

Global Statelessness Retreat

24-25 May 2022
Geneva, Switzerland



2022 Global Statelessness Retreat

From 24 to 25 May 2022, the Statelessness Section in DIP organized a Global Statelessness Retreat (Global Retreat) to bring together UNHCR Regional Statelessness Officers and key stakeholders from civil society, UN Agencies and community-led organizations (participant list in Annex I). The Global Retreat was preceded by regional preparatory sessions, co-hosted by UNHCR and regional civil society stakeholders, to allow for a wider range of regional, national and local actors to participate and present their views and recommendations on global efforts to address statelessness.

Objectives

The Global Statelessness Retreat had four overarching objectives:

1. Assess the progress of the #IBelong Campaign and the work to address statelessness and identify opportunities and priorities to accelerate progress towards ending statelessness.
2. Discuss how the inclusion of persons with lived experiences can be strengthened and improved and the specific role stateless-led organizations can take.
3. Workshop the final Campaign theme of “Statelessness and Development”, situating the theme for stakeholders, solicit feedback and identify opportunities for activities and collaboration under the theme.
4. Present the ongoing work to establish a global multi-stakeholder alliance, discuss the process for establishing the alliance, seek input on its main objectives, structure and membership.

Agenda

<p>DAY I</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moment of truth: self-evaluating our collective • Regional presentations on achievements, challenges and priorities (hybrid) • Strengthened inclusion of stateless persons (hybrid) • Setting up stateless-led organizations • Importance of data and the IROSS 	<p>DAY III</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statelessness and SDG Target 16.9 • What can be done when there is little political space? • #IBelong Campaign Theme: Statelessness and development (hybrid) • Global Alliance to Address Statelessness (hybrid) • Alliance building: reflections by stakeholders
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How far have we come?

Throughout the Global Retreat and the regional preparatory sessions, the UNHCR Statelessness Section wanted to engage with UNHCR colleagues and civil society and UN partners on the shortcomings and successes of the #IBelong Campaign, where improvements are required and where the priorities lie until 2024. Summary take-aways from the discussion include:

- The Campaign has provided a platform for more and stronger partnerships to address statelessness, with UNHCR and among other stakeholders.
 - The Campaign has been successful in bringing on board a wider range of relevant and important stakeholders, through increasing awareness on statelessness among UN partners and civil society, such as the UN Special Rapporteurs on Minority Rights and Violence Against Women.
 - More efforts need to be made toward multi-stakeholder partnerships and structural inclusion of persons with lived experiences.
- The Campaign has not been very successful, and more work is required regarding advocacy and engagement towards solutions for (major) situations of statelessness, including in places where statelessness continues to be politically sensitive.
- The Campaign and especially the Global Action Plan have provided a useful and pragmatic framework to focus joint efforts to find solutions for statelessness and the protection of stateless persons.

Regional priorities and opportunities

Based on the regional preparatory sessions, representatives from the different regions provided an overview of the main challenges, opportunities, and priorities at the regional and country level until the end of 2024. Several cross-cutting opportunities were identified:

- Engagement with regional intergovernmental organizations and regional processes are ongoing and offer specific opportunities in almost all regions of the world.
- Supporting State-to-State advocacy, leveraging “peer-pressure”, sharing of best practices among government stakeholders were highlighted as presenting more opportunities.
- The appointments of government focal points on statelessness at the national level and within regional organizations were recognized as a good practice and catalysts for better and more structural engagement with relevant government counterparts.

In terms of overarching priorities until 2024 some summary take-aways include:

- Continued collaboration between UNHCR and UN agencies and regional civil society networks and organizations.
- Multi-stakeholder advocacy for accession to the UN Conventions and law reform.
- Enhancing data on statelessness, including socio-economic data on stateless populations.
- Establishing or strengthening statelessness determinations procedures to guarantee protection of stateless persons.
- Working towards strengthened civil registration procedures, including through further engagement with development actors.

Annex II provides an overview and summary of the identified regional opportunities and priorities.

Addressing statelessness in places with limited political space

Throughout the preparations for the retreat and during the retreat itself, it was recognized by all stakeholders that despite achievements being made, progress has been slow in countries where there is a lack of political will and where statelessness is politically very sensitive. This includes some of the major statelessness situations globally. Summary take-aways of the discussions include:

- UNHCR and the UN as a whole (including the UNCTs) could do more to further empower affected communities and civil society organizations to advocate and raise awareness, also in situations where UNHCR/UN agencies themselves are restricted from publicly engaging on the issue.
- There is a need to stay abreast of developments and new opportunities, even in situations that have been stagnant for years. Civil society actors and members of the community can be vital sources of information in this regard. UNHCR and other actors need to be agile and take advantage of opportunities as they arise.
- Innovative approaches for awareness raising and public advocacy, including through virtual platforms and social media can be useful ways to amplify and bring together voices of affected populations in safe and secure environments.
- Government to government advocacy presents opportunities for engagement in contexts where UNHCR/UN, civil society and affected communities face limitations.
- Cooperation with regional bodies (including identifying champion states) needs to be prioritized to build momentum and increase the critical mass of states willing to act.
- Calls were made for UNHCR to increase efforts to (re)build relationships with affected communities and civil society actors, especially in places where UNHCR due to political sensitivities has not been actively engaging.

Strengthened inclusion of persons with lived experiences

There was a clear recognition that more needs to be done to increase and deepen the inclusion of those with lived experience of statelessness by UNHCR and other stakeholders. Presentations by Statefree, Apatride Network and United Stateless again showcased that advocacy and public awareness raising activities and the inclusion of members from affected communities have a strong impact towards achieving common goals. Some key take-aways from the discussion are:

- It is critical to include persons with lived experience in policy discussions and program development.
- Inclusion of stateless persons should not be limited to (sometimes tokenistic) requests for sharing their own individual experiences. [ENS's External Community Speaker Policy](#) provides concrete guidance on key considerations that need to be made when engaging stateless persons in activities to address statelessness.
- Affected persons have skills and can provide relevant expertise (law, social work, community engagement and empowerment, etc.) despite often not being able to formally practice within their areas of expertise.
- Persons with lived experience are often able to collect and provide data on their communities.
- Stateless persons face real barriers in setting up formal organizations, which present significant challenges related to institutional capacity, accessing funding and entering formal partnerships (including with UNHCR).

Some key follow-up activities include:

- The UNHCR Statelessness Section has continued its work on the establishment of the Statelessness Community Consultation group, and the development of its Terms of Reference, in close collaboration with representatives from affected communities and the Institute on Statelessness and Inclusion, considering the discussions held at the Retreat.
- Discussions held at the Retreat and feedback received have further informed the ongoing development of the Global Alliance, including the recently established Task Force and take-aways from the discussion on the inclusion of persons with lived experience will continue to be a central part of its development.

Statelessness and development

Following the #IBelong Campaign themes on childhood statelessness and stateless minorities, statelessness and development has been selected as the third and final Campaign theme. The DIP Statelessness Section and the International Development Law organization provided presentations on the nexus between statelessness and development and on opportunities presented by the Campaign team. The theme was recognized as relevant and presenting real opportunities to strengthen existing partnerships, bring new stakeholder onboard and accelerate progress. Key take-aways from the feedback and discussions during the retreat, which will inform activities planned under the theme umbrella, include:

- The theme will further highlight the socio-economic impact of statelessness on persons with lived experiences, but also present opportunities to learn more on the impact on the whole of society.
- The objectives of the theme should be to seek stronger engagement of development actors by including statelessness in key-development themes. The SDGs have already provided a range of opportunities for further engagement on statelessness and for even more attention, action, and resources.
- The development community is data-driven and UNHCR and other stakeholders will need to improve the availability of socio-economic data, including common development indicators, to harness increased attention from key stakeholders.

Building a Global Alliance

Following the recommendation in the Secretary General's Our Common Agenda report to “end statelessness” and recommendation 4 of the 2021 UNHCR evaluation on statelessness, several sessions were organized during the Retreat to discuss with stakeholders on the objectives, framework and activities of a Global Alliance to End Statelessness. Some of the key points raised during the Retreat included:

- Persons with lived experience need to be at the heart of the Alliance and contribute to its development.
- UNHCR leadership (under its mandate, and as tasked by the Secretary General in follow-up to his Our Common Agenda Report) will be essential to the overall success of the Alliance. UNHCR needs to allocate resources to the Alliance, including a dedicated coordinator position.
- The Alliance needs to actively engage UN Agencies to ensure they play an active role, in line with the aspects relevant to statelessness within their own mandates.
- The Alliance will need to play a vital part in donor engagement and resource mobilization for statelessness activities, with special attention for support to stateless-led organizations who may struggle to register as formally established organizations and access funding.
- To ensure the Alliance can go above and beyond the framework provided by the #IBelong Campaign, it will need to define concrete activities of its own with clear objectives and indicators to monitor and record progress.
- Actions defined in the Global Action Plan continue to provide a strong framework on the priority issues to prevent and reduce statelessness and protect stateless persons and can continue to guide the work of the Alliance and its members.
- The membership in the Alliance was discussed, in particular in relation to the membership of governments. One strong recommendation was that if states are to be included, clear criteria need to be developed and consistently applied to ensure that involved states are committed to address statelessness within their own countries.

Since the Global Retreat, the development of the Alliance under the leadership of UNHCR has been ongoing. The discussion during the Retreat have significantly contributed to the ongoing work. A Global Alliance Task Force has been set up, including representatives from UNHCR, UN Agencies, civil society stakeholders and academia, many of them who were present at the Global Retreat. The Task Force will lead on the development of the foundational documents of the Alliance, which set out its vision, mission, and purpose and discuss the structure and terms of reference. The Task Force will also coordinate the stakeholder consultation workshops which will discuss and validate the foundational documents and the ongoing work on the establishment of the Global Alliance.

UNHCR	UN & Int. organizations	Civil society and academia	
DIP Statelessness Section	International Development Law Organization	Institute on Statelessness and Inclusion	Global Campaign for Equal Nationality Rights
Global Learning and Development Centre	IOM	Central Asia Network on Statelessness	Nationality for All
DER Campaigns Hub	UNICEF	Southern Africa Nationality Network	West African Civil Society Forum
DIP Policy and Law	UNDP	OBMICA (Caribbean Migrants Observatory)	Kenya Human Rights Commission / East African Network on Nationality ¹
DIP Child Protection Unit	OHCHR	Hawiati (MENA Statelessness Network)	Apatride Network
Regional Statelessness Officers from each Bureau	Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women	Statefree	European Network on Statelessness
		World Council of Churches	Namati
		Red ANA	Open Society Foundation
		Peter McMullin Centre on Statelessness	Child Identity Protect
		United Stateless	Religions for Peace

In addition to the above listed participants (both in-person and virtual), representatives from civil society organizations who participated in the regional preparatory sessions and UNHCR staff from country operations also attended the virtual sessions.

Seven regional meetings were organized in the weeks leading up to the Global Retreat. A total of **209 partners and stakeholders** participated in these regional meetings. Although varying in format, all regional meetings provided valuable opportunities for national and local stakeholders to discuss the main topics of the Global Retreat and ensure that their views were represented by the regional representatives. They further provided an opportunity for regional actors to discuss common challenges and identify regional priorities and opportunities.

¹ [Working Group: Regional Statelessness CSO Network Website \(unhcr.org\)](https://www.unhcr.org/working-group-regional-statelessness-cso-network-website)

<p>Asia-Pacific</p> <p><u>Opportunities</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building on good practices from other countries • ASEAN Human Rights Declaration • The CRVS Decade <p><u>Priorities</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building a regional network for joint advocacy, peer learning, and building a regional movement • Increase fair and meaningful participation of persons with lived experiences • Invest in capacity building and community leadership programs 	<p>Europe</p> <p><u>Opportunities:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ENS Stateless Journeys Campaign and Conference (May 2023) • Addressing Roma Statelessness • Statelessness Index and Case Law Database • Engaging stateless changemakers and community representatives <p><u>Priorities</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish SDPs and improve existing ones • Identification of stateless persons in asylum procedures • Addressing childhood statelessness • Accessions to the conventions • Improve data on statelessness • Continued engagement with regional actors 	<p>Middle East and North Africa</p> <p><u>Opportunities</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification of common issues and challenges • Working in partnership. • Reframing existing narratives. <p><u>Priorities</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct support to affected communities (including legal assistance and assistance with access to civil documentation) • Capacity development and awareness raising for all stakeholders • Law reforms and accessions, including effective implementation. • Improved data and analysis. • Addressing barriers to full inclusion. 	<p>East and Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes Region</p> <p><u>Opportunities:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of HLS/GRF statelessness related pledges and Adoption of National Action Plans /Roadmap to address statelessness • Peer pressure through good practices by countries in the region • Cooperation with the Special Rapporteur on Minority and other Special procedures issues <p><u>Priorities</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved statelessness data • Capacity building and awareness raising on statelessness • Universal and non-discriminatory birth registration for all born on the territory • Equal access to nationality documentation to those entitled to nationality (i.e. ID vetting)
<p>Americas</p> <p><u>Opportunities</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brazil Plan of Action • regional platforms (R4V, MIRPS, Quito Process) • Latin American and Caribbean Council on Civil Registration, Identity and Vital Statistics <p><u>Priorities</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal reform & accession to Conventions • Establishing/improving SDPs • Strengthened stakeholder collaboration (UN, CSO & govts) • Involving development partners • Accessions to the conventions 	<p>Central Asia</p> <p><u>Opportunities</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SDGs • Strengthened cooperation with UNICEF and ESCAP • National population censuses <p><u>Priorities</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessions and legislative harmonization • Establishing/improving SDPs • Information campaigns for affected populations • Inclusion of statelessness in UN human rights and development frameworks 	<p>Southern Africa</p> <p><u>Opportunities</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SADC Ministerial Declaration and Action Plan • Government focal points in place in all countries • AU Draft Protocol to the ACHPR <p><u>Priorities</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of the SANN/UNHCR action plan • Accessions to the conventions • Legal reform • Strengthening birth registration • Improved data on statelessness 	<p>West and Central Africa</p> <p><u>Opportunities</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthened cooperation with ECOWAS • Regional Model Law on SDPs, protection, and solutions <p><u>Priorities:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved data and understanding of statelessness • Legal reform for the prevention of statelessness • Strengthening CRVS systems • Support adoption and implementation of SDPs

