and Somalia.

Through targeted funding, UNHCR supported field-level initiatives to resolve statelessness in six countries in Central and South-East Asia. In Kyrgyzstan, UNHCR and its partner collaborated with the Government to identify and assist more than 6,000 people who acquired or confirmed Kyrgyz nationality, paving the way to resolve statelessness in the country

within five years. In Tajikistan and Kazakhstan, government authorities collaborated closely with civil society to resolve the situation of stateless people and those of undetermined nationality, most of whom are former citizens of the Soviet Union.

UNHCR worked with the Governments of Indonesia and the Philippines to confirm the nationality of people of Indonesian descent in the southern Philippines. In Thailand, a pilot project was carried out to support mobile government teams who process the nationality applications of stateless people. In Malaysia, UNHCR supported a project run by a community-based NGO which identified stateless people and assisted them to acquire nationality.

In the Middle East and North Africa, UNHCR worked with refugee-hosting governments to prevent statelessness by promoting the registration of refugee births, with particular emphasis on Syrian refugee children born in exile.

To improve data on stateless populations, UNHCR launched mapping studies in Finland, Iceland and Malta. A study on the Makonde community in Kenya and a public call to identify and assist stateless people in Montenegro were also undertaken jointly with governments.

In order to boost UNHCR's capacity to end statelessness, two regional statelessness officers were hired, increasing the number of regional statelessness officers from five to seven. Moreover, seven statelessness officers were deployed under the specialized roster of the International Rescue Committee's Surge Protection Capacity Project, which provides UNHCR with crucial staff support in the area of protection.

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENTS AND PARTNERSHIPS

Partnerships with governments, regional organizations and civil society to end statelessness were strengthened. Latin America and the Caribbean became the first region to respond to the campaign, with 28 States committing to eradicate statelessness by 2024. In the Asia and the Pacific region, 44 States agreed to support universal civil registration and endorsed a Regional Action Framework that recognizes the vital role of birth registration in preventing statelessness.

UNHCR continues to advocate for the protection of stateless people in Europe, working with the Council of Europe and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe's Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights, its Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons, as well as the European Network on Statelessness.

The organization reinforced its partnership with NGOs at the annual statelessness retreat in which 28 organizations, 13 of which had not participated in previous editions, played an active role. Following the retreat, the Americas Network on Nationality and Statelessness was created. The network comprises

civil society organizations, academic initiatives and individual experts committed to addressing statelessness in the Americas. UNHCR also supported a coalition of NGOs in a campaign to remove gender discrimination from nationality laws.

CAPACITY BUILDING THROUGH TRAINING AND NETWORKING

Some 300 participants from more than 70 countries attended the First Global Forum on Statelessness, which was held in September 2014 at the Peace Palace in The Hague. The Forum was co-organized and hosted by UNHCR and Tilburg University's Statelessness Programme, providing a unique opportunity for a wide range of stakeholders to meet and share their experiences, research, plans and ideas to help address and resolve statelessness.

To meet the continued demand for training and promote the exchange of information among governments, international organizations, NGOs and academics, UNHCR sponsored four short courses on statelessness, one of which was developed jointly with UNICEF and focused on child rights. UNHCR's Protection Learning Programme and external e-learning course on statelessness reached more than 1,000 people. ■

AREAS OF INTERVENTION

ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2014

DURABLE SOLUTIONS

Greater reduction of statelessness is achieved

Develop and implement strategies to address protracted situations of statelessness

Assist stateless people and those with undetermined nationality to acquire or confirm nationality

Provide training and technical advice to government officials on statelessness reduction measures, including acquisition by or confirmation of nationality for stateless people and those with undetermined nationality

Promote facilitated naturalization procedures

- The Global Action Plan sets out the strategy for achieving the goals of the #BELONG campaign to end statelessness. National action plans were adopted in four countries.
- At least 37,100 stateless people acquired nationality or had it confirmed.
- Operational responses were stepped up in selected countries using targeted funding, including:
 - 6,890 stateless people and people of undetermined nationality were assisted to acquire or confirm nationality in Kyrgyzstan;
 - 5,480 stateless people and people of undetermined nationality in Malaysia were identified and registered by a community-based NGO to assist them to acquire nationality;
 - 1,171 people of undetermined nationality in the southern Philippines were registered to have their nationality confirmed through a pilot project.

AREAS OF INTERVENTION

ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2014

FAVOURABLE PROTECTION ENVIRONMENT

Law and policy developed or strengthened

Encourage reform to ensure that nationality laws are consistent with international standards on preventing statelessness

Support development of national capacity to implement standards contained in the UN conventions on statelessness through expert and technical advice as well as training

- Advocacy was undertaken and advice provided in 76 countries.
- 28 Latin American and Caribbean States adopted the Brazil Declaration and Plan of Action.
- Georgia adopted new legislation on nationality and statelessness, establishing safeguards to prevent statelessness and providing a framework for identifying and protecting stateless people.
- Niger and Suriname adopted legislative amendments to achieve full gender equality in their nationality laws.
- The Benin Constitutional Court struck down elements of the country's national code that restrict women's ability to confer nationality to their children and spouses, paving the way for the adoption of a gender-equal law.
- In Central Asia, an International Conference on Statelessness and Migration organized by UNHCR, IOM and the Turkmen Government brought together 25 States and called on governments and international organizations to resolve statelessness.
- In Europe, UNHCR and the European Network on Statelessness (ENS) held a joint conference, hosted by the Council of Europe and attended by more than 100 delegates, to improve the protection of stateless people in Europe. UNHCR supported ENS initiatives, such as a petition calling on European leaders to protect stateless people and a campaign on the prevention of childhood statelessness.
- UNHCR and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe's Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights and its Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons organized a hearing to discuss the need to eradicate statelessness and subsequently adopted recommendations. Member States were asked to accede to and implement the 1997 European Convention on Nationality and the UN conventions on statelessness.
- 28 NGOs participated in the annual statelessness retreat, advising on the Global Action Plan and exploring opportunities to form regional civil society coalitions. Following the retreat, the Americas Network on Nationality and Statelessness was launched, which consists of a network of civil society organizations, academic initiatives and individual experts committed to addressing statelessness in the Americas.
- A coalition of NGOs, supported by UNHCR and UN Women, launched a campaign to end gender discrimination in nationality laws.
- The Office formalized its collaboration with the Norwegian Refugee Council by signing a memorandum of understanding that included statelessness work in situations of forced displacement.
- UNHCR published a *Handbook on Protection of Stateless Persons* to assist with the interpretation of the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons, provide guidance for statelessness determination and for developing and implementing law and policies that protect stateless people.
- UNHCR and the Inter-Parliamentary Union published a second edition of *Nationality and Statelessness: Handbook for Parliamentarians*. It recommends actions that can be taken by parliamentarians and provides updated information on contemporary statelessness issues, developments in international law and doctrine, and good practice examples.
- UNHCR published the summary conclusions from the expert meeting on *Interpreting the 1961 Statelessness Convention and Avoiding Statelessness resulting from Loss and Deprivation of Nationality* to further develop a doctrine on statelessness standards.
- Four short courses on statelessness were held at Tilburg University and the University of Oxford, as well as in Istanbul and Geneva.
- An external version of the statelessness e-learning course was launched and reached more than 1,000 people.
- In West Africa, UNHCR training for journalists led to the creation of a regional media network on statelessness and subsequently increased media coverage on related issues.

International and regional instruments acceded to or ratified

Advocate accession to the UN conventions on statelessness

- 13 accessions to the UN conventions on statelessness by 10 States: Argentina (1961 Convention), Belgium (1961 Convention), Colombia (1961 Convention), the Gambia (1954 and 1961 Convention), Georgia (1961 Convention), Guinea (1961 Convention), Mozambique (1954 and 1961 Convention), Niger (1954 Convention), Paraguay (1954 Convention) and Peru (1954 and 1961 Convention).





AREAS OF INTERVENTION

ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2014

FAIR PROTECTION PROCESSES AND DOCUMENTATION

Identification of stateless people improved

Undertake studies to boost knowledge on the number of stateless people, their situation and possible solutions

Conduct advocacy and provide technical advice to improve the quality of procedures to identify stateless people

- Statistical data available on 77 countries.
- Following the recommendation made by UNHCR, the Netherlands decided to introduce a statelessness determination procedure.
- Studies were undertaken in 18 States. Mapping studies in Finland, Iceland and Malta were launched. Subsequent recommendations included the establishment or improvement of statelessness determination procedures.
- A study on the Makonde community was conducted in Kenya, and the preliminary findings were shared with the Government to begin addressing the situation.
- The number of countries for which UNHCR reports statistical data on stateless people will increase to 85.

Civil registration and civil status documentation increased

Promote civil registration and universal birth registration

- At a ministerial conference on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific, which was co-hosted by UNHCR in Bangkok, 44 States adopted a Ministerial Declaration promoting universal civil registration.
- Universal birth registration was promoted among Syrian refugee children born in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey. In Lebanon, more than 40,000 families were advised on birth registration procedures, and the Government simplified the process of registering new refugee births. Jordan launched mobile birth registration services for all camp-based refugees and issued 2,400 birth certificates to Syrian refugee children, compared to less than 300 in 2013.

Stateless in the Philippines: Indonesian descendants feel torn between two lands

This article is an adapted version of a UNHCR news story

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Merlyn (left) at home in Kidapawan with her youngest daughter and husband. They are among more than 6,000 people of Indonesian descent in the southern Philippines.

“My parents are from Indonesia,” said Merlyn Mandak, a 48-year-old who lives in a mixed community alongside Filipinos in Kidapawan, Cotabato province. “My mother escaped forced marriage and came to the Philippines. My father came to work. I was born in the Philippines.”

“It’s better to be a bird because at least they have their own nest,” said her neighbour Roger Mandak (no relation), 58, lamenting the struggles his parents have faced since their arrival in the Philippines in the 1930s. Roger is also of Indonesian descent. Both sets of ancestors moved here generations ago and left a legacy no one wants or deserves – statelessness.

Under the country’s 1958 Citizenship Law, Indonesians would lose their citizenship if they lived abroad for more than five years without registering with the Indonesian authorities. In 2006, the Government reformed its citizenship law to ensure statelessness would no longer occur in this way and offer those who had lost Indonesian nationality a way to reacquire it. However, some people did not formally reacquire Indonesian citizenship and remain stateless.

A mapping study conducted by UNHCR and the Governments of Indonesia and the Philippines in 2012 and 2013 identified more than 6,000 people of Indonesian descent who were of undetermined nationality in

the southern Philippines. Those interviewed highlighted daily challenges, including poor access to employment, livelihoods, education and clean water. They also lack a secure immigration status.

“Given the uncertainty of their status, they suffer discriminatory treatment in employment because they are considered as aliens by most people,” said Precious Pojas, Senior State Counsel at the Ministry of Justice, who added that their rights to land ownership could also be denied. “There is [also] a threat they would be deported, especially if they do not comply with our labour laws.”

At a glance, Merlyn seems luckier than most. Her husband Joseph, also of Indonesian descent, works without a permit in a rice mill in Kidapawan. His employer provides free accommodation and utilities. Their youngest daughter, aged 13, attends a nearby school. Two older daughters have married Filipinos.

But like their local neighbours, they struggle with poverty – losing sleep when the bills arrive.

Recognizing the community’s livelihood problems, UNHCR has teamed up with the local authorities and an NGO called *Pasali* to help supplement their income. Through a cooperative of community representatives, it

KIDAPAWAN, the Philippines, September 2014 (UNHCR) |
The question is simple: “Where are you from?” But in this rice-milling community in Mindanao, the answer is never straightforward.

was decided that they would start a mushroom farming project. Local authorities provide the land and transport, UNHCR provides the spores, and *Pasali* trains community members on how to grow the mushrooms.

But livelihoods alone will not solve their problems.

The Governments of Indonesia and the Philippines have agreed to work together to verify the nationality of people of Indonesian descent in Mindanao, determine their citizenship status and address their protection issues.

“Once they have the status [of citizens], it will be much easier for the governments to give them access to social services like education and health care,” said Agung Sampurno at the Indonesian Consular Office in Davao City. “The essence of this cooperation is to give them the right to a better life, not only for them but also for their children, grandchildren and great grandchildren.”

When the problem is resolved in Mindanao, the Vice-Consul added, the same approach would be used to address similar problems faced by people of Filipino descent now living on Indonesian islands in the Sulu Sea. ○