



STATELESSNESS IN WEST AFRICA

Turning your world
upside down



UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency



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The UNHCR Global Campaign to End Statelessness

In 2014, on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons, UNHCR launches a 10-year campaign to eradicate statelessness by 2024, which seeks greater political commitment to resolve protracted situations of statelessness and to prevent new situations of mass statelessness. In prioritizing the eradication of statelessness, High Commissioner for Refugees António Guterres said: “It is tragic that today millions of people are living without nationality. Unlike many armed conflicts, it is wholly within the power of every concerned government to resolve statelessness. We have the opportunity, as never before, to tackle this injustice. Now is the time to act. And I reiterate to governments that UNHCR is committed to supporting your efforts to end statelessness.”

WHO IS A STATELESS PERSON



A person with **no nationality**



HOW DOES IT HAPPEN

It's not an individual's fault

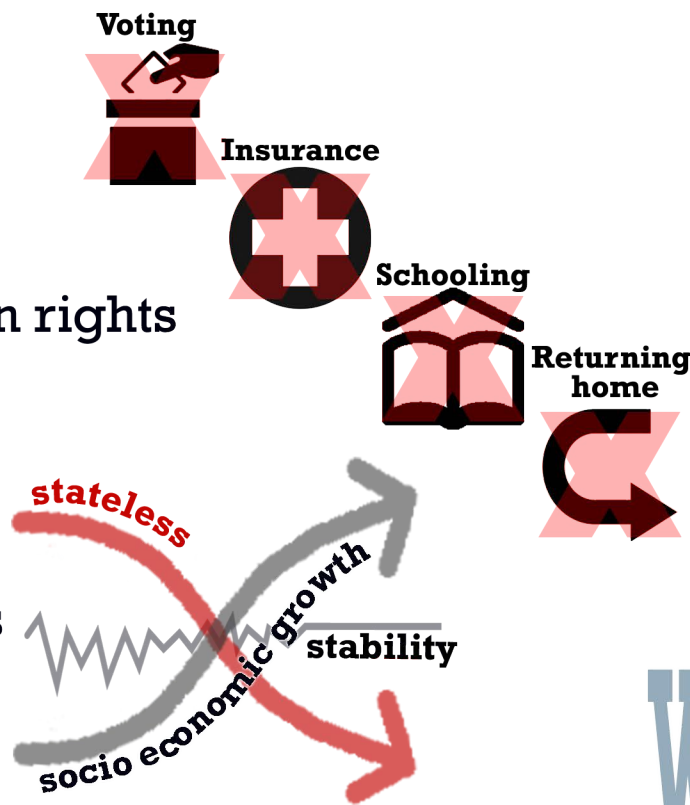
WHY DO WE CARE

No access to human rights



Highly vulnerable

Affects State affairs



WHAT CAN BE DONE

There are **solutions** within reach



WHAT DOES UNHCR DO



Shines light on invisibles
Identifies identityless

Promotes legal safety nets



What does “stateless” mean?

Nationality is a **legal bond** between a state and an individual, and statelessness refers to the condition of an individual who is not considered as a national by any State.

Everyone has the **right to a nationality** and the right to enjoy the protection that this legal bond represents. Statelessness is thus a violation of a **fundamental human right**.

Statelessness affects at least 10 million people and

is a problem that exists in all parts of the world. An estimated **750,000 stateless persons** live in the 15 countries that make up the West Africa region. The region is also home to a large population of persons at risk of statelessness. Persons who face difficulties proving the legal bond they share with the State are considered at risk of statelessness. The harder it is for a person to confirm this bond, the higher their risk of statelessness.



Florence's story

Florence is in her late 40s and has no determined nationality. She lives in exile in Senegal with her Liberian husband and her two children. She was born in Ghana to a Togolese father and a Ghanaian mother. Both of her parents are now deceased and her birth was never registered.

Florence has lived in numerous countries. Before arriving in Senegal, she lived in Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia. Earlier in her life, she managed to acquire a type of Ghanaian identity document, however she lost the documents somewhere in the midst of all the moving around. Florence now relies exclusively on a Senegalese refugee card she acquired because her husband was a Liberian refugee in Senegal. However, this card is no longer valid.

Due to the administrative hurdles preventing her from determining citizenship, she, like many other undocumented migrants in West Africa, is at a high risk of statelessness.



Demba is stateless.

He must beg in order to feed himself and his brother but he hopes to someday become a mechanic. Obtaining a nationality is an important step towards achieving this goal.

Consider what life would be like without a nationality.

How would you go to school or apply for a job?

How would you travel or access health care?

How would you open a bank account or get married?

Why care about Statelessness?

Is the possession of a nationality anything more than a mere formality? Does statelessness have a measurable impact on people's day-to-day lives? The answer to these questions is undeniably yes!



No nationality often means no access to basic human rights

Statelessness has a devastating impact on the lives of individuals as possession of nationality is essential for full participation in society and a prerequisite for the enjoyment of the full range of human rights.

A nationality is a pre-requisite for basic political, economic and civil rights. Without a nationality, it can be impossible to perform tasks that most people take for granted. In many West African countries, taking secondary school exams requires proof of nationality. In others, accessing health care and obtaining national health insurance requires a nationality certificate. Travelling across the region and beyond requires a passport, the delivery of which is

conditioned upon a proof of nationality. All of these examples show some of the consequences of being stateless.

The **right to return** to one's home country is a central feature of a nationality. It is what allows nationals to return to their country after travelling or working abroad. Stateless migrants do not enjoy this fundamental right and are at high risk of indefinite detention if they nevertheless try to return to the country they consider as their home. Similarly, when the country in which stateless persons are resident decides they must leave, the stateless migrant may be forced to travel back and forth between hostile borders.

No nationality = no vote = no political voice

Without a nationality, a person **cannot vote** or stand for election. If a person cannot vote, then who and what represent their interests in the territory that they inhabit? In circumstances where entire groups of people do not have

a nationality, that community's concerns may be entirely **without political representation**.

The political arena is where group interests are transformed from ideas into action. A community's

ability to bring about change is determined in proportion with its ability to participate in democratic processes.



Case study: Stateless in Côte d'Ivoire

A conflict largely about who is and is not an Ivorian displaced hundreds of thousands from their homes and caused three million people to need humanitarian assistance during the country's civil war.

Ten years after the violence in Côte d'Ivoire ended, government authorities estimate that there are 700,000 persons who are stateless or at high risk of statelessness currently living in the country. This is the largest concentration of stateless persons in West Africa.

Fortunately, since 2011 the government of Côte d'Ivoire has taken positive steps towards reducing statelessness and protecting the stateless population. These steps include acceding the two Stateless Conventions law reforms and leading a registration campaign that allows stateless persons who meet certain criteria to acquire Ivorian nationality through a simple declaration.

Is Statelessness a relevant issue in modern West Africa?

There was a time in West Africa and elsewhere in the world when it was common to attend school, travel, or seek medical attention without having to show identity documents. Back then, communities were smaller and it mattered more who one knew than what was written on paper. Modern states now rely on complicated administrative procedures to determine who belongs to the community and who has access to what services. Individuals without adequate identity documents are commonly **denied access to basic services** simply because they cannot prove who they are and where they came from. Ensuring the full enjoyment of the right to a nationality through providing documents proving the nationality of individuals is highly relevant to daily life in modern West Africa.

The consequences of statelessness are contrary to State interests

Allowing statelessness to occur or persist is contrary to States' interests. Some stateless populations reside near border regions. In the absence of clear procedures to prevent statelessness, disputes can occur between States over whether specific individuals or populations are nationals.

Not only can statelessness cause problems between nations, it also **increases insecurity within the State**. Populations who are denied

the protection of a nationality often lead highly marginalized lives. This **exclusion** renders them vulnerable to **exploitation** by criminal groups, increases the risk of human trafficking and political radicalization and threatens the stability of the State.

The fact that stateless persons often cannot own land, open a bank account, or pursue higher education is not only a denial of basic rights but also a barrier to

the economic and social development of the State. A State is less likely to thrive when the people who live within its borders do not have equal opportunity to participate in the economic and social development of the nation. For a people to invest in the present and future of a State, the State must in turn invest in its people and ensure all people realize their right to a nationality.

The day-to-day difficulties of a Stateless Mauritanian refugee

Ibrahima has been a stateless refugee for 25 years. He was born in Mauritania but was forced to flee in 1989 after the government began denationalizing and expelling Negro-Mauritanians.

"It is hard for me to do things people with a nationality take for granted. I have to fight to open a bank account and find legal employment. I cannot vote or travel. I badly want to become Mauritanian again but after twenty five years, I am beginning to lose hope."



Is there a difference between a person who is "stateless" and a person who is a "refugee"?

Stateless persons and refugees are distinct categories. Refugee is a person who, owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion is outside of his country of origins. In contrast, a stateless person is

a person who does not have a nationality. Most stateless persons do not have a nationality despite having lived in one country for their entire lives. However, like Ibrahima, it is possible to be both at once. Ibrahima is a 'stateless refugee' because he is at risk of persecution and he is without a nationality.

How does statelessness happen in West Africa?

Some people are born stateless while others had a nationality in the past and then lost it.

“Some stateless people simply never acquire a nationality as statelessness may be transmitted, like a disease, from generation to generation.”

- António Guterres
UNHCR High Commissioner

Conflict of laws

Nationality laws provide the **rules of attribution** of nationality in a given country. The nationality laws in West Africa differ from country to country. Nationality laws are generally based on two concepts, or a combination of both: ***jus soli***, where nationality is acquired by anyone born on State territory, and/or ***jus sanguinis***, where nationality is acquired by anyone whose parents are or were citizens of the State. *Jus soli* and *jus*

sanguinis laws can at times clash and create a situation whereby people become stateless. Consider what happens when a child, whose parents are nationals of a *jus soli* country, is born in a country where nationality may only be acquired if the parents are nationals. This is known as a conflict of law and in the absence of safeguards, this child will be stateless from birth. The story of Alioune and Bintou on page 6 shows you how this can happen.

Helpful Terminology

What is a safeguard?

Safeguards are legal provisions that prevent new situations of statelessness from arising. A provision in a country's nationality law granting nationality to all children born on the territory who would otherwise be stateless is an example of a safeguard.

What is a foundling?

A foundling is a child who is found abandoned and whose parents are unknown.

What is jus soli?

Jus soli means 'right of the soil.' In law, it refers to countries that bestow nationality on the basis of being born on State territory.

What is jus sanguinis?

Jus sanguinis means 'right of blood.' In law, it refers to countries that bestow nationality on the basis of being born to a parent who is a national of that country.

What is a naturalized person?

Naturalization is a way of acquiring citizenship. Criteria vary in each country but generally include marriage, residence, etc.. Naturalization is not automatic, this is a decision made by the State.

What is a civil registration?

Civil registration is a system used by governments to record birth, marriage, death and other important events in people's lives. A legal record is essential to the recognition and protection of the rights of citizens.

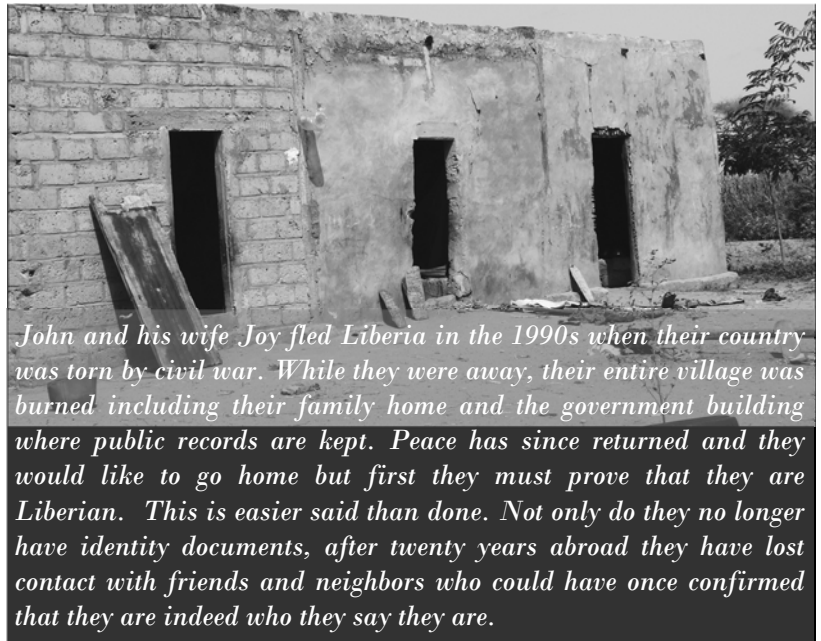
Falling through a gap in the law

A 'gap in the law' is often used to refer to an **absence of safeguards**. A noteworthy gap in many West African States' legislation exists in relation to **foundlings**. Even if most nationality laws allow foundlings who are adopted to receive the nationality of their new parents, a gap remains such that children who are never adopted - often children with physical and mental disabilities - pass through life with no legal identity or nationality.

Other types of legal gaps that cause statelessness in West Africa derive from circumstances surrounding **change of civil status**, such as divorce, attempt to acquire another nationality and prolonged residence abroad. Many laws in West Africa only allows one

nationality. When a national wishes to acquire the nationality of another country that also allows one nationality only, s/he is often required to renounce her/his nationality of origin in the process of naturalization. However, the outcome of this process is uncertain and s/he may not end up being

naturalized. In such situations, if the person cannot reacquire his nationality of origin, s/he 'falls through a gap in the law' and becomes stateless. A similar situation can occur in instances where nationality laws provide for the loss of nationality on account of residence abroad.



John and his wife Joy fled Liberia in the 1990s when their country was torn by civil war. While they were away, their entire village was burned including their family home and the government building where public records are kept. Peace has since returned and they would like to go home but first they must prove that they are Liberian. This is easier said than done. Not only do they no longer have identity documents, after twenty years abroad they have lost contact with friends and neighbors who could have once confirmed that they are indeed who they say they are.

Prolonged time abroad may rupture the link with country of origin

West Africa is and has always been a region prone to intense migration. Migration may rupture the bond migrants have with their countries of origin leading to a high risk of statelessness. For instance, migrants may lose evidence of nationality during their time abroad. Without these records, it is

exceedingly difficult to prove their legal link with their country of origin. Often the loss of a **migrant's records** is entirely beyond their control such as in the case where civil status records are destroyed due to conflict in their country of origin.

Undocumented lives: the risks caused by inadequate civil registries



How does statelessness happen?

Conflict of laws

Alioune and Bintou are both from a country where nationality is acquired by virtue of being born on the territory.

The couple migrate in search of work to a neighbouring country with different laws. In this country, nationality may only be acquired if at least one parent is a national of that country.

When Alioune and Bintou gave birth to a daughter in that neighbouring country, she was born stateless.

Falling through a gap in the law
Divorce is always difficult but for some women in West Africa divorce carries consequences that extend far beyond their personal relationships.

In one country, women who acquired nationality by virtue of marriage lose this nationality upon divorce and thus become stateless unless they are able to reacquire their previous nationality.

Basic law reform would protect all people from statelessness due to changes in civil status.

Gaps in core administrative practices greatly increase the risk of statelessness in West African States. A **birth certificate is essential** to prove nationality. Yet despite its importance, birth registration rates remain low in all countries in West Africa. Rates are critically low in rural areas, where, in general, no specific arrangements have been made for nomadic populations or populations residing in remote areas. In one West African country, less than ten percent of births are registered.

Even when births are

registered, the civil registry may not be computerized. During times of war, crises, or exodus, paper records are easily lost or destroyed.

The lack of a birth certificate is not equivalent to being stateless. However, a birth certificate is fundamentally important as a mean of proving nationality. Without it, the person will likely experience many of the same consequences of statelessness, such as difficulty in accessing services, travelling, and obtaining legal employment.



Article 6 (2) of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child states “every child shall be registered immediately after birth.” Reducing the cost of registration, instituting mobile registration units, and creating public education campaigns are all steps States can take to help ensure that this right is realized for all.

Discrimination

Discriminatory nationality laws are a cause of statelessness in West African countries. There are nationality laws that place different groups on unequal footing in relation to the right to acquire nationality or to transmit nationality through marriage or child birth. For instance, States may prevent members of a particular **race, ethnic group** or **gender** from acquiring or transferring nationality.

In West Africa, a number of countries have nationality laws that only consider the citizenship of the father when determining the citizenship of a child. This discriminatorily denies

women the right to transfer their citizenship to their children, with the consequence of a child being rendered stateless if he is unable to acquire a nationality from her/his father.

Persons of certain ethnicities and races also face discrimination; based on the colour of their skin or ethnic origin, they may be denied the legal right to transmit or even acquire nationality. For example, in some West African countries it is impossible to acquire nationality by birth or through naturalization if a person is not from an indigenous ethnic group, or

if s/he is not of Negro descent.

In addition to such discrimination, procedures for the acquisition or confirmation of nationality may be unclear or inconsistent. This means that those who determine who is and who is not a national may do so by relying on subjective criteria such as accent, ethnicity, religion and race, and such subjectivity leads to further discrimination.

Return to homeland after a prolonged migration

During 2014, thousands of people of West African descent have returned to their countries of origin fleeing the crisis in the Central African Republic. A lack of identity documentation has placed some of these “returnees” at a high risk of statelessness. For instance, a group of 11 people claim to have Nigerien fathers. However, none of them have documentation or evidence of family connections to prove this link. For the time being they are being housed by the Nigerien state but this undetermined existence is far from ideal. A determined nationality is an important first step in rebuilding a life after fleeing violence and destruction.

In 2012, as the political situation in Liberia has fundamentally changed, the refugee status of Liberian refugees was withdrawn, by application of a so-called clause of cessation. Refugees, some of whom had been in exile for over 20 years, could no longer reside in their country of residence as refugees, unless they prove a persisting fear of persecution. As a result, many opted to continue residing in their country of (former) asylum with a status of legal migrant resident. As a prerequisite, they had to obtain a Liberian passport. In this process, about 950 were denied issuance of passport on the ground that they could not confirm their nationality. Unless a solution is found, they are in legal limbo.



Oulimata's story

Oulimata is Senegalese. She is the mother of two sons both of whom were born in France to a father from East Africa. Until June 2013, unmarried Senegalese women could not transmit their nationality to a child born abroad unless the father was unknown or stateless.

The father of Oulimata's children is a national of a country that is politically unstable and that requires children to be physically present in the territory to acquire citizenship. Since the family feared to travel to the country due to the war, her sons were effectively stateless.

Oulimata recalls that in addition to the routine hardships her sons faced as a result of being stateless, "I felt less valued by my country. The law stood in the way my right to transmit to my children something which is fundamental to both personal and family identity."

*Oulimata's story also illustrates that **solutions** to statelessness are attainable through legal reform. In June 2013, Senegal amended its nationality law. Women and men are now equally entitled to transmit nationality to their children and spouses. Oulimata recalls that it was with great pride that she joined hundreds of other families in arranging for her sons to at long last become Senegalese.*

Change of state sovereignty over a territory

State succession occurs when an existing State is replaced by two or more States, when part of a State separates to form a new State, when territory is transferred from one State to another, or when two or more States unite to form a new State.

State succession can create stateless populations when individuals fail or are unable to secure citizenship in the successor states.

State succession is a **recurring phenomenon** related to the geopolitics of the region. It has been a cause of statelessness since the **decolonization** process and the subsequent creation of new independent States. Typically all citizens of the predecessor State (a territory under the colonial administration for instance) acquired the citizenship of a successor State, however, some newly independent States established nationality criteria that excluded certain individuals or groups on account of not being born in the territory or not being indigenous. As statelessness may be transmitted from one generation to the next, decisions made at that time remain relevant more than 50 years later.

State succession remains highly relevant in contemporary West Africa. There have been several recent instances of state succession and a handful of border disputes are pending. Although States will continue to change and evolve, with the proper safeguards in place it is possible to ensure that all people will enjoy the protection of a nationality.



Caught between two borders

Disputes stemming from the delineation of borders have not been limited to the immediate aftermath of the decolonization.

The stateless inhabitants of the île aux Oiseaux (Island of the Birds) are a testament to the effect of a border dispute can have on individuals and communities. In 2005, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) resolved a longstanding dispute between Benin and Niger over the sovereignty of the island. Though the decision clarified that the island belonged to Benin, it failed to address the question of nationality of the île aux Oiseaux 2000 inhabitants.

Are they Beninois or are they Nigerien?

Although there is the political will to resolve the situation, the inhabitants are neither Beninese or Nigerien for the time being. Until a durable solution is found, they live in limbo.

The right to a nationality is a fundamental human right

Statelessness is a violation of the fundamental human right to a nationality.

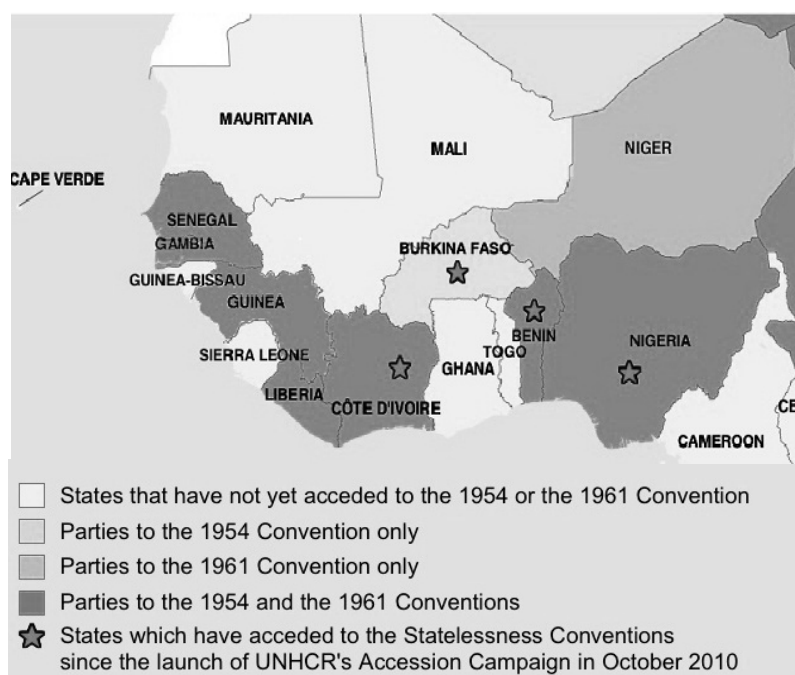
The right to a nationality is recognized by many international and regional agreements, including the list below (not exhaustive, but only indicative):

- Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)
- International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (1965)
- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966)
- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (1979)
- Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)
- African Charter on the Rights and welfare of the Child (1999)

Statelessness Conventions

The 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons defines a stateless person and enunciates basic measures to protect his/her rights. The 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness provides measures countries should take to prevent statelessness from occurring at birth and later in life.

By 1 August 2014, 82 States including 8 in West Africa were parties to the 1954 Convention and 59 States, including 8 in West Africa, were parties to the 1961 Convention.



Can lawyers and judges help solve the problem?

Litigation, or an action brought to enforce the right to a nationality, contribute to the reduction of statelessness. Individuals residing in West Africa have access to two unique institutions that they can use to find solutions.

African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights



The African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights is an international human rights instrument to promote and protect human rights and basic freedoms in the African continent.

Oversight and interpretation of the Charter is the responsibility of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights based in Banjul, The Gambia. Any individual or non-governmental organization may bring a communication before the Commission provided that they can show all available local remedies have been exhausted or that the local procedure is unduly prolonged. Thus, the Commission provides a forum wherein persons without a nationality (or groups who advocate on their behalf) can enforce their rights.

***The case of John K. Modise v. Botswana,
African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, Comm. No. 97/93 (2000)***

Facts: John Modise was born in pre-independence South Africa to parents who originated from pre-independence Botswana. Modise lived in Botswana from infancy until the age of 35 when he was designated an “undesirable immigrant” and deported to South Africa where he was denied entry due to lack of legal status. After three failed attempts to return to Botswana, he was left with no choice but to live as a stateless person in a border zone best described as a sort of “No-Man’s Land.” He spent seven years there until he was once again involuntarily displaced due to his lack of nationality.

Decision: The Commission found these acts exposed John Modise to personal suffering and indignity in violation of the right to freedom from cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment. The deportations deprived him of his family, and his family of his support in violation of the right to family life. The Commission also found that the deportations jeopardised John Modise’s freedom of movement. Finally, granting citizenship by registration (as opposed to birth) deprived him of his right to participate in the government of his country. The Commission urged the Government of Botswana to recognise John Modise as a citizen of Botswana by descent.

Community Court of Justice

In addition to the rights guaranteed under the African Charter, ECOWAS citizens are entitled to the enjoyment of the rights set out in the Community Law. Community Law does not provide for the right to a nationality; however it does establish a Community citizenship. The enforcement of these rights is guaranteed by the ECOWAS Community Court of Justice, which Community citizens may directly access. As the withdrawal of, or refusal to confer, an ECOWAS State's nationality prevents the enjoyment of Community citizenship, the ECOWAS Community Court of Justice

could in theory consider that conditions for the acquisition and loss of nationality fall within the scope of Community Law. However this issue has not yet been brought to the attention of the Court.



Who can access to the Community Court of Justice?

Access to the court is open to Member States, corporate bodies, or individuals residing in Member States.

How to access the court?

Cases are filed before the Court through written applications indicating the name of the applicant, the party against whom the proceedings are being instituted, a brief statement of the facts of the case, and the orders being sought by the plaintiff.



Béré's Story

For most of his life, Béré was stateless. His grandparents, originally from Burkina Faso, settled in Côte d'Ivoire in the 1940's. He and his parents were born in Bouaffle, Côte d'Ivoire, but their births were not registered.

After years of being teased at school for not being "Ivorian," he discovered he could not enroll in high school, because he lacked the documentation required

to take the exams. He then decided to try his luck in Burkina Faso, but people were calling him 'Paweogo' which means 'someone with no roots.' They made fun of him. He felt like a nobody.

In 1996, the Ivorian government issued a decree listing the names of thousands of people, to ensure those in limbo would finally be recognized as citizens of Côte d'Ivoire. For Béré, it was a new beginning as his name was listed on page 152 of the decree.

Inspired by his newfound rights, Béré ran for public office. He was democratically elected Municipal Counsel in the mayor's office in Bouaffle. Using the little spare time he has, Béré volunteers to help people to get documented and ensure that they have protection of the state. Béré wishes no one else goes through what he has gone through.

How to ensure every person has a nationality?

States confer nationality through the operation of their domestic law. It is therefore **primarily States** which **must take action**, both alone and in cooperation with other States, to ensure that everyone has a nationality.

Statelessness is a complex issue and no single action will eradicate its consequences. Moreover, each State has different nationality laws that already uphold and protect the right to a nationality to varying degrees. Therefore, what follows is a list of **general recommendations** for action that States should consider taking:

“We must go beyond acknowledging the problems of stateless people. What they really need are solutions. Solutions that enable them to secure a nationality and enjoy the full rights of citizens”

- António Guterres
UNHCR High Commissioner

Accede to the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons

Accede to the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness

Identify stateless populations and populations at risk of statelessness using tools such as the national census

Take measures to ensure that people at risk of statelessness have their nationality confirmed and acquire proof of nationality

Protect stateless persons from human rights abuses

Create clear procedures to determine and recognize a distinct legal status for stateless migrants

Amend nationality laws to conform to the 1961 Convention to ensure that no new stateless populations are created

Improve civil registration by raising the birth registration rate and by keeping records safer

Reduce statelessness by restoring or granting stateless persons a nationality, and fully integrating them into the society

Inform the general population about the unique vulnerabilities stemming from statelessness

Provide more legal aid in order to expand vulnerable persons access to courts

Why does the UNHCR do what it does?

The atrocities of the Second World War changed the world fundamentally and its aftermath marked the beginning of a new era for international cooperation and human rights. The UNHCR was established in 1951 to work with refugees. In 1974, the United Nations General Assembly extended UNHCR's mandate thereby granting the agency the legal authority to work in partnership with governments to prevent statelessness from occurring, to resolve those

cases that do occur and to protect the rights of stateless persons.



How does a State accede to the 1954 and 1961 Statelessness Conventions?

States may accede to the 1954 and 1961 Conventions at any time by depositing an instrument of accession signed by the Foreign Minister or Head of State or Government with the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

What would becoming a signatory really mean?

Accession to the 1954 convention means that States adopt measures to protect stateless people and in particular establish procedures for the determination of stateless persons amongst migrants.

Accession to the 1961 Convention signifies a commitment to ensure measures are put in place to avoid statelessness:

- *among children*
- *upon change of civil status*
- *due to loss or renunciation of nationality*
- *due to deprivation of nationality*
- *in the context of State succession*

UNHCR assists States to fulfil these goals when assistance is necessary.

What can civil society do?

Change happens when enough people care.

In this increasingly connected world, a lot can be accomplished by informing others. The more we talk about the cause and consequences of statelessness, the more likely it is that durable solutions will be implemented. Civil society's role include, among others, disseminating information and providing legal aid to populations of concern.

Where can I learn more on UNHCR's work in West Africa?

The purpose of this brochure is to provide an overview of the main causes and consequences of statelessness in West Africa. For more information on statelessness, visit UNHCR's statelessness website at www.unhcr.org/statelessness or Refworld www.refworld.org/statelessness for online legal and policy documents on statelessness.

For information specific to West Africa, the blog kora.unhcr.org gives updates on major stories and developments in the region. Additionally if you type in @StatelessWA into Twitter this will give you the most recent news stories on statelessness. If you want to contribute your point of view, feel free to email us at statelessnessinfo@unhcr.org.

What is the UNHCR doing to combat Statelessness in West Africa?

Identification: Gathering information and data on statelessness in order to assess the scale of the problem and the profile of the population affected

Prevention: Addressing the causes of statelessness by working with States to adopt nationality laws with safeguards and promoting accession to the 1961 Convention

Reduction: Supporting legislative and procedural changes that better allow stateless people to acquire a nationality and help individuals take advantage of these changes

Protection: Intervening to help stateless people to enjoy their rights and promote accession to the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons

Key documents on Statelessness

1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons

1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness

2006 UNHCR Executive Committee Conclusion on Identification, Prevention and Reduction of Statelessness and Protection of Stateless Persons

2013 African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights Resolution on Right to a Nationality

2013 Banjul Appeal

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