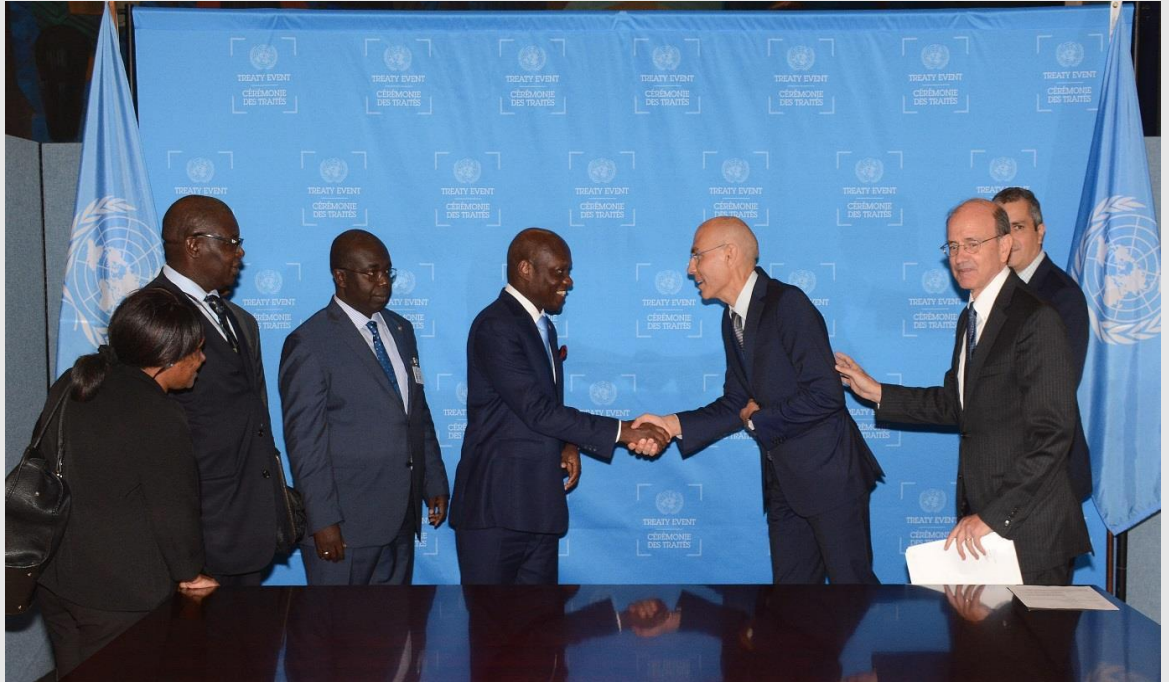


## A REGION ON THE MOVE TO END STATELESSNESS



H.E. Mr. José Mário Vaz, President of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau depositing the Instruments of Accession to the Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness in the presence of Mr. Volker Turk, Assistant High Commissioner for Protection, UNHCR, and Mr. Stephen Mathias, Assistant Secretary-General for Legal Affairs, UN. ©Win Khine

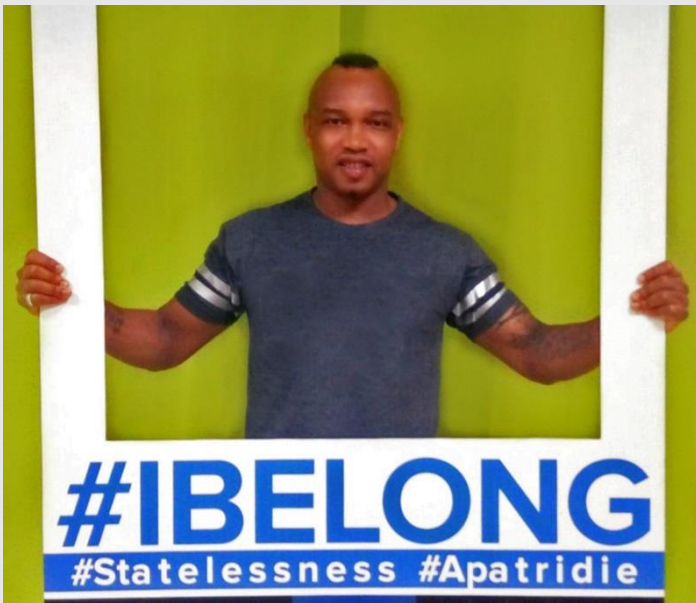
### Guinea Bissau joins the Statelessness Conventions

In September, **Guinea Bissau** officially acceded to both Statelessness Conventions – the 1954 Convention Related to the Status of Stateless Persons and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness. Out of the 15 ECOWAS Member States, 12 are now State parties to the 1954 Convention and 11 are parties to the 1961 Convention.

Such firm commitment suggests all West African States could become part to the Statelessness Conventions in the near future. There are only a few countries that have not yet acceded to both Conventions - namely Togo, Ghana, Cape Vert and Burkina Faso. However, Togo and Ghana are on the move to accession and Burkina Faso is already party to the 1954 Convention.

On the global level, Guinea Bissau became the 10<sup>th</sup> State to have acceded to one or both of the Statelessness Conventions since the launch of UNHCR's '#IBelong Campaign to End Statelessness by 2024' two years ago. Out of these 10 countries, 3 are in West Africa – Guinea Bissau, Sierra Leone and Mali. The advocacy efforts from the #IBelong campaign are strengthened by regional commitments, such as the Abidjan Declaration on the Eradication of Statelessness, in which all West African States took part.

## SPREADING THE #IBELONG MESSAGE



El Hadji Diouf, Senegal ©UNHCR/F.Bissacot



Bideew Bou Bess, Senegal ©UNHCR/Stephane Diane

### Check out our supporters

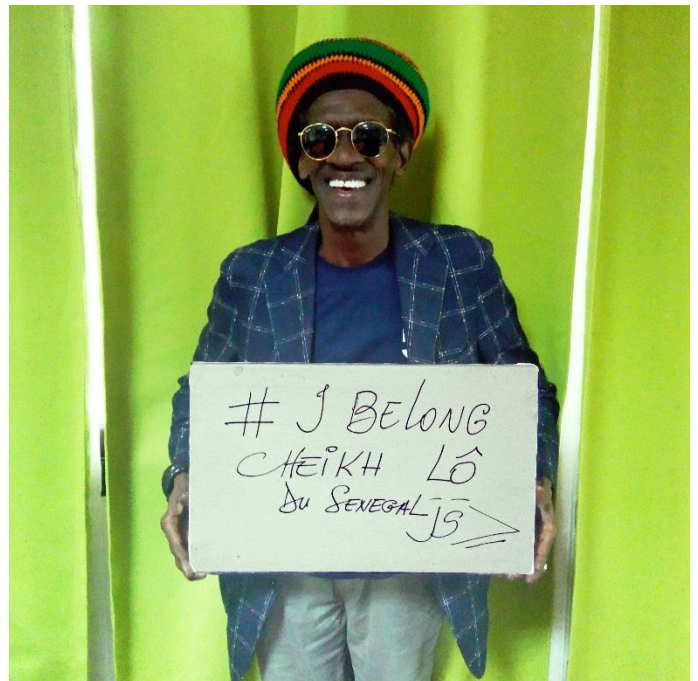
We are very happy to see the growing attention given to the issue of statelessness in the region. UNHCR is especially delighted with the special visitors we have welcomed these past weeks.

For the first time, internationally-known professional footballer **El Hadji Diouf** visited UNHCR to express his support for the #IBelong campaign. Mr. Diouf showed marked interest in the subject and in discussing ways to increase the visibility of the statelessness issue. Commenting on his own experience, he said: “I would not have had the opportunities I had as a football player if I didn’t have a nationality”.

During the same period, musicians from the group **Bideew Bou Bess** (pictured above right) also visited the office to discuss the issue and how it would be addressed in future musical projects of theirs, the previews of which sounded fantastic!

Last but not least; during his visit, UNHCR’s High-Level Supporter **Cheikh Lo** shared his tremendous energy and commitment towards fighting statelessness.

Thanks for your support! You are making the difference!



Cheikh Lo, Senegal ©UNHCR/ Stephane Diene



## Statelessness at the heart of a rap concert



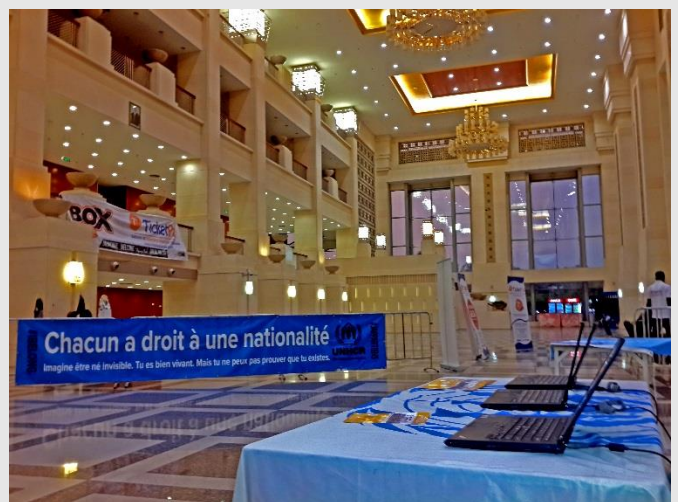
Entrance hall *Grand Théâtre* Dakar, Senegal ©UNHCR/F.Bissacot



Main stage *Grand Théâtre* Dakar, Senegal ©UNHCR/F.Bissacot



Friends supporting #IBelong, Senegal ©UNHCR/Stephane Diene



Entrance hall *Grand Théâtre*, Senegal ©UNHCR/Bissacot

UNHCR's #IBelong campaign was brought to the fore at the Open Doors concert in Dakar, Senegal, which brings numerous hip-hop artists together each year. Performers raised the issue of statelessness and invited the audience to sign the #IBelong letter.

Over 1,000 Senegalese youths attended the concert, which took place on 29 July at the *Grand Théâtre de Dakar*. Artists and guests alike took part in photo shoots and received information and promotional materials on statelessness and on the efforts that are underway to eradicate it.

## Statelessness Caravan: a great success

In August, the caravan on awareness raising and advocacy for the eradication of statelessness completed its travelling in the 13<sup>th</sup> region of **Burkina Faso** – Central Plateau. Awareness raising meetings with religious and traditional leaders as well as with the general public were conducted in the city of Ziniaré and nearby villages.

Three participatory theatre performances were carried out by the “Atelier Théâtre du Burkina” group, reaching out to some 1,000 people, 60 per cent of whom were women.

A professional facilitator engaged with the audience using humor as a tool to capture attention. At the end of each performance, an assessment exercise determined the knowledge acquired by the participants.

Chief among the issues identified through the caravan’s various activities were those of barriers to birth registration and solutions for overcoming them.



A participant answering questions from the facilitators ©UNHCR

## Teenagers talking about it

In **Senegal**, as part of Summer PENCC - a competition of short films by children from 14 to 17 years of age broadcasted on national television - a team of three young directors chose to speak about statelessness.

Participants said that statelessness is a social phenomenon that concerns them. After showing their emotional 5 minute video, the teenagers celebrated qualification to the final.



Teenage team celebrating qualification, Senegal ©Boul Ngom

## ABIDJAN COMMITMENTS TRANSLATED INTO ACTION

### Documentary proof of nationality – art. 7

- The regional conference on the voluntary repatriation of Ivorian refugees, held in **Côte d’Ivoire** in July, tackled the issue of documentation problems among returnees by facilitating late birth registration procedures, with a view to preventing this population from further exposure to the risk of statelessness. Findings indicated that 36 per cent of the returnee population had registered their births, and that 37 per cent had lost their identification documents.



- **Burkina Faso's** Ministry of Justice estimates the number of undocumented nationals of Burkina Faso in Côte d'Ivoire to be approximately 3.5 million. In order to reduce the risk of statelessness, the Government has initiated a series of meetings with UNHCR with a view to planning missions to Côte d'Ivoire and issuing documentation to those persons who are eligible for the Burkina Faso nationality.

## Reducing statelessness – art. 18, 19, 20

- With the support of UNHCR, the Government of Liberia has embarked on a series of international missions to re-assess the cases of some 1,000 undocumented former refugees who claim to be of Liberian nationality but who were denied documentation when last screened, leaving these refugees in a state of limbo. The first mission took place in the Gambia, where 58 individuals now recognized as Liberians will have documents issued in their names. In the coming months, similar missions are planned for Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Mali, Nigeria, Senegal and Sierra Leone.



Applicant filling out papers, Gambia ©UNHCR/E.Umutesi



Family going through the screening, Gambia ©UNHCR/E.Umutesi

In **Cote d'Ivoire**, by the end of August 2016, a total of 10,219 nationality certificates had been issued under the Nationality by Declaration programme - a simplified nationality acquisition mechanism - including to some formerly stateless historic migrants. In addition, between January and June 2016, UNHCR's partners in Côte d'Ivoire facilitated late birth registration for 1,292 people, in order to prevent statelessness among at-risk communities. This number includes 15 foundlings in Aboisso, a city in south-western of Côte d'Ivoire.



Files of applicants claiming nationality under the declaration programme ©Ministry of Justice Cote d'Ivoire

## Developing national action plans – art. 24

- In **Côte d’Ivoire**, the government completed its National Action Plan to eradicate statelessness during a workshop held in the town of Grand Bassam in September, which was attended by 40 governments as well as diplomatic, civil society, and UN participants. The Plan, which will be submitted to the relevant Ministries for adoption, lays out concrete steps to end the major situations of statelessness in the country and prevent new cases from arising.
- In **Niger**, UNHCR convened a follow-up meeting with the Working Group on Statelessness in which government authorities and members of academia took part. A draft National Action Plan was shared and further discussions have been scheduled to take place before a final document is endorsed by all parties.
- The government of **Sierra Leone** – along with UNHCR and the National Commission for Social Action – undertook a fact finding mission to the country’s border areas in order to collect preparatory information in view of drafting the National Action Plan. The drafting workshop is expected to take place in October.



Interview with family in Yenga, Sierra Leone ©UNHCR



Road to the border between Liberia and Sierra Leone ©UNHCR/F.Bissacot

## Acceding to the Statelessness Conventions – art. 4, 14

In addition to the accession of **Guinea Bissau** to the Statelessness Conventions (mentioned on page 1), positive developments took place in **Burkina Faso**, where after the Council of Ministers approved a bill authorizing the signature of the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness in April, advocacy efforts continued at the highest level. Indeed, UNHCR discussed the issue directly with Burkina Faso’s President Roch Marc Christian Kabore and Prime Minister Paul Kaba Thieba in different occasions in August.



UNHCR Representative and President of Burkina Faso © UNHCR/P.Absalon



## Revising nationality laws – art. 2, 3

- In **Liberia**, the revision of the nationality law is ongoing. So far, four review meetings have been carried out and UNHCR has advocated for the amendment of some key legal provisions which are discriminatory against Liberian women. Stakeholders are generally favorable to the removal of these discriminatory provisions which have until now prevented women from passing their nationality to their children born abroad.

## Improve information and data collection – art. 1, 15

- Statelessness-mapping activities are ongoing in **Benin, the Gambia, Ghana, Mali and Nigeria**.

## Sensitization campaign – art. 10

UNHCR's office in Niger has drafted documents aimed at the general public, which outline rules and procedures relating to nationality and birth registration. These consist of three guide books, the first of which contains information for stateless persons and persons at risk of statelessness, the second, information on birth registration and the third, information on the rules of nationality attribution in Niger.



Guidebooks produced by UNHCR Niger @UNHCR

## UPCOMING

- **Nigeria** - Workshop for ECOWAS Parliamentarians - 5 October;
- **Nigeria, Sierra Leone, and Togo** - National Action Plan to End Statelessness - October & November;
- **Ghana**, a #IBelong Sign up event is in partnership with Universities. Early November.
- Training of Law professors on stateless and nationality, in cooperation with the University of **Ghana** - Early December.
- **Regional** - Countries across the region will be celebrating the 2<sup>nd</sup> Anniversary of #IBelong - the Global Campaign to End Statelessness - Early November.

## STATELESSNESS IN THE NEWS

- Nigeria's horrible record of childbirth registration ( [Nigeria- English](#) )
- Les enfants fantômes du Sénégal ( [Sénégal- French](#) )
- Mobile Birth Registration Gains Momentum in Ganta ( [Liberia- English](#) )
- Parliament approves compulsory registration of citizen and no-citizen ( [Sierra Leone- English](#) )
- Mamadou Diédhou l'ange gardien des enfants fantômes ( [Sénégal- French](#) )

- Birth certificate: a vital document many Liberians have never heard of ( [Liberia-English](#) )
- Nigeria a Major Factor In Reducing Statelessness in West Africa ( [Nigeria- English](#) )
- The West-African nation of Guinea Bissau acceded to both Statelessness Conventions ( [Guinea Bissau- English](#) )

## LOOKING FOR MORE?

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If you want more information, we have the following options for you:

- UNHCR's Global [website](#) on Statelessness;
- UNHCR's #IBelong Global Campaign to End Statelessness – [Support it here](#);
- Documents from the [Ministerial Conference](#) on Statelessness in the ECOWAS region in 2015;
- [Webpage](#) where we post our Newsletter in 3 different languages;
- [KORA](#) - UNHCR's blog dedicated to Refugees, Internally Displaced Persons, and Stateless people in West and Central Africa;
- Look for us on Social Media, we are on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) (@StatelessWA) and [Youtube](#) ;
- You can also reach us by e-mail at [sendawas@unhcr.org](mailto:sendawas@unhcr.org).



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