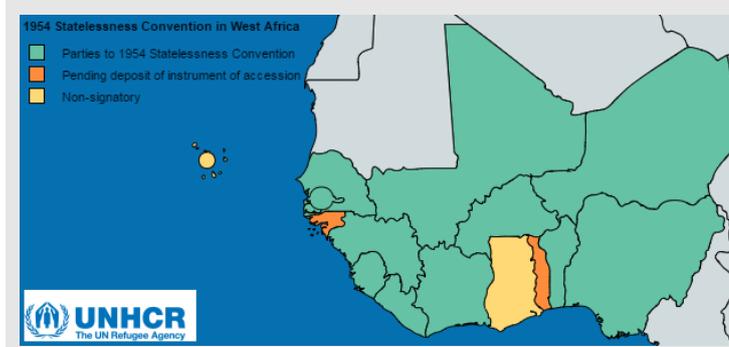


STATELESSNESS IN WEST AFRICA

NEWSLETTER #9

April – June 2016

A REGION ON THE MOVE TO END STATELESSNESS



Of the 15 countries in West Africa, 11 have acceded to the 1954 Convention while accession is pending for 2 others

Sierra Leone and Mali join the Statelessness Conventions

The Republic of **Sierra Leone** and Republic of **Mali** have 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.

This a positive sign that the global #IBelong Campaign to End Statelessness by 2024 is gaining traction in the region. Out of the 15 countries in West Africa, 11 are now members of the 1954 Convention and 10 have joined the 1961 Convention. Additionally, Guinea Bissau and Togo have paved the way to joining the Conventions. Their official accession to the Conventions is pending formal deposit of the instruments of accession with the Conventions' depository.

A growing number of countries worldwide have acceded to the Stateless Conventions since the #IBelong campaign was launched in November 2014. Now, with Sierra Leone and Mali on board, the 1954 Convention will have 88 State parties while the 1961 Convention will have 67 State parties.



The Republic of Mali has become the most recent country in West Africa to accede to the Statelessness Conventions

Building Momentum: ECOWAS & UNHCR follow-up on the Abidjan Declaration



Workshop ECOWAS and UNHCR ©UNHCR/Lena Haap

ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States) and UNHCR met in Dakar this April to follow-up on the implementation of the Abidjan Declaration on the Eradication of Statelessness. The event was attended by key ECOWAS Directorates such as Political Affairs, Social and Humanitarian Affairs, Free Movement and Legal Affairs, as well as representatives of the Court of Justice and the Parliament. The meeting attracted a host of stakeholders including representatives from the Senegalese Government and civil society groups WASCOF and OSIWA.

The meeting resulted in a draft regional action plan that lays out the concrete steps that States and ECOWAS need to take to fulfil the spirit of the Abidjan Declaration. The draft action plan covers the broad spectrum of activities needed in order to end statelessness in West Africa while taking into account the different roles and responsibilities of ECOWAS, Member States, UNHCR and other important stakeholders. The next step is to submit the regional action plan for approval by ECOWAS Member States. Momentum is building for the transformation of Abidjan Declaration commitments into a binding treaty between ECOWAS member States.

STATELESSNESS IN THE AIR



Cheikh Lo © Bernard Benant

“Everyone has a right to a nationality. Statelessness must be fought against in West Africa”

Cheikh Lo, Senegalese musician, during performance at Saint Louis Jazz Festival in Senegal

Musicians in Senegal support the #IBelong campaign

Other musicians in **Senegal** have joined Cheikh Lo in supporting the campaign to end statelessness. Cheikh Lo, a renowned Senegalese musician who was recently nominated [UNHCR's High Profile Supporter](#), has become increasingly engaged with raising awareness about statelessness.

During an event celebrating his 40-year musical career in May and later on during a performance at the world famous Jazz Festival in St Louis, Cheikh Lo made statements supporting the campaign to end statelessness. In addition, he invited fellow musicians to support the #IBelong campaign, and artists like Marema, Idrissa Diop, Omar Pene, Ismael Lo, Carlou D and Saintrick eagerly responded to this call. UNHCR set up a sensitization activity with fans during the performance, through which some 300 signatures were collected for the #IBelong campaign.



Musicians supporting IBelong campaign ©David Lopy

Spreading the Seeds of Awareness in Burkina Faso

In April 2016, UNHCR launched a mass awareness-raising campaign on statelessness in **Burkina Faso**. The "statelessness caravan" travelled throughout the country to sensitize the local population and authorities about the causes and consequences of the phenomenon.

The caravan passed throughout the country sensitizing the general public through entertaining open-air activities and participatory theatre performances. The caravan was complemented by a radio talk show that UNHCR organised in 8 regions of Burkina Faso and in the capital city of Ouagadougou. The show aimed to introduce the public to the risks of statelessness. In addition, UNHCR met with administrative authorities, religious and local leaders in order to advocate for birth registration procedures and the right to nationality. Finally, the sensitization efforts included two themed conferences on "Statelessness and Nationality Crisis" for students from the cities of Bobo-Dioulasso in the South-West region and Koudougou in Central Burkina Faso.



Role-playing in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso ©UNHCR/P. Absalon



Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso ©UNHCR/P.Absalon



Role-playing in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso ©UNHCR/P.Absalon



Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso ©UNHCR/P.Absalon

Making Statelessness Known in the Suburbs



Students in Yeumbeul Nord, Dakar, watching a sketch © Lena Haap

In April, UNHCR in collaboration with Doxandem, a youth Senegalese association, organized a month-long traveling exhibition on statelessness in the suburbs of Dakar, Senegal.

Dancers and artists performed themed performances dealing with statelessness, while students role-played with the audience to raise awareness about statelessness and its consequences.



Dance performance in Yeumbeul Nord, Dakar ©Lena Haap

Widespread training efforts

In **Côte d'Ivoire**, UNHCR and partners trained a total of 623 people on statelessness from April to June. This number includes lawyers, actors, radio producers, mobile cinema MCs, police officers, soldiers, community and religious leaders, civil registry officials, teachers, school principals, bloggers, NGO staff, community health agents, midwives, nurses and students.



Sensitization activity in Abobo, Côte d'Ivoire ©UNHCR



Workshop on Statelessness, Grabo, Côte d'Ivoire ©UNHCR

ABIDJAN COMMITMENTS TRANSLATED INTO ACTION

Developing national action plans – art. 24

- In **Guinea**, the National Plan to end statelessness is completed and awaits endorsement by the Ministry of Justice
- In **Togo**, the government appointed representatives to make the inter-ministerial committee responsible for drafting a National Plan for Statelessness. Representatives from the Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Security and Civil Protection and Ministry for Social Action and Women Empowerment will

participate in the task force. Other members expected to join the committee are civil society organizations, National Human Rights Commission and the University of Lomé. Once the committee is established, the drafting of the action plan will start.

- In **Mali**, a draft of the national action plan was shared with the technical counsellor of the Ministry of Justice for his inputs.
- In **Burkina Faso**, a draft plan of action was elaborated during a workshop jointly organized by the Ministry of Justice and UNHCR. Representatives from several government bodies - such as the Ministry of Economy and Ministry for Women - as well as NGOs and other UN agencies attended to the event. Besides the draft of the action plan, the activity included training on statelessness and its causes and consequences in the country.

Improve information and data collection – art. 1, 15

- Studies mapping the landscape of statelessness are ongoing in **Benin, Gambia, Ghana and Mali**.

Acceding to the Statelessness Conventions – art. 4, 14

Besides the accessions to the Stateless Conventions by **Sierra Leone** and **Mali** mentioned above, positive developments took place in **Burkina Faso**. In April, the Council of Ministers approved a bill authorizing signature of the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness. UNHCR continued advocacy efforts with the National Assembly and Ministry of Foreign Affairs for accession to the 1961 Convention.

DECLARATION D'ABIDJAN

DES ETATS MEMBRES
DE LA CEDEAO SUR L'ERADICATION DE

L'APATRIDIE

We invite the member States who have not yet done so to accede as soon as possible to the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness.



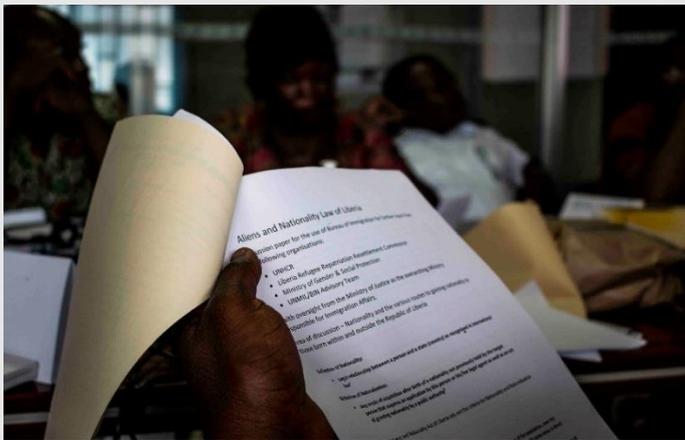
Reducing statelessness – art. 18

- In **Côte d'Ivoire**, the government (Ministry of Justice and SAARA) and civil society (Association des Femmes Juristes) implemented a referral mechanism to facilitate legal aid to those claiming nationality under the declaration law - a simplified nationality acquisition mechanism - and those whose cases have been adjourned or rejected. As of June 1st, 8,585 Ivorian nationality certificates had been issued to claimants under the declaration programme.
- In **Côte d'Ivoire**, officials from the **Burkina Faso** consulate, along with Côte d'Ivoire government officials and UNHCR, undertook a nationality verification exercise in a village near Abidjan where the majority of population is composed of Burkinabe migrants. With the assistance of the local school principal, authorities were able to identify children without birth registration as well as undocumented parents. In order to make it possible for these children to access late birth registration procedures, Burkinabe authorities agreed to issue provisional documents confirming the parents' identity.

- At the invitation of **Sierra Leone**, a high-level United Nations inter-agency mission - including UNHCR - undertook an assessment of civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) in Sierra Leone intended to help the government reform its CRVS system including birth registration.

Revising nationality laws – art. 2, 3

- In **Liberia**, UNHCR and the International Organization for Migration assisted the government in revising the country’s Alien and Nationality Law. As part of these efforts, two review workshops took place in June to discuss amendments to the law.



Stakeholders workshop, Monrovia, Liberia ©UNHCR/D.Diaz



Stakeholders workshop, Monrovia, Liberia ©UNHCR/D.Diaz

REACHING OUT: NEW SOCIAL MEDIA CHANNELS



You can now find us on **Facebook**

www.facebook.com/UNHCRWASateless

And on **Youtube**

[UNHCR West Africa Statelessness](https://www.youtube.com/UNHCRWASateless)

- To better engage with the general public, stakeholders, and stateless people, UNHCR recently created two new social media platforms. The Facebook page for the region (www.facebook.com/UNHCRWASateless) and YouTube channel (UNHCR West Africa Statelessness) are the place to engage with our office and discover new information and multimedia about statelessness in the West Africa region. “Like” and Follow us!
- Remember, you can also follow us on twitter **@StatelessWA**

STATELESSNESS FILMS

- “Stateless Children” – the film on stateless children in Senegal is now available in [English](#) and [Portuguese](#).
- "[Stateless Caravan](#)" – a mass awareness-raising campaign on statelessness in Burkina Faso.

UPCOMING

- July: A stakeholder meeting on statelessness in Cote D'Ivoire will finalize an action plan to end statelessness
- September: A video focused on the plight of stateless women, a particularly at-risk subset of stateless people will be released. The video, which will highlight the experience of Senegalese and Liberian women will help deepen understanding and spread awareness of the specific risk stateless women face in the region. Keep an eye out for this impactful video which will be released later this year.

STATELESSNESS IN THE NEWS

- They thought they were going to religion school. They ended up slaves ([Senegal - English](#))
- African churches commit to working for the elimination of statelessness ([English](#))
- Internal Affairs Minister assures Politicians that Civil Registration exercise will be transparent ([Sierra Leone – English](#))
- 1 million ID cards ready, only 300,000 collected ([Nigeria – English](#))
- 34.000 élèves sans extraits de naissance : Une opération nationale de régularisation lancée ([Senegal - French](#))
- UNHCR hails accessions to statelessness conventions in West Africa ([English](#)):
- Concert à la Place Faidherbe : Cheikh Lo, un conquérant à Ndar ([Senegal - French](#))
- L'association des blogueurs de Guinée annonce la fin de la campagne #DROITALIDENTITE ([Guine – French](#))
- L'Apatridie au Burkina Faso: Le HCR interpelle les autorités burkinabè ([Burkina Faso – French](#))
- Bobo-Dioulasso : Le HCR se préoccupe de l'apatridie et les crises de nationalités ([Burkina Faso – French](#))
- Lutte contre l'Apatridie : l'UNHCR veut éradiquer l'apatridie au Burkina Faso ([Burkina Faso – French](#))
- 1 286 personnes dotées d'extraits de naissance à Nabadji Civol ([Senegal – French](#))
- Plus De 15.000 Enfants Sans Papiers à Sédhiou ([Senegal – French](#))
- Au royaume des sans-papiers ([Senegal – Guinea Bissau – French](#))
- Who Belongs? Statelessness and Nationality in West Africa ([English](#))

CORRIGENDUM

In the last Newsletter we stated that the NGO Network in **Côte d'Ivoire** was composed of 4 NGOs. Kindly note that the correct number is 20 organizations.



www.unhcr.org/statelessness
unhcr.org/ecowas2015/
issuu.com/unhcrinwestafrica



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