

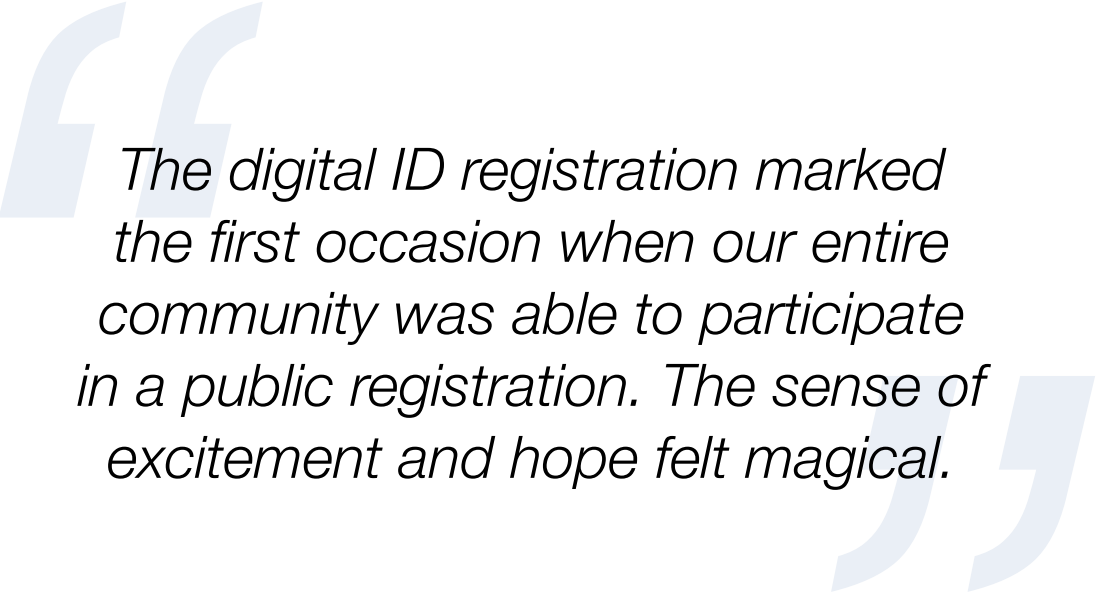


 **ID4D** Identification
For Development

Building Statelessness-Sensitive ID Systems

February 2026

 **WORLD BANK GROUP**



The digital ID registration marked the first occasion when our entire community was able to participate in a public registration. The sense of excitement and hope felt magical.

Member of the formerly stateless Shona community
who has now completed university



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ABOUT ID4D

The World Bank Group's Identification for Development (ID4D) initiative uses global knowledge and expertise across sectors to help countries realize the transformational potential of digital identification systems to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. It operates across the World Bank Group with global practices and units working on digital development, social protection, health, financial inclusion, governance, gender, and legal, among others.

The mission of ID4D is to enable all people to access services and exercise their rights, by increasing the number of people who have an official form of identification. ID4D makes this happen through its three pillars of work: thought leadership and analytics to generate evidence and fill knowledge gaps; global platforms and convening to amplify good practices, collaborate, and raise awareness; and country and regional engagement to provide financial and technical assistance for the implementation of robust, inclusive, and responsible digital identification systems that are integrated with civil registration.

The work of ID4D is made possible with support from the World Bank Group, Gates Foundation, UK Government, French Government, Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation, and Omidyar Network.

To find out more about ID4D, visit id4d.worldbank.org.

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SCOPE & TERMINOLOGY

This publication is intended to foster statelessness-sensitive approaches that will benefit people who meet the international legal definition of a stateless person as well as people at risk of statelessness. For the purposes of this publication, all references to stateless people should be read to include those at risk of statelessness.

Throughout this document, the terms “citizen”/“citizenship” and “national”/“nationality” are used fully interchangeably.

Terms and Definitions

Digital Public Infrastructure: The World Bank’s working definition of DPI per the [DPI White Paper](#) is an approach to digitalization focused on creating “foundational, digital building blocks designed for the public benefit.”

Foundational Identification System: An identification system primarily created to manage identity information for the general population and provide credentials that serve as proof of identity for a wide variety of public and private sector transactions and services. Common types of foundational ID systems include civil registries, universal resident or national ID systems, and population registers (ID4D, Glossary).

Functional Identification System: A system that provides official proof of identity and authorization for particular purposes or sectors. This typically includes identification systems that provide voter identification, ration cards, social security numbers, health cards, tax numbers, and more; in some cases, these credentials may also be recognized as proof of identity for other purposes or sectors. (ID4D Principles, 2022, p.4).

Stateless Person: A person who is not considered a national by any State under the operation of its law. This definition comes from the 1954 Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and is part of customary international law.

People at Risk of Statelessness: This is a broad term that has no international definition and which for purposes of this publication includes but is not limited to all individuals who lack proof or recognition of any citizenship/nationality status but who may possess an entitlement to nationality, and if so, could be assisted to obtain proof of nationality by the relevant authorities. (Note that the [International Recommendations on Statelessness Statistics](#) refer to such people as “Persons Without Recognized Nationality Status”).

In Situ Statelessness: Most stateless persons have never crossed a border and find themselves in their ‘own country’. Their predicament exists in situ, that is, in the country of their long-term residence, in many cases the country of their birth. For these individuals, statelessness is often the result of problems in the framing and implementation of national laws.

Legal Identity: The UN Legal Identity Agenda (UNLIA) defines legal identity as the basic characteristics of an individual’s identity, such as name, sex, place, and date of birth, conferred through birth registration and the issuance of a certificate by an authorized civil registration authority. If birth registration is unavailable, legal identity may be granted by a legally recognized identification authority, which should be linked to the civil registration system. Legal identity is retired upon death with the issuance of a death certificate by the civil registration authority ([ID4D, Types of ID Systems](#)).¹

Refugee: The [1951 Convention](#) defines a refugee as a person who is outside his or her country of nationality or habitual residence; has a well-founded fear of being persecuted because of his or her race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion; and is unable or unwilling to avail himself or herself of the protection of that country, or to return there, for fear of persecution.

Asylum Seeker: An asylum seeker is an individual who has left their country seeking protection from persecution and whose claim for refugee status has not yet been determined ([UNHCR, Website: Asylum Seekers](#)).

Internally Displaced Person (IDP): An IDP is a person or a group of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized State border (OCHA: Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, 2024).

Migrant: There is no internationally agreed definition of a migrant; for purposes of this publication migrants are persons living outside their country of birth, irrespective of: their migration status, the reasons for their migration, or how they migrated.

Note: Refugees, IDPs, migrants, and asylum seekers can also be stateless, i.e., have a dual-status as stateless refugees or stateless migrants or stateless asylum-seekers, and displacement or migration can exacerbate risks of statelessness.

¹ Although proof of legal identity—particularly birth and/or marriage registration—is frequently a requirement for acquiring a nationality, legal identification need not be linked to nationality and should not be equated with legal or national status. While some legal identification systems (e.g., national identification systems) require or constitute proof of nationality, others do not.

ABSTRACT

This publication provides policymakers, practitioners, and development partners with practical guidance for integrating statelessness considerations into the planning, design, and implementation of foundational identification systems. As countries accelerate the development of Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI), including digital ID, millions of stateless people risk being excluded or further marginalized due to legal and administrative barriers and other challenges. To help address these risks, the publication sets out concrete measures to make ID systems more inclusive for stateless people—such as incorporating statelessness assessments during project preparation, adapting enrollment procedures to overcome legal and documentation barriers, strengthening birth registration systems, ensuring data protection and due process safeguards, and aligning national frameworks with international standards to prevent and reduce statelessness. By embedding statelessness-sensitive approaches into ID system design and implementation, governments and partners can advance the Sustainable Development Goal of legal identity for all (SDG 16.9) and help ensure that no one is left behind in the digital transformation.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Inclusive and trusted identification (ID) systems are a cornerstone of sustainable development and digital transformation. Yet for millions of stateless people and those at risk of statelessness, lack of recognized nationality or proof of identity remains a barrier to accessing services, exercising rights, and participating fully in social and economic life. **This publication is intended to provide policymakers and practitioners (including government officials, international organizations, civil society, and World Bank Group task teams) with resources and practices that support the planning, design, and implementation of statelessness-sensitive foundational identification systems, i.e., systems that take stateless people and their situation into account.**

It highlights risks and opportunities to such people presented by the rapid modernization of identification systems, including adoption of new forms of digital ID as part of Digital DPI. **It outlines considerations and recommendations intended to help ensure that stateless people are not left behind and instead benefit from advances in ID and DPI, consistent with the World Bank Group's strategic goals of ending extreme poverty and increasing shared prosperity.**

Drawing on global consultations co-convened by ID4D and UNHCR, the publication synthesizes lessons from country experiences and emerging good practices to help ensure ID system design and delivery leave no one behind.

Purpose and Approach

The publication provides an operational framework for integrating statelessness-sensitive measures throughout the ID system lifecycle—from legal and institutional assessment to system architecture, data management, outreach, and grievance redress.

Key Messages — Risks, Opportunities, and Actions

Risks. Stateless people are frequently excluded from ID systems. The absence of a recognized identity then blocks access to essential services, legal rights, and formal economic participation, compounding marginalization across generations. If digital transformation proceeds without a statelessness-sensitive lens, new platforms and credentials may harden these barriers, widening existing inequalities and scaling exclusion through interoperable databases and automated eligibility checks that silently leave the most vulnerable behind.

Opportunities. Well-designed, inclusive, and trusted ID systems can be gateways to empowerment, opening participation in education, health, finance, and civic life. The rapid build-out of DPI presents opportunities to embed “inclusion by design”—ensuring everyone is recognized and counted from the start. By extending legal and practical recognition to all residents, stronger ID ecosystems can bolster social cohesion, enhance service delivery, and reinforce Statelegitimacy through fairer, more transparent access to rights and opportunities.

RECOMMENDATIONS	ACTION ITEMS
Build ID systems that are inclusive of stateless people and protect their rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Adopt a context-specific design approach. Tailor ID system design to the regional and national legal and political context, recognizing that visibility of “statelessness” may be protective in some countries and harmful in others.• Design enrollment that works without proof of nationality. Advocate for universal access; residence-based enrollment where proof of identity is sufficient to register in national ID system; make nationality fields optional (“not collected/unknown”). This will require clear standard operating procedures to ensure officials do not impose any nationality requirement. The system should also be designed to enable future linkage with civil registration or nationality records.• Promote alignment with international standards. Use World Bank-UNHCR dialogue and technical assistance to help governments close gaps with the 1954 and 1961 Statelessness Conventions, human rights treaties, and regional instruments.• Pathways to nationality. Support the creation of safe pathways to nationality and refer people as appropriate to these where they exist.

RECOMMENDATIONS	ACTION ITEMS
<p>Include statelessness in diagnostic assessments before project planning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrate statelessness analysis early. Conduct a Statelessness Situation Assessment before project design, jointly with government, UNHCR, and civil society, to understand protection risks, data gaps, and legal frameworks. • Engage affected communities. Consult directly with stateless people—safely and ethically—to identify barriers, preferences, and risks in enrollment and ID use.
<p>Use findings from diagnostics in dialogue during preparation/implementation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cross-cutting issues to consider include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Is there a National Action Plan (NAP) to End Statelessness? If yes, link technical support to this. If not, is there interest in developing a NAP? Have any statelessness pledges/commitments been made at the Global Refugee Forum, Universal Periodic Review (UPR) or elsewhere? Is the country a Party to the UN Statelessness Conventions and implementing them fully? If not, is there interest in technical support to become a Party/fully implement? ✓ How do we help ensure that stateless people and those at risk are identified so they may be provided ID and referred to the competent authorities who can support resolution of their nationality/statelessness situation? How do we ensure that those with an entitlement to nationality but without proof of it are supported to obtain proof? ✓ Are there appropriate due process protections built into the system to mitigate the risk that people will be wrongfully assessed not to be nationals—and to allow robust recourse in the case of such assessments? ✓ Does the system appropriately protect sensitive personal information about stateless people? ✓ What improvements to the birth registration system might be supported as part of the project? • Framing Statelessness. In settings where statelessness is sensitive, position the operation/project around “resident inclusion” and “documentation barriers,” not statelessness. Use Project Development Objective (PDO)/result language like “share of residents able to enroll and use foundational ID” rather than category labels (citizens; stateless people; etc.).

RECOMMENDATIONS	ACTION ITEMS
Design credentials with country-specific sensitivity to statelessness visibility.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep credentials neutral. Suggest that cards/QRs/ID numbers contain no nationality or other markers. Route citizen-only entitlements (e.g., voting) through sector back-end checks instead of visible fields on the foundational credential. • Registration approach/whether to register statelessness. Decide whether “statelessness” should be captured at all—and if so, whether it should be stored only as a protected back-end attribute or omitted entirely. Where a discrete back-end flag clearly benefits stateless persons (e.g., enabling service access or tailored safeguards) and can be protected by robust governance, limited access controls, and purpose limitation, consider recording it in the back end. Where any recording poses credible risks of harm, discrimination, or misuse, adopt neutral credentials and avoid collecting or storing explicit statelessness identifiers.
Train civil registrars/officials to apply legal criteria fairly.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote awareness and capacity-building. Provide training and knowledge-sharing for officials on statelessness-sensitive practices, legal obligations, and international standards to ensure consistent application of non-discrimination principles.
Support due process & grievance guidelines; inform individuals about decisions/redress.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grievance Mechanisms. Support the setup of accessible grievance redress and appeals for enrollment/denial decisions. • Informed decision. Ensure that individuals are informed about decisions and avenues for redress in cases of denial of documentation, including birth registration and nationality documentation.
Run awareness-raising for stateless groups on birth registration/ID opportunities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusive outreach. Recommend targeted outreach using neutral, inclusive messaging; partner with Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) with community trust. • Accessible Information. Provide easy-to-read materials and safe referral information.
Support legal aid/paralegals for applications or redress.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support assisted enrollment. Partner with CSOs and paralegals to help applicants prepare documentation, navigate registration, and contest arbitrary denials—bridging the gap between law and practice.
Foster regional cooperation and cross-border data sharing protocols.	Cross-border coordination. Coordinate with neighboring countries and learn from regional good practices on documentation continuity for mobile/in-situ populations.

RECOMMENDATIONS	ACTION ITEMS
Monitor results continuously and adapt systems for inclusion.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor outcomes. Set up M&E to track enrollment/use/denial rates for at-risk groups including stateless people; enable feedback loops with CSOs/communities. • Evidence-based adjustments. Course-correct design choices (e.g., nationality field handling, credential neutrality) based on evidence.

Audience and Use

This guidance note is intended for **World Bank Task Team Leaders (TTLs) and other ID practitioners** seeking to operationalize inclusion commitments under SDG 16.9 and the *Principles on Identification for Sustainable Development*. It offers statelessness-related key considerations that ID practitioners should take into account when designing and implementing an ID project.

Vision

By embedding statelessness sensitivity into ID system planning, design, and implementation, countries can potentially **prevent and reduce statelessness** and improve service delivery to all—**without introducing or heightening risks for marginalized groups**—in line with the ‘leave no one behind’ principle.

BACKGROUND

A growing global consensus highlights the importance of [DPI](#) as a foundation for large-scale digital transformation. At the core of this infrastructure, digital identity is widely regarded as the lynchpin, providing reliable authentication and enabling trusted interactions between individuals, governments, and businesses.

Box 1. Global Findex Data 2021 – Findings on Digital ID

- **Over 90% of countries now have foundational ID systems underpinned by digital data:** As of mid-2022, **186 out of 198** countries have foundational ID systems where identity records are stored in a digital format. Many countries that were primarily reliant on paper-based identity records are in the process of introducing digitized ID systems. The number of people relying on non-digitized systems and records for identity management is expected to decline rapidly in the coming years.
- **Two-thirds of countries globally have foundational ID systems that support some form of digital identity verification and/or authentication for in-person services and transactions:** Foundational ID systems in at least 132 countries support some form of digital identity verification or authentication in the context of in-person services and transactions. However, the functionality, availability, and use of digital verification or authentication services—along with the levels of assurance and data privacy and protection safeguards they provide—vary substantially across countries.
- **In close to 40% of countries, people can obtain at least one government-recognized digital identity credential—i.e., one that allows for remote authentication to access online services and transactions.**

Source: Global Findex Data 2021

As a key enabler, digital ID underpins the delivery of digital public and private services—ranging from healthcare management and social welfare payments to banking transactions and tax administration. For users, it brings greater convenience, shorter waiting times, and reduced travel costs by enabling remote authentication. For governments, it strengthens administrative efficiency and helps mitigate risks such as identity fraud.

The World Bank supports the development of inclusive and trusted ID and DPI ecosystems that expand access to services and economic opportunities. This engagement is aligned with global commitments such as the Sustainable Development Goals (including SDG 16.9 on legal identity for all) and is informed by frameworks including the Principles on Identification for Sustainable Development (ID4D, 2021), the Principles for Digital Development, and the Universal DPI Safeguards Framework (UNDP, 2024).

Unfortunately, millions of stateless people may be left out of foundational ID systems or made more vulnerable by ID-related policies and procedures. There are many reasons for this, including because stateless people may face eligibility or other barriers to register in and use ID systems. They may also be provided with an ID that creates additional vulnerabilities by making their statelessness visible in settings where it may subject them to discrimination.

As the momentum around DPI accelerates, there is an urgent need to identify practices that mitigate the risks and maximize benefits to stateless people to the greatest extent possible. By making inclusivity an important goal, ID practitioners and development actors may be able to leverage work on foundational ID systems to help identify stateless people, improve their socio-economic situation, and contribute to global efforts to prevent and reduce statelessness itself.

This publication identifies key questions to be considered during the development of ID systems that may affect stateless populations, including:

- Is there a stateless population present, and if so, what is their situation (e.g., what is the legal and policy environment like for stateless people)?
- How can the rollout of new or improved ID systems be used as an opportunity to help identify stateless people and resolve their situation, as well as an opportunity to ensure that those with an entitlement to a nationality but without proof are supported to obtain nationality documentation?
- How can the rollout of new or improved ID systems be used as an opportunity to help stateless people included in the ID system so that they benefit from access to rights and services they're entitled to?
- How can identification and development practitioners promote international standards that help identify and protect stateless people and prevent and reduce statelessness?

- How can birth registration procedures be strengthened to help prevent statelessness? What capacity-building should be provided to officials who are assessing nationality for ID purposes?
- Technical questions include:
 - ✓ What types of data related to nationality may be considered for collection in foundational identification systems, and what approaches exist for validating such data?
 - ✓ In what circumstances should a “stateless” or other “non-national” marker be visible on digital identity credentials and/or visible at the back end of identity systems?
 - ✓ How should the legal and policy environment for stateless people influence choices in this regard?
 - ✓ And how can due process protections and grievance mechanisms be built into ID systems so that people have recourse if they’re incorrectly assessed not to be citizens?

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. What is Statelessness?

International law defines a stateless person as “a person not considered as a national by any State under the operation of its law.”² Assessing whether an individual meets this definition may require a careful assessment of law and fact, but in simple terms a stateless person is a person without citizenship. For an outline of the main pathways leading people to be without citizenship see **Annex I: Causes of Statelessness**.

People who lack citizenship are found in all regions of the world, particularly in regions and countries affected by fragility, conflict, and violence. Developing countries in Asia and Africa have the highest reported stateless populations (**see Map 1**). Worldwide, UNHCR reports around 4.4 million stateless people, while noting the actual number is likely much higher and that such people are likely among the poorest globally.³ The lack of reliable quantitative data has multiple causes, including:

1. Most countries do not routinely collect data on statelessness as part of censuses or other population surveys, including many with known stateless populations (UNHCR reports some data on statelessness for approximately 100 countries in the world, using multiple sources).
2. In countries where statelessness data is collected, definitions, concepts, and classifications employed to measure statelessness statistics often reflect country-specific legislation and policies, such that harmonized data is lacking to enable cross-country comparisons.
3. Individuals may be hesitant to declare themselves stateless to a national authority due to fear of legal repercussions and/or social stigma. In addition, many stateless individuals may not consider themselves to be stateless, but rather to be nationals of the country of residence or of another country (even though they would be unable to gain official recognition of that nationality in practice).

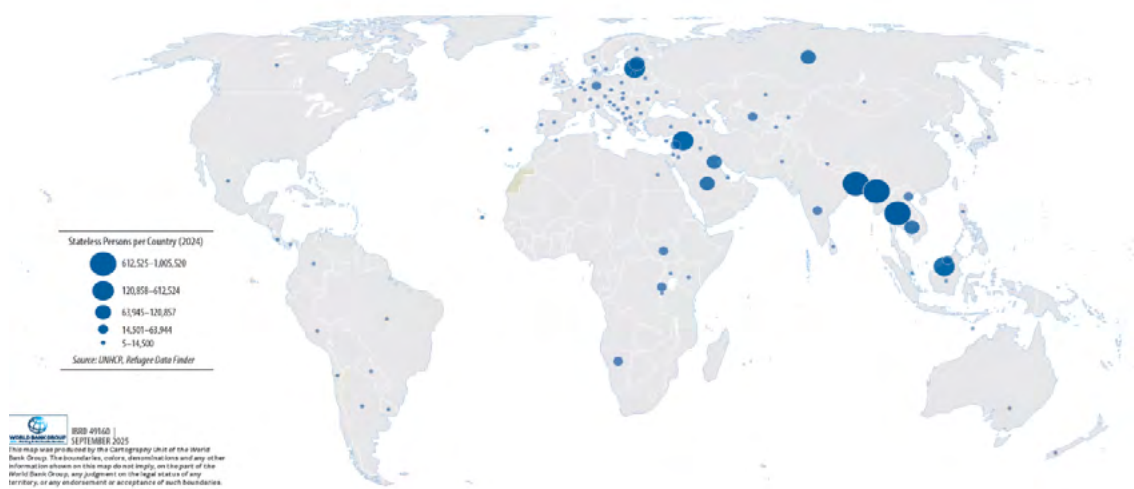
² UNHCR’s Handbook on Protection of Stateless Persons (2014) notes that the reference to “law” in this definition “should be read broadly to encompass not just legislation, but also ministerial decrees, regulations, orders, judicial case law...and, where appropriate, customary practice.” The Handbook further clarifies that “Establishing whether an individual is not considered as a national under the operation of its law requires a careful analysis of how a State applies its nationality laws in an individual’s case in practice” and that “This is a mixed question of fact and law” (See paragraphs 22 and 23).

³ See, e.g., UNHCR Global Trends (2024); UNHCR “I am here, I belong” (2015) and UNHCR “Stateless Minorities and Their Search for Citizenship” (2017).

4. Many countries lack procedures to determine the citizenship status of a person whose nationality of the country of residence is uncertain, or “Statelessness Determination Procedures” (SDPs) to identify stateless persons in a migratory context and provide them with a legal status as such.

Although stateless people may be treated like foreigners, most are not refugees and are instead “in situ” stateless people.

Map 1: Stateless people by country



Source: Refugee Data Finder, UNHCR 2024, designed by the World Bank's Cartography Unit (2025).

In addition to the millions of people who are stateless, many more lack any proof of legal identity whatsoever. The World Bank estimates that 850 million people globally do not have any official proof of their identity. More than half of these are children whose births have not been registered. People without any official identification live disproportionately in low- and lower- middle-income countries in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia ([ID4D Global Dataset](#), 2021).

Being undocumented is not the same as lacking citizenship; most of the 850 million people without official identification are likely considered citizens by their governments. However, when the absence of official documentation intersects with other risk factors—such as belonging to a minority group, living in a border region, or having a real or perceived connection to another country—people can encounter challenges being recognized as citizens.

Wherever citizenship is lacking or in question, affected individuals are likely to face hurdles

in accessing education, healthcare, and other services critical to realizing their socio-economic potential. They may not be allowed to go to school beyond primary school—or they may be allowed to attend school but not to sit for exams or given credentials documenting their graduation. They are often denied formal employment and the right to own property, making them particularly vulnerable to exploitation and abuse (**see Box 2 below**). Their day-to-day ability to function in the economy is often impeded by the lack of financial services such as access to a bank account or government support programs. They may not even be able to acquire a mobile phone or SIM card. And as lack of recognized citizenship status is frequently passed down from one generation to the next, poverty and other negative repercussions are perpetuated. Accordingly, a new report from UNHCR sheds light on the importance of understanding statelessness as a development issue; see [“Leaving no one behind: Statelessness and the Sustainable Development Goals.”](#)

Box 2. Examples of Statelessness Situations Around the World

The Rohingya of Myanmar

The Rohingya represent the world’s largest known stateless population at well over a million people. They are a mostly Muslim ethnic minority in and from Myanmar, where they have lived for hundreds of years. Despite this longstanding presence, they have been regarded as “foreigners” and discriminated against based on religion and ethnicity. In 1982, Myanmar amended its Citizenship Law to remove the Rohingya from the listing of ethnic groups that automatically qualify for full citizenship from birth. Over time, their ability to acquire even temporary documents proving their identity and links to Myanmar deteriorated, leaving the Rohingya not only without citizenship but without access to basic civil and political rights and services. Their freedom of movement and access to education and work is very limited, and they have endured extreme forms of discrimination and abuse. Waves of violence against them, most recently brutal attacks in 2017, have led to their mass displacement. Today, an estimated one million Rohingya live in refugee camps in Bangladesh, and the hundreds of thousands who remain in Myanmar live under severe restrictions.

Statelessness in the former Soviet Republics

When the Soviet Union fell apart in 1991, some 25 million people found themselves holding citizenship documents of a defunct state. Many successor governments enacted new

citizenship laws, and some granted citizenship only to those descended from the population that was present on the territory before it became part of the Soviet Union. For example, Latvia's 1994 citizenship law provided automatic citizenship only to those persons who were descended from Latvians who were present on the territory before it was incorporated into the Soviet Union, thus leaving hundreds of thousands of ethnic Russians in Latvia without nationality. Latvia has since naturalized many of these people and amended its citizenship law to allow children born to "non-citizens" to automatically receive Latvian nationality at birth such that the number of people without citizenship decreases every year.

Even where new citizenship laws were more inclusive from the beginning, there were (and remain) many people who simply never acquired new, valid citizenship credentials, including many people living in remote, mountainous regions in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. Thanks to political will and support from UNHCR and partners, notable progress has been made to resolve statelessness in countries that were once part of the Soviet Union, and the numbers have been declining accordingly. In 2019, Kyrgyzstan was even recognized as having resolved all known cases on its territory.

Statelessness in the context of the Syria refugee situation

As of 2025, some 24 countries globally do not allow mothers to pass their nationality to their children on an equal basis with men. Most of these countries are in the Middle East, and Syria is one of these countries. As a result, when a child's father is unknown, stateless, foreign, absent, or unable to complete the necessary paperwork, a child born to a Syrian mother can be left without any nationality. When this legal hurdle combines with practical issues that commonly arise during civil conflict and displacement—such as lost documents, separated families, children born out of wedlock, and challenges accessing civil registration and/or consular authorities—the result is that many displaced children may be at risk of statelessness, both within Syria and in the countries hosting Syrian refugees.

Statelessness is a risk in any forced displacement situation, especially when displacement endures for long periods, even multi-generationally. The risk factors for statelessness in refugee situations include loss of documents, family separation, challenges accessing civil registration, limited or no access to consular services, and loss of links to country of origin over time.

Statelessness in the Dominican Republic

Like most countries in the Americas, the Dominican Republic has a jus soli citizenship law, meaning that people born on the territory are citizens. However, children born to parents who were Haitian migrants or of Haitian descent were often denied citizenship documents in practice because of widespread discrimination. And in 2013, a Constitutional Court ruling (168-13) effectively retroactively stripped citizenship from tens of thousands of such people born in the country since 1929, ruling that if their parents were irregular Haitian migrants they were “in transit” and the children were thus carved out from jus soli provisions. In 2014, the Dominican Congress passed Law 169-14, restoring nationality to some people who had previously been registered as citizens and creating a process for others to apply. Implementation of this law has, however, been uneven and incomplete, and many people who were born and have spent their whole lives in the Dominican Republic remain without citizenship documentation.

The harms associated with statelessness extend beyond individuals and affect families, communities, and even regions and countries. Marginalization and discrimination linked to statelessness can be a root cause of persistent poor development outcomes, conflict, violence, and displacement.

The international community has set standards for States to follow to prevent and reduce statelessness and protect stateless persons. In the aftermath of World War II, the [Universal Declaration on Human Rights](#) recognized a fundamental “right to a nationality” in Article 15, and soon thereafter two treaties specifically on statelessness were adopted, known together as the UN Statelessness Conventions. The first, the [1954 Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons](#) (1954 Convention), contains the definition of a stateless person and a set of basic rights and protections that all stateless people should enjoy. The second, the [1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness](#) (1961 Convention), contains key international standards designed to prevent and reduce statelessness itself.⁴ In addition, human rights treaties provide the right of every child to acquire a nationality at birth and prohibit gender discrimination in the transmission of nationality to children and spouses.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is the UN agency mandated to address statelessness. Specifically, UNHCR has a mandate to identify stateless persons and persons of undetermined nationality, protect stateless persons, and prevent and

⁴ The provisions of the 1954 and 1961 Conventions are complemented by other international human rights treaties that promote the right to a nationality and prohibit various forms of discrimination: the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women, and the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination.

reduce statelessness.⁵ To advance these goals, UNHCR supports the identification of stateless persons and includes available data on stateless people in its annual Global Trends reports; conducts advocacy with governments and other stakeholders; and provides technical assistance to governments on statelessness. For example, UNHCR advises governments on the preparation and implementation of nationality legislation and other relevant legislation and procedures that are in line with the international standards to prevent and reduce statelessness and identify and protect stateless persons. UNHCR also engages with affected communities, including through awareness raising and legal aid.

Over the past ten years, there has been increased political will and momentum to tackle statelessness. Many countries have made positive reforms to address statelessness, and many have made voluntary pledges to do more at events such as the Global Refugee Forum and the 2019 High-Level Segment on Statelessness. UNHCR recently published a report on these and other important developments: [The #IBelong Campaign: A Decade of Action to End Statelessness 2014-2024](#). The progress documented in this report highlights that while statelessness and the recognition of nationality for certain groups can be politically sensitive in some contexts, many countries are willing to acknowledge and address the issue, including by identifying stateless persons and establishing pathways toward the acquisition of nationality. For example, over 20 countries have now adopted National Action Plans (NAPs) to End Statelessness, and some 24 countries have joined the recently formed Global Alliance to End Statelessness.⁶

Where there is political will to address statelessness, it can generally be resolved through relatively simple law and policy reforms. For example, if all countries implemented the standards in the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, statelessness would be nearly eliminated within a generation. However, even where there's political will, countries may lack the expertise and resources to conform their laws and policies to international standards and/or to fully implement these standards. In these cases, technical assistance by UNHCR and others is critical. Supporting governments to incorporate international standards in domestic laws and to apply them is therefore a major way in which the international community can contribute to ending statelessness. The introduction of new identification systems thus presents an opportunity to assist countries to address long-standing challenges with existing legal and policy frameworks and thus build upon current momentum to end statelessness.

⁵ UNGA Resolution 61/137 (2006), paragraph 4.

⁶ 24 countries have joined more than 100 other key stakeholders in the Global Alliance to End Statelessness by June 2025. Sign up is still open. See all members here: <https://statelessnessalliance.org/members-directory/> Additionally, in 2024, UNHCR published the Global Action Plan to End Statelessness 2.0. The Global Action Plan establishes a guiding framework comprising eleven actions to be undertaken by States, with the support of other stakeholders.

Box 3. Growing Momentum

More than 600,000 stateless people and people of undetermined nationality have acquired citizenship in the last ten years. Examples include:

- Kyrgyzstan resolving all known cases of statelessness as of 2019.
- Kenya granting nationality to members of the Makonde, Shona, and Pemba minorities.
- Vietnam making strides to address statelessness among former Cambodian refugees.
- Turkmenistan declaring in 2024 that it had resolved all known cases of statelessness.
- States are also strengthening legal frameworks to prevent and reduce statelessness and protect stateless people⁷:
- There have been 77 new accessions to the 1954 and 1961 Statelessness Conventions since 2010 – a 76% increase.
- 20+ countries (e.g., Argentina, Brazil, Côte d'Ivoire, Kazakhstan, Türkiye, Ukraine) have adopted new laws and policies to protect stateless persons.
- 13 countries have passed legislation to help ensure no child is born stateless (Albania, Armenia, Chile, Colombia, Cuba, Estonia, Iceland, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Luxembourg, Republic of Moldova, the Philippines, and Tajikistan).
- Liberia, Madagascar, and Sierra Leone reformed their nationality laws so mothers can confer citizenship on the same basis as fathers, helping to prevent childhood statelessness.

In addition, governments and other actors have in recent years made over 400 voluntary pledges to do more, signaling unprecedented political will.

1.2. Why Does Statelessness-Sensitivity Matter for Development Work on ID Systems?

Working to reform and improve ID systems has the potential to unintentionally leave stateless people further behind, or to help address past exclusion and improve their situation. Stateless people are at risk of being left out of progress towards universal access to ID and the development benefits that come with it; as a result, they are at risk of being left behind and in poverty.

The recognition of the powerful link between legal identity and development outcomes led to the inclusion of SDG 16.9 (“By 2030, provide legal identity for all, including birth registration”) in the Sustainable Development Agenda. In accordance with SDG 16.9, the World Bank and other development partners are supporting governments as they work towards “legal identity for all.” (See Box 4).

⁷ UNHCR (2024): The #IBelong Campaign: A Decade of Action to End Statelessness, 2014-2024.

Box 4. Target 16.9—Legal Identity and Statelessness

Goal: By 2030, provide legal identity for all, including birth registration.

Indicator: Proportion of children under 5 years whose births have been registered with a civil authority.

Linkage: SDG Target 16.9 is directly relevant to preventing and reducing statelessness. The registration of a child's birth is the first step in establishing their legal identity. Birth registration and certification typically contain essential information for determining a child's nationality, including the identity of the child's parents and date and place of birth.

Consistent with the SDGs, Principle 1 of the Principles on Identification for Sustainable Development calls for countries to “Ensure universal access for individuals, free from discrimination.” It highlights that: “All identification systems should be free from discrimination ...against groups, such as those who may face increased risks of exclusion for cultural, political, economic, or other reasons. Such groups include people living in poverty; women; children; rural populations; racial, ethnic, linguistic, and religious minorities; persons with disabilities; sexual and gender minorities; migrants; asylum seekers, refugees, and the forcibly displaced; and **stateless persons**, among others.”

To achieve the SDGs and uphold the Principles on Identification for Sustainable Development, it is essential that governments ensure rights to a foundational ID for all legal residents, regardless of nationality status or any other factor, and systematically work to remove barriers and enroll previously excluded populations. To accomplish this, it's important that stateless people and their needs are considered from the very beginning of designing foundational ID systems, including digital ID systems. While inclusion is mission-critical to the ambition to “Leave No One Behind,” it is equally important that stateless people are included in a way that advances their well-being as opposed to leaving them worse off.

There are real risks that new identification systems can harm stateless people's interests. This can occur when they are left out of identification systems in situations where the new systems make official ID both more universal and more critical to everyday life than was previously the case. In other words, in situations where stateless people were previously able to “get by” without official identification or a national ID card, new ID systems and service provider policies may make both more essential for accessing services. Moreover, some people whose nationality status was previously unclear because they lacked proof of

nationality may become mistakenly formally identified as non-citizens.

At the same time, the introduction of new systems can also provide the political and administrative space for countries to address long-standing problems of access to identification and confirmation of nationality. There are thus opportunities for those working on foundational ID systems to positively impact the lives of stateless people and to contribute to efforts to prevent and reduce statelessness. As discussed below, these encompass opportunities to get people included in systems that will increase their access to rights and services; to help those who are entitled to a nationality but lack conclusive proof of it to obtain nationality documentation; to support improved birth registration coverage for the prevention of statelessness; to strengthen the capacity of institutions and ID officials involved in making nationality determinations; to help ensure that universal design principles strengthen data protection and due process; to encourage legal assistance to address statelessness cases, including through community-based paralegal services; to establish referral and appeal mechanisms for nationality to be determined or administrative decisions to be reviewed; and to raise awareness of statelessness and provide technical assistance (TA) to governments to support alignment of their national legislation with the international standards that help prevent and reduce it and protect stateless persons.

2. IDENTIFICATION AND STATELESSNESS: CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES

2.1. What are the Key Challenges?

Reaching stateless populations with trusted — unique, secure, and accurate — identification⁸ poses special challenges. For one thing, governments may not be aware that stateless people are present, including because they may wrongly be convinced that certain population groups are made up of foreigners—or because stateless people are “hidden” in the sense that they have not shown up in population censuses or household surveys, or in the sense that they live in remote areas. **It is therefore important for governments and development agencies to consult with affected populations, non-government actors, including UNHCR and civil society, to assess the statelessness situation and understand the specific barriers and challenges faced by stateless people.**

Some of the most common barriers, challenges, and concerns that stateless people may face are discussed below.

2.1.a. Legal and Administrative Barriers to Inclusion

Stateless people have long experienced a wide range of barriers in obtaining identity credentials. These include:

- **Eligibility barriers** in countries where, for example, the law does not conform to international non-discrimination standards; and/or where only citizens are eligible for enrollment; or where those deemed not to be citizens are wrongly denied birth registration, either systematically or ad hoc as a matter of administrative discretion.
- **Documentation barriers** where certain documents are required for enrollment (usually called feeder documents) and these are missing for reasons that may include

⁸ Read more about the definition of trusted- unique, secure, and accurate- identity system in the Principles on Identification (2022), p.14.

weak or non-functioning civil registration systems; discrimination in law or policy; loss or destruction of documents, including during forced displacement; and lack of access to consular services. In some cases, documentation barriers may be caused by the lack of clear nationality status or ID credentials of the parents. For instance, this is frequently the case in late birth registration procedures where the parents of a child are required to provide ID cards, and in the absence of ID cards and any alternative mechanisms to verify the identity of the parents, access to birth registration for the child may be denied, which may hamper eligibility for an ID card later in life.

- **Administrative and practical barriers** such as lack of awareness of opportunities for enrollment or lack of awareness of procedures and requirements; costs, such as fees; and travel and mobility constraints (including potential limitations on freedom of movement for refugees and stateless persons), language barriers, and illiteracy.

In many contexts, these barriers have pushed stateless individuals to rely on informal workarounds to access services. As ID systems become more modern, opportunities to resort to these coping strategies are disappearing, creating new risks of exclusion (see Box 5).

Box 5. Recognizing and Responding to Stateless People's ID Coping Strategies

Legal, administrative, and practical barriers may have prevented stateless individuals from enrolling in ID systems. In contexts where an ID is required to access essential services and benefits, some may have coped by using someone else's ID or otherwise simply "slipping through" gaps in order to access rights and services.

As ID systems become increasingly digitalized, centralized, and interoperable, these informal coping strategies are likely to disappear—introducing new risks of exclusion for those who have long depended on them to meet their basic needs.

A statelessness-sensitive approach entails recognition that people may have had to resort to fraudulent or otherwise problematic ID practices because of their status.

Responding to these practices purely punitively will not advance the goals of inclusion and poverty reduction. Flexibility and leniency may be appropriate where a person's statelessness status has caused resort to such coping measures.

2.1.b. Data Protection and Privacy

By their very nature, foundational identification systems involve the capture, storage, and use of sensitive personal data, increasingly including biometrics. They are thus subject to data protection and privacy risks associated with personal data, potentially including:

- Lack of legislation governing data protection
- Lack of purpose specification
- Unauthorized disclosure
- Misuse, including unauthorized surveillance and discrimination
- Cybercrime, including identity theft.

Stateless people may have specific concerns about the possible use of data about their status and other information about them to target them for immigration enforcement, such as detention or deportation; discrimination; and even persecution (**see Box 6 for a good practice example from the Pacific region**).

Box 6. UNESCAP Ministerial Declaration on Data Protection and Inclusion

The Pacific region has made significant efforts to strengthen civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) systems as part of inclusive digital transformation, culminating in the [UNESCAP 2025 Ministerial Declaration on Building a More Resilient and Inclusive Future with CRVS Systems](#). The Declaration underscores governments' commitment to embedding strong privacy and data protection safeguards to ensure that personal data is collected, stored, and used securely and responsibly. It further highlights the importance of protecting vulnerable populations—including stateless people—by promoting rights-based, non-discriminatory approaches to digital identity and CRVS systems, thereby reducing risks of harm and exclusion.

Stateless people also face special risks when it comes to the ability to use ID based on the format of the credentials issued. This could include overt markers such as “stateless”, “non-national,” or “nationality unknown”, or IDs that are issued in a different color or size than IDs issued to nationals or non-stateless groups, or the structure of unique identification numbers themselves. The optimal approach will vary by country, depending on the legal and policy environment for stateless people.

Risks to consider in decision-making—and mitigate where possible—include:

- ID that visibly marks people as non-citizens or stateless in legal and policy environments where such markings render people vulnerable to discrimination, detention, or deportation.
- ID that visibly marks people as non-citizens or stateless in legal and policy environments where citizenship is required to access basic rights and services, as opposed to special rights and services reserved for citizens in all countries.
- ID that may not visibly mark people as stateless or non-citizens, but where non-citizen or stateless status is included in back-end databases and could potentially be used for discrimination.

It is important that the special risks faced by stateless people be evaluated when standards about the capture, storage and transmission of personal data are being developed.⁹ As with other population groups, “privacy and security by design” should be a goal from the outset. This includes adopting state-of-the art legal, management, operational, and technical controls to ensure the protection of personal data as well as mechanisms to ensure that individuals retain consent, control, and oversight of their personal data and that officials limit their access and use of people’s data to the purposes they have been provided for.

2.1.c. Due Process

When parents seeking a birth certificate for their newborn are turned away, there is often no apparent recourse. The same is true when adults are denied official documentation or renewal of their documentation, including national ID cards. It is not uncommon that the discretion of individual officials goes unchecked, and that people are not informed either of the reasons for denial or what remedies they can pursue. This is a significant challenge to the “Leave No One Behind” agenda, because weak due process and access to grievance mechanisms mean that people will be excluded erroneously.

Weak processes are vulnerable both to error and to discrimination that disproportionately affects those with less social status and capital. Members of minority groups are more likely to encounter hurdles in many settings and may also be without the education or resources needed to mount effective challenges. Those who do not succeed in obtaining official documentation may pass on documentation gaps to their children, creating an intergenerational vicious cycle. Discrimination in documentation services without adequate

⁹ For recommended considerations, please see resolution 3 by the Global Privacy Assembly: Achieving global data protection standards: Principles to ensure high levels of data protection and privacy worldwide (2023).

due process may be one reason why UNHCR has found that a majority of the world's stateless people belong to minority groups.¹⁰

Exclusion without access to remedies is not a new risk for identification systems, but the consequences for people may be greater than ever as certain forms of ID become ever more necessary to daily life. There's an important opportunity for work on ID systems to help address weaknesses in this area through universal design principles that include rigorous service standards and referral mechanisms when people are denied documents. Appropriate training for officials and access to legal aid are also areas where identification projects can encourage and support improvements.

While the risks discussed above are common to all foundational ID systems, the modernization of ID systems, including digitalization, can introduce some new risks and may compound existing ones, as set out in Box 7 below.

Box 7. New Risks Associated with ID System Modernization and Digitalization

New "Entry Point" for Creation of Statelessness

In some countries, the modernization and digitalization of ID systems have led to nationality determinations being made at the time when credentials are issued, including at birth. This poses risks, as individuals may be incorrectly assessed not to be citizens based on attributes that do not affect their entitlement to nationality, such as membership in a minority group in countries where this is not relevant to citizenship, or the foreign nationality of one parent in countries where nationality may be conferred by either parent. Those making nationality determinations when issuing credentials may not be the competent authority for nationality matters or may not have received any guidance or training about the country's nationality law and how to apply it properly. There also may or may not be checks in place to ensure that individuals' cases are properly handled, and that administrative discretion does not allow for discrimination. Moreover, an incorrect determination of nationality at birth may be something that parents lack awareness of or are incapable of effectively overcoming, leaving children without any recourse. There is thus a risk that the introduction of digital ID introduces nationality determinations at birth that effectively produce new cases of statelessness, especially where people are not trained or where social prejudices enter

¹⁰ "More than 75% of the world's stateless populations are members of minority groups." UNHCR (2017).

the equation and there are not strong service checks and grievance mechanisms in place.

New Risks of Exclusion from Services

There are also new risks of exclusion from services that stateless people may have had access to previously when new or reformed ID systems replace old, service-specific functional IDs. For example, stateless people who may have managed to acquire a health card or social welfare benefits card—which may not have required proof of nationality but allowed some access to services—are unable to obtain other forms of identification because of one or more of the barriers set out above. The consequences of weak due process and lack of access to remedies are also greater when ID becomes more universal and more important for access to a wide range of rights and services.

New Data Protection and Privacy Concerns

Stateless people whose status may not have been visible as such to government authorities or others risk being more “exposed” by ID systems. Moreover, the ease of access to centrally administered databases may make it easier for authorities wishing to do so to identify, track, and surveil stateless people, including in situations where public opinion towards such groups deteriorates.

Potential Criminalization of Coping Mechanisms

Stateless people may have resorted to using other people’s documents, or bribing officials to obtain documents, or other means of survival, without any intention to use the documents acquired in this way for ill intent. They may have these coping mechanisms exposed and upended by new or reformed ID systems, and they may even face criminal penalties that put them and their families at greater risk.

2.2. What are the Important Opportunities?

ID operations and projects can improve outcomes for stateless people and help to prevent and reduce statelessness. For ID practitioners, the first opportunity is often a diagnostic assessment that maps the statelessness context and barriers to inclusion (see Annex II). Building on that, operations can support and encourage:

- Identifying stateless people (see 2.2.a).
- Including stateless people in ID systems (see 2.2.b).
- Providing nationality documentation to all those entitled to it (see 2.2.c).
- Supporting Improvements to Birth Registration Systems (see 2.2.d).
- Addressing data protection and privacy risks from the outset (see 2.2.e).
- Strengthening due process by design (see 2.2.f).
- Raising awareness of Statelessness and supporting alignment of national frameworks with international standards (see 2.2.g).

Taken together, these represent important prevention and mitigation opportunities.

2.2.a. Identify Stateless People

Identifying persons who are stateless can, where safeguards and legal pathways exist, translate into tangible improvements for affected individuals. Administrative recognition may enable access to procedures and rights available under national and international frameworks—such as issuance of documentation, permission to remain lawfully and, where provided in law, facilitated routes to naturalization. In countries that are Party to the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons, individuals recognized as stateless benefit from access to certain rights and remedies, and States are called upon to facilitate their assimilation and naturalization (Article 32).

To support the identification of stateless people in migratory contexts, many countries have established dedicated Statelessness Determination Procedures (SDPs). Establishing whether a person is stateless can be complex and challenging, and it is in the interests of both countries and stateless people that determination procedures be as simple, fair, and efficient as possible. Governments have broad discretion in the design and operation of SDPs, and current practice is varied depending on factors such as the estimated size and diversity of the statelessness population and the complexity of the legal and evidentiary issues likely to need evaluating.¹¹ Governments interested in establishing SDPs as part of their efforts to ensure inclusive identification can be supported with resources on best

¹¹ See UNHCR Handbook on Protection of Stateless Persons, paragraphs 62-65.

practices, including [UNHCR's Good Practices Paper-Action 6: Establishing Statelessness Determination Procedures to Protect Stateless Persons](#).

In the case of “in-situ” stateless populations with long-established ties to their country of residence, countries might be advised to undertake targeted nationality campaigns or nationality verification efforts rather than statelessness determination procedures.¹²

Another consideration concerns statistical visibility. Where statelessness is not captured in administrative and statistical systems, authorities and partners may find it difficult to plan, budget, and evaluate responses; cross-country comparability is limited; and progress against global commitments is hard to demonstrate. [A literature review published by the Joint Data Center on Forced Displacement](#) notes that the absence of harmonized concepts and methods yields fragmented; partial counts that constrain policy design and accountability. Ongoing standardization efforts—culminating in the [International Recommendations on Statelessness Statistics \(IROSS\)](#), endorsed by the UN Statistical Commission in 2023—seek to improve the quality, comparability, and use of official statistics on statelessness and should be recommended to governments. An example of how stateless people can be identified and registered is provided in Box 8.

2.2.b. Include Stateless People in ID Systems

Box 8. Norway - Identifying Stateless Persons in the Norwegian Population Register

In the Norwegian Population Register there is a code for citizenship for every resident of Norway, including a code for statelessness. Being recorded as “stateless” in the register is important, because this official recognition establishes the pathway to naturalization: stateless persons may apply for Norwegian citizenship after three years of legal residency. There is also a separate code for “unknown citizenship,” used for very few individuals.

Information about the background of stateless persons and persons of unknown citizenship may be obtained from “country (or place) of birth” and “country of previous residence” (for immigrants) variables drawn from multiple data sources including both the population register and censuses, and which do not necessarily correspond to nationality, but they can indicate historical connections to other countries.

¹² See UNHCR Handbook on Protection of Stateless Persons, paragraph 58.

In addition, for stateless children, data are usually linked to the parents' records via their ID number, which contain data on the parents' citizenship status, country of birth, and where they emigrated from. Of Norway's total resident population of 5.5 million on 1 January 2024, there were 4.9 million Norwegian citizens, 0.6 million citizens of other countries, 1,626 stateless persons, and 55 with unknown nationality.

The naturalization process is widely used: half of stateless persons become citizens after 3.5 years of legal residency, and 95 percent have naturalized within 7.5 years of legal residency.

Inclusion of stateless people in foundational ID systems is also critical to ensuring they can access the rights and services they are entitled to pending a nationality solution. Many countries are finding ways to include stateless people in new ID systems and enhance their socio-economic wellbeing even though they lack citizenship. In Rwanda, for example, standards for enrollment of stateless people in the new ID system have been designed to allow for testimonial evidence to support a person's identity rather than just formal documentation, and inclusion will allow such people to benefit from an array of rights and services while they pursue Rwandan citizenship (see Box 9).

Good practice is to align ID enrollment procedures for stateless people to those in place for citizens to the greatest extent possible, and, where needed, to adjust address specific barriers faced by stateless people. In addition to accepting testimonial evidence in place of documentation, strategies for overcoming obstacles to enrolling stateless people include:

- Making proof of identity available to all people resident on the territory irrespective of nationality status.
- Conducting awareness campaigns designed to reach stateless communities and inform them of the benefits of enrollment in the ID system.
- Helping those who need help understanding the requirements for enrollment.
- Visiting communities in remote areas with mobile registration/enrollment facilities.
- Waiving fees for those who cannot afford them.

Box 9. Case Study – Rwanda

Rwanda’s legal framework provides a strong foundation for addressing statelessness through both the 2021 Organic Law Governing Rwandan Nationality and the 2023 Law on Population Registration in the National Single Digital Identity System. The 2021 Nationality Law explicitly recognizes statelessness as a ground for acquiring Rwandan nationality, allowing stateless persons residing in Rwanda to apply for nationality either personally or through a third party (Article 19). The law defines a stateless person as someone not recognized by any State as a national and ensures that nationality cannot be revoked if it would result in statelessness.

Complementing this, the 2023 Digital ID Law includes stateless persons among those eligible for registration in the national population registry and the Single Digital Identity (SDI) system. It establishes a dedicated registry for stateless persons and allows registration even without formal documentation, based on testimonial evidence. The law also provides emergency provisions for registration in life-or-death situations and clarifies that holding a digital ID does not confer nationality, maintaining a clear distinction between legal identity and citizenship.

Building on this legal foundation, Rwanda is rolling out a new digital ID system expected to be fully operational by June 2026. The system will cover Rwandan nationals, foreigners, stateless persons, refugees, asylum seekers, and other vulnerable groups, and introduce multi-format IDs (physical card, QR code, digital token). It prioritizes data privacy and user control, and will be accessible via local government offices, online platforms, and Rwandan embassies abroad—streamlining access to services and supporting inclusive documentation efforts.

2.2.c. Provide Nationality Documentation to All Those Entitled to It

Many people who are nationals of the countries they live in lack documentation to prove it. This includes those who never acquired documents proving nationality, often because of lack of birth registration. Accordingly, Action 8 of The Global Action Plan to End Statelessness is “Issue Nationality Documentation to those with entitlement to it.” Projects to strengthen ID systems provide a unique opportunity for governments and partners to reach out to such people and to support them in building their dossiers. For this purpose, governments should be encouraged to take a flexible approach to documentary requirements and to accept, for example, affidavits and testimonials from respected community members about a person’s place of birth and parentage—including to provide people with late birth registration






documents where these are missing, ideally at no cost (see recent developments in Box 10). Table 1 outlines linkages between nationality and access to services.

Box 10. Examples of Notable Achievements in Issuing Nationality Documentation to Those Entitled

- 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.

More information about progress in this area and examples of good practice can be found in [The #IBelong Campaign: A Decade of Action to End Statelessness](#).

Table 1: The Benefits of Documentation Confirming Nationality

AREA		WHY NATIONALITY STATUS MATTERS
	Education	Many countries limit stateless people's access to education, especially after primary school, and most deny issuance of high school diplomas and other credentials to stateless people.
	Health	Many countries require proof of nationality to access health services, including immunization and vaccinations.
	Protection	Having citizenship helps protect against trafficking, child labor, and child and forced marriage.
	Financial inclusion	Proof of nationality can help ensure that people have equal access to financial services, including the ability to open a bank account, receive loans, own property, etc.
	Employment and livelihood benefits	Proof of nationality is typically required for formal employment and eligibility for various social benefits.

2.2.d. Support Improvements to Birth Registration Systems

Improving birth registration laws and procedures is critical, as lack of universal birth registration can lead to statelessness. Without birth registration, a person lacks proof of their place of birth and parentage, i.e., the facts necessary to establish entitlement to nationality. Not everyone whose birth goes unregistered will wind up stateless, but birth registration is an important protection, especially for vulnerable groups such as minorities, refugees, IDPs, migrants, nomadic and border-dwelling populations, and orphaned or unaccompanied children. Strengthening laws, policies, systems, and procedures to make birth registration more universal (and ensuring it covers both place and date of birth and parentage) is therefore a key area where ID practitioners can help prevent statelessness.

An enabling legal and policy framework is thus a prerequisite for inclusive and effective birth registration systems. This includes reviewing and reforming laws and procedures that create barriers to registration, such as provisions that prevent unmarried mothers from registering their children, requirements that discriminate on the basis of gender, ethnicity, religion, or migration status, or administrative practices that make registration conditional on parents' legal residence or documentation.

When a government adopts or makes improvements to an ID system, there should be a stocktaking of the obstacles to the registration of all births that take place on the territory. For example:

- Does the law ensure every child's right to be registered at birth, irrespective of the legal status of the parents? Are there eligibility requirements in the law that will limit coverage to certain groups only? If so, are those requirements consistent with international non-discrimination standards, or should they be adjusted? Does the law provide equal rights for mothers and fathers to register the birth of their child?
- Even if the law is inclusive and non-discriminatory, are there policies or practices that are discriminatory or arbitrary?
- Are all documentary requirements clearly outlined in law? Are there documentation requirements that may prove difficult for many eligible people to meet because of lost or missing documents, or barriers to obtaining these documents? If so, how might that issue be sensibly addressed, drawing on lessons from other country contexts?
- If there are practical barriers such as lack of awareness of procedures (including due to language barriers or illiteracy), long-distance travel or movement restrictions, or fees, can these be overcome with information campaigns, mobile units, and reduced or waived fees?
- Is legal aid available to people who may need it?

Some of the key hurdles to overcome to improve birth registration systems for the prevention of statelessness include the following:

1. **Gaps in the Legal Framework:** Not all countries provide in law that birth registration is available to all children born on the territory, irrespective of their parents' legal status. And some countries have gender and/or marital status discrimination in relevant laws or regulations (e.g., father's presence required, or marriage certificate required).
2. **Lack of Access to Consular Authorities in the context of births abroad:** If a person abroad cannot access the consular authorities of their country to report the birth of a newborn, the newborn may go without nationality documentation indefinitely.
3. **Weak Capacity:** Not all countries have invested adequately in their CRVS systems to ensure that they are fit for purpose, reliable, and secure. In addition to the systems themselves, personnel sometimes lack adequate training and supervision to guard against inadvertent errors and/or discrimination.
4. **Burdensome Process Requirements:** Not all countries make birth registration free and easy. In some countries, fees apply, and multiple visits may be required, which can have significant indirect costs (such as travel costs, lost wages). Late birth registration is particularly likely to require fees and, in some countries, affidavits, or other documents, including court judgments.
5. **Lack of Linkage to the Health Sector:** Not all countries register all births occurring in hospitals, clinics, and maternity centers and automatically transmit electronic health records to the Civil Registry. In some countries, children born outside of health facilities face specific risks of not being registered.
6. **Absence of "Last Mile" Strategies:** Many countries do not have specific plans for how to reach those least likely to be registered, such as those living in remote areas and vulnerable groups such as refugees, IDPs, and stateless people.¹³

Good Birth Registration Practices include:

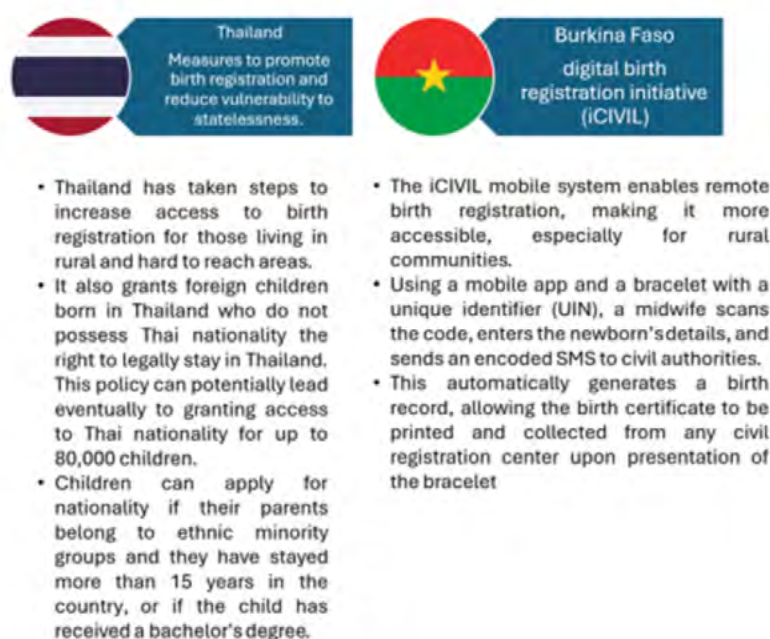
- **A child's right to registration in law:** A strong practice is that the law clearly States that every child has a right to birth registration immediately after birth by civil registration authorities in the country where the birth occurred, regardless of the citizenship or residency status, documentation, or other attributes of the child or of either or both parents, and regardless of whether birth took place outside of the healthcare institution. Documentary evidence required for birth registration is reasonable and does not obstruct registration. It is preferable to leave missing parental details blank if unverified than to leave a child unregistered. It is also preferable to exclude any sensitive information from

¹³ Additionally, there may be limited understanding that due to their particular circumstances, stateless persons, refugees and other forcibly displaced persons may not have had a chance to have their birth registered in their early childhood, and that it is critical for them to benefit from birth registration even if they are above five years old or adults, including to help prevent statelessness or resolve it later on.

birth certificates.¹⁴

- **Free and compulsory procedures:** International best practice is that birth registration is compulsory for all births, without sanctions or fees, including for late registration, and the first copy of the certificate is provided free of charge.
- **Gender equality in birth registration:** An effective practice is that all parents, regardless of their sex, have equal rights to register the births of their children without discrimination. Laws, regulations, practices, and procedures that allow only fathers to register the birth of a child or that allow mothers to do so only in some circumstances (and/or for fathers not to be allowed to register a birth) are reformed to provide fully equal rights to mothers and fathers with respect to birth registration. Marriage, death, or divorce certificates are not required to be produced by parents as a prerequisite to birth registration.
- **Linkage to the health sector:** A recommended approach is that birth notifications are generated by hospitals, clinics, and other health facilities where children are born, and automatically forwarded to the Civil Registry.
- **Capacity building:** A sound practice is that investments are made to ensure CRVS systems are modernized and maintain high service standards, including investments in regular training of staff.
- **Last Mile Strategies:** It is recognized as good policy that all governments have a plan for how to reach those population groups least likely to register. These can include public awareness campaigns, mobile birth registration units, and incentives to register.

Figure 1. Examples of Good Practices in Birth Registration for Stateless People



Source: *Good Practices Paper - Action 7: Ensuring birth registration for the prevention of statelessness*, UNHCR, 2017

¹⁴ For more information on recommended safeguards regarding birth registration and prevention of statelessness: <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/109696>

2.2.e. Strengthen Data Protection

The fact that a country's foundational ID system is likely to encounter stateless people adds to the importance of building strong data protection. The use of personal data should be governed by legislation on data protection.

Data protection considerations are critical for all individuals enrolled in ID systems. However, for stateless people, inadequate safeguards can have particularly serious consequences. In many countries, data protection frameworks may not fully address their situation—or may not exist at all—making it essential to help officials assess the risks of exposing someone's status and to design appropriate access management measures that minimize potential harm. For example, if a person's lack of nationality is visible to third parties, it could expose them to discrimination in access to services or even targeting by authorities for detention or deportation in certain contexts.

In general, the design, policies, and technology used by ID systems should comply with global norms on data protection, including purpose specification, data minimization, and proportionality. One relevant protection mechanism against widespread and harmful access to ID system data by certain authorities is the purpose of specification principles. This principle requires processing to be limited to the fulfilment of specific, explicit, and legitimate purposes and not further processed in a manner that is incompatible with those purposes.

2.2.f. Strengthen Due Process by Design

When it comes to assessing eligibility for identification credentials, there should be service standards in place that require officials to document determinations that someone is not eligible, and the reasons for such determinations. These should be made fully available to the individuals concerned. Such determinations should trigger "flags" in the system that invites or requires an additional layer of review, depending on circumstances.

Where individuals who present themselves as citizens seeking national IDs or other proof of citizenship are determined not to be citizens, the negative determination and its rationale should be entered into the system and should automatically trigger an additional layer of review by a separate official. If two layers of review individuals want to pursue additional recourse, there should be an independent grievance mechanism in place to which they can turn, in addition to the possibility of regular review by the courts. All officials with responsibility in such matters would benefit from dedicated training about the criteria for citizenship in the country's law and how to apply it in practice, including in difficult cases.

It is essential that people—regardless of citizenship status—be provided with the reasons

for decisions concerning their documentation, including so that they can be provided with effective legal assistance. Discussions with governments concerning ID projects are an important opportunity to help ensure that legal and paralegal programs exist to support individuals who need help building their dossiers and pursuing remedies where necessary. Accompaniment of people as they go through the process of seeking documentation and resolving their stateless status can make an enormous difference to the goal of full inclusion. For guidance on how community practitioners can be supported to help, see Box 11.

Box 11. Paralegal Support for Stateless People to Enroll

One way to mitigate the risk of excluding stateless people from foundational ID systems is through community-based paralegal programs. These grassroots' legal advocates can help bridge the gap between law and practice by using legal knowledge, mediation, education, and advocacy to help individuals overcome barriers to obtaining legal identity. Paralegals can provide practical support throughout the ID application process—from raising awareness about eligibility criteria and enrollment procedures to accompanying applicants to registration offices and challenging arbitrary denials or delays. Their presence often deters discriminatory practices and helps ensure fairer treatment.

In Kenya alone, Nubian paralegals opened more than 1,200 cases in just an 18-month period, resulting in hundreds of Nubian community members obtaining identity documents. In Bangladesh, more than 1,400 Urdu-speaking individuals received documentation in a single year.¹⁵ Beyond individual assistance, paralegals can help systematically document and analyze cases, creating an evidence base to identify structural barriers and advocate for legal and procedural reforms.

More information and resources to support paralegal assistance can be found in [A Community-Based Practitioner's Guide: Documenting Citizenship and other Forms of Legal Identity](#).

2.2.g. Raise Awareness of Statelessness and Support Alignment with International Standards

Many governments around the world are aware of statelessness and have made strides to address it and even to champion the cause regionally or globally. In other countries, however, there may be a lack of clarity about what statelessness is and whether it is a problem that exists for that country. As noted above, governments are sometimes unaware that stateless populations reside within their borders, or they may have awareness of relevant, vulnerable groups but assume they are citizens of another country. This may be because such groups

¹⁵ NAMATI (2014): Blogpost on The Paralegal Approach to Statelessness.

are descendants of historical migrants and/or because of another association with the citizens of a different country, such as ethnicity, religion, or language.

The best way to protect stateless people and prevent and reduce statelessness is for governments to align their nationality legislation and policies with relevant international standards. Work on ID systems is thus an opportunity to raise awareness with governments that stateless people are found in virtually all countries in the world, and there are concrete steps they can take to protect such people and to prevent and reduce statelessness itself. In fact, not only are there likely to be stateless people on the territory, but there are also likely many more people at risk of statelessness. ID practitioners and development actors can help governments understand the possibility that such people may be excluded from ID systems or unintentionally made worse off by them.

Joint studies about the development impacts of statelessness can be helpful where governments need more information. In Kenya, two joint studies by the World Bank and UNHCR highlighted the socio-economic disadvantages experienced by the stateless Shona community, which had negative spillover effects on citizens as well (see Box XY). At the same time, the studies also documented positive outcomes—such as improved financial inclusion—after the Government of Kenya granted citizenship to the Shona people. Framing statelessness as a topic of dialogue with governments not only underscores such tangible benefits but also provides an opportunity to emphasize that quantitative data on statelessness can be strengthened if National Statistical Offices apply the [International Recommendations on Statelessness Statistics by IROSS](#), 2023.

Box 12. Good Practice: Joint WB-UNHCR Study on the Socioeconomic Impact of Statelessness on the Shona Community in Kenya

In 2019, the Government of Kenya, in partnership with the World Bank and UNHCR, conducted a comprehensive socioeconomic assessment of the Shona community (formerly stateless) residing in urban counties. This survey aimed to analyze household characteristics, poverty levels, and living conditions within the community, comparing them to both the broader urban Kenyan population and national averages.

The findings of the study included that:

- A notable disparity in poverty rates existed between the Shona population and the

wider urban Kenyan demographic. Specifically, the poverty rate among the Shona community was observed to be 24% higher than that of the general urban populace.

- Over half of the Shona community—53%—lives below the national poverty line, exceeding both the national average of 36% and the urban average of 29%.
- The absence of citizenship documentation posed a significant barrier for members of the Shona community in accessing formal employment opportunities. This impediment not only undermined their ability to contribute to the economic and social development of their local communities but also perpetuated their marginalized status.

Following the survey's completion, the Government of Kenya took proactive measures to address the challenges of stateless Shona individuals. Notably, it announced plans to grant Kenyan citizenship to all eligible members of the Shona community. By shedding light on the challenges faced by the Shona population, the study raised awareness among national policymakers, a crucial step leading to ultimate legal recognition and greater access to services for many.

Following the 2021 recognition of their right to Kenyan citizenship, 1,670 stateless Shona were naturalized and issued ID documents.

A 2024 follow-up survey shows how quickly citizenship has transformed their lives:

- Access to nationality enabled formal economic participation: the share of Shona with bank accounts rose from 9% in 2019 to 35% in 2024, and mobile wallet use from 52% to 97%. Health insurance coverage nearly tripled (4% to 11%), while access to jobs, mobility, and public services improved markedly. School attendance increased, particularly among older children who had previously been excluded.
- Citizenship has reduced harassment, expanded opportunities, and fostered social inclusion. Kenya's experience with the Shona shows that inclusive nationality policies can strengthen social cohesion and drive economic development – with tangible impacts visible in just a few years.

It is evident that citizenship has transformed the Shona community by granting access to essential rights and services and enabling formal economic participation. This transformation is visible already after a relatively short period (3 - 4 years) since the acquisition of nationality. To sustain these gains, continued support is necessary to address persistent disparities and ensure sustainable growth. Kenya's experience with the Shona demonstrates that inclusive citizenship policies can drive social cohesion and economic development.

Source: [UNHCR and the World Bank \(2019\)](#) and [UNHCR and the World Bank \(2024\)](#)

Section 3 below contains additional information about how ID projects can serve as an entry point for dialogue concerning legal and policy reforms to align national frameworks with the international standards that prevent and reduce statelessness and protect stateless persons. For instance, assessments of a country's nationality laws and practices can identify gaps in alignment with the standards in the UN Statelessness Conventions. Such assessments can inform the dialogue with the government during ID or civil registration project design. Where political will exist, technical assistance can be mobilized to address these gaps.

Box 13. Case Study: Inclusion of Stateless Persons in the Philippine Identification System (PhilSys)

Through Executive Order No. 163, series of 2022, the Philippines, led by the Department of Justice Refugees and Stateless Persons Protection Unit (DOJ-RSPPU), institutionalized access to protection services for refugees, stateless persons, and asylum seekers. The Philippine Statistics Authority, as part of the inter-agency committee, plays a key role in ensuring their access to documentation. Established under Republic Act No. 11055, the Philippine Identification System (PhilSys) is a landmark initiative aimed at providing a single national ID to all residents of the Philippines. Among its most impactful features is the inclusion of stateless persons and refugees, groups that have long faced challenges in accessing legal identity and essential services. This inclusive approach aligns with the Philippines' commitments under the 1954 and 1961 Statelessness Conventions.

With this, stateless persons are now able to obtain a national ID or what is locally known as "PhilID", an important document that opens doors to government services, financial institutions, and digital platforms. Moreover, stateless applicants may also register if they hold a visa valid for at least six (6) months. Inclusion in PhilSys is more than administrative—it is transformative, promoting digital and financial inclusion by enabling access to mobile connectivity, banking services, and social protection programs that require formal identification. By guaranteeing legal identity for all, the Philippines affirms its humanitarian values and strengthens its commitment to inclusive development and human rights. Through a whole-of-society approach, the government continues to engage with civil society, academe, and the private sector to ensure that no one is left behind.

3. STRATEGIES FOR STATELESSNESS-SENSITIVE AND INCLUSIVE ID SYSTEMS

Creating statelessness-sensitive and inclusive ID systems requires a comprehensive effort to overcome barriers to enrollment and mitigate potential risks to stateless people associated with enrollment and use of ID credentials. This effort should be based on international human rights laws and standards that advance the principles of:

- Non-discrimination (Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons, Article 3; International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 26; Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 7)
- Legal identity for all (Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 7; SDG 16.9; and Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons, Article 27)
- Right to nationality (Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 7; Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 15)
- Freedom of movement (Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons, Article 26; International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 12; Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 13)
- Non-expulsion of stateless persons (Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons, Article 31)
- Facilitated naturalization for stateless persons (Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons, Article 32)

Applying these principles in practice requires an effort to:

- A. Assess the statelessness situation in partnership with governments, UNHCR, and others, including through consultations with affected persons and civil society organizations;

- B. Adopt a context-specific, statelessness-sensitive approach to project planning, design, and implementation (including enrollment, credential issuing, use and authentication, and grievance redress) and continuously monitor processes and evaluate results;
- C. Promote international standards that prevent and reduce statelessness and protect stateless people, including through awareness-raising and training.

3.1. Assessing the Statelessness Situation

The outcomes for stateless people of various choices that need to be made will vary depending on the legal and policy environment and country context. In countries with positive protection and rights regimes for stateless people, identification of individuals as stateless can generally be expected to promote access to rights and benefits and support resolution of individual cases of statelessness. In the example of Norway in Box 8, identification of persons as “stateless” in the population register is a positive step. However, in countries where statelessness is highly sensitive and those who are stateless or believed to be stateless may be at risk, the design choices associated with the nexus between ID and citizenship status require careful attention and consideration. Therefore, it is important that the legal and policy environment be assessed from a statelessness perspective before project design begins.

Without a basic understanding of statelessness, ID practitioners might assume that all persons on the territory are either nationals or foreigners, and thus not take stateless people and their circumstances into account in project planning, design, and implementation. In fact, there may be a significant, native-born population that lacks citizenship (so-called “in situ” stateless people), and reaching this population with safe and trusted ID is likely to require special attention.

Hence, statelessness should always be considered as part of the diagnostic work that precedes project design. In some countries, a more complete assessment may be feasible and appropriate. To support this, Annex II of this guide contains a Statelessness Situation Assessment Tool. The questions in this tool are designed to be answered in consultation with the government, UNHCR, and other stakeholders (e.g., civil society organizations). The Assessment Tool consists of four parts as follows:

- International Standards and Best Practices in Birth Registration for the Prevention of Statelessness
- International Standards and Best Practices in Nationality Laws for the Prevention and

Reduction of Statelessness

- International Standards and Best Practices for the Protection of Stateless Persons
- Questions Concerning Statelessness and the Identification System

In addition to this desk analysis, in-country stakeholder engagement is a critical part of a statelessness-sensitive approach. This stakeholder engagement should be planned as part of the strategy for overall engagement with civil society that would normally take place. For good practices, see ID4D, 2022: [Engaging Civil Society Organizations \(CSOs\) for Successful ID Systems: Guidance Note](#).

In some countries, there may be no publicly available data on the stateless population, and stakeholder consultations will be needed to determine where populations may live and what their protection situation is. If the environment for stateless people is politically sensitive and making them more visible risks making them more vulnerable, careful consideration needs to be given as to how to proceed. UNHCR¹⁶ and civil society actors, including legal aid organizations and paralegal groups, should be consulted; they may have valuable experience working with affected populations and engaging with the government concerning these groups (see Figure 1).

Figure 2: Examples of Activities to Include in a Plan for Engagement



Source: The World Bank, ID4D (2022)

Where it is possible to do so without putting them at risk, stateless people should be directly consulted about the barriers they face in practice, as well as about their preferred outcomes. Even where the law and policy are favorable, people may be experiencing discrimination or other barriers in its implementation. And they will have views about what approaches

¹⁶ UNHCR publishes information, resources, and tools concerning statelessness, including country-level studies where these exist, at <https://www.refworld.org/thematic-area/statelessness>.

will serve their interests best. Wherever possible, consultations should include a mix of interviews with key informants, such as community leaders and CSO members who work with the stateless population and focus groups of stateless people. Practical guidance on how to conduct consultations to collect qualitative data from stateless communities can be found in UNHCR's [Quick Guides: Researching Statelessness \(2021\)](#), Guide 4. Useful information on how to carry out qualitative research to inform work on ID systems is available in ID4D's publication: [Understanding People's Perspectives on Identification: A Qualitative Research Toolkit \(2020\)](#).

As discussed in more detail below, the analysis that results from the statelessness situation assessment and the in-country consultations should inform the dialogue with the government about project planning, design, and implementation.

3.2. Adopting a Context-Specific Approach

Most governments are likely to have the following questions about whether and how nationality status should be reflected in ID systems:

- What data about nationality status should we collect, if any, as part of enrollment?
- How should this nationality status data be verified or validated? What documentation should be required?
- Do we link to civil registrar databases, and if so, what information do we pull from there?
- How can people without any documentary proof of identity be supported to enroll?
- Should nationality or statelessness status be visible on certain ID credentials (including through the structure of identification numbers), and if so, which ones?
- Should nationality or statelessness markers be reflected in back-end systems?

The answers to these questions are likely to depend on the specifics of each country's situation. For example, in countries where a wide range of rights and benefits are available to all residents, citizenship may not be important to include on ID credentials, other than those needed for exercise of rights and benefits reserved to citizens, such as voting in national elections. In other countries, however, citizenship status may be important for access to a wide range of important rights and benefits. In such countries, it will be important to carefully consider what kind of ID attributes (visible on credentials and stored on the back end) maximize the welfare and protection of citizens and non-citizens and to understand the preferences of those most directly affected.

In some country contexts, such as in the nearly one hundred countries that are Party to the 1954 Convention and in particular those that have a domestic legal framework for the protection of stateless people, an explicit statelessness marker on ID credentials may be helpful to ensure that stateless people are able to access the rights and benefits the country has established for them. In contrast, in countries where there are no legal provisions providing rights for stateless persons and no process to recognize statelessness status, or stateless populations are subject to rights violations, it will be important for ID programs not to increase their vulnerability by adding such markers.

In countries where stateless people are not acknowledged officially, the following strategies can be considered:

- **Reframe:** Position the operation/project around “resident inclusion” and “documentation barriers,” not statelessness. Use Project Development Objective (PDO)/result language like “share of residents able to enroll and use foundational ID” rather than category labels (citizens, stateless people, etc.).¹⁷
- **Design enrollment that works without proof of nationality.** Advocate for universal access; residence-based enrollment where proof of identity is sufficient to register in national ID system; make nationality fields optional (“not collected/unknown”). This will require clear standard operating procedures to ensure officials do not impose any nationality requirement. The system should also be designed to enable future linkage with civil registration or nationality records.
- **Keep credentials neutral.** Suggest that cards/QRs/ID numbers contain no nationality or other markers. Route citizen-only entitlements (e.g., voting) through sector back-end checks instead of visible fields on the foundational credential.
- **Set up assisted enrolment.** Offer financing opportunities (if possible) such as CSO/paralegal partners to help stateless people build dossiers, accompany applicants, and contest arbitrary denials.
- **Use non-politicized, widely supported language and evidence-backed examples:** Avoid sensitive labels (e.g., “stateless,” “refugee,” “undocumented”) where these are contentious, and instead ground discussions in the SDGs (“legal identity for all” and “no one left behind”), and development benefits such as inclusive service delivery and administrative efficiency—supported by data and examples from comparable contexts to show benefits and reduce resistance.

The international standards in the 1961 Convention and, where relevant, regional instruments on eradication of statelessness such as Protocol to African Charter on Human and People’s Rights on the Right to a Nationality and Eradication of Statelessness in Africa, combined with non-

¹⁷ See SDG 16.9: “legal identity for all”.

discrimination provisions of widely ratified international human rights treaties, are effective at preventing and reducing statelessness when properly implemented. Many governments that have subscribed to these standards are not fully implementing them, for reasons that may include low awareness and/or low technical capability. There are also countries that have not signed on to all relevant treaties or all parts of relevant treaties for a variety of reasons, including but not limited to opposition or reluctance. In some cases, a government that is not Party to a certain treaty may be very open to implementing some of its standards.

What is key is understanding where the gaps in a country's alignment with the international standards are and whether there is political will to address these. The Statelessness Situation Assessment Tool at Annex II and the results of in-country consultations can help identify areas where a country can be supported to align its laws more closely with key international standards. Where governments are receptive, technical assistance can be provided by the World Bank and UNHCR to help ensure that proposed reforms are appropriately tailored to address the gaps in a context-specific manner.

The Statelessness Situation Assessment Tool (Annex II) looks at a variety of important issues. Box 14 is an example of an area where dialogue about possible reforms can make a meaningful contribution to efforts to address statelessness, namely the issue of gender discrimination in nationality laws.

Box 14. Countries with Gender-Discriminatory Nationality Laws Regarding the Conferral of Nationality on Children

Gender discrimination in nationality laws is one of the major causes of statelessness. Nationality laws in 24 countries worldwide still prevent women from passing their nationality to their children on an equal basis with men. In situations where fathers are absent, deceased, have abandoned the family, or are unwilling to take the necessary steps to transmit their nationality, children might be left stateless. However, the majority of countries have gender-equal nationality laws, and over the past two decades, close to 15 countries have revised their laws to allow women to confer nationality to their children on an equal basis with men.

Additionally, roughly 50 countries deny women equal rights in their ability to acquire, change, or retain their nationality, or to confer nationality on non-national spouses. Such provisions also create risks for statelessness. Both forms of gender discrimination present an impediment to the attainment of equality for women globally.

DESCRIPTION	COUNTRIES
Nationality laws do not allow mothers to confer their nationality on their children with no, or very limited, exceptions.	Brunei Darussalam, Iran, Kuwait, Lebanon, Qatar, Somalia, Eswatini
Nationality laws deny mothers the right to confer nationality on their children on an equal basis with men but have some safeguards against statelessness.	Bahrain, Burundi, Iraq, Jordan, Kiribati, Liberia, Libya, Nepal, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, Togo, United Arab Emirates
Nationality laws deny mothers the right to confer nationality on their children on an equal basis with men but have some safeguards against statelessness. Nationality laws also deny fathers the right to confer nationality on their children born outside of legal marriage on an equal basis with women under the same circumstances.	The Bahamas Barbados Malaysia
Nationality laws deny mothers the right to confer nationality on their children on an equal basis with men, but provisions ensure that statelessness will only arise in very few circumstances.	Mauritania

Source: UNHCR (2024)¹⁸

¹⁸ More sources can be found here: UNHCR (2015): Removing Gender Discrimination from Nationality Laws - Good Practices; UNHCR (2025): Background note on Gender Equality, Nationality Laws and Statelessness 2025 | Refworld; General Assembly (2023): Resolution adopted by the Human Rights Council on 13 July 2023 that urges countries to reform nationality laws that discriminate against women and, where such laws have been reformed, to ensure their effective implementation; UN, Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women and girls (2023): Violence against women and girls, nationality laws and statelessness: sheds light on the challenges associated with gender discrimination and statelessness and provides examples of good practices as well as recommendations for States.

4. GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTION ITEMS

Based on the considerations outlined in this publication, below are recommendations and action items intended to help identification practitioners, development actors, and partners minimize risks and take advantage of the opportunities in this area.

RECOMMENDATIONS	ACTION ITEMS
Build ID systems that are inclusive of stateless people and protect their rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopt a context-specific design approach. Tailor ID system design to the regional and national legal and political context, recognizing that visibility of “statelessness” may be protective in some countries and harmful in others. • Design enrollment that works without proof of nationality. Advocate for universal access; residence-based enrollment where proof of identity is sufficient to register in national ID system; make nationality fields optional (“not collected/unknown”). This will require clear standard operating procedures to ensure officials do not impose any nationality requirement. The system should also be designed to enable future linkage with civil registration or nationality records. • Promote alignment with international standards. Use World Bank-UNHCR dialogue and technical assistance to help governments close gaps with the 1954 and 1961 Statelessness Conventions, human rights treaties, and regional instruments. • Pathways to nationality. Support the creation of safe pathways to nationality and refer people as appropriate to these where they exist.
Include statelessness in diagnostic assessments before project planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrate statelessness analysis early. Conduct a Statelessness Situation Assessment before project design, jointly with government, UNHCR, and civil society, to understand protection risks, data gaps, and legal frameworks. • Engage affected communities. Consult directly with stateless people—safely and ethically—to identify barriers, preferences, and risks in enrollment and ID use.

RECOMMENDATIONS	ACTION ITEMS
<p>Use findings from diagnostics in dialogue during preparation/implementation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cross-cutting issues to consider include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Is there a National Action Plan (NAP) to End Statelessness? If yes, link technical support to this. If not, is there interest in developing a NAP? Have any statelessness pledges/commitments been made at the Global Refugee Forum, Universal Periodic Review (UPR) or elsewhere? Is the country a Party to the UN Statelessness Conventions and implementing them fully? If not, is there interest in technical support to become Party/fully implement? ✓ How do we help ensure that stateless people and those at risk are identified so they may be provided ID and referred to the competent authorities who can support resolution of their nationality/statelessness situation? How do we ensure that those with an entitlement to nationality but without proof of it are supported to obtain proof? ✓ Are there appropriate due process protections built into the system to mitigate the risk that people will be wrongfully assessed not to be nationals—and to allow robust recourse in the case of such assessments? ✓ Does the system appropriately protect sensitive personal information about stateless people? ✓ What improvements to the birth registration system might be supported as part of the project? • Framing of Statelessness. In settings where statelessness is sensitive, position the operation/project around “resident inclusion” and “documentation barriers,” not statelessness. Use Project Development Objective (PDO)/result language like “share of residents able to enroll and use foundational ID” rather than category labels (citizens; stateless people; etc.).
<p>Design credentials with country-specific sensitivity to statelessness visibility.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep credentials neutral. Suggest that cards/QRs/ID numbers contain no nationality or other markers. Route citizen-only entitlements (e.g., voting) through sector back-end checks instead of visible fields on the foundational credential. • Registration approach/whether to register statelessness. Decide whether “statelessness” should be captured at all—and if so, whether it should be stored only as a protected back-end attribute or omitted entirely. Where a discrete back-end flag clearly benefits stateless persons (e.g., enabling service access or tailored safeguards) and can be protected by robust governance, limited access controls, and purpose limitation, consider recording it in the back end. Where any recording poses credible risks of harm, discrimination, or misuse, adopt neutral credentials and avoid collecting or storing explicit statelessness identifiers.

RECOMMENDATIONS	ACTION ITEMS
Train civil registrars/officials to apply legal criteria fairly.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote awareness and capacity-building. Provide training and knowledge sharing for officials on statelessness-sensitive practices, legal obligations, and international standards to ensure consistent application of non-discrimination principles.
Support due process & grievance guidelines; inform individuals about decisions/redress.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grievance mechanisms. Support the setup of accessible grievance redress and appeals for enrollment/denial decisions. Informed decision. Ensure that individuals are informed about decisions and avenues for redress in cases of denial of documentation, including birth registration and nationality documentation.
Run awareness-raising for stateless groups on birth registration/ID opportunities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inclusive outreach. Recommend targeted outreach using neutral, inclusive messaging; partner with Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) with community trust. Accessible information. Provide easy-to-read materials and safe referral information.
Support legal aid/paralegals for applications or redress.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support assisted enrollment. Partner with CSOs and paralegals to help applicants prepare documentation, navigate registration, and contest arbitrary denials—bridging the gap between law and practice.
Foster regional cooperation and cross-border data sharing protocols.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cross-border coordination. Coordinate with neighboring countries and learn from regional good practices on documentation continuity for mobile/in-situ populations.
Monitor results continuously and adapt systems for inclusion.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor outcomes. Set up M&E to track enrollment/use/denial rates for at-risk groups including stateless people; enable feedback loops with CSOs/communities. Evidence-based adjustments. Course-correct design choices (e.g., nationality field handling, credential neutrality) based on evidence.

5. CONCLUSION

The rapid development and evolution of ID systems presents new challenges and risks to stateless people that ID practitioners and development actors need to be aware of so that they can take appropriate steps to mitigate them. These risks range from being left out of systems that are essential to access a wide range of rights and benefits—and thus being left behind and in poverty—to being included in a manner that may compromise their safety and well-being.

Modernized foundational ID systems that include an assessment and assignment of a nationality status at birth may inadvertently contribute to creation of new cases of statelessness. They also present special data protection and privacy concerns for stateless people, as the centralized storing of personal information may make it easier for a range of actors to access personal data, unless safeguarded by data protection legislation and protocols. All of the above makes it necessary to take statelessness into account and to adopt context-specific risk mitigation measures to ensure a “do no harm” approach.

At the same time, work to develop and improve ID systems presents remarkable opportunities to make progress in this area, including:

- Using the rollout of new ID systems to identify stateless people and those at risk of statelessness and, where needed, establishment of a referral mechanism so that their protection situation can be addressed by the competent authorities and their statelessness eventually resolved;
- Assessing and addressing legal and administrative barriers to inclusion in the new/improved ID system (not only for stateless populations, but for everyone, as many people may face challenges providing documentary proof of identity, for example) and including stateless people in ID systems in a manner that facilitates their access to rights and services;
- Providing nationality documentation to all those with an entitlement to it, including those who currently lack proof of nationality;
- Reviewing alignment with the legal and policy frameworks for the prevention and reduction of statelessness and the protection of stateless people, and, in so doing, promoting international standards;
- Improving birth registration systems for the prevention of statelessness;

- Strengthening data protection and privacy, bearing in mind the special risks to stateless people;
- Building robust due process and transparency standards into design and implementation to minimize risks of creating new cases of statelessness and enhance the protection of stateless people.

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ANNEX

Annex I: Causes of Statelessness

Statelessness has various causes, including nationality laws that do not conform to international standards and weak civil registration or identification systems, which may leave individuals without proof of their entitlement to citizenship and result in statelessness, especially when combined with other risk factors such as minority status. The main drivers of statelessness are described below.

Gaps in nationality laws	If laws are not drafted in accordance with international standards or if they are incorrectly applied, people may be left stateless. For example, abandoned children of unknown parents (“foundlings”) can be left stateless in countries where nationality can only be acquired through descent and where the law is missing a safeguard granting them nationality of the State where they are found if they would otherwise be stateless.
Discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity, religion, or language	Some countries exclude members of certain racial, ethnic, or religious groups from citizenship, or establish and implement preferential access to such groups in such a way that others are in effect excluded. Discrimination can be explicit in the state’s nationality law or observable as a matter of consistent practice. The exclusion of certain groups or populations from the citizenry of a State based on race, ethnicity, religion, or language is linked to many large-scale protracted statelessness situations.
Gender discrimination in nationality laws	In 24 countries, women are unable to confer nationality to their children on an equal basis as men. This disparity can result in statelessness, particularly when the father is stateless or unavailable or unwilling to confer nationality.
Conflicting nationality laws between countries	Conflicting nationality laws can leave people with link(s) to two or more countries unable to access any nationality. This can occur, for example, where a child is born abroad in a country where nationality is not granted based on birth on the territory (jus soli) to parents whose country of origin does not allow conferral of nationality to children born abroad. ¹⁹

State succession and changing borders	In situations of State succession and changing borders, people can be left stateless when they are unable to access nationality of the successor state, either because nationality laws of the successor State have been drafted in a restrictive manner, or because individuals are unable to prove their links to the new country.
Loss or deprivation of nationality	Statelessness can also be caused due to loss or deprivation of nationality. When legal provisions depriving a person of their nationality are applied automatically or without a safeguard against statelessness, people may be left stateless. For example, in some countries citizens can automatically lose their nationality due to an extended period of residency abroad, even if this would leave them stateless.
Lack of proof of nationality/identity documents	Being undocumented is not the same as being without nationality, but it can lead to statelessness in certain circumstances. For example, a person who does not have a birth certificate may be unable to prove their place of birth or parentage, which are key elements needed to establish entitlement to nationality. Minority groups and those perceived to possess links to another State lack proof of identity.
Administrative and financial barriers	Administrative or financial barriers may prevent individuals from meeting requirements for accessing nationality. This includes challenges such as requirements in some countries to provide a marriage certificate to obtain a birth certificate; heavy fines in some countries for late birth registration; difficulties encountered in some countries in registering children with consulates; and difficulties proving deceased parents' nationality due to documentation issues or inefficient civil registration systems.

Annex II: Statelessness Situation Assessment Tool

Part A: International Standards and Best Practices in Birth Registration for the Prevention of Statelessness

- Does the State's civil registration law explicitly set out the right of every child to be registered at birth? (Yes/No)
 - ▶ Only if answer is No—Recommend clarifying the state's civil registration law so that it explicitly sets out the right of every child to be registered at birth.

- Are there any fees associated with registration? (Yes/No)
 - ▶ Only if answer is Yes—Recommend rescinding fees associated with registration.

- Is presentation of a marriage certificate required as a prerequisite to registration of a birth? (Yes/No)
 - ▶ Only if answer is Yes—Recommend rescinding requirement that a marriage certificate be presented as a prerequisite to registration of a birth.

- Does the civil registration law give both parents equal rights to declare a birth, including in the absence of the other parent? (Yes/No)
 - ▶ Only if answer is No—Recommend reforming the civil registration law to give both parents equal rights to declare a birth, including in the absence of the other parent.

- Does the civil registration law stipulate procedures for notification of birth by the health sector? (Yes/No) Does the health sector provide birth notifications in practice? (Yes/No)
 - ▶ Only if the answers are both No—Recommend taking practical steps to enable the health sector to systematically provide birth notifications.

- Are there fees and/or penalties associated with late registration? (Yes/No)
 - ▶ Only if the answer is Yes—Recommend removing fees and/or penalties associated with late registration.

- Does the civil registration law specify procedures for the registration of orphans and abandoned children? (Yes/No)
 - ▶ Only if the answer is No—Recommend clarifying the civil registration law so that it specifies procedures for the registration of orphans and abandoned children.

- Does the civil registration law specify procedures for the registration of children born to imprisoned mothers? (Yes/No)
 - ▶ Only if the answer is No—Recommend clarifying the civil registration law so that it specifies procedures for the registration of children born to imprisoned mothers.
- Does the civil registration law explicitly set out the right of refugees, asylum seekers, and migrants to be registered at birth? (Yes/No)
 - ▶ Only if the answer is No—Recommend clarifying the civil registration law so that it explicitly sets out the right of refugees, asylum seekers, and migrants to be registered at birth.
- Are there provisions in either the civil registration law or child protection legislation for registration of an adoption? (Yes/No)
 - ▶ Only if the answer is No—Recommend that there be provisions added to the appropriate law setting out procedures for registration of an adoption.
- If the State relies on paper records and registers, is there a clear and appropriate procedure for replacing lost or damaged documents? (Yes/No)
 - ▶ Only if the answer is No—Recommend that there be provisions added to the appropriate law setting out procedures for replacing lost or damaged documents.
- Does the civil registration law grant access to a court of appeal for review of administrative actions? (Yes/No)
 - ▶ Only if the answer is No—Recommend amendment of the civil registration law so as to grant access to a court of appeal for review of administrative actions.

Part B: International Standards and Best Practices in Nationality Laws for the Prevention and Reduction of Statelessness

International Conventions

- Is the State a party to the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness? (Yes/No)
 - ▶ Only if the answer is No—Recommend that the State considers becoming a Party to the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness.
- If it is not a party, has it made a voluntary pledge to become a Party? (Yes/No)

- ▶ Only if the answer is No—Recommend that the State considers making a voluntary pledge to become a Party.
- Whether or not the State is a party, is it applying the 1961 Convention's safeguards against childhood statelessness (Articles 1-4) in practice?
 - ▶ Only if the answer is No—Recommend that the State considers applying the 1961 Convention's safeguards against childhood statelessness in practice.

Prevention of Childhood Statelessness

- Article 1—As a general rule, does the State provide nationality to a child born on the territory if the child would otherwise be stateless? (Yes/No)
 - ▶ Only if the answer is No—Recommend reform so that, as a general rule, nationality is provided to a child born on the territory if the child would otherwise be Stateless.
- Article 2- Does the State provide nationality to foundlings? (Yes/No)
 - ▶ Only if the answer is No—Recommend reform so that nationality is provided to foundlings.
- Article 3—Are children born on ships and aircraft considered to have been born in the territory of the State to which the vessels are registered? (Yes/No)
 - ▶ Only if the answer is No—Recommend reform so that children born on ships and aircraft are considered to have been born in the territory of the State to which the vessels are registered.
- Article 4—As a general rule, does the State provide nationality to a child born outside the State to a parent who is a national of the State if the child would otherwise be Stateless? (Yes/No)
 - ▶ Only if the answer is No—Recommend reform so that, as a general rule, nationality is provided to a child born outside the State to a parent who is a national of the State if the child would otherwise be Stateless.

Loss and Renunciation of Nationality

- Articles 5 and 6—If the state's law provides for loss of nationality in certain circumstances, is such loss conditional upon possession of another nationality? (Yes/No)
 - ▶ Only if the answer is No—Recommend reform so that loss of nationality is conditional upon possession of another nationality.

- Article 7–If the state’s law permits renunciation of nationality, is the renunciation conditional upon possession of another nationality? (Yes/No)
 - ▶ Only if the answer is No–Recommend reform so that renunciation of nationality is conditional upon possession of another nationality.

Deprivation of Nationality

- Article 8–Does the state’s law permit it to deprive its citizens of nationality only where doing so would not render them stateless? If it allows for deprivation of nationality even where it would leave a person stateless, are the conditions in accordance with the international standards set out in Article 8, paragraphs 2-4? (Yes/No)
 - ▶ Only if both answers are No–Recommend reform so that deprivation of nationality does not leave persons stateless (best practice).
- Article 9–Does the State deprive any person or group of persons of their nationality on racial, ethnic, religious or political grounds? (Yes/No)
 - ▶ Only if the answer is Yes–Recommend reform so that citizens are not deprived of their nationality on racial, ethnic, religious, or political grounds.

Gender Equality

- Is the State a party to the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)? (Yes/No)
 - ▶ Only if the answer is No–Recommend that the State consider becoming a party to the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).
- Whether or not it is a party to CEDAW, does the State a) grant women equal rights with men to acquire, change or retain their nationality, and b) allow mothers to confer nationality to their children on an equal basis as fathers? (Yes/No)
 - ▶ a) Only if the answer is No–Recommend that the State reform its law to grant women equal rights with men to acquire, change or retain their nationality.
 - ▶ b) Only if the answer is No–Recommend that the State reforms its law to allow mothers to confer nationality to their children on an equal basis as fathers.

Part C. International Standards and Best Practices for the Protection of Stateless Persons

- Is the State a party to the 1954 Convention on the Protection of Stateless Persons? (Yes/No)
 - ▶ Only if the answer is No—Recommend that the State considers becoming a party to the 1954 Convention on the Protection of Stateless Persons.
- If it is not a party, has it made a voluntary pledge to become a Party? (Yes/No)
 - ▶ Only if the answer is No—Recommend that it considers making a voluntary pledge to become a party.
- Whether or not the State is a party:
 - a. Does the State include the definition of a stateless person in its law? (Yes/No)
 - ▶ Only if the answer is No—Recommend that the State includes the definition of a stateless person in its law.
 - b. Does the State have a Statelessness Determination Procedure (SDP)? (Yes/No)
 - ▶ Only if the answer is No—Recommend that the State establishes a Statelessness Determination Procedure (SDP).
 - c. Are stateless people treated no less favorably than citizens with respect to the right to practice their religion? (Yes/No)
 - ▶ Only if the answer is No—Recommend that stateless people be treated no less favorably than citizens with respect to the right to practice their religion.
 - d. Are stateless people treated the same as citizens with respect to access to primary education? (Yes/No)
 - ▶ Only if the answer is No—Recommend that stateless people be treated the same as citizens with respect to access to primary education.
 - e. Are stateless people treated no less favorably than aliens in the same circumstances with respect to access to education other than primary education? (Yes/No)
 - ▶ Only if the answer is No—Recommend that stateless people be treated no less favorably than aliens in the same circumstances with respect to access to education other than primary education.
 - f. Do stateless people have access to health care on terms no less favorable than applicable to aliens in the same circumstances? (Yes/No)
 - ▶ Only if the answer is No—Recommend that stateless people be provided access to health care on terms no less favorable than applicable to aliens in the same circumstances.
 - g. Do stateless people have access to courts of law? (Yes/No)
 - ▶ Only if the answer is No—Recommend that stateless people be given access to courts of law.

- h. Are stateless persons treated no less favorably than aliens in the same circumstances with respect to access to gainful employment? (Yes/No)
 - ▶ Only if the answer is No—Recommend that stateless persons be treated no less favorably than aliens in the same circumstances with respect to access to gainful employment.
- i. Does the State facilitate the naturalization of stateless people? (Yes/No)
 - ▶ Only if the answer is No—Recommend that the State facilitates the naturalization of stateless persons.
- j. Does the State provide identity papers to stateless persons on their territory who don't possess a valid travel document? (Yes/No)
 - ▶ Only if the answer is No—Recommend that the State provide identity papers to stateless persons on their territory who don't possess a valid travel document.
- If there is a known, significant-sized stateless population on the territory, are steps being taken to address this population's statelessness status?
 - ▶ Only if there is a stateless population and the answer is No—Recommend that steps be taken to grant nationality to this population.

Part D. Statelessness and the Identification System

- Is nationality determination carried out when applying for the national ID card? (Yes/No)
 - ▶ If the answer is Yes—Recommend that clear safeguards be established to ensure that individuals who may lack documentation are not wrongly classified as non-nationals or stateless. Nationality determination procedures should be transparent, non-discriminatory, and coordinated with civil registration and nationality authorities. Staff should be trained to recognize when individuals may be entitled to nationality under the law, even if documentation is missing.
- Are stateless individuals who may face legal and administrative barriers to inclusion in the ID system being supported to overcome those?
 - ▶ Only if the answer is No—Recommend introducing legal, procedural, or administrative measures to actively support stateless individuals to access the ID system without discrimination (e.g. paralegals; antidiscrimination trainings for registrars)
- What is the process the ID system follows in cases where a person's eligibility for nationality documentation is unclear or in doubt?
 - ▶ If no clear process exists—Recommend establishing transparent procedures requiring that reasons for denial are: (a) formally communicated to the individual; (b) recorded in the system; (c) subject to automatic review by a second official; and (d)

- accompanied by access to a formal and timely redress mechanism.
- Does the ID system link to the civil registry and rely on it for information about nationality status? (Yes/No)
 - ▶ Only if the answer is No—Recommend creating an interoperable connection between the ID system and civil registry to verify and update nationality status accurately.
 - Is the nationality and/or statelessness status displayed on the legal ID document? (Yes/No)
 - ▶ If the answer is Yes—Recommend conducting a context-specific assessment to determine whether displaying nationality or marking the statelessness status on ID documents promotes inclusion or contributes to exclusion, discrimination, or harm, particularly for (de-jure) stateless persons.
 - Are stateless people eligible to obtain IDs that allow them to access rights and services they are entitled to under national law? (Yes/No)
 - ▶ Only if the answer is No—Recommend ensuring that stateless individuals can obtain legal identity documents that grant access to services and rights, even in the absence of proof of nationality
 - Does the ID system collect and retain information on country of origin, ethnicity, religion, or language? (Yes/No)
 - ▶ If the answer is Yes—Recommend reviewing whether the collection of such attributes is necessary, and ensure safeguards are in place to prevent misuse or discriminatory profiling, especially for minority and stateless communities.
 - Are safeguards in place to prevent individuals from being assigned an incorrect or arbitrary nationality in ID or CR records? (Yes/No)
 - ▶ Only if the answer is No—Recommend introducing procedural checks and staff training to prevent misregistration or imposition of inaccurate nationality status in identity records.
 - Does the ID or CR system enable late or delayed registration without punitive measures for those affected by displacement, discrimination, or historical exclusion? (Yes/No)
 - ▶ Only if the answer is No—Recommend allowing for flexible, non-punitive late registration procedures with waivers or alternative documentation pathways for affected populations.
 - Are mobile registration and outreach campaigns designed to reach stateless populations and groups at risk of statelessness? (Yes/No)
 - ▶ Only if the answer is No—Recommend tailoring mobile registration initiatives to explicitly include marginalized, nomadic, or stateless-affected communities, and deploying them in coordination with community leaders or civil society.

- Is disaggregated data collected to monitor access to ID and CR services by sex, age, ethnicity, legal status, and risk of statelessness? (Yes/No)
 - ▶ Only if the answer is No—Recommend strengthening data systems to include disaggregation that enables identification of statelessness-related exclusion patterns, while ensuring compliance with data protection principles.



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