



CITIZENSHIP HAS BECOME
A DARK CLOUD OVER OUR FAMILY.”

Jubeda has lived her entire life in Assam India, with her husband, children and grandchildren. In 2017 she was stripped of her Indian citizenship and detained for 3 years. She was released on bail in 2020, into the new COVID-19 landscape. Having drawn on the family's meagre resources to secure her release, she now faced a new, desperate reality: her irregular work had dried up and her husband was also unable to find work, due to the lockdown and health concerns. Jubeda does not have a ration card and doesn't benefit from any state relief. As a released detainee, she is required to register at the police station every week. Travelling by foot and in poor health herself, this 26km journey takes her 5 hours to complete. Recently, floods in Assam displaced her from her home.

TOGETHER WE CAN: A CONSORTIUM TO PROTECT THE STATELESS

Jubeda, a victim of structural discrimination, has been deprived citizenship of the only country she knows. The COVID-19 pandemic has added another layer of rights' deprivation, further exacerbated by the intransigence of the state, and her exclusion from state relief. Jubeda is one of millions of stateless people around the world, whose situation has significantly deteriorated due to COVID-19. Through the COVID-19 Emergency Stateless Fund (CESF), our Consortium of partners works on behalf of those like Jubeda, to challenge the structural discrimination they endure, while fighting for their rights and inclusion during the pandemic.

EQUAL ACCESS TO VACCINATIONS: A HUMAN RIGHTS & PUBLIC HEALTH IMPERATIVE

With the world's attention on the vaccine rollout, it is essential that the stateless are not left out or disadvantaged. The right to health-care is a basic human right. Yet in practice, healthcare systems are often based on nationality, denying the stateless equal access and potentially lifesaving support in the context of a global pandemic.

We urgently need a concerted effort to ensure universal and equal access to healthcare.

FIVE THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT STATELESSNESS AND COVID-19

- 1 Stateless persons are mostly **excluded** from COVID-19 responses, relief, healthcare and vaccinations.
- 2 Stateless persons are being **denied their rights**, arbitrarily detained & subject to xenophobia & hate speech at higher rates in the context of COVID-19.
- 3 COVID-19 is bringing to light the (invisible) **structural discrimination** that stateless persons have always endured.
- 4 COVID-19 is creating **new risks of statelessness** as registration and other key activities are stalled.
- 5 COVID-19 presents a **unique opportunity** to raise visibility, address the structural causes of statelessness, and secure lasting change.

THE CESF AT A GLANCE

A targeted and time-bound initiative to build a consortium of NGOs and citizenship rights activists at the frontline of the COVID-19 crisis. Through the **COVID-19 Emergency Statelessness Fund (CESF)**, we jointly develop strategic and bespoke projects which implement research-based action advocacy, to realise structural solutions and challenge the exclusion of stateless persons, while also addressing emergency needs. The CESF is overseen by an Expert Committee of citizenship rights activists, humanitarian and human rights actors and donors.

Established in June 2020, the CESF currently supports projects in **13 countries**, alongside the global advocacy efforts of the Consortium. **With further funding, we will be able to provide more in-depth, potentially lifesaving, support** to more stateless communities around the world.



The CESF Consortium is an urgent and much needed response to the exclusion and structural discrimination faced by stateless people around the world that has been exacerbated by COVID-19. The Consortium's innovative design allows for frontline citizenship rights activists from around the world to work collaboratively. DLA Piper as a global law firm is proud to be providing pro bono support to the Consortium. We are honoured to take part in this incredible exchange of ideas and expertise, a critical initiative in the global push for citizenship equality.

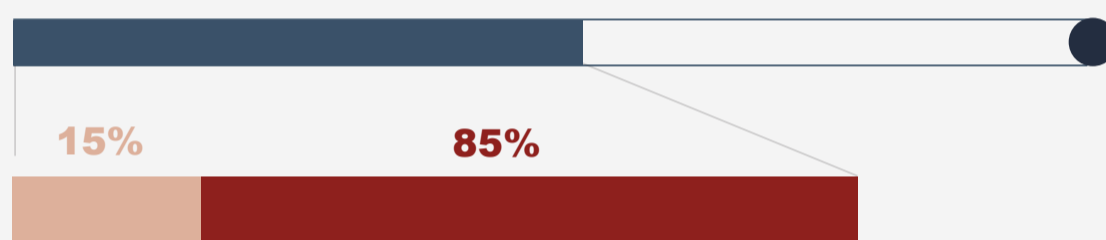
Nesha Balasubramanian,
Associate, Pro Bono Manager,
DLA Piper

€ 387,000

funds raised

€ 750,000

funding target



€ 59,000

ISI's role
(supporting partners, capacity
development & advocacy)

€ 328,000

Partners
(lead-implementers
of country projects)

FIVE REASONS TO SUPPORT THE CESF

- 1 **A Blindspot:** Statelessness is a global challenge that cuts across many issues. But it is poorly understood and often falls between the cracks of donor priorities. Institutional blind-spots towards the stateless mean they are often the least visible, most vulnerable and furthest left behind, especially during a global pandemic.
- 2 **Localisation:** Inspired by the maxim 'nothing for us without us', the CESF is shaped and driven by community groups and activists, who design and implement bespoke action to meet the needs of their communities.
- 3 **Innovation:** The innovative design of the CESF allows for the implementation of strategic projects that address both structural issues and emergency needs; horizontal learning and collaboration through the Consortium; and global advocacy facilitated by ISI.
- 4 **Impact:** Through the CESF, we recognise both the challenge and opportunity presented by COVID-19. CESF projects are designed to maximise impact, and over its short history, our partners have delivered ground-breaking results.
- 5 **Value:** All projects are planned to maximise impact. 80% of funds go to the field. The rest is invested in enhancing partners' capacities, strengthening the Consortium through cross-learning and engaging in joined-up global advocacy.

When the pandemic hit and ISI began to organize their COVID-19 response, we felt it was critical to support. ISI's fund combines addressing both emergency needs and structural problems. For humanitarian funders who might focus more narrowly on relief, it's critical to also understand the structural issues that need to be addressed."

CESF Donor, Martin Dunn,
Dunn Family Foundation

CESF COUNTRY PROJECTS

STRATEGIES FOR ENGAGEMENT

Community outreach: awareness raising through interviews, focus groups, podcasts, radio programmes, documentaries etc.
Paralegal support to navigate access to documentation and COVID-19 relief measures.
Research & mapping stateless communities, human rights abuses, and the impact of COVID-19.
Advocacy for inclusion of stateless persons in COVID-19 relief efforts, and other services.
Advocacy for law and policy change to address structural discrimination and exclusion.
Emergency humanitarian support as an interim relief measure.

THEMATIC & GROUP COVERAGE

- **Right to nationality, legal identity and documentation**
- **Right to healthcare**
- **Livelihoods and other socio-economic rights**
- **Minority rights, racism and related discrimination**
- **Gender discrimination**
- **Xenophobia and hate speech**
- **Freedom of movement, liberty and other civil & political right**

NORTH MACEDONIA



A help desk for excluded Roma during the pandemic.

Research & Mapping; Community outreach

MONTENEGRO



Storytelling and awareness raising for the Roma community through a documentary.

Research & Mapping; Advocacy for inclusion of stateless persons in COVID-19 relief efforts, and other services

“Mapping people with unregulated documentation in Montenegro opens the door to a real solution to the problem. Previously, we relied on unreliable and fabricated official data. This mapping will provide credible evidence to resolve documentation issues of the Roma and Egyptian community, which prevents them living dignified lives.”

CENTRAL ASIA (KAZAKHSTAN, KYRGYZSTAN, TAJIKISTAN, UZBEKISTAN)



Understanding the exclusion of stateless minorities in order to provide evidence for reform.

Research and Mapping; Advocacy for inclusion of stateless persons in COVID-19 relief efforts, and other services

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC



Empowerment and demonstration of capacities of the stateless through supporting stateless entrepreneurs.

Advocacy for law and policy change; Paralegal support

KENYA



Providing legal and psychosocial support to minority communities who risk further exclusion through a digital ID scheme.

Paralegal support; Community outreach

INDIA



Creating a [civil society nationality rights network](#) in the context of mass nationality deprivation and disenfranchisement in Assam.

Paralegal support; Advocacy for law and policy change
Publications: [Marginalised and Impoverished in Assam](#)

BANGLADESH



Setting up a rights advocate system to address community exclusion.

Community outreach; Advocacy for law and policy

BANGLADESH/MYANMAR/INDIA/MALAYSIA



Raising awareness on COVID-19 amongst Rohingya refugees.

Community outreach
Publications: [COVID-19 Protection monitoring and advocacy Rohingya refugees in India](#)

NEPAL



Raising awareness on citizenship rights and supporting mental health of stateless communities through a dedicated podcast.

Community outreach; Research & Mapping

MALAYSIA



Advocating for evidence-based policy reform to end discrimination against Malaysian transnational families.

Advocacy for law and policy change; community outreach

CASE STUDY:

Gaithiri was trying to return to Malaysia with her family to spend time with her unwell father. Her spouse and child were denied entry to the country during the pandemic. We connected her to a journalist and her story was **published**. Soon after, her family was given approval to return to Malaysia. Gaithiri sent us a message, “I just wanted to share that I just got an email from immigration. My appeal for my spouse and daughter is approved! I can’t thank you enough. The community built has been an incredible support, especially during these unprecedented times”, she added. “For mothers like me all we want is to be reunited with loved ones, but the system seems stacked against us”.

Malaysia’s nationality law is gender discriminatory, impacting nationality rights and free movement of families with one Malaysian and one foreign parent. COVID-19 has exacerbated the situation. Foreign spouses and children who previously periodically left Malaysia to renew visas, now cannot return. This project gathers evidence on bureaucratic inconsistencies and challenges faced by such families to create awareness and push for evidence-based policy change.

1. The **persistent CAMPAIGN** to bring spouses home **succeeded** and the government allowed spouses to return. Since June 2020, hundreds of families have been reunited.

2. Spouses and non-citizen children of Malaysians are **able to submit and re-new their visas** without having to do the infamous visa runs during the pandemic.

21,000 spouses supported through online platform.

3,500 spouses provided bespoke advice (entry, quarantine, COVID-19 testing, visa application and renewal guidance).

3. Immigration authorities have made the **immigration system MORE EFFICIENT** through digitalisation. Malaysians, their spouses and children can now apply via an online portal to enter and exit the country.

4. Quarantine **fees have been waived** for spouses entering Sarawak, easing the financial burden on these transnational families.

300 spouses connected through peer support whatsapp groups.

100 Malaysian mothers affected by gender discriminatory laws connected in peer support group.

