

The background is a purple sky with white, fluffy clouds. On the left, there is a black street lamp with two yellow lanterns. In the center, a large black chalkboard with an orange border contains the title text. Below the chalkboard, a woman with long black hair and a red top is looking through a magnifying glass. To her left, a boy with blonde hair is riding a black bicycle. To her right, another boy is standing and holding a pink chalk. The overall style is a soft, painterly illustration.

Teaching about statelessness

with **Neha**

**A guide
to exploring
borders, belonging,
citizenship and
rights with children**

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citizenship and rights with children

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GETTING STARTED

Who is Neha and what is this teaching guide about?

This teaching guide was created to accompany the carefully crafted children’s story *The Girl Who Lost Her Country*, which tells the story of Neha, a girl without a nationality¹, who travels the world to learn about the lives of different children and how they are impacted by statelessness. Neha is now a young woman with Nepalese citizenship, but she previously was a girl without a country. As a child, Neha did not have Nepalese citizenship since her mother, under Nepalese law, was not able to pass on her Nepalese citizenship to her daughter. *The Girl Who Lost Her Country* is inspired by Neha’s real story and the story of other children who are stateless. With a mix of multi-disciplinary, interactive, enjoyable, memorable, and creative activities, this teaching guide is designed to teach children about Borders & Belonging (Theme 1) and about Citizenship & Rights (Theme 2), by exploring the causes and impact of statelessness, looking at real-life examples from around the world.

Why teach about statelessness?

When having a nationality is taken for granted, it is difficult to picture what its absence looks like. But in a globalised world, identity and belonging can be complex. Millions of people around the world today are denied a nationality: they are stateless. As a result, they may have difficulty accessing basic rights such as education, healthcare, employment and freedom of movement. By teaching about statelessness, we are raising awareness for the issue, giving learners the opportunity to understand the concept and take action to support those who are stateless by applying what they learn beyond the classroom. We also urge learners to explore their own identity, contribute responsibly to their community and think critically about the world and their place in it. Using global contexts, learners become internationally minded and aware of our interconnectedness. We also hope to encourage and promote empathy and understanding for all people, regardless of their nationality status or formal belonging. Let's **learn** about statelessness so we can **act** together to help stateless people! We are grateful that you are joining us and working with us to achieve these goals.

Learning goals

The overall goal of this guide is to strengthen learners’ understanding of the world around them, their identity and relationships with others, the rights they hold and what can be done to claim them. This is done by exploring the concepts of borders, identity, belonging, citizenship, and statelessness.

After completing the activities in this guide, learners will also:

1. Gain knowledge and be in a position to discuss the issue of statelessness and describe its causes and impact in human rights terms.
2. Understand the meaning and importance of the right of every child to a nationality and be able to evaluate their own position in the world and in their community.
3. Gain knowledge about actions against statelessness being taken today and be able to join in advocating for the right to nationality for everyone.



¹ The terms nationality and citizenship are used interchangeably. See also: Appendix I: Glossary of Key Terms.

How was the teaching guide developed?

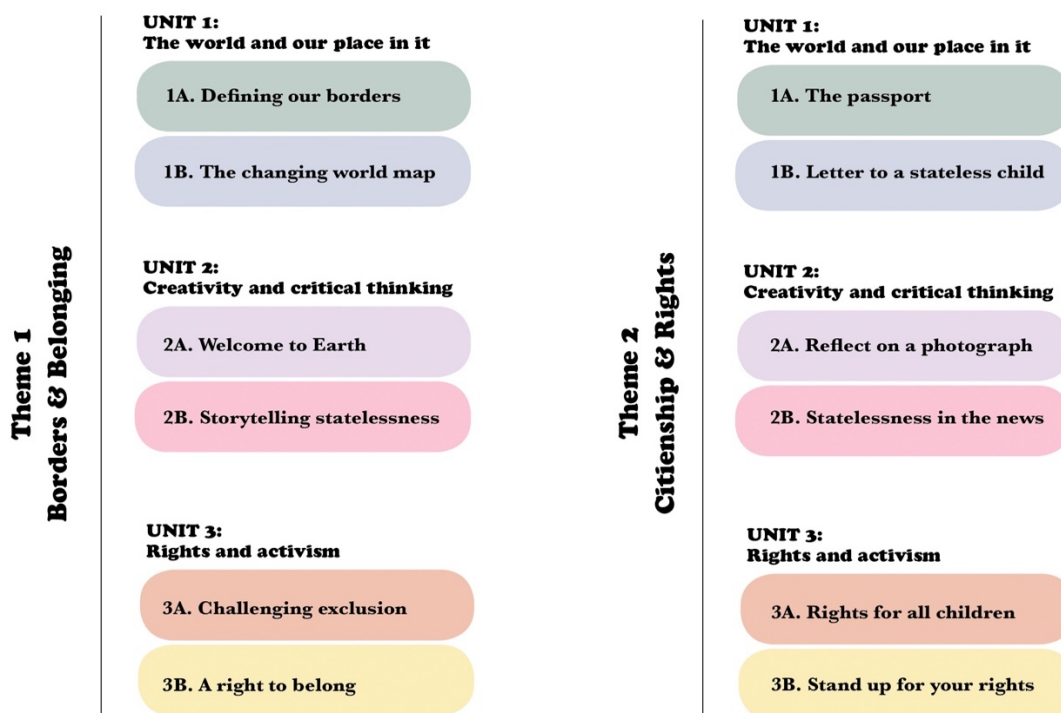
This teaching guide was published by the Institute on Statelessness and Inclusion (ISI), an independent non-profit organisation committed to realising the right to nationality for all. One of our main focuses has been the issue of childhood statelessness, which impacts millions of children around the world. This teaching guide, along with Neha’s book “The Girl Who Lost her Country” and its website (<http://kids.worldsstateless.org/>), aim to contribute to raising awareness on this phenomenon that places so much unnecessary strain on so many young shoulders.

What can be found in the teaching guide?

This teaching guide is divided into two themes: **Theme 1: Borders & Belonging** and **Theme 2: Citizenship & Rights**. Each theme contains three learning units:

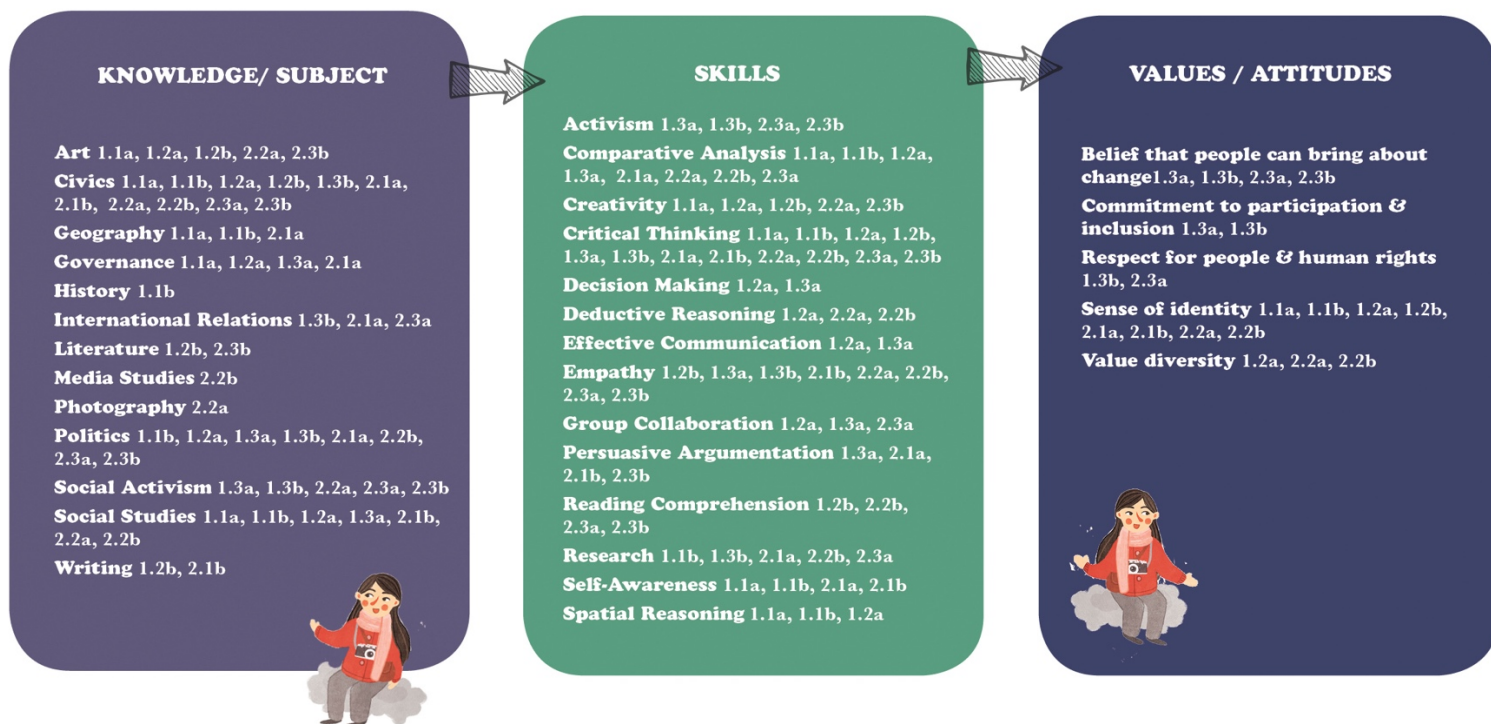
- 1) **Unit 1:** The world and our place in it. This unit allows learners to reflect on their position in the world and the different factors that shape their identity.
- 2) **Unit 2:** Creativity and critical thinking. This unit urges learners to express their creativity and critically reflect on issues of borders, belonging, nationality and statelessness.
- 3) **Unit 3:** Rights and activism. This unit engages learners with different kinds of social activism and encourages them to take action to stand up against injustices.

Under each learning unit you can find two carefully developed activities that reflect the objectives of the unit and theme that they fall under. The sequence of activities allows the learner to build up their knowledge, skills and values connected to the issue of statelessness. For learners to get a full grasp of the issue we would suggest, if time allows, to explore the full range of activities in the suggested sequence. However, if time is limited or other restrictions exist, you are welcome to pick and choose, trying out a single theme, learning unit or even activity according to the available time, materials and the needs of your group. Below is an overview of the content and structure of the two themes:



To ensure that the instructor has a basic understanding of key terms that might come up during the activities or when reading Neha’s book, a *Glossary of Key Terms* can be found in Appendix I.

The topics in this teacher’s guide can be quite intense and challenging for learners to grapple with and think about. It can help to do a fun activity prior to diving into the complex themes presented in these activities, in order to break the ice. In Appendix II we offer a suggested warming up activity that can be used for this purpose. *Can we do it?* encourages learners to think about how different restrictions change the way in which people are able to complete tasks. In Appendix III, you can find a *Quiz* and a *Crossword Puzzle* that can be used as a wrap up after completing the activities in this guide to allow participants to revisit what they have learned.



How are the activities connected to *The Girl Who Lost Her Country*?

As stated above, this teaching guide was created to accompany Neha’s book *The Girl Who Lost Her Country*. Many activities refer to sections of the story, pictures and other resources readily available in the book. To offer your group a full experience of the activities included in this teaching guide, we suggest that participants read the book fully, or at least those parts of the book that are necessary for certain activities. It is also recommended that at least the facilitator has a copy of the physical book which can be ordered online through book sellers. It is also available to download as a free ebook here: <http://kids.worldsstateless.org/learn/nehas-story-0>.

What age groups are the activities suitable for?

This teaching guide contains activities for learners between 10-14 years old, i.e. children of upper primary school or the early stages of secondary school. The guide indicates a complexity level for each activity (Level 1-3). However, as children present different levels of development, understanding, interests and learning styles, feel free to try an activity that you feel suits your group. You can also adapt an activity to fit the available time and materials, as well as the size, competence and circumstances of the group. Some activities can also be suitable for younger or older children. You can also take a look at the “Further the Activity” section under each activity and adjust the activity accordingly to fit the needs of older participants. If you are in a school environment, you can also encourage older students to read the book, and then they can facilitate one of the activities for the younger children in the school.

Teaching controversial issues²

- *Anticipate conflict.* When preparing an activity, think about possible conflicts it might evoke in the group or in individual children. Is the topic, the rules or terminology too sensitive for some or all of the children?
- *Do not provoke conflicts but also do not step aside when they arise.*
- *Don't assume conflicts are your fault - or anyone's fault.* They are normal and inevitable within every group. Help children accept that fact and avoid blaming. Focus on managing conflict, not fault finding.
- *Do not ignore bad feelings in the group.* Acknowledge their reality and help children address them.
- *Take plenty of time for debriefing and discussions* after each activity so that children have a chance to express how they are feeling, both about the activity and each other. This is perhaps your important opportunity to model conflict management.
- *Talk to children individually.* Often a child's feelings are too personal or painful to be discussed within the group. When you sense this, make an opportunity to speak privately about what may be causing this distress. Let the child know you are ready to listen whenever he or she is ready to discuss the problem.

² Tips for facilitation, taken from 'Compasito', a Council of Europe Manual on Human Rights Education, available at: http://www.evcb.coe.int/compasito/chapter_3/1.html#18.

HELPFUL RESOURCES

A short introduction to statelessness

Having a nationality is like holding the official membership of a country, bringing with it the benefits attached to that membership, like the opportunity to participate and the protection of a government. It also offers a sense of belonging – to a place and to a community. Each country has its own rules about how you can become a member: rules (or laws) that set out which people are granted nationality. Some countries give nationality to anybody born there. Other countries give nationality to anybody who has a parent from the country. Most countries allow people who have lived there for a long time or married someone from the country, to apply for nationality. In this way the real-life connections that a person has with a country form the basis for becoming a national. There is a very important document called the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which sets out the rights of every single person in the world. The Declaration says that “everyone has the right to a nationality”. This means that nationality rules should be fair, and everyone should be able to get a nationality somewhere. No one should be stateless.

However, some countries have bad rules, like not allowing women to pass on their nationality to their children or saying that people who belong to certain minorities cannot have a nationality. Other countries have good rules that are not practiced properly. For all these reasons, there are still many people in the world who don't have a nationality. No one knows the exact number, but we think at least 15 million people around the world are stateless, they have no nationality. When a person has no nationality, they are unable to participate in life in the same way as others. They might not be able to go to school, see a doctor or have a job. This is clearly wrong, it goes against everyone's human rights and must be changed. There are lots of people around the world fighting for everyone's right to a nationality. They are running campaigns, speaking to leaders, protesting and doing all kinds of interesting and important things to change the situation. It can take a lot of time and hard work but there have been great successes. We must do everything we can so that everyone enjoys the right to a nationality!

Quick facts

- The **right to a nationality** is a fundamental human right. **Statelessness** is the most extreme violation of this right.
- There are an estimated **15 million** people who are **stateless** in the world meaning that they are not considered as nationals by any state.
- Statelessness is often the result of **discrimination** against women, ethnic minorities and other groups. This is in violation of human rights standards.
- **Childhood statelessness** is most often a result of the inheritance of statelessness from parent to child. However, it can also be caused by gender and other forms of discrimination in nationality laws, lack of adequate safeguards or gaps in birth registration.
- **Stateless people** are often unable to see a doctor, get a job, open a bank account, buy a house or even get married due to their status. For children who are stateless it can also mean that they can't go to school, play, be with their families and carers and enjoy their childhood.



Myth-busting

- **Statelessness is NOT a choice.** Normally, if a person does not have a nationality, it is not because they have done something wrong. It is usually because the country has done something wrong – because it has bad rules, like not allowing women to pass on their nationality to their children or saying that people who belong to a certain minority cannot have a nationality. It can also be because a country has gaps in its rules or doesn't properly practice its rules.
- **Being undocumented is NOT the same as being stateless.** Lack of birth registration, however, can heighten the risk of statelessness as a birth certificate can prove where a person was born and who their parents are, which can be crucial to establishing nationality.
- **Being stateless is NOT the same as being a refugee or an [irregular] migrant.** Not all refugees are stateless (most refugees have a nationality) and not all stateless persons are migrants or refugees (most stateless persons live in the country of their birth and ancestry). However, stateless persons are non-citizens, meaning that they are treated as foreigners by every other state, even their own. They also may be considered to be in their country irregularly, so they can face similar problems to e.g. migrants with an irregular status.

Learn more

If you want to know more about the issue of statelessness or have questions about either this Teaching Guide or The Girl Who Lost Her Country, don't hesitate to contact us at: neha@institutesi.org

You can also find useful resources here:

- <http://www.kids.worldsstateless.org/>
- <http://kids.worldsstateless.org/learn/further-resources>
- <https://www.institutesi.org/>
- <https://www.unhcr.org/ibelong/about-statelessness/>
- <https://www.unhcr.org/ending-statelessness.html>
- <https://www.statelessness.eu/>

THEME 1: BORDERS & BELONGING

In this theme, participants reflect on their place in the world by exploring the ways in which borders and the idea of belonging to a particular country shape our identity and our interactions with others. Teaching about statelessness in this context allows participants to critically assess the role that borders and nationality play in defining human relationships and communities, in order to consider how this system can create exclusion and to think about how we could build a world that is more inclusive.

What can be found in this theme?

This theme is structured around six activities, divided into three learning units:

UNIT 1: THE WORLD AND OUR PLACE IN IT

1.1 A: Defining our borders allows the learner to reflect on the way borders can define our sense of belonging and how they can cause exclusion when (re)drawn at the level of a community.

1.1 B: The changing world map takes a step further and shows that as borders are constantly changing, they redefine the world map and our place in it.

UNIT 2: CREATIVITY AND CRITICAL THINKING

1.2 A: Welcome to earth urges the learner to critically reflect on how borders and belonging are organized at a global level, identify the loopholes and re-imagine the way this system is shaped.

1.2 B: Storytelling statelessness offers learners the opportunity to express their thoughts on the exclusion stateless people face and the fairness of a system that allows that to happen.

UNIT 3: RIGHTS AND ACTIVISM

1.3 A: Challenging exclusion aims to encourage activism by urging participants to take action and address a situation of exclusion within a role-play exercise.

1.3 B: A right to belong introduces learners to the UN as a forum to advocate for the right to belong and urges them to critically reflect on existing actions against statelessness.

How are the activities connected to *The Girl Who Lost Her Country*?

Neha's encounters in *The Girl Who Lost Her Country* raise certain questions that are addressed in this theme and the relevant parts of the book:

- Question 1: What is a nationality? Does everybody get the nationality of the country where they were born? (p.12, 50)
- Question 5: Why do people who have a nationality sometimes lose it? (p.22, 54)
- Question 8: If the government refuses to give you nationality, or takes your nationality away, what can you do to change your situation? (p.37, 58)

Real-world examples encountered by Neha and included in this theme show how the (re)drawing of borders and identity politics can leave people excluded:

- The Bajau Laut, a nomadic community in Malaysia where borders are drawn through their (nomadic) community. (p.30-33)
- The Kurds in Syria who are “maktoum”, which means not registered in Syria. (p. 35-36)
- The Makonde in Kenya who were stateless but marched to Nairobi to meet the president and demand their rights. They are now citizens! (p. 37-40)

Before you begin

Before you begin with any of the activities, take a look at the main issues that will come up in this theme. You can also ease the participants into the activities in the form of a warm-up discussion around the concepts set out below.

Borders

In this theme, we use the term borders to refer to dividing lines between different areas of territory or separating different communities. Ultimately, the borders we explore are the geographic boundaries between different countries – as you would see on a modern map of the world. These country borders have not always existed: the world's surface has been divided up by humans through borders which have been drawn, shifted, disappeared, and reappeared over time. The borders determine what land belongs to what country. People also form a part of this system and are organised in relation to these borders and countries via citizenship (also known as nationality). A person who has citizenship is considered to “belong” to that country, to be a member of that community. This citizenship is most commonly acquired through their parents' citizenship, by being born in the country, or by moving to the country and meeting certain requirements to prove belonging and be recognised as a citizen. However, some countries have bad rules, like not allowing women to pass on their nationality to their children or saying that people who belong to certain minorities cannot have a nationality. Other countries have good rules that are not practiced properly. For all these reasons, there are still many people in the world who don't have a nationality. Another reason people can lose their nationality is when borders change. For example, some individuals used to be citizens of the Soviet Union, but once the country ceased to exist and its land became divided into different countries, people who had been citizens of the Soviet Union were required to get the nationality of the new country they were in. Most of them did, but some, even today, have no nationality because each new country set its own rules and some people were not included.

Belonging

Human beings have an emotional need to be an accepted member of a group: to “belong”. Whether it is family, friends, co-workers, a religion or something else, people have an 'inherent' desire to be a part of something greater than themselves. Our sense of belonging and identity are intertwined. The identity of a person is often influenced by where they are considered to “belong”. In the world of today, citizenship is an important form of belonging – it is the recognition of a person as a full member of the community of a country and that they can live within that

country's borders as their home. By saying that some people do belong, and others do not, we create an "us" and a "them". This could be for a sports team, where players on the green team recognise themselves as a group that belongs to the green team and recognise players on the blue team as not belonging to the green team. These blue team players are labelled as "the others" that don't belong to the "us" of the green team. This isn't necessarily a bad thing; however, when people are treated in harmful ways or as "less-than" for not belonging to a certain group, then this dynamic of "us" vs. "them" becomes harmful. Xenophobia is an example of a harmful "us" vs. "them" dynamic. Xenophobia is when people who are from another country or who are viewed as foreigners are treated badly. People who are stateless could be considered to be foreign no matter where they live, as they do not have citizenship of any country. Although stateless people often do have strong ties to the country of their birth or ancestry and may feel a strong sense of belonging to "their" country, this is not formally recognized through the enjoyment of citizenship. And since being a citizen is a form of belonging, stateless people do not officially "belong" to any country.

If you choose to start a discussion prior to the activities, here are some questions about borders and belonging you may ask the participants. These questions can also pop up during the activities:

- What are the borders of your school? How do you know this? Why does the school have borders? Who can cross the school borders? Who cannot? Who decides who can and cannot cross the school borders?
- What other places have borders? What do those borders look like? Who decides them and are they necessary?
- Why do countries have borders? What purpose do borders serve for a country? Who can pass through borders of the country we are in now? Who cannot pass through? Why? Are there times when borders have caused problems for you?
- In what kind of groups do you belong? Is the feeling of belonging important to you? Do you feel that you belong to a certain country?

Key Takeaways of this theme

1. Borders are manmade and dynamic and as they shift, they influence our sense of belonging and can lead to exclusion.
2. Nationality is a manmade system that determines who gets to belong and who doesn't. However, as this system is not predefined, there is room to re-imagine and improve it.
3. It is important to speak out against exclusion and fight for the right to nationality for everyone. There are different fora and actions to affect change regarding statelessness.

Key Words

Borders; Belonging; Citizenship/Nationality; Identity; Inclusion/Exclusion; Xenophobia.

UNIT 1: THE WORLD AND OUR PLACE IN IT

In this learning unit, learners reflect on their place in the world by exploring the ways in which borders influence our idea of belonging and shape our identity and our interactions with others at a community and a global level.

1.1 A: DEFINING OUR BORDERS

We experience borders every day in our lives. From the borders of our homes, our schools, our communities and throughout the world, borders are all around us. These borders order and define our movement and access to different parts of the world, but also have a big influence on our sense of belonging and how we interact with others from ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ our community.



Defining our borders is a creative activity involving ‘mapping’ the learners’ own community, discussing its borders and considering how the community might be affected if its borders change and exclude some of its people. Learners are also invited to critically reflect on the meaning and function of borders, as well as the way their community is defined by borders and how this shapes their own place in the world.

1.1 B: THE CHANGING WORLD MAP

The world map is not static. Countries are formed, borders are determined, countries disappear, and borders are changed. This dynamic characteristic of maps and borders means that questions of belonging can be complicated. For example, if a country changes its borders or ceases to exist, certain individuals might be excluded and lose the citizenship of that country. Sometimes people receive a new citizenship right away, but often it is a much more complicated process.



The changing world map is an activity that allows learners to explore borders as temporary and shifting rather than fixed and permanent, and understand how this could lead to changes in human relationships and belonging – including how it can lead to exclusion.

1.1 A: Defining our borders

Instructions:

1. Divide the participants into groups of around five and give each group a large piece of blank paper.
2. As a group, have the participants draw a map of their community. The participants can choose to include whichever aspects of their community they find most important, but encourage them to think of what areas of their community are necessary for them to live their lives and to include these areas in their map (e.g. hospital, park, shops, bus station). Have the participants clearly mark their houses with their initials and mark where the school is on the map. Have the participants name their community (e.g. Community A). Congratulations, you are all citizens of “....”.
3. After the participants have had some time to work on their community maps, have them discuss in their groups where they might go within their community on a typical weekday and how they would spend their weekend. How would they get to the different places within their community?
4. Next, the facilitator should go around and draw a line on every group’s map clearly dividing the community. The line can be drawn anywhere and does not need to be straight or follow any pattern, but it should divide the members of the group into two separate communities. Tell the participants that the part of the community that gets to keep its original name is the one with the school in it (Community A) and the other part must come up with a new name (Community B). Members from each side of the now divided community can no longer cross the line to the side where, for example, their peer’s house is on, as the line represents a new border.

Remember!

Borders are lines drawn by humans to separate regions by a boundary based on the idea of shared characteristics among the people living within a border (e.g. common language, history, culture). Borders have an important effect on people’s lives as they can demarcate a community while imposing requirements (e.g. passport) for other people to access it.

5. In their groups, have the participants discuss question 3, but in light of the new border. What has changed in the participants’ routines? Where do they no longer have access to? How will they visit their friends? Will all the participants be able to attend school? What would the participants need in order to attend school now that the border has been put in place?

Duration: 45 minutes

Level of complexity: 2

Knowledge/Subjects:

Art, Civics, Geography, Governance, Social Studies

Skills:

Comparative Analysis, Creativity, Critical Thinking, Self-Awareness, Spatial Reasoning

Values/Attitudes: Sense of identity

Objectives:

- For learners to explore borders within their own community and how losing access to certain areas of their community would disrupt their lives.
- For learners to understand how statelessness can be produced and impact our sense of belonging and experience of borders.

Materials:

Large blank paper & pen/pencil (preferably markers/crayons/coloured pencils)

Connection to

“The Girl Who Lost Her Country”:

“Bajau Laut are a nomadic community in Malaysia where borders are drawn through their (nomadic) community. They live on boats and work at the sea fishing or pounding cassava or rice. Bajau Laut children don’t go to school because Malaysia does not recognise them as nationals. In Malaysia, Neha met Riki who told her how she and her siblings have never set foot in another country, but Malaysia still won’t accept them. “The government thinks Bajau Laut are Filipinos,” she says. “So even before I was born, my fate was decided. I would be stateless. I would inherit statelessness from my parents, who inherited it from my grandparents.” (Neha’s book p. 30-33)

6. Now have them imagine the following scenario:

Community A offers citizenship ONLY to those who were born within its new borders while Community B offers citizenship ONLY to those who live within its new borders the moment it was formed.

7. What will happen to those who live in community A but were born where community B is now? How would lack of citizenship affect their lives? Where might a stateless individual not be able to go within the community map? Will they face obstacles even within their own community?

8. Reflecting on the activity discuss with the whole group: Even if divided, how could it become possible for the members of the two communities to come together and easily visit members of their family which might live in the other community?

Further the Activity

If a border is what it takes to split a community into two, what would it take for a community to be recognised as an actual country? You can find out by watching a six-part BBC series following comedian Danny Wallace as he takes up the challenge and begins the unlikely odyssey of setting up and running his own country:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7HLzbowqnUc&list=PLADOhGXs97LlNwNTtCNaDbwaLVqxkc8L>

1.1 B: The changing world map

Instructions:

1. With the whole group watch the video on <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ymI5Uv5cGU4> showing how borders have changed over time. (Note: The video is 16 minutes long, so we would recommend either speeding up the video via Youtube settings or show parts of it).
2. Divide the participants into pairs or small groups. Instruct them to access <http://geacron.com/home-en/> and research how world maps have changed across time. Encourage participants to research the country you are currently in, an area of the world that is of interest to them or an event or period of history that your group is studying.
3. Have the participants discuss their findings. Were they surprised by how borders have changed throughout time? Has their view on borders changed at all? How does the changing of borders affect people? How are border changes decided? What do the participants think borders will look like in 20 years? 50 years? 100 years? 1000 years? Do participants think that borders will still be used in the future?
4. Next the participants are going to think about the question of how nationality comes into play when borders change. Introduce the following case study with regards to borders and nationality:

In 1991, the Soviet Union (also known as the USSR) was dissolved, meaning it ceased to exist as a country. Anyone who was previously a Soviet citizen lost their citizenship because the country no longer existed. The land which had been previously recognised as the Soviet Union was now held by a number of different groups wanting to form independent countries. Fifteen of these were recognised as countries at some point after the end of the Soviet Union.

- a. Take a look at the map handed out to you which outlines the area of land that formerly belonged to the Soviet Union, and the countries that arose from the Soviet Union. How was the citizenship of individuals who lived in these areas influenced by the dissolution of the Soviet Union?
 - *People who had been citizens of the Soviet Union were now required to get the nationality of the new country they were in. Most of them did, but some, even today, have no nationality because each new country set its own rules and some people were not included.*
- b. How is an individual recognised as a citizen of a country? Who decides that and what options exist for determining citizenship? What if a person doesn't meet the criteria? Can someone lose their citizenship and how?
 - *Each country has its own rules about how you can become a member: rules (or laws) that set out which people are granted nationality. Some countries give nationality to anybody born there. Other countries give nationality to anybody who has a parent from the country. Most countries allow people who have lived there for a long time or married someone from the country, to apply for nationality. In this way the real-life connections that a person has with a country form the basis for becoming a national.*

Duration: 45 minutes

Level of complexity: 1

Knowledge/Subjects:

Civics, History, Geography, Politics, Social Studies

Skills:

Critical thinking, Comparative Analysis, Research, Self-Awareness, Spatial Reasoning

Values/Attitudes: Sense of identity

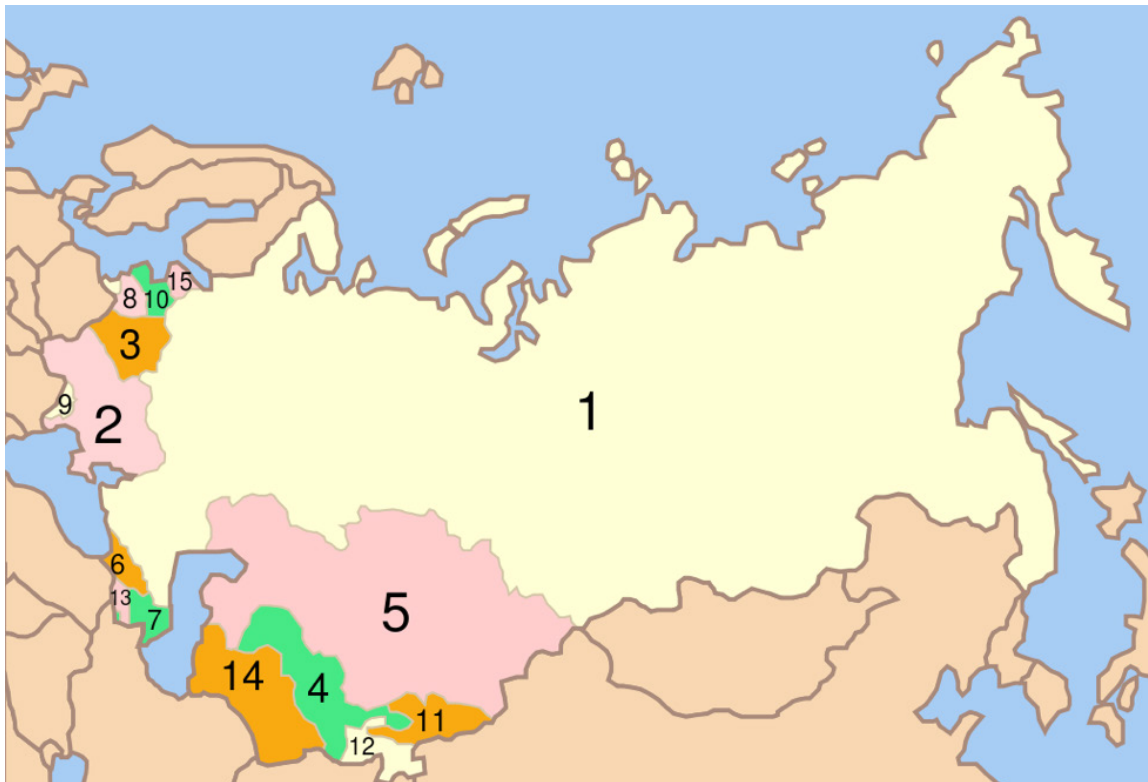
Objectives:

- For participants to explore borders as changing and not static and understand how this could lead to changes in human relationships and belonging – including how it can lead to exclusion.

Materials:

Internet access (PCs, Laptops, Tablets), Photocopies of the Soviet Union map

- *If someone doesn't meet the necessary criteria regulated by a specific country, they are not granted this country's citizenship. If the country they live in ceases to exist or splits up in two or more countries, people can also lose their nationality and may end up without one. Some countries also take away citizenship, even without the re-drawing of borders. In the Dominican Republic, Rosa and her family (p.17-21) lost their nationality because a new bad law was made taking away the nationality of those who belong to a particular ethnic minority group. Some countries have also decided that they can take away nationality of people who do very bad things. People who join wars against their own country, or engage in terrorism, can lose their nationality. These are difficult issues for a country to deal with but as long as there is punishment under the law, there is no need for them to have their nationality taken away and there is also no proof that this makes countries any safer. Sometimes these laws are also used in the wrong way to target activists and their children, although they haven't done anything wrong.*
- c. What other issues might arise as new countries (and thus new governments) are formed and individuals are no longer citizens of the country they were previously citizens of?
- *When people lose the nationality of the country they were previously citizens of and are not recognised as citizens of the new country, they can face all sorts of difficulties. They can be seen as not belonging to the new country and become unable to participate in life in the same way as others. They might not be able to go to school, see a doctor or have a job. This can happen if the new country requires individuals who live within its borders to have a nationality to be able to enjoy these things. This is clearly wrong and must change. When new countries are formed, people should not be left without a nationality.*



Republics of the Soviet Union:

1. Russia
2. Ukraine
3. Byelorussia (now Belarus)
4. Uzbekistan
5. Kazakhstan
6. Georgia
7. Azerbaijan
8. Lithuania
9. Moldavia (now Moldova)
10. Latvia
11. Kirghizia (now Kyrgyzstan)
12. Tajikistan
13. Armenia
14. Turkmenia (now Turkmenistan)
15. Estonia

Further the Activity:

As a take-home assignment, have participants look more closely at actual borders on a map from today (participants can pick a particular area and focus on it). What kinds of borders do the participants notice? How are they shaped? Are there any particular landscape structures such as rivers or mountains that seem to be influencing borders? Why do you think there are particular shapes or landscapes around certain borders? Do these borders all make sense? Might some of them cut through communities that have close ties? Have the participants write a few paragraphs on what they found as they examined the borders.

UNIT 2: CREATIVITY AND CRITICAL THINKING

This learning unit urges learners to critically reflect on how borders and belonging are defined and shaped on our planet and on the fairness of a system that leaves stateless people feeling excluded from society.

1.2 A: WELCOME TO EARTH

The way borders and belonging are organised and undertaken here on earth is not an inherent system. On the contrary, it was created and developed over time so there is plenty of room for change and improvement. Learning from each other by exchanging perceptions on citizenship and thinking about how it is experienced in different contexts can help us reflect on the fairness of the system. The starting point should be that everyone has a right to belong.



Welcome to earth is a creative activity that cultivates learners' critical thinking and their ability to collaborate as a group to inquire into how borders and belonging are organised on Earth, identify the drawbacks of our system and re-imagine the way it is shaped.

1. 2 B: STORYTELLING STATELESSNESS

Not having a nationality can influence the way stateless people go through life. It creates a lot of hardships and restricts what they are able to do and where they are able to go. As stateless people do not officially “belong” anywhere and are considered outsiders no matter which side of the border they are on, they often feel unwelcome and excluded from society.



Storytelling statelessness is a creative writing project challenging participants to express their thoughts on the exclusion stateless people face and the fairness of a system that allows for that to happen. This way learners can understand and empathise with the life stateless people lead and the hardships they might face.

1.2 A: Welcome to earth

Instructions:

1. Briefly present the following scenario to the group:

An ambassador from Mars is coming to visit today with his/her delegation and wants to learn about nationality. The ambassador of Earth and his/her delegation have agreed to meet with him/her and to teach him/her about what nationality means. The delegation from Earth would also like to learn about how things work on Mars as they recently learned that Mars does not have a system of countries, borders and nationality like we do here on Earth!

2. Divide the group into two subgroups (or four subgroups if the group is large). One subgroup is going to be a delegation from Earth and the other the delegation from Mars.
3. Have one subgroup prepare a presentation on Earth to the members of the Mars delegation. They can give a brief background of the planet and describe how it is organised in terms of the division of land using borders and the idea of having different countries, governments and nationalities. The Mars team will then address the same issues and how they are dealt with on their planet. Participants can be as creative as they want, they can make up terms, ways of organising, or whatever else they can think of. Make sure to point out to the Earth delegation that the delegation from Mars is likely to be unfamiliar with Earth vocabulary so they will need to think of a way to explain the system to them.
4. Once each planet has given their presentation (around 5 minutes), have the participants discuss what they liked and what they think could be improved about each planet's way of structuring itself. How does lack of borders or nationality impact life on Mars? What would happen if a Martian is not happy with their current place of residency and wanted to move somewhere else? Does the way Mars is organised make the participants feel differently about how things are organised on Earth? How? Why? What would be different if there was no borders, no separate countries and no nationality on Earth? Would it redefine our sense of belonging? Are there elements from each planet that could be drawn out and used to think about borders, belonging and citizenship on the other planet?

Further the Activity

The Earth is considering making a settlement on another planet and is seeking for advice on the ideal system of borders, belonging and citizenship to apply on its settlement. In the form of a play, have the Earth and Mars delegations act out this scenario (possibly for other classes, parents etc.) by presenting their own systems and coming up with the ideal system of borders, belonging and citizenship for Earth to apply on its new settlement.

Duration: 45-60 minutes

Level of complexity: 2

Knowledge/Subjects:

Art, Civics, Governance, Politics, Social Studies

Skills:

Comparative Analysis, Creativity, Critical thinking, Decision Making, Deducting Reasoning, Effective communication, Group collaboration, Spatial Reasoning

Values/Attitudes:

Sense of identity, Value diversity

Objectives:

- For participants to explore how borders and belonging are organised on Earth, identify the drawbacks of our system and re-imagine the way it is shaped.
- For participants to understand the meaning of belonging and the role borders play in our interaction with the world around us.

Materials:

Paper and pen/pencil.
Art supplies (if available)

1.2 B: Storytelling statelessness

Instructions:

In this activity, participants will be asked to produce their own piece of creative work. Before that, as a group, read the short story “**Melancholy**” written by one of the two authors of Neha’s book, Amal de Chickera. Discuss the participants’ thoughts on the story. Some guiding questions that could be used include:

1. What happened when the boy’s grandfather missed his registration?
2. Why was the boy so sad that he missed the library registration?
3. Why do you think the registration period for the grandfather was so short? What could be done to fix this problem?
4. What is the story trying to tell us? What would you think is the message of the author?
5. Is the feeling of belonging important? How can nationality affect our feeling of belonging? What happens when someone does not have a nationality?

Short stories, poetry, plays, and performances are all great ways to discuss issues such as exclusion and statelessness, and how it can influence an individual’s sense of belonging and their experience of the world around them. Using creativity allows you to get a message across in a unique and oftentimes more memorable way than just explaining about something. The short story you just read is one example of this. The book, *The Girl Who Lost Her Country*, is a much longer piece of prose that tries to help convey information and share some key messages on the issue of statelessness. Other poetry examples on the issue of statelessness can be found online at <http://www.kids.worldsstateless.org/create/poetry>.

Now it is time for participants to create their own short story, poem, play, drawing or cartoon. The only guideline is that it relates to borders, belonging or exclusion in some way. Participants can work in groups or individually on the activity. Create a scrapbook containing everyone’s creation and, if there is a printing capacity create copies for everyone. If you are in a school environment, you can also circulate it in the school.

Further the Activity:

Every story has an author and sometimes more than one! Get to know a little bit about the second author of Neha’s book, Deirdre Brennan. You can read her interview in Appendix IV on her inspiration and experiences that guided the story, how Neha’s book came to be and her plans to write a sequel! Next, you can interview another participant on their inspiration and goals when producing their creation for this activity. Make sure you’ve read the creation of the other participant carefully and reflected on what the message of their piece is to discuss it in the interview.

Duration: 60+ minutes

Level of complexity: 2

Knowledge/Subjects:

Art, Civics, Literature, Writing

Skills:

Creativity, Critical Thinking, Empathy, Reading Comprehension

Values/Attitudes: Sense of identity

Objectives:

- For participants to express their thoughts on the exclusion stateless people face and the fairness of a system that allows for that to happen through a short story, poem or play.
- For participants to understand and empathise with the life stateless people lead and the hardships they might face.

Materials:

It would be beneficial for all participants to have a copy of the short story, and paper/pen to write down their own work

Connection to

“The Girl Who Lost Her Country”:

Sima and her family are Kurdish Syrians living in Germany. Sima’s dad, Sami explained to Neha: “we are Kurds, I was born in Syria like my wife and my children, and we lived there all our lives before the war broke out. However, not one of us has Syrian nationality. We are “maktoum”, this means that we are not registered in Syria. When a census was carried out in 1962 many Kurdish Syrians were not registered. My grandfather was on bad terms with his landlord at the time and when the census committee visited his landlord, he did not pass on my grandfather’s name for registration. My grandfather instantly became stateless and we have had to inherit this status and pass it down to our own children ever since.” (Neha’s book p. 35-36)

Melancholy

By Amal de Chickera

Melancholy.

May-lan-kho-lee

It's a big word isn't it? It means 'a feeling of sadness'. This is the word I thought of when I first met the boy. He was crumpled on the floor in the corridor near the library. Looking melancholic. Staring into nothing. Deep in distant thought.

I had to stop and ask him why he was sad. He looked up. I noticed the stain of recently dried tears. I sat down next to him and instinctively took his hand.

'I missed it' he said.

I looked quizzically at him and he knew I wanted to hear more.

'I was too late. The library was closed. I was going to register so I could borrow books'.

I told him to meet me there the next day, half an hour earlier.

We filled out all of the forms. I learnt his name. he even got his library card at once.

'There, that wasn't so difficult was it?' I asked. 'All that sadness yesterday, wasted... you could have saved it up for something really sad'.

This brought a half smile to his face. 'I thought I missed my chance. I thought if I couldn't register, I would never be able to borrow a book. Ever!'

What a strange little boy I thought.

We laughed.

We became good friends. Best friends even.

One day, I remembered what he had said about the library and decided to tease him about it.

'you were very dramatic about your library card weren't you?'

He grunted embarrassed.

'I guess'.

'but that's what happened to my great grandad'.

'he couldn't join the library?' (I asked)

'where do you think I'm from?' he asked me in return

'why here. Just two streets down'. (I didn't say 'in the dirty part of town'.)

'which country do you think is mine?'

'why this one! Same as me! What does this have to do with your great grandad's library card?'

I was struggling to follow and increasingly perplexed (which is another big word for puzzled).

It was then that he told me his story.

Just like him, his great grandad too had missed a simple registration. Unlike him though, it wasn't because his great grandad was late. He simply didn't know. You see, he lived out in the countryside and he travelled a lot. They hadn't bothered to announce the registration there. Only the city folk knew.

It wasn't a registration for a library card though. It was a registration to say you belonged to this country. And everyone who missed it, all of a sudden didn't. Their children didn't either. Or their children's children. All for missing a registration they never knew about.

And so my friend, who lived in and loved this country as I do, did not belong to it as I do. He never would. Perhaps this is why he lived in the dirty part of town. Maybe the nice part was only for the ones who had registered.

I now understood my friend's melancholy the day we first met.

This made me very sad and angry.

I'm sorry. I asked one of the questions I promised myself never to ask.

UNIT 3: RIGHTS AND ACTIVISM

This learning unit urges learners to stand up against rules that are unfair and lead to exclusion by taking action that promotes recognition and belonging. Learners are then invited to explore the United Nations (UN) and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) as a platform to advocate for the protection of the right to belong and critically reflect on existing actions against statelessness.

1.3 A: CHALLENGING EXCLUSION

Countries, governments, groups and organisations sometimes make rules that are unfair and negatively impact people's lives by leaving them feeling unwelcome and excluded. It is important to speak out and fight back against these rules. Within society, different voices are often heard unequally. However, the more the voices are raised, the louder each individual voice is heard. When we have the opportunity, it is also important to use our own voice and speak out for people who might not be able to.

Challenging exclusion is an activity that aims to stimulate activism through role-play. Participants are invited to organise themselves and take action to affect change by promoting recognition and belonging against a scenario in which some of their peers are excluded.



1.3 B: A RIGHT TO BELONG

The United Nations (UN) was formed after World War II as a platform to help countries working together to solve issues around the world. One of the first acts of the UN, in 1948, was to adopt the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), outlining the rights that every human is entitled to just because they are human. Article 15 of the UDHR states that every person has a right to a nationality. Statelessness is a violation of this right. Using the UN as a forum and the UDHR as a tool, actors can thus advocate for the right to nationality for everyone – spurring international action against statelessness.



A right to belong introduces learners to the UN as a forum to advocate for the right to nationality for everyone using the UDHR as a tool and urges them to critically reflect on existing actions against statelessness.

1.3 A: Challenging exclusion

Instructions:

Important note! At a particular stage of this activity participants will be divided into three distinct groups. As an example, we have suggested shirt colour as a way to divide the participants. You can replace wearing either blue or red with hair colour, eye colour, other shirt colours or whatever feature will clearly distinguish between three different subgroups and adapt the activity accordingly. The activity also situates participants in a school setting. If it is carried out in a different environment, feel free to adapt it accordingly.

Round One

Divide the participants into groups of 4-5 people. Read the following news report and then give the participants time in their groups to come up with a response to the decision that has just been announced. Their plan can include reasons why they disagree with the ruling, potential compromises that can be reached, how the ruling would affect people, and anything else they deem necessary. The news report is as follows:

“The head teacher has announced that, starting today, those who wear blue must pay a small fee in order to enter the school building. This is because the colour blue has been shown to increase electricity costs within the school and the school must save money in any way it can right now. This change is effective immediately and there will be absolutely no exceptions. Any students with blue clothing must pay the fee in order to enter the school.”

Have a spokesperson from each group briefly read the plan the group has come up with.

Round two

After each group has shared their plan, announce the following:

“In response to the complaints we have received regarding the fee involving the colour blue, we have decided to outlaw all blue from campus. Anyone wearing blue will not be allowed to enter the school from this point forward. Also, all those who wear the colour red are no longer allowed to use the school restrooms as red has been shown to reflect light and damage mirrors and floors. These changes are effective immediately.”

Give the participants time to again develop a response to the recent development. However, this time, if the participants want to, they can combine teams in order to come up with a response.

Duration: 60+ minutes

Level of complexity: 3

Knowledge/Subjects:

Governance, Politics, Social Studies, Social Activism

Skills:

Activism, Critical Thinking, Comparative Analysis, Group Collaboration, Decision Making, Effective Communication, Empathy, Persuasive Argumentation, Research

Values/Attitudes:

Belief that people can bring about change, Commitment to participation & inclusion

Objectives:

- For participants to experience first-hand how bad rules can lead to exclusion, organise themselves and take action to affect change by promoting recognition and belonging.

Materials:

Paper and pen/pencil to brainstorm and write the plan. Art supplies, if available, to allow for creatively designing campaigns

Connection to

“The Girl Who Lost Her Country”:

In Kenya Neha met the Makonde. They were stateless but marched to Nairobi to meet the president and demand their rights. They are now citizens! Talking to the Makonde, Neha learned that they were first brought from Mozambique to Kenya by the British in 1936. Despite living there for generations since, they were later treated as foreigners. On various occasions they were promised that they would be registered, but this never happened, and they faced many hardships. After trying all legal processes, they decided to march to Nairobi to meet the president. They gathered in Makongeni in the coast region, started with prayers and then began the march. In total, the Makonde trekked 526 kilometres, until they reached the president’s house in Nairobi. They faced many challenges on the way. They were even stopped by the police. But they kept on going. When the president finally did meet them, he asked for their forgiveness, because it took such a long time to end their exclusion and bring justice to them as fellow Kenyans. The Makonde are now Kenyan citizens! (Neha’s Book p. 37-40)

As the participants work in their groups, announce the following:

“The Parent-Teacher Committee has decided that at this time, all students involved in the negotiations who are wearing red or blue must leave the negotiating room in accordance with the rules that have been passed and for the safety of all.”

After this statement is read have all the participants wearing red and blue go to one area of the room which will be deemed “outside school property”. Here the participants may discuss with one another how to attempt to combat the rules, but they may not interact with the participants who are still on school property.

Give the participants a few more minutes and then have them present their plans. However, the group of participants who are “outside school property” must present last, and they only have one minute to present their plan, so cut them off from speaking after around one minute. It is up to you if you tell the “outside school property” group if they have less time or if you simply gently cut them off without letting them know they get less time.

Round Three:

After the groups have presented, provide feedback (in the name of the school and Parent-Teacher Committee) to all the groups except for the “outside school property” group. Feedback could include letting the groups know areas you were interested in or would be open to negotiating, as well as areas or arguments that you do not agree with and will not work. Then read the following announcement:

“The Parent-Teacher Committee has decided it acted too rashly in its former decision and those wearing red should not have been banned from the school grounds while the investigations into the safety of red are ongoing. Thus, effectively immediately those wearing red are allowed to re-enter the school. The school has agreed with this decision and supports the re-entrance of those in red until further investigations have been completed.”

Have those wearing red re-join their groups and give them time for another round of discussions and then a very brief presentation. Once again, give the “outside” group a short time to present before cutting them off.

After the presentations are completed have a de-briefing discussion about the experience and the arguments the participants made. Some guiding discussion questions are:

1. What do you think of the decisions that the school and the Parent-Teacher Committee made?
How did they make you feel?
2. Were there any arguments presented from any of the groups or from the school and Parent-Teacher Committee that you thought were particularly convincing? Why?
3. Why or why not did you team up with other group(s) when given the opportunity?
4. For the group that had to be “outside school property”, how did you feel about being removed from the rest of the participants? Did it make your negotiating harder or easier?
5. For the participants that weren’t in the “outside” group, how did you feel when the “outside” participants were removed from your groups?
6. Did you notice anything about the response and presentation time for the “outside” group?
How did the differences in what they were allowed versus what others were allowed make you feel?
What does this difference represent?
7. Are there people in our own community that have more of an opportunity to speak and to get what they want? Why do they have this privilege? Are there people who have less of an opportunity to speak or are not given as much attention? Why?

8. How does this activity relate to statelessness and other situations of exclusion?
9. How can we amplify the voices of those who are not being heard?

After this discussion, revisit the story of the Makonde from Neha's book (p. 37-40). The Makonde are a great example of how a group that is discriminated against can together demand rights and recognition. The participants can also watch a video about the Makonde, available here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-PG8chfAX_U. After reading from the book and watching the video, have a brief discussion about how the Makonde were able to gain their right to citizenship.

Further the Activity:

Apart from learning about statelessness, you can also act! You can find inspirational ways of action at <http://www.kids.worldsstateless.org/act>. For example, you can campaign, act and raise awareness within your own community – asking people to come together and make a real change to end statelessness or help stateless people! So, get out there and get active! And let us know what you've done by writing us at neha@institutesi.org.

1.3 B: A right to belong

Instructions:

Before beginning the activity, it might be helpful to refresh participants' knowledge on statelessness as a global problem by sharing some quick facts:

- There are an estimated 15 million people who are stateless in the world meaning that they are not considered as nationals by any state.
- Statelessness is often the result of bad rules, like not allowing women to pass on their nationality to their children or saying that people who belong to certain minorities cannot have a nationality.
- Stateless people are often unable to see a doctor, get a job or even get married because of their status. For children who are stateless it can also mean that they can't go to school, play, be with their families and carers and enjoy their childhood.

It is often difficult for countries to deal with global issues such as statelessness on their own. Sometimes it is countries themselves who have bad rules that lead to statelessness. To help them deal with such issues, countries have created the United Nations (UN) as a place in which they work together to help them get along, improve living conditions for people all over the world and make the world a better place. One way the UN works together and tries to hold countries accountable for their actions is via written and agreed upon documents including declarations, compacts, and treaties. There is a very important document called the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which sets out the rights of every single person in the world such as going to school or being able to see a doctor. The Declaration also says that "everyone has the right to a nationality". This means that nationality rules should be fair, and everyone should be able to get a nationality somewhere. No one should be stateless. Everybody should belong somewhere!

Alternatively, you can refresh participants knowledge on statelessness through this video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iQ9SzaumyW0> and provide a brief introduction to the United Nations through an educational rap video available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9l2W7Ikrp6Y> and to the UDHR through an witty educational video at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ew993Wdc0zo>.

Next, have a discussion about Article 15 of the UDHR and statelessness. You can write Article 15 on the board or hand it out to the participants:

- 1. Everyone has the right to a nationality.**
- 2. No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his nationality nor denied the right to change his nationality.**

Guiding questions for the discussion include:

- 1.** What does Article 15 mean? If nationality is a right, how come there are 15 million stateless people in the world?
 - *The right to a nationality is a fundamental human right. Statelessness is the most extreme violation of this right because it leaves people without a nationality, anywhere. However, stateless people can still be found in all regions of the world as many countries have bad rules that lead to statelessness like not allowing women to pass on their nationality to their children as in*

Duration: 45 minutes

Level of complexity: 2

Knowledge/Subjects:

Civics, Politics, International Relations, Social Activism

Skills:

Activism, Creativity, Critical Thinking, Empathy, Research

Values/Attitudes:

Belief that people can bring about change, Commitment to participation & inclusion, Respect for people & human rights

Objectives:

- For participants to explore the UN as a forum to advocate for the right to nationality for everyone using the UDHR as a tool.
- For participants to critically reflect on existing actions against statelessness.

Materials: Internet access (optional)

Kuwait and Syria, or saying that people who belong to certain minorities cannot have a nationality like Myanmar excluding the Rohingya people. Another reason why people have no nationality is the change of borders. For example, some individuals used to be citizens of the Soviet Union, but as its land became divided into different countries, not all people got the nationality of the new country they were in and became stateless. This is clearly wrong, goes against every human's rights and must be changed. Sometimes it is difficult to persuade a country to change its nationality rules or include stateless people as citizens because of discrimination, intolerance and stigma. For example, if a group have been treated as 'outsiders' for a long time, because they are stateless, it can be hard to change people's attitudes and to convince the public and/or the government that they have the right to belong and should be recognised as citizens.

2. Do you think progress has been made on statelessness since the UDHR came into force in 1948?

- *The UDHR marked an important moment in history for the issue of statelessness: for the first time, nationality was recognised to be a fundamental human right. Today, the right to nationality is protected by lots of different treaties and international courts and committees of experts are helping to ensure that laws and practices that make people stateless are changed. In the last decade in particular, statelessness is becoming more and more visible as an issue that affects millions of people across the globe and requires an immediate response by the international community. More and more NGOs and activists are working together on statelessness and there have been important successes for individuals (like Neha – see p. 81-83 of the book) and whole communities (like the Makonde in Kenya – see p. 37-40 of the book). Lots more work still needs to be done, to ensure that everyone enjoys the right to a nationality and there are lots of people around the world fighting to make this happen. They are running campaigns, speaking to leaders, protesting and doing all kinds of interesting and important things to change the situation. It can take a lot of time and hard work, but it is worth it: we must do everything we can so that everyone enjoys the right to a nationality!*

Now it is time to explore an action dedicated to statelessness. The UNHCR is the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. This is one of the specialised agencies within the United Nations and it focuses on helping refugees and also individuals who are stateless. As a group or individually, look at the UNHCR's #IBelong campaign located at <https://www.unhcr.org/ibelong/>. After reading about the campaign and discovering a bit about the aims of the campaign, ask participants to critically reflect on the images that were developed to promote the #IBelong campaign and encourage people around the world to get involved (these can be found in Appendix V). What are the strengths and weaknesses of these images? (How) are they effective in communicating the goals of the campaign and/or what statelessness means? If time allows, ask participants to also brainstorm alternative ideas for posters, images etc. to promote the message of the #IBelong campaign.

Further the Activity:

A great way to address the issue of statelessness is by campaigning to raise awareness on and encourage action against statelessness. The UNHCR's #IBelong campaign is such an example. To show your support sign #IBelong's open letter to contribute in ending statelessness here: <https://www.unhcr.org/ibelong/sign-the-open-letter/>. You can also start a campaign in your school or community by encouraging people to also sign the letter. For more information about how people around the world are fighting for everyone's right to a nationality visit: <http://www.kids.worldsstateless.org/act/campaign-act-raise-awareness>.

THEME 2: CITIZENSHIP & RIGHTS

In this theme, participants reflect on their position in society and the opportunities that they have as citizens of a country by exploring the concepts of citizenship and rights. Teaching about statelessness in this context helps participants to understand how exclusion can lead to discrimination and the denial of rights, allowing them to develop empathy for people who are ‘stuck’ outside the system and to think about how we could build a world that is more equal.

What can be found in this theme?

This theme is structured around six activities, divided into three learning units:

UNIT 1: THE WORLD AND OUR PLACE IN IT

2.1 A: The passport urges learners to reflect on the role of passports and the benefits of having one as a way of exploring what citizenship is and why is it significant.

2.1 B: Letter to a stateless child invites participants to reflect on the importance of citizenship and understand the situation stateless people find themselves in, by writing a letter.

UNIT 2: CREATIVITY AND CRITICAL THINKING

2.2 A: Reflect on a photograph allows learners to discover the power of images to convey information and emotion while deepening their understanding of a life without a nationality.

2.2b: Statelessness in the news offers learners the opportunity to critically reflect on how media portrays stateless people.

UNIT 3: RIGHTS AND ACTIVISM

2.3a: Rights for all children invites learners to reflect on the rights that all children should enjoy no matter their nationality status by exploring the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).

2.3b: Stand up for your rights engages participants in human rights activism by designing campaign material to advocate for the rights of stateless children.

How are the activities connected to *The Girl Who Lost Her Country*?

Neha's encounters in *The Girl Who Lost Her Country* raise certain questions that are addressed in this theme and the relevant parts of the book:

- Question 3: Is it your birth certificate that gives you a nationality? (p.17, 52)
- Question 4: What kind of things are children who don't have a nationality not able to do? (p.21, 53)
- Question 6: Why can't countries make sure all children get a nationality, even if they don't know where they were born or who their parents were? (p.24, 56)

Real-world examples encountered by Neha and included in this theme show how denying a person citizenship limits their ability to enjoy other rights and to participate in society:

- Aasif from the Bajau Laut community who cannot go to school because Malaysia does not recognise Bajau Laut as nationals. (p. 30-33)
- Talia who has not been provided with a birth certificate by the Dominican Republic due to her Haitian migratory background. (p. 17-21)
- Grace, a foundling in Cote d'Ivoire, who fears that she won't be able to go to school or travel because she doesn't have a birth certificate. (p.21-22)

Before you begin

Before you begin with any of the activities, take a look at the main issues that will come up in this theme. You can also ease the participants into the activities in the form of a warm-up discussion around the concepts set out below.

Citizenship

Having a citizenship is like holding the official membership of a country. Once you are 'in' and are a member of the country, you have access to the benefits that come along with that membership: you can enjoy the rights of citizens of that country. Citizenship also offers a sense of belonging – to a place and to a community – and recognition of your place in the world. Each country has its own rules about how you can become a member: rules (or laws) that set out which people are granted nationality. Some countries give nationality to anybody born there. Other countries give nationality to anybody who has a parent from the country. Most countries allow people who have lived there for a long time or married someone from the country, to apply for nationality. In this way the real-life connections that a person has with a country form the basis for becoming a national. Sometimes things go wrong and a person's real-life connections do not allow them to access citizenship in any country. This leaves them stateless and excluded from the benefits of citizenship. It also means that they are treated as outsiders and may suffer from prejudice, xenophobia and discrimination.

Rights

(Human) rights are the rights that every single person in the world has, such as being able to go to school or see a doctor. No matter their nationality, race, sex, religion etc., everyone is entitled to these rights, without discrimination. There is also a special set of human rights specifically for children, often known as "child rights". However, stateless people around the world are often unable to participate in life in the same way as others and enjoy rights such as going to school, seeing a doctor or having a job. That is because certain countries require individuals who live within their borders to have a nationality to be able to enjoy these rights. This is clearly wrong, goes against every human's rights and must be changed. No matter if a person is stateless, he/she should be able to enjoy all human rights!

If you choose to start a discussion prior to the activities here are some questions about citizenship and rights you may ask the participants. These questions can also pop up during the activities:

- What is citizenship? How would you explain it to someone else?
- How can a person get citizenship when they are born? Can a person only have the citizenship that they get at birth? How else can a person get citizenship?
- What rights does a person have as a citizen of a country?
- What happens if you are not able to have a citizenship? How would it feel if you were not able to belong to a country via having citizenship, but everyone else around you did?
- Do you know what country you are a citizen of? How did you become a citizen of that country? What rights do you have as a result of being a citizen of your particular country?

Key Takeaways of this theme:

1. Citizenship may be something we cannot see or touch, but it makes a big difference in our lives. Understanding the role of a passport and what life would look like without access to one helps us to understand the impact statelessness can have.
2. Communicating with stateless people is a great way to show support and better understand their position in society.
3. Statelessness can be portrayed in different ways throughout the media so it is important to be a critical media consumer.
4. There are different ways to advocate for the rights of stateless people around the world. It can take a lot of time and hard work but we can all make a difference.

Key words

Citizenship/Nationality; Rights; Participation; Discrimination; (In)equality; (In)tolerance.

UNIT 1: THE WORLD AND OUR PLACE IN IT

In this learning unit learners reflect on the role of passports and the benefits of holding one as a way of exploring what citizenship is and why it is significant. To better understand and empathise with the position stateless people have in society and some of the hardships they might face, learners are then asked to show their solidarity by writing a letter to a stateless child.

2.1 A: THE PASSPORT

Citizenship is something you cannot see or touch, so it can be hard to understand or explain what it is. A passport makes citizenship tangible: it is a document given by countries to their citizens. It recognises citizens as full members of the community who enjoy certain rights and responsibilities. However, not everyone is able to obtain a passport because not everyone has citizenship somewhere. Without any nationality, people who are stateless are unable to get a passport and face difficulties when it comes to accessing various services and travelling.



The passport is an activity that urges learners to critically inquire into how passports transform the idea of citizenship to something tangible and enable people to enjoy their rights as citizens of a country and how stateless people lacking a nationality and thus a passport are excluded from enjoying such rights.

2.1 B: LETTER TO A STATELESS CHILD

One way to better appreciate the value of citizenship and to understand how stateless children go through life is by writing a letter that builds a connection or opens a conversation around these issues. That way we can also let them know that they are not alone and that others care about the challenges that are affecting them.



Letter to a stateless child is a creative writing project challenging participants to reflect on the importance of citizenship and understand the situation stateless people find themselves in. Drawing inspiration from what they have learnt about citizenship, rights and statelessness, participants are invited to write a letter to a stateless child.

2.1 A: The passport

Instructions:

Watch this video on passports:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qRvaT4Jgv2Q>;

followed by this short clip from the movie “The Terminal”, starring Tom Hanks, which portrays the limbo that many stateless people find themselves trapped in due to not having a nationality and being without a passport:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OHPVY_j2HDY.

If no internet connection is available, discuss the following with the group:

1. What is a passport?

- *A passport is a document issued by the authorities of a country that verifies that an individual is a citizen of that country, his/her identity (full name, nationality, date and place of birth) and gives them the right to travel under its protection.*

2. What is the function of a passport?

- *Passports are used as proof of nationality. When you possess a passport, this means that your country of origin vouches for you, assuring other nations that you are in fact the person you say you are. If you have the passport of country X, this is the country that you formally ‘belong’ to and where you should be able to enjoy rights as a citizen.*

3. Is it possible for a country to revoke a passport?

- *As countries control the passport system, apart from issuing a passport, a country can also revoke your passport. Some countries have rules allowing them to take away the nationality and passports of people who do very bad things – for instance if they join wars against their own country or engage in acts of terrorism. Sometimes these laws are used in the wrong way to target activists, journalists or peaceful protestors and their children, although they haven’t done anything wrong. Sometimes countries also decide to withdraw nationality from their own citizens for other reasons, for instance because they consider ethnic or religious minority groups to be outsiders. And sometimes people fail to acquire any nationality to begin with. In other words, there are lots of ways in which people can end up without a nationality – and therefore without a passport – as shown in the stories of the different people Neha encounters in the book.*

After watching the two videos or discussing the questions set out above, remind participants that if a person is stateless, they are unable to get a passport from any country so their ability to enjoy the rights of a citizen such as travelling internationally legally is pretty much non-existent. Ask them to discuss the following questions:

1. What are some solutions to the issue of stateless individuals not having a passport? Can you think of any way of making it possible for those who are stateless to travel freely?
2. One group of individuals had the idea of making a world citizen passport for anyone to have. You can read about this organisation and what they are trying to do here: <http://www.worldservice.org/docpass.html>
 - a. What do you think of the idea of having a world citizen passport?
 - b. Why do you think this idea has not caught on?

Duration: 45 minutes

Level of complexity: 1

Knowledge/Subjects:

Civics, Geography, Governance, International Relations, Politics

Skills:

Comparative Analysis, Critical thinking, Persuasive Argumentation, Research, Self-Awareness

Values/Attitudes: Sense of identity

Objectives:

- For participants to explore how passports transform the idea of citizenship into something tangible and help people to understand the rights that they enjoy as citizens of a country.
- For participants to understand that as stateless people lack a nationality and thus a passport, they are excluded from enjoying the rights of a citizen.

Materials: Internet access (optional)

Further the Activity

Different countries' passports grant individuals different sets of rights and even different levels of access to other countries! To explore this, have participants look at two websites and explore differences between passports. Give participants between 10-15 minutes and then have a group discussion on what they found and whether different countries' passports should have different power. (<https://www.henleypassportindex.com/passport>, <https://www.passportindex.org>). You can also turn the discussion into a debate forming two groups to debate on the fairness of a system where one passport is 'valued' higher than another.

2.1 B: Letter to a stateless child

Instructions:

1. As a group, read the “Letter to a Stateless Child” found on page 78-80 of the book or in Appendix VI.
2. After reading the letter together, you might want to have a brief discussion about it. Have participants discuss with their neighbour or in small groups. Examples of questions to discuss include:
 - a. What are some messages that the authors of this letter have for stateless children?
 - b. What emotions do the authors express?
 - c. Were there any parts in the letter that you particularly liked? Why?
3. Have participants write their own letter to one of the three stateless children who Neha meets on her travels and are referred to above. Invite participants to explain who they are and that they are learning about statelessness and citizenship and express what they feel they’ve learned so far. Encourage them to be creative and to think both about what it is they want to say as well as how they want to say it.

Send your letters to ISI at neha@institutesi.org. They might even be included on our website or shared with other people around the world who are learning about statelessness or working to address it.

Further the Activity:

It is important to bring attention to the issue of statelessness that so many people are facing. One way is by making sure that government officials know about it so that they take action. A great way is by letter/email. Even if you cannot vote yet, the elected officials are still supposed to look out for your interests if you live in an area that they are representing (e.g. members of the parliament, local authorities etc.). If enough people reach out and let a government official know that statelessness is an issue that they want to see addressed, then the chances of the issue being taken up increase greatly. Before you begin, it might be helpful to look at an example letter in Appendix VII.

Duration: 60+ minutes

Level of complexity: 2

Knowledge/Subjects:

Civics, Social Studies, Writing

Skills:

Critical thinking, Empathy, Persuasive Argumentation, Self-Awareness

Values/Attitudes: Sense of identity

Objectives:

- For learners to reflect on the importance of citizenship and understand the situation stateless people find themselves in.

Materials:

Piece of paper and pen/pencil (if preferred type the letter on a computer)

Connection to

“The Girl Who Lost Her Country”:

In the Dominican Republic, Neha met Rosa and her daughter Talia. Talia has not been provided with a birth certificate by the Dominican Republic due to her Haitian background. In the Dominican Republic children and grandchildren of Haitian immigrants who could not show certain documents cannot be Dominican citizens, even though according to Dominican nationality law a child acquires the Dominican nationality if he/she is born in the country. Talia handed Neha a beautiful drawing on pink paper portraying Talia’s emotions. “When I do not have a birth certificate and my sister or mother go to run errands to try to get papers and they do not appear, I feel sad. If I don’t have my birth certificate I will not be able to study.” (Neha’s Book p. 17-21)

In Cote d’Ivoire, Neha met Grace, an orphan girl who doesn’t know her parents. Grace explained to her that in Cote d’Ivoire it is very hard to get nationality without your parents’ documents. “Ivorians must provide their birth certificate and the nationality certificate of a parent as proof of their own nationality. I don’t have any of those things, so I cannot prove that my parents were Ivorian. They call me a foundling and I have heard some grownups say that I am stateless. If, one day, I can no longer go to school, I would be very unhappy”, she says. “In Cote d’Ivoire stateless people cannot do many things, like working or opening a bank account,

things, like working or opening a bank account, they can't own land or even move freely inside the country. My dream is to travel" (Neha's Book p. 22-23)

In Malaysia Neha met Aasif. He and the other children told her that they are Bajau Laut. "We live on these boats... and we work here". We have to help our parents, we don't go to school so sometimes we go fishing or pound cassava or rice." Neha later learned that they cannot go to school because Malaysia does not recognise them as nationals. (Neha's Book p. 31-33)

UNIT 2: CREATIVITY AND CRITICAL THINKING

This learning unit focuses on how statelessness is portrayed in the media and allows learners to contemplate on how stateless people go through life. By reflecting on what photographs tell the viewer and comparing this to how newspaper articles discuss stories of statelessness and what vocabulary they use, learners can evaluate and compare how each source of information communicates the issue of statelessness.

2.2 A: REFLECT ON A PHOTOGRAPH

Photographs can be used to express the realities of a life without a nationality. As each individual is unique and complex, stateless persons do not experience a one-dimensional life as sometimes assumed. In this sense, photographs can be used to educate, send messages, and share experiences by saying a story through images in a different way to words.



Reflect on a photograph is a creative activity involving a discussion of photographic portraits of stateless individuals, helping participants to discover the power of images to convey information and emotion while deepening their understanding of a life without a nationality.

2.2 B: STATELESSNESS IN THE NEWS

Reading the news and other media is a great way to learn more about the world and societal issues. However, it is equally important to be a critical media consumer as there are different viewpoints and different ways of reporting. Sometimes the media can help a cause through fair and accurate reporting but other times it can reinforce prejudice and exclusion.



Statelessness in the news is a critical literacy assignment in which participants review news articles relating to statelessness to identify what message is being communicated and how. Participants are also encouraged to evaluate how media portrays stateless people, the subconscious effects of media representation and the multifaceted ways of presenting information.

2.2 A: Reflect on a photograph

Instructions:

Introduce the group to the work of the award-winning photographer Greg Constantine and his project Nowhere People

<http://www.nowherepeople.org/the-project>.

Greg first learned about statelessness in 2002, and in 2005 he embarked on what would turn out to be a ten-year journey documenting statelessness around the world. He has published three books of photographs of his journey, shown his work in exhibitions, and integrated his photographs and the stories of stateless people in a multimedia website. As a group you can also read Greg's letter to stateless children located on pages 74-76 in Neha's book (also in Appendix IX) and/or watch Greg's TEDx talk on statelessness here:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u9DD6MZj5Z4&feature=emb_title

According to Greg: *"Photography is a language and it's a language that needs to be included in discussions because it's far too easy for the voices and the stories of the dispossessed and unwanted to actually just become lost"* (TEDx talk 2016, London).

This activity is about reflecting on his photography of statelessness.

1. Ideally, participants would be divided into small groups of 3-4.

2. Hand out a photograph to each group (if possible, have each group analyse a different photograph). You can assign photographs from Neha's book, make copies of the photographs (in Appendix VIII) or visit Greg Constantine's website <http://www.nowherepeople.org/> and select the photographs you would like the participants to analyse.

3. Each small group will discuss and analyse the photograph they have been given for 5-10 minutes. They will then share with the group the photograph they have as well as their thoughts and interpretation of it. After sharing, other participants can ask questions or give their own thoughts on the photograph.

4. It might be helpful to provide a list of questions for the participants to use as they begin analysing the photograph. However, they do not just have to use these questions and should feel free to discuss whatever comes to them as they look at the photograph. You can also do an example of photograph analysis with the whole group before you begin and/or have participants draw inspiration from two children's reflections on these photographs available at: <http://www.kids.worldsstateless.org/act/reflect-photograph>

Example of questions:

- What is the first thing you notice when you look at this photograph?
- Is there anything striking about the use of light and shadow?
- What emotions do you see in the photograph? What emotions do you feel when you look at this photograph?
- What does the photo tell you about the person portrayed?
- Do you think there is a (particular) message that the photo is trying to convey about statelessness? If so, what is the message?
- Does this photograph relate to the concepts of citizenship, rights, identity or exclusion? In what way?

Duration: 45 minutes

Level of complexity: 2

Knowledge/Subjects:

Art, Civics, Photography, Social Activism, Social Studies

Skills:

Comparative Analysis, Creativity, Critical thinking, Deductive reasoning, Empathy

Values/Attitudes:

Sense of identity, Value diversity

Objectives:

- For participants to discover the power of images to convey information and emotion while deepening their understanding of a life without a nationality.

Materials:

Internet Access or copies of photos from Neha's book located on pages 23, 52, 53, 55 59, at <http://www.nowherepeople.org/> or in Appendix VIII. If unable to make copies, you can show the entire group a photograph from Neha's book or the teacher's guide and then either discuss the photograph as a group or have the participants discuss it in small groups. Note: Be sure to allow the participants the opportunity to look at the picture multiple times!

Further the Activity

Discuss what participants would photograph if they were told to photograph anything that made them think about citizenship, rights, identity and/or exclusion. If possible, ask them to think about these topics over the week/week-end and take any pictures that remind them of those terms. Ask them to share their pictures and do a photograph analysis with the whole group.

2.2 B: Statelessness in the news

Instructions:

1. Assign the participants (either in small groups or individually) one of the articles below to examine. Feel free to also add / use local articles about statelessness or others that might be particularly relevant for the group. You can find the articles in Appendix X. Here are the links to the originals:

Article A. Living in a sea of trash: Sabah's stateless children face bleak future:

<https://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/asia/sabah-stateless-children-sea-gypsies-bajau-laut-11561194>

Article B. Stateless kids causing a headache for Sabah authorities:

<https://reliefweb.int/report/bangladesh/hundreds-thousands-rohingya-people-are-trapped-stateless-limbo>

Article C. Thousands find themselves stateless in the Dominican Republic:

https://cronkite.asu.edu/buffett/dr/the_stateless.html

Article D. Hundreds of thousands of Rohingya people trapped in stateless limbo:

<https://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2020/02/09/stateless-pelahu-kids-causing-a-headache-for-sabah-authorities>

Article E. I found a country, but lost my brother - Stateless activist:

<http://news.trust.org/item/20191006223443-qazhk/>

2. Give the participants 15-20 minutes to go through their articles and to examine how statelessness, citizenship and rights are discussed in the article. Have the participants think about and write down answers to the following questions (if applicable to their article):

- a. What is the article about? Is statelessness the main topic? What other topics are being discussed?
- b. Who is talking about statelessness? (Is it the author, an expert quoted, stateless people etc.)
- c. What tone is the author/speaker using to talk about statelessness/citizenship/rights? Why do you think this is?
- d. Are stateless people portrayed as outsiders, victims or a problem group?
- e. Is there a message that is trying to be conveyed about statelessness? If so, what do you think that message is?
- f. Do you think this is an accurate representation of statelessness? If not, what do you think is misrepresented or not represented completely?
- g. How are newspaper articles different from photographs when telling a story? Were you able to form your own conclusions based on facts or did you feel the story was leading you to particular conclusions?

Further the Activity:

Statelessness can be portrayed through several media. A great way to discuss about the issue is through comics! Shapeless Shapes is a beautifully designed graphic novel about identity, belonging, history, freedom, discrimination, injustice, activism and statelessness. You can order a copy of the physical book through online book sellers or read it as an ebook here: https://files.institutesi.org/Shapeless_shapes.pdf

Duration: 45-60 minutes

Level of complexity: 3

Knowledge/Subjects:

Civics, Media Studies, Social Studies, Politics

Skills:

Comparative Analysis, Critical thinking, Deductive reasoning, Empathy, Reading Comprehension, Research

Values/Attitudes:

Sense of identity, Value diversity

Objectives:

- For participants to critically reflect on how media portrays stateless people, the subconscious effects of media representation and the multifaceted ways of presenting information.

Materials:

Copies of the news articles (one for each group of 3-4)

UNIT 3: RIGHTS AND ACTIVISM

This learning unit invites children to reflect on the rights that all children should enjoy and how not having a nationality limits access to rights, against the backdrop of a discussion of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). Participants are then urged to educate others on the issues that stateless children face as a first step towards inspiring people to engage with the issue and advocate for change.

2.3 A: RIGHTS FOR ALL CHILDREN

The CRC is a specifically designed treaty to protect childhood and contains the rights all children should have including the right to health, education, family life, play and recreation, an adequate standard of living and protection from abuse and harm. As these rights are afforded to all children no matter their nationality status, the CRC can be used to advocate for the right to nationality for every child across the world.

Rights for all children introduces children to child rights and invites them to envision a document containing all the rights children should have no matter their nationality status. It also introduces them to the CRC, the most important child rights treaty in the world, and invites them to utilise it to advocate for the rights of stateless children.



2.3 B: STAND UP FOR YOUR RIGHTS

Educating others on the difficulties stateless children face is a great way to show support and inspire a great number of people to advocate for the issue. We can all make a difference. Start by educating others!



Stand up for your rights is an activism-driven project aiming at empowering participants to engage in human rights activism by designing campaign material to advocate for the rights of stateless children.

2.3 A: Rights for all children

Instructions:

1. Reflect on the “**Questions by Stateless Children**” and think of some of the examples we have read about in Neha’s book. What issues do children in different countries face when trying to claim their nationality? What other rights might be denied to them?
2. Not having a nationality limits children’s access to other rights such as going to school, seeing a doctor etc. How do you feel about that? Should children be deprived of their rights due to lack of nationality? What rights do you think all children should have?
3. As a group, draft a document containing all the rights children should have! You can invite a participant to write the group’s ideas on the board or on a piece of paper and when the document is complete ask all participants to sign it.
4. The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) is a treaty of the United Nations that sets out the rights every child should have including the right to go to school, see a doctor etc. Compare your document to the actual CRC available in a child - friendly version here: <https://www.unicef.org/media/56661/file> Which rights are missing, what extra rights have you included compared to the actual CRC? Do you think the CRC makes it clear that no matter their nationality status, children should enjoy all the rights included in the treaty? If the CRC protects the rights of all children, why are stateless children unable to enjoy their rights?

Further the Activity:

The CRC is a great tool for raising the issue of statelessness and advocating for the rights of stateless children. Almost all UN countries have signed the CRC and made a commitment to protecting the rights of all children as set out in the treaty. To make sure enough is being done and hold countries accountable for fulfilling the rights set out in the treaty, a special committee of UN experts has been established to monitor what is happening around the world: the CRC Committee. NGOs and activists report to the CRC Committee so it will push countries to implement child rights friendly measures. Children can advocate for their rights too! Check out this short guide about a new United Nations treaty that lets you speak up about child rights violations in your country and how to submit a complaint:

- https://www.childrightsconnect.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/OP3_CF_Leaflet_En_FINAL.pdf
- <https://opic.childrightsconnect.org/what-is-opic/how-to-submit-an-individual-communication/>

You can also ask local organisations or people you know, like your local children’s rights contact person or your teacher, how you could bring up the issue of statelessness in your area and encourage people to start a campaign and advocate for the issue. Or pick another child rights problem that you feel passionately about or you see affecting people in your community and get involved in ensuring that it gets the attention that it deserves.

Duration: 45 minutes

Level of complexity: 3

Knowledge/Subjects:

Civics, International Relations, Politics, Social Activism

Skills:

Activism, Comparative Analysis, Critical Thinking, Empathy, Group Collaboration, Reading Comprehension, Research

Values/Attitudes:

Belief that people can bring about change, Respect for people & human rights

Objectives:

- For participants to reflect on the rights that all children should enjoy and how not having a nationality limits access to other rights.
- For participants to learn about the Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC) and utilise it to advocate for the rights of stateless children around the world.

Materials: Internet access (optional)

Questions by Stateless Children



Why is it that my brothers have documents,
but (like so many other girls) I do not?
– *Zalina, 19 years old, Tajikistan*

How long will I have to wait to have
equal rights with other people? I have been
fighting for this my whole life.
– *Phra, Thailand*



What will happen if I never continue
my education beyond this year?
– *Sheellin, 15 years old, Malaysia*

Does the world care about us?
How much longer must I wait?
– *Andrew, South Africa*



2.3 B: Stand up for your rights

Instructions:

1. In small groups, or individually, read the short story “The Certificate” located below.

Note: this story was written to be performed as a monologue and so is highly suitable to be read out loud!

2. Have a short discussion about “The Certificate”. Some potential questions include:

- a. What questions is the narrator trying to get answered? Why can she not get answers to these questions?
 - *She is trying to figure out how to get her rights that are being denied to her. However, the legal system is very complicated, and no one has really given her a straight answer. Her mum and herself go to many offices but haven't been able to figure out how to get her birth certificate, be recognised as a citizen and gain her rights.*
- b. What are the differences between how men and women are treated in the story?
 - *Women are not able to pass on their nationality to their children, so they need to have a man in their lives if they want their children to easily get a nationality. Without that, children may end up stateless.*
- c. Why is the narrator's mum upset and why does she tell her daughter that her certificates do not matter?
 - *Her mum is upset because she switched her certificates file with her mum's documents file, but all the papers in the documents file have been carefully collected because they are needed to try and get the daughter's birth certificate. Without a birth certificate, the daughter wouldn't be able to get an advanced education even though she was very good at school and gained a lot of certificates.*
- d. What answer would you give the narrator to the last question of the story, which asks, “what in the world makes this [confirmation of her birth] so difficult to admit?”

3. After discussing the story, invite the participants to advocate for children who are stateless. Have the participants pick an issue that affects stateless children (such as inability to take school exams, get healthcare, etc.) that they would like to educate others on.

4. Have either the instructor or the participants choose what kind of product they will make to educate others on the issue facing stateless children. The product could be a postcard, a poster, a cartoon, a comic strip, or a video. Before the participants get started on their product, encourage them to read Neha's success story (located on p. 81-83 in Neha's book) so they can see how dedication and hard work have resulted in Neha regaining her rights. You can also watch Maha Mamo's inspiring story about how she became a citizen for the first time at the age of thirty and is now an activist on statelessness here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RzffChmXKyA>

Further the Activity:

If you are in a school environment, have the students organise a presentation of their work for another class. The students could present to smaller groups or to the entire class at once. You could also display the students' work in the hallway or include it in the school paper. If there is time, “The Certificate” could be performed as a monologue by a student (or students who split it into parts) for the other class before the class presents their own work.

Duration: 60 minutes

Level of complexity: 2

Knowledge/Subjects:

Art, Civics, Literature, Politics, Social Activism

Skills:

Activism, Creativity, Critical thinking, Empathy, Persuasive Argumentation, Reading Comprehension

Values/Attitudes:

Belief that people can bring about change

Objectives:

- For participants to think about what it takes for a stateless child to gain their rights.
- For participants to engage in human rights activism to advocate for the rights of stateless children.

Materials:

Copies or display of the short story “The Certificate”, Art supplies

The Certificate

By Ruwanthie de Chickera

I have a few questions that no one can answer. So, I have stopped asking them.

I don't have a problem understanding things. I understand lots of things. I understand ... things better than most kids my age. My mom says I understand most things better than her.

But she says that probably because ... she can't read, you know... And, of course, because she's my mom... and all...

But hey... It's important to try and understand things for yourself. That is what I think.

Like... I think kids and adults live in different worlds. And it's not that one world has toys and balloons and colours and is full of shorter, lisping people and stuff ... no, it's like a world of different rules. One set of rules for kids and the adults have different rules for the very same thing. It's like kids are taught about a world that adults don't really, really believe in, you know...

Like we learn in school that policemen are good and the governments look after people, and that it's bad to lie and that everyone has equal rights and that every child is special and la di da...

Well, nothing about my life has been like this. It was confusing for a very long time. Then I just decided that adults lie. They lie all the time. Once you figure that out – all this makes sense.

My mom always takes me with her when she has to go to meet people to 'sort out our lives.' This generally means a lot of time spent in queues. And a lot, a lot a lott of time filling out forms and writing letters and then telling our story.... Over and over and over again...

My mother never seems to get tired of telling our story. I am frankly just sick of it. But my mom, she knows how to tell our story – she knows the voice, the expression all of it. It's like switching a button.

'So... tell us your story...'

Click.

Oh man... she's repeated that same old story so many times to so many people ...

I watch her. Her mouth speaks the words but I can see her heart leaving her body. It just leaves.

And she becomes very, very small and very, very ... empty. She's been getting the same answers to the questions she has been asking for all of my life. That is more than 14 years. But she still asks these questions. She asks all of them. Every single one. Just in case one of them will be answered differently.

My mom's a clever lady. She can't read letters but she can read faces. My mother knows what someone is going to say before they say it (maybe even before they know it). This is probably why she talks without stopping. Because she tries to get in as many words as possible before they say what she knew they were going to say all along.

Me? I have just stopped asking the questions which I know no one will answer.

Whenever we go out to 'sort out our lives', we take our 'documents file' with us. And before and after every meeting mama gets me to count the papers in the file and put them all in order. There are 63. Without the photocopies. The documents file is the most important thing in our house. Most important. Mama always says, if there is a bomb or a flood or anything, take the documents file and run.

My mom is dead proud of me. I keep winning all kinds of certificates in school. I have a whole pile of them, for almost every subject. Studying comes easy to me. I remember one of my certificates was for a speech I gave on my country. I spoke of this country like I belonged here...

My teacher said it was brilliant. But she sounded more sad than proud and she couldn't look me in the eye.

When I was smaller, I used to make my own certificates. 'this is to certify that (XX) completed (YY) on this day.' And I would sign it. My mother got certificates for all sorts of things she did for us. My father got certificates for smiling and making jokes. This was to encourage him to do these things. My father is a horrible man. I wish she would leave him. But she says that our problems will be bigger if we were on our own. I don't quite see how. But my mother says that until the laws treat women the same way they treat men, women will always have to keep a man with them.

These are the kind of 'grown up things' that I know about.

I worry about my younger sister. I love her very much and I would not change her for anything else except that this world is so cruel to girls.

My sister is very funny. She has a very funny understanding of the world. She believes that countries are different colours. Because in the world map in her classroom, all the countries are different colours. I tried to explain to her that this was not really how the world was divided. But she imagines that from out of space, if you look at the world, you really see all these different countries in different colours. She loves to tell people that our father came from a green country and our mother is from a purple country, where we live. Where we were born. She tells everyone that this is her country. My sister is still young.

My mom and I fought the other day. I switched the documents file with my certificates file. The documents file has 63 documents – and it's a really good file. But my certificate file now has over 81 certificates. And I am scared I might lose some.

'Idiot child, what are you doing?'

'I need a bigger file mama... I got three more certificates from school this term...'

'The documents file!'

'It's a bigger file, I need a bigger file for my certificates...'

'Your certificates don't matter.'

'You're saying that because you are stupid.'

'You are stupid. All those certificates don't mean a thing ...'

Then she hit me, and she cried.

Later she said she was sorry. She said she had been wrong. My certificates meant I was easily the best in my class, in my school, in the whole district, even in the country ... she said I could one day become the best in the whole world...

And as she spoke I saw her heart leave her body ... And I realised this happens when she cannot bear to hope.

That night... when she was busy... when she was... when my dad and she were arguing ... I found out what I already knew. It was easy. I knew the documents file and certificates file better than anyone. But I went through them both carefully. Just to be sure.

And I was right. And my mother was right. I had certificates that told me I could write and make things and play the flute and run fast and remember better, count better, reason better, the best in my class, school... But I didn't have a certificate that told me I was born. I didn't have a certificate to say this was my country. Without those, none of the rest mattered.

Sometimes I get tired of the lies. I sometimes want to tell my teacher that what she is teaching us about this country, the world, is not true.

Without these certificates you can be treated like you are not really a human being. I have seen this happening to people in the queues. I have seen it happening to my mother. She has not let it happen to me yet.

We are taught by adults to say the truth and to be kind and responsible. But the truth is that I am a human being and kindness is to tell my mother that I will be always treated like I am a human being and responsibility is to give me a certificate saying that I am a human being so that my mother and I can stop standing in queues and filling out forms and repeating our story and being shouted at by strangers and being beaten by my dad... and just stop worrying and just start living because really, really, really, all these problems will stop. They will stop for us, forever. We don't need help with any of our other problems. Any other problem I can figure out how to solve.

I am not afraid. I just need someone to confirm that I am born.

What in the world makes this so difficult to admit?

APPENDIX I: Glossary of key terms

This glossary contains descriptions of terms that might come up during the activities or when reading the book. It aims at ensuring that the instructor has a basic understanding of and is able to answer questions involving these terms thus making the facilitation of the activities easier.

Birth certificate / birth registration

Birth registration is the process of recording the occurrence and characteristics of a birth within a country's civil registry. It establishes the existence of a person under law, and lays the foundation for safeguarding civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. Because a child's place and date of birth, and the identity of the parents, is usually recorded, birth registration can be an important tool to establish a child's nationality. A birth certificate is the document issued to attest birth registration and evidence of the State's legal recognition of the child.

Citizenship

A legal link between an individual and a state (country) that entails specific legal responsibilities and rights. A person who holds citizenship is recognised as a full member of the political community of the state. He/she is described as a "citizen". Citizenship / nationality and citizen / national are used as synonyms in this Teaching Guide as well as in *The Girl Who Lost Her Country*.

Citizenship by birth - *Jus soli & Jus Sanguinis*

There are two main ways in which a child can acquire citizenship at birth: *jus soli* (law of the soil), whereby a child acquires the nationality of the country in which he or she is born and *jus sanguinis* (law of the blood), whereby a child acquires the nationality of the country of nationality of the parent(s). Every country decides which rules to apply in its law – often there is a combination of these two approaches.

Citizenship by naturalisation

The most common way to acquire citizenship after birth (and to change nationality) is through naturalisation. This requires an application initiated by the individual, once they have met certain requirements. Common conditions include a certain period of residence in the country prior to making an application and proving knowledge of the official language and/or its laws and customs.

Convention on the Rights of the Child

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) is an important agreement by countries who have promised to protect children's rights. It was adopted in 1989 and explains who children are, all their rights, and the responsibilities of governments. The CRC affirms that every child has the right to a nationality. A Committee of experts meets in Geneva several times a year to monitor whether governments are doing enough to protect the rights in the CRC.

Discrimination

Discrimination is unfair treatment of one particular person or group of people. Usually the different treatment is because of the person's sex, religion, nationality, ethnicity (culture), race, or other personal traits. Discrimination based on race is called racism. Discrimination prevents people from doing things that other people can do freely. It can happen in many ways and in many areas of life: at work, in public, and at school. Inequality and discrimination are causes of statelessness (think of the example of a nationality law that does not allow women to pass on their nationality on the same terms as men and how this leaves children like Neha stateless). Further, stateless persons face discrimination and inequality because of their statelessness.

Displacement

Millions of children are on the move. Some are driven from their homes by conflict, poverty or climate change; others leave in the hope of finding a better, safer life. (Forced) displacement is the involuntary or coerced movement of a person or people away from their home or even across an international border.

Ethnic minority

An ethnic minority is a group of people who differ in race or colour or in national, religious, or cultural origin from the dominant group – often the majority population – of the country in which they live. Sometimes, minorities experience discrimination due to their (perceived) differences and they may face difficulties acquiring citizenship. It is estimated that 75% of the world's stateless people belong to minority groups.

Foundling

A foundling is a baby or child who has been abandoned and whose parents are not known. They have been 'found' by someone else. Foundlings need extra help to acquire citizenship because the identity of their parents is not known (important for jus sanguinis) and it may also not be evident where they were born (important for jus soli). Countries can adopt special rules in their law to ensure that foundlings acquire citizenship and are not left stateless.

Human Rights

Human rights are rights inherent to all human beings, regardless of race, sex, nationality, ethnicity, language, religion, or any other status. Human rights include the right to life and liberty, freedom from slavery and torture, freedom of opinion and expression, the right to work and education, and many more. Everyone is entitled to these rights, without discrimination. There is also a special set of human rights specifically for children, often known as "child rights".

Country

A country refers to a territory with its own borders, people, government and laws. Countries are also often referred to as "states".

Nationality

See Citizenship.

NGO

NGO stands for Non-Government Organisation. This means that it is a group that is not part of the government, but it often does some of the things that governments do, like helping with health care, education, human rights or providing clean drinking water. NGOs are independent of government and are usually not-for-profit organisations with a societal mission.

Passport

An official document issued by a government, certifying the holder's identity and citizenship and entitling them to travel under its protection to and from foreign countries. While citizenship is a rather abstract notion – something that you cannot see or touch – a passport is a tangible document that can act as proof of citizenship.

Racism

Racism is the belief that a particular race is superior or inferior to another, that a person's social and moral traits are predetermined by his or her inborn biological characteristics. See also Discrimination.

Refugee

A refugee is a person who seeks protection in another country. A refugee is forced to leave their own country for various reasons. For example, because their lives, safety or freedom are threatened by violence and danger.

Stateless

A stateless person is someone who does not hold any citizenship. The official international law definition, found in a United Nations treaty adopted in 1954 is "a person who is not considered as a national by any State under the operation of its law". Some people are stateless because they fail to acquire any citizenship when they are born; others are stateless because they lost their citizenship and did not acquire a new one.

United Nations (UN)

The UN was founded in 1945 and is an international organisation which works to maintain international peace and security, develop friendly relations among nations and achieve international co-operation in solving international problems. Today, 193 countries are members of the UN.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)

On 10 December 1948, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights or UDHR. The Preamble and 30 Articles of the Declaration proclaimed - for the first time in history - the universal, inalienable and indivisible human rights. The Declaration says that “everyone has the right to a nationality”.

APPENDIX II: Warm up Activity

Can we do it?

Duration: 5-10 minutes

Objectives:

- For participants to think about how our ability to do certain things is challenged from different restrictions.

Materials: Slips of paper with the items in #3 of the instructions written on them

Instructions:

1. Divide the participants into four groups of around 4-7 people in each group (if you have more than 28 people you can have more than four groups)
2. Assign each group a number between 1-4 and then give them the following rules
 - a. Group 1 can talk and use their hands
 - b. Group 2 can only talk (have them put their hands behind their backs)
 - c. Group 3 can only use their hands
 - d. Group 4 can neither talk nor use their hands (have them put their hands behind their backs)
3. Give each group a sheet of paper that says what they have to do as a group (this way they can't figure things out based on what other groups are doing)
 - a. Order yourselves by age with the oldest person on the left and the youngest person on the right
 - b. Order yourselves alphabetically by last name from right (A) to left (Z)
 - c. Order yourselves by height from tallest on the right to shortest on the left
 - d. Order yourselves alphabetically by first name from left (Z) to right (A)
4. Set a timer for between 1-2 minutes, once the instructor says start the groups have only that time to attempt their task

Alternatives:

If you have time, have each group complete each task (so rotate the papers around to each group).

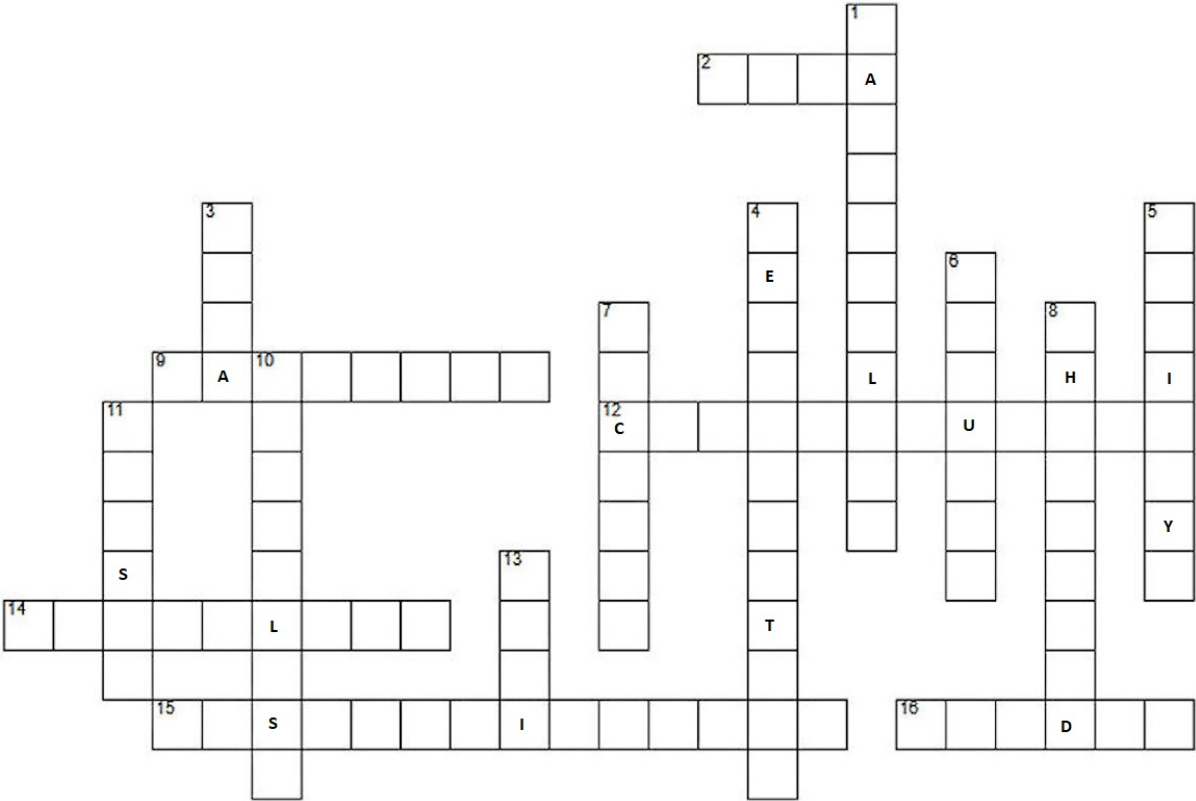
To make it more challenging, have the group pick one person as the leader of the group. The leader is the only one who can see the piece of paper on the task their group is to complete.

5. After time is up, have the participants discuss the process of completing the task based upon their restrictions (or lack thereof). Some potential discussion questions include:
 - a. How did you communicate when you couldn't talk?
 - b. What was the most difficult part of the activity? Why?
 - c. How do you think this activity relates to citizenship and belonging?
 - i. If a person does not have citizenship, then they do not have the same rights as everyone else. This is like not having their hands to complete the activities we just did. It is harder and more difficult to live everyday life if a person does not have citizenship.
 - ii. If a person does not have citizenship, then they can also feel as if they do not belong as they are not recognised as equally as everyone else is. This can be like not being able to have your voice heard as certain groups in the exercise weren't able to talk.

APPENDIX III: Wrap up Activities

Crossword Puzzle

Now here's a puzzle! Can you fill out this crossword by answering the clues? All answers can be found in The Girl Who Lost Her Country!



ACROSS	DOWN
<p>2 One of Europe's oldest and largest ethnic minority groups. Some of them are stateless.</p> <p>9 A document that allows you to leave your country and enter another country, and to return back to your own country.</p> <p>12 The set of main laws of a country, that all other laws must follow. These usually include everyone's rights in the country.</p> <p>14 A child who is found somewhere, whose parents are unknown. These children can be at risk of statelessness if there are no good safeguards to protect against statelessness.</p> <p>15 Unfair and bad treatment of people based on certain qualities of theirs, such as their skin colour, gender, religion or disability.</p> <p>16 To identify as a girl/woman or a boy/man you are often asked "what is your _____?"</p>	<p>1 Everyone has a right to this. We should all have the _____ of a country with which we have a strong bond, for example, because we were born there, our parents are from there and/or we live there.</p> <p>3 The currency (money) of Bangladesh.</p> <p>4 Entering basic information about someone – usually on an important occasion like birth or marriage - in a system of public records.</p> <p>5 A minority group who have lived in Myanmar for centuries but are not recognised as nationals of Myanmar and are treated very badly.</p> <p>6 Someone who is treated so badly in their own country, that they have to run away and seek safety in another country.</p> <p>7 A vehicle with two wheels that moves with a pedalling movement.</p> <p>8 The period of time before adulthood.</p> <p>10 A person who is not recognised by any country as its national, is a _____ person.</p> <p>11 An exercise to obtain important information about all the people living in a country.</p> <p>13 A spicy, sweet and milky tea commonly drunk in South Asia.</p>

Neha's Great Statelessness Quiz

So, you've read and learned a lot about statelessness, nationality and rights. Test your knowledge by answering Neha's questions in her great statelessness quiz...

Question 1 – Maths (bet you didn't see that coming did you?)

While no one knows exactly how many stateless people there are in the world, the United Nations has estimated that a child is born stateless every ten minutes. Look at the clock now, and look at the clock again when you finish this quiz, how many babies would have been born stateless in that time?

But here's the question. If one child is born stateless every 10 minutes, how many children are born stateless:

1. in one day?
2. in one week?

Question 2 – Maths again! (sorry)

There are at least 50 countries in the world which deny women equal nationality rights as men (to keep their own nationality, or to pass it on to someone else). Of these, 25 countries do not give women equal rights to pass on nationality to their children. There are roughly 200 countries in the world (there are really 195, but for this problem, let's imagine there were 200).

Now, can you, figure out both as a fraction and as a percentage of the total number of countries in the world (200):

1. the number of countries which deny women equal nationality rights.
2. the number of countries which deny women the equal right to pass on their nationality to their children.

Question 3 – causes of statelessness.

Which of these is not a cause of statelessness?

1. A country breaks up in to two or more new countries. Everyone loses the nationality of the old country, but not everyone gains a nationality of a new country.
2. A country makes a bad law, which says that people from a certain minority cannot be its nationals, even though these people have always lived there, for many generations.
3. A baby is born, but the baby's birth is not registered. However, the law of the country in which the baby was born says that all people born in the country are nationals.
4. A mother gives birth to a baby, but the law in her country says that women cannot pass on their nationality to their children.

Question 4 – know your rights

Which of these statements about rights is wrong?

1. every child has the right to play
2. every child has the right to eat ice cream every day
3. every child has the right to a nationality
4. every child has a right to be safe.

Question 5 – Geography

I met the Bajau Laut in my travels. They are a minority in Malaysia, who live in a very special way. What habitat do the Bajau Laut occupy?

1. water
2. mountains
3. desserts
4. space



Question 6 – More Geography!

My travels took me to many countries. I started marking them on this world map in red, but never finished naming the countries I'd marked. Can you finish the job for me? The countries are:

1. Nepal
2. The Netherlands
3. Sri Lanka
4. Macedonia
5. Kenya
6. The Dominican Republic
7. Cote d'Ivoire
8. Bangladesh
9. Malaysia
10. Germany

Question 7 – Still More Geography

The map also marks ten other countries in yellow, all of which have stateless populations. Can you name them too? The countries are:

1. Myanmar
2. Latvia
3. Thailand
4. Sweden
5. Kuwait

6. Saudi Arabia
7. Russia
8. South Africa
9. Madagascar
10. The United Kingdom
11. United States
12. Australia
13. Chile
14. Brazil

Can you do research and think of other countries with large stateless populations? Name them and mark them on the map!

Question 8 – Discrimination

We have learnt a lot about discrimination. Which of the below, is an example of discrimination?

1. My school friend's father gave him a really nice present on his birthday. It was a really cool magic set. But on my birthday, he didn't give me a present.
2. We had our sports meet the other day. There were separate races for girls and boys. The girls and boys did not race each other.
3. We had a test today in class. It was very unfair. I hadn't studied and so I didn't know any of the answers. My friend had studied and she did very well.
4. One of my classmates is disabled. He can't walk, he has a wheelchair. We went on a class trip recently, and he couldn't join us, because the bus we went in had really small doors which couldn't fit his wheelchair.

Question 9 – Birth Registration

You are asked to design a new birth certificate, to include the most important information that is needed to figure out what nationality the baby should have. Which two items from the below list, must you include?

1. The place in which the baby was born
2. The number one song, the day the baby was born
3. The identities of the baby's parents
4. The colour of the baby's hair

Question 10 – Nationality

Which of these documents is proof that you have a nationality?

1. Your passport
2. Your bus ticket
3. Your school library card
4. Your birth certificate

Well done! You've finished the quiz! Now you can quiz someone else?

And remember to check the time. How many children have been born stateless while you answered these questions?

APPENDIX IV: Get to know an author - Deirdre Brennan

Deirdre is one of the two authors of *The Girl Who Lost Her Country*. She wrote the book together with Amal de Chickera, a co-Director of the Institute on Statelessness and Inclusion, while she was doing a Fellowship with the organisation. Find out more about what drew her attention to this issue and how she experienced writing a book about it in this interview with Deirdre...

1. When did you first learn about statelessness?

In 2011, when I just turned 21, I interned at an anti-human trafficking charity in northern Thailand. The charity is based at the border between Thailand and Myanmar and they run a school for children who, because of their citizenship status, cannot access mainstream schools and universities. I met children and young adults the same age as me who explained to me what statelessness was, and how it was impacting their lives and their ability to enjoy the freedoms I was privileged to. Because of them, I've remained committed to working on this issue ever since.

2. What was the hardest part about writing the book? The nicest/most interesting part?

After years of talking about statelessness to other adults I found it quite hard not to use words that were too big or boring! So, at first, I found it difficult to get into the mind of a kid and to know what they would enjoy reading. I thought about my favourite books as a kid, and how I always loved reading about what food the characters ate. Then I remembered my trip to see Neha and her family at their home a few years ago, and how Deepti, Neha's mother, lay out a spread of foods from around the world, everything from samosas to potato salad. She said she loved cooking foods from different countries because it was a way for her daughters to be able to travel without citizenship. I decided to centre some of the stories in the book around a shared meal or drink, and I ended up having lots of fun researching foods from different parts of the world, while doing my best to describe them in temptingly delicious ways!

3. What do you hope children will learn from the book/take away from the book?

I hope this story sparks a curiosity in those who read it, a curiosity to learn more about statelessness, to investigate whether there are stateless populations in their home country, and whether there are local organisations they can support to help end statelessness.

4. Do you have a nationality and if yes, which one?

Yes, I'm Irish, although I live in Australia. Irish citizenship entitles me to apply for visas to live, work or even study in different countries, a privilege sadly not afforded to millions of people around the world.

5. When you were in middle school (11-14 years old) what did you want to be when you grow up?

I wanted to be a car saleswoman!! This still makes me laugh, especially because I don't even own one car now, never-mind a shop full of them.

6. Planning on writing any more books?

I would love to write a sequel to the *Girl Who Lost Her Country*. There are many more stories of stateless children that I think deserve to be told, including those of the children I met living at the border of northern Thailand all those years ago. Deepti, the mother of Neha and Nikita, said she would love to read part two, and we joked about how it would follow the girls as they enjoyed their newly received citizenship holidaying on a tropical island somewhere!

APPENDIX V: #IBelong Campaign

The #IBelong Campaign was launched by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in 2014. It aims to end statelessness within a decade, so by 2024. Below are some images developed to promote the #IBelong Campaign and encourage people all over the world to get involved in making it a success. For more about the Campaign, visit www.unhcr.org/ibelong.



#IBELONG

Join us in our campaign to end statelessness



**10 MILLION PEOPLE IN THE WORLD
HAVE NO NATIONALITY**

Discrimination is the biggest
cause of statelessness.

In cooperation with
**UNITED COLORS
OF BENETTON**

#IBELONG

Join us in our campaign to end statelessness



**10 MILLION PEOPLE IN THE WORLD
HAVE NO NATIONALITY**

Without nationality, women and children are more
vulnerable to trafficking and exploitation.

In cooperation with
**UNITED COLORS
OF BENETTON**

#IBELONG

10 MILLION PEOPLE IN THE
WORLD HAVE NO NATIONALITY

© UNHCR



#IBELONG

Join us in our campaign to end statelessness



**10 MILLION PEOPLE IN THE WORLD
HAVE NO NATIONALITY**

Without a nationality, people can remain
invisible from cradle to grave.

In cooperation with
**UNITED COLORS
OF BENETTON**

#IBELONG

Join us in our campaign to end statelessness



**10 MILLION PEOPLE IN THE WORLD
HAVE NO NATIONALITY**

Statelessness is often passed from
generation to generation.

In cooperation with
**UNITED COLORS
OF BENETTON**

#IBELONG

Join us in our campaign to end statelessness



**10 MILLION PEOPLE IN THE WORLD
HAVE NO NATIONALITY**

In 27 countries mothers cannot pass
their nationality to their children.

In cooperation with
**UNITED COLORS
OF BENETTON**

APPENDIX VI: Letter to a stateless child

Dear friend,

We are writing to you because you are one of very many children in the world who are stateless. Because you have no nationality, the world has treated you unfairly. This is not your fault, or your parents'. Everyone is equal, and should be treated equally. We firmly believe this, and have spent many years working to achieve equality for all people.

The situation you are in may be like eight-year-old Elsa's, who was born in the Dominican Republic. Her mother was born in Haiti but has lived in the Dominican Republic for many years; her grandmother is a citizen of the Dominican Republic. But Elsa is not recognised as a Dominican. She will only be able to go to school until she is 10; after that she will need identity papers.

Or it may be a situation like Ivan's, born in Kosovo, the son of a Croatian mother and a Serbian father whose identity papers were destroyed during the war. When Ivan was very sick, the hospital refused to admit him because he did not have identity papers.

Or it may be like Subina's, who was born in Nepal. Her mother was not married. In Nepal, it is difficult for an unmarried woman to pass her nationality to her child. Subina told us: "I have always felt the same with my friends until the day when I had to fill up my form for School Leaving Certificate's board exam... all my friend's forms were accepted but not mine."

Or like many other children who have been made stateless for many other reasons.

But remember, you are unique and special. Your story is your own. You are the future of the world and you will be able to do great things, particularly if you are allowed to reach your potential.

You probably ask if the world cares about you. How much longer must you wait? And what can you do to make the world understand the situation you are in?

We believe you have been let down. It is very unfair that you are treated in this way. Everyone has the human right to have a nationality - to fully belong to a country. This means that every boy and girl should have identity papers, including a birth certificate. All children have this right, no matter who they are, where they live, what their parents do (or whether they have parents), what language they speak, what their religion is, whether they are a boy or a girl, what their culture is, whether they have a disability, and whether they are rich or poor. This is a human right for every child, promised in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and in the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

But making this happen - achieving equality - is a battle which has had to be fought over and over again by many people in every country, including our own.

One of our grandmothers lost her citizenship when she married a man from another country. Another of our grandparents was stateless because the government of their country did not count Jews as citizens. The parents of another of us took in refugee boys in Europe who had to leave their own countries because they were being punished by a dictator. And all three of us have dear friends who lost their citizenship, or are themselves stateless now.

There is no excuse for you to suffer because of who your parents are or what your religion is or whether your mother could pass her citizenship to you. You have human rights, and you should be able to enjoy them.

We want you to know that there are people trying to stop statelessness happening, and to change the situation of those like you who are stateless now. It is frustrating, most of all for you, that there are not yet enough of us. But we do see signs of progress, with more people coming on board and greater understanding of why children are stateless, and what it means to have no nationality.

The United Nations is asking countries to change their laws, and some countries are beginning to do this. Ten refugee and stateless athletes led the opening parade at the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro, flying the Olympic flag, marching to the Olympic anthem, receiving a standing ovation by the entire stadium, honouring their talents and their courage.

Meanwhile we are awed by so many of you who are facing your situation with courage. We promise to continue working for you, and to encourage others to do so as well.

Rachel Brett, Stefanie Grant, Linda K. Kerber

APPENDIX VII: Letter to a government official

[Your name]

[Your (school's) address]

[Name of the official]

[Office or Email Address]

[Date]

Subject: [Sentence summarising the topic / main message of the letter]

Dear [Name Member of Parliament],

I am/We are writing to you because I am/we are concerned about the issue of statelessness, especially stateless children in [your country, area, continent etc]. At school, I/we learned about the issue of childhood statelessness and I/we think the government should consider childhood statelessness as a serious problem because it affects many children across the globe. I would like to ask you to provide me with information on what the situation regarding statelessness is in [your country, area, continent etc] and what the parliament/city council do to address the issue.

International law defines a “stateless person” as someone who is not considered as a national or a citizen by any State. Worldwide, an estimated 15 million people are stateless. This means that, [Explain in your own words what statelessness is and what impact statelessness can have on a person's life].

I would thus like to know the situation in [your country, area, continent etc]. What are the most crucial statelessness/nationality matters in [your country etc.]? For instance, how many stateless persons live in [your country etc.]? Why are they stateless? Are there specific communities affected by statelessness in [your country etc.]?

[Request the Member of Parliament to explain how the government is addressing the issue and explain the urgent need to resolve statelessness]

[Politely ask the Member of Parliament if he or she can respond to your request and handle this issue with care and a great sense of responsibility]

Yours Sincerely,

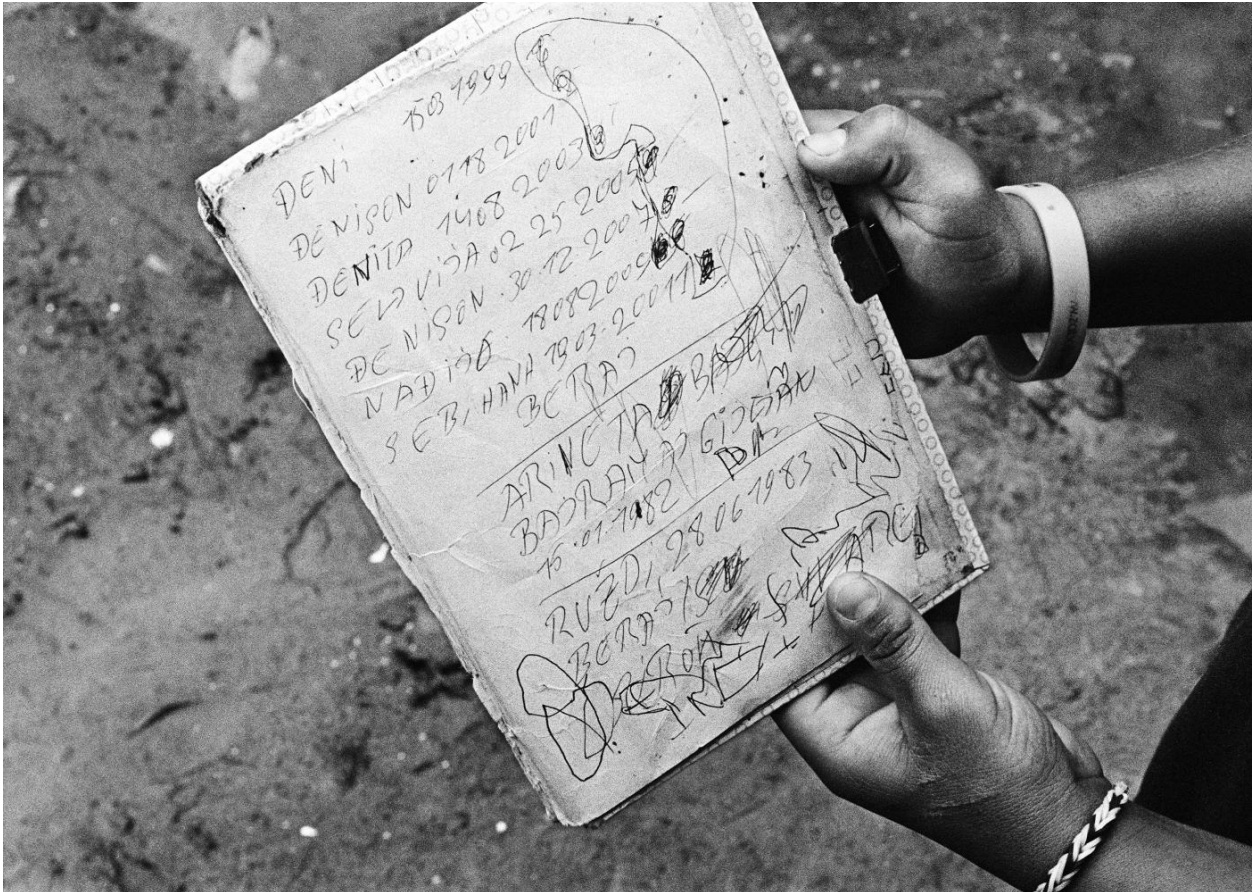
[Your name]

APPENDIX VIII: Greg Constantine's photos

1. Côte d'Ivoire



2. Serbia



3. Malaysia



4. Dominican Republic



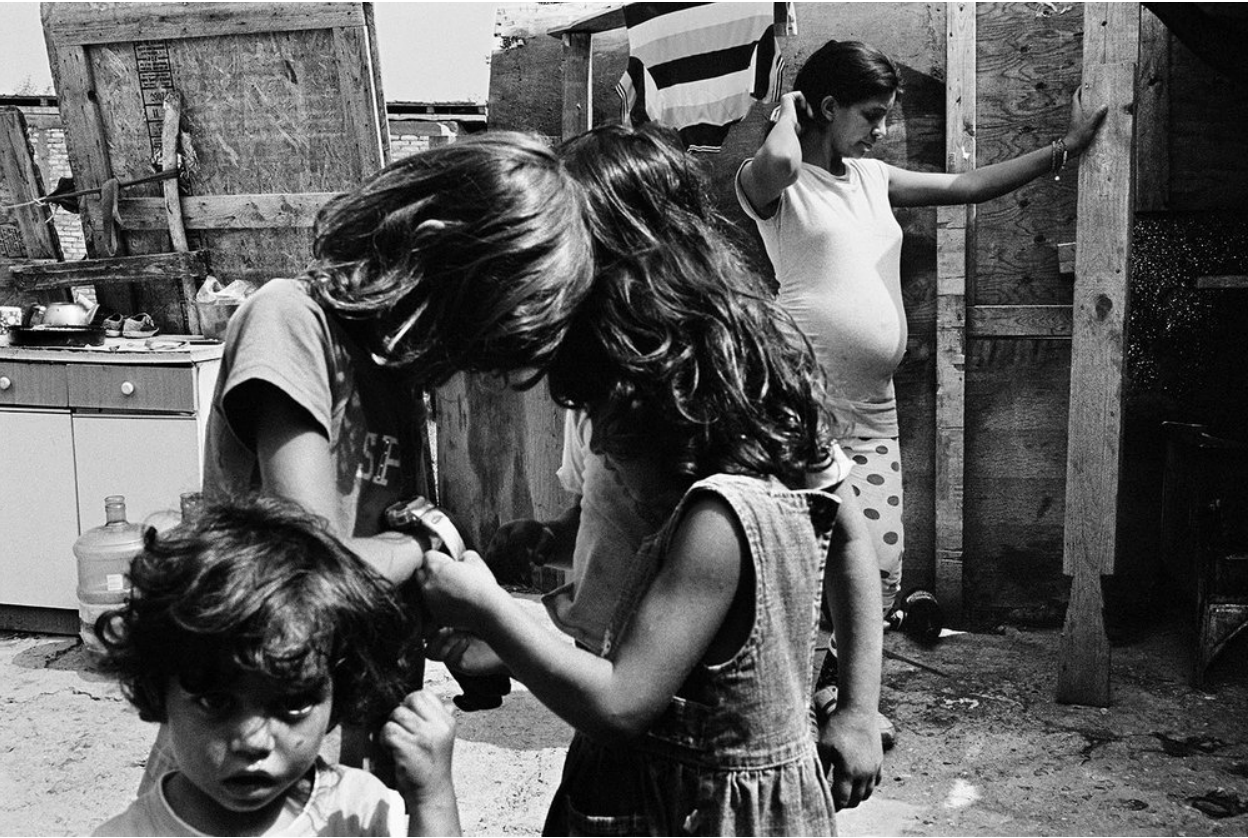
5. Kuwait



6. Malaysia



7. Serbia



APPENDIX IX: Greg Constantine's letter

I remember travelling to the Ivory Coast; it was early 2010. I travelled all around that amazing country, meeting with stateless people who struggled every day. Most were born in the Ivory Coast, but were not recognised as citizens. And with that, they were denied documents which paralysed them, preventing them from being able to move forward with their lives, find jobs, education and a sense of belonging to this country they called home. Toward the end of my time in the Ivory Coast, I visited an orphanage in Abidjan. The orphanage was home to many children who had been given away at birth, some because they had a disability, or orphaned because their parents had passed away. At the time, the laws in the Ivory Coast did not provide nationality to children who were 'foundlings': children who could not provide evidence to establish who their parents were. As a result, the child would travel through life stateless.

One of these children was eleven years old. He had lived in the orphanage all his life. I remember talking briefly with him and when I took his photograph, he said something to me in French. I don't speak or understand French. I assumed he said something about me taking his photograph. But the translator told me the young boy had said, "You see me."

It was an incredibly powerful moment. One that I will never forget. In so many ways, children are the most silent and invisible victims of statelessness. And without a doubt, children have the most to lose by statelessness as well. They represent futures denied. Potential denied. A wealth of amazing contributions to society denied.

Stateless children must rely on others for their voice, and this includes other children. Other children who know what it is like to go to school, enjoy their studies and discover the excitement that comes from learning and having an education. Other children who also have dreams but live day to day with the opportunity to make those dreams come true. Other children, regardless of where they are in the world, who believe it is important to say "All children deserve a birth certificate. All children deserve the right to citizenship."

Adults have a crucial role to play too. Adults who recognise the importance of children receiving every opportunity life can give them, so they may do better than we have.

All children deserve a future.

"We see you!"

By Greg Constantine

First published in the Institute on Statelessness and Inclusion report "The World's Stateless: Children" in 2017 (available at: <http://children.worldsstateless.org/random-pages/we-see-you.html>)

APPENDIX X: News articles on statelessness

Article A. Living in a sea of trash: Sabah's stateless children face bleak future

By AMIR YUSOF

Tuesday, 28 May 2019

These stateless Bajau Laut children cannot go to a public school or find a job.

SANDAKAN, Sabah: On most afternoons, Hassan Suhidin and his younger brother, Khairul, would climb down the rickety wooden planks of their village into the rancid shallow waters underneath.

The coastal areas surrounding the island, Pulau Berhala, were covered in garbage, animal carcasses and human waste, due to the absence of a waste management system. Seemingly oblivious to the murky waters, the brothers would tread around barefooted collecting plastic bottles, wooden planks or metal sheets – anything that could potentially be sold for pocket money.



Hassan Suhidin and his younger brother, Khairul, collect plastic, wood and metal pieces along the beach below their home. (Photo: Amir Yusof)



Farm animals owned by the Bajau Laut community are also impacted by the trash situation in Kampung Berhala. (Photo: Amir Yusof)

“We never really got used to the smell, but we don’t have a choice,” said Hassan, 12.

“What do we do with them? We keep them and in time of need when we have no more food, we’ll sell them and use the money,” he added.

The pair are among hundreds of stateless children on Pulau Berhala forced to grow up amid harsh living conditions. The island, located about 10km off the coast of Sandakan, is home to about 5,000 people. It is not clear how many among them are Malaysian citizens.

In the recent Sandakan by-election, just over 300 people cast their votes.

The ethnic Bajau Laut people, or sea gypsies fled to Sabah in the 1970s to escape the war between the Philippine government and the independent movement by the Moro National Liberation Front, resettling in many parts of the state such as Lahad Datu, Semporna and Sandakan.

In the eyes of the Malaysian government, they do not exist.

A MOTHER'S TEARS

Like their parents or grandparents, the offspring of these migrants have no legal status to work, live, marry or buy a house on Sabah land. And for Khairul and Hassan's mother, who only wanted to be known as Asmida, she is constantly reminded that she cannot give her children a better future. This for her, is a source of regret.



Ms Asmida holding her daughter Bulan outside their home on Pulau Berhala. Bulan's friends regularly visit her house to play with her toys. (Photo: Amir Yusof)

Ms Asmida's husband, Mr Suhidin, works as a fisherman and he earns around RM500 (US\$119.28) a month, which is less than half the minimum wage of RM1,100 set by the government. Her two sons spend their afternoons collecting waste to be sold in Sandakan in case the family's food situation gets desperate.

"I never wanted them to be rubbish collectors. I wanted them to go to school, get a good job in the city and live in proper houses," she said, holding her youngest daughter Bulan in her lap.

Bulan spends her time playing with makeshift toys, cobbled together by plastic bottle caps and discarded cigarette butts her brothers have brought home.

"For Bulan, I want her to be a doctor. But I can't even promise that I will send her to a proper school. Have I failed her as a mother?" added the 30-year-old as she struggled to hold back tears.

PULAU BERHALA'S ONLY SCHOOL: TWO TEACHERS, 236 STUDENTS

In two years' time, Bulan will attend the village's only educational institution, Sekolah 3M. The school was set up by the Malaysian military, which has a strategic base at the island to patrol the waters and protect Sabah from militants coming from southern Philippines.

The school aims to equip stateless children with the basic educational skills of reading, writing and counting, but it does not offer its students the opportunity to take national examinations or to graduate with any certificate that will help them apply for a job.



This small building accommodates more than 200 students from the age of four to 17 on weekday mornings. (Photo: Amir Yusof)



Sergeant Muhd Amran Jaafar has taught the children at Pulau Berhala's 3M school for five years. He was trained as a soldier but has now become a full-time teacher. (Photo: Amir Yusof)

The school, built in 2010, is attended by students aged four to 17, and is located next to the Pulau Berhala army camp.

One of the school's two teachers is Sergeant Muhd Amran Jaafar, who told CNA that his objective was to give the village children just a rudimentary level of education.

“We only teach the basic subjects: the Malay language, maths, Islamic studies. We do teach a bit of English, but just how to read basic words and count. We do not have the resources to do any more than that,” said Mr Amran.

He explained that the ratio of teachers to students was too high, and that it was unrealistic for the school to meet the needs of every single child. “There are 236 students here and just two teachers. The other soldiers have their own military responsibilities so it’s just us two. But we do our best,” he said.

Sergeant Amran, who has been teaching at the school full-time since 2013, said he realised that his students do not have “bright futures”, as compared to other students with citizenship who travel from the island to the mainland to attend classes. However, he noted that many of his students are able to apply some of the skills they learn in school in everyday life.

“Their future is not bright, and I am also resigned to the fact that this is the situation. We help them on humanitarian grounds, and I’m proud to see them growing up to be responsible adults,” he said.

When they reach the age of 18, Sergeant Amran said that many of them head to Sandakan to work illegally. Their citizenship status does not allow them to officially hold a job, but they are an important part of Sandakan’s economy, working in industries such as tourism, construction and fishing.

“WE MUST NOT LET THEM ENTER SABAH”: CHIEF MINISTER

The trend of undocumented migrants working and living illegally on Sabah soil was a hot button issue during the Sandakan by-election held earlier this month.

During his campaign speech in support of Democratic Action Party (DAP) candidate Vivian Wong, Sabah Chief Minister Shafie Apdal said that the state government must not allow any more migrants from the Philippines to enter illegally and live on Sabah soil.

“We must make sure they are kept away from the border, and not let what happened in the 1970s repeat itself. If they come here and live, life will be difficult for all of us,” he said to loud cheers.

Mr Shafie also joked that he might take a leaf out of US President Donald Trump’s book and build a huge metal gate at the border between the two countries. “That’s going to be expensive, to build such a gate,” he said, drawing laughter from the crowd. “But we must cordon them (off) and not allow them to enter Sabah,” he added.

Some residents of Pulau Berhala told CNA that they feel unwelcome when they visit the mainland to buy supplies.

Ms Salbiah Gapur, who goes to Sandakan’s public market with her infant daughter to buy groceries regularly, recalled how they have been insulted by the locals when they visit Sandakan.

The pair make the 20-minute journey in a crammed passenger boat twice a week. Each time they travel, Ms Salbiah holds her daughter’s head near a window for ventilation as the boat’s exhaust fumes fill the passenger cabin. But her journey typically does not improve when she reaches the mainland.

“(The locals) can easily tell that we are Bajau Laut people, from the way we dress and talk,” she said. “And they don’t hide (their disdain). They call us outsiders and illegal immigrants. My daughter has not learnt to talk and she has already been subjected to such abuse,” said the 26-year-old.



Ms Salbiah and her infant daughter on a passenger boat travelling from Sandakan to her home in Pulau Berhala. (Photo: Amir Yusof)

RESIDENTS TURN TO NEW MP

Those on Pulau Berhala hope the authorities can do more to improve their living conditions.

Ms Syamsiah Kamal, who is mother to six young children said the government should resolve the trash problem and the lack of basic electricity for residents. “We don’t have any trash system. The sea is our garbage dump, and that’s not hygienic for us and the animals we own,” she added.



The village do not have a garbage disposal system for its 5,000 residents. (Photo: Amir Yusof)

Furthermore, the lack of electricity supply to the island means that she has to cook in a makeshift kitchen outside her wooden hut. The small space has beach sand on the floor and a small zinc roof.

When CNA visited the kitchen, Ms Syamsiah was boiling flour to make porridge for dinner on her wooden stove. But the black soot emanating from the stove left her two children, Naqib and Jumaat, who were playing marbles outside, coughing wildly.

“If I don’t cook this food, they’ll starve. But when I cook, it’s also not a healthy situation with the smoke all over the place,” she said.

“But I’m confident that the Sabah government will help us, if god wills it. We are not citizens, but we are still part of the community after all,” added Ms Syamsiah.



Ms Vivian Wong’s campaign posters were plastered across Pulau Berhala during the by-election campaign. (Photo: Amir Yusof)

Sergeant Amran pointed out that the army and non-profit organisations would sometimes organise mass beach clean-up events to help clear up the waste on the coasts of Pulau Berhala. But according to Ms Syamsiah, the problem is that many of the villagers are not educated on how to put aside their trash responsibly, and there is no system for any official to collect the trash and dispose of them properly.

“My children are sick often and every month I have to take them to the clinic on the mainland to see the doctor. I think it’s because of the trash situation,” she said.



Ms Syamsiah cooking her children’s dinner. (Photo: Amir Yusof)

Ms Syamsiah also said she is glad that Ms Wong of DAP won the by-election and is optimistic that more educational facilities will be developed on the island. On her part, Ms Wong told CNA that she wants to build a community centre on Pulau Berhala, even though not everyone is a Malaysian there.

The centre will host classes to teach the children basic school subjects, moral values, as well as life skills, such as how to dispose trash responsibly, said the new lawmaker.

“I do understand that (extending help to the Bajau Laut community) is a very sensitive topic and it is not fair for me to give equal rights to them as the Sabahans who are citizens,” said Ms Wong, who is a former teacher.

“But from a humanitarian point of view, I think they should be given the minimum level of education, so that we don’t form a generation of children that resort to crime like stealing to earn a living in Sandakan.”

Source: CNA/am(tx)

Article B. Stateless kids causing a headache for Sabah authorities

By MUGUNTAN VANAR

Sunday, 09 Feb 2020

KOTA KINABALU: A group of sea gypsies or Pelahu children are posing a “headache” for authorities as they beg and mess around with the facilities around the city centre. The children, numbering about 30, have been rounded up and lectured about their activities but to no avail as some of their parents were also going about begging along the streets with authorities having little power or laws to act.



Children of sea gypsies taking a dip at Kota Kinabalu’s Gaya Street fountain that triggered a social media storm

Commenting on recent viral photographs and video of the children bathing at a water fountain at the city’s popular Gaya Street, Kota Kinabalu city mayor Datuk Nordin Siman said that the children have been rounded up many times in the past and were given counselling over their act.

“Their parents were also called in and told to watch their children’s activities but they just get back to their begging after awhile,” he said when contacted on Sunday (Feb 9).

It is understood that neither the state Welfare Department nor the Immigration Department can provide assistance or deport them as they are stateless.

“We are in a dilemma with handling the problem.

“They are not involved in crime or any criminal intimidation. The problem is more of a nuisance and gives our city a bad image. We are having a problem keeping them from misbehaving on our streets,” he said.

“We have recorded the details of the children. They are about 30 of them who are loitering the streets, but it could be more,” he added.

He said operations to round up the children were done regularly but the cycle of “catch and then release” was not solving the problem. Nordin said that the sea gypsy population has been slowly growing around the city since 2003 when state authorities acted against two families living under a bridge in Sembulan here. They were sent back to the state’s east coast.

“We believe it is the same families and their number has been growing over time,” he said, adding that most of them now lived in stilt houses at the Sembulan water village near town or Kg Pondo in Pulau Gaya off the city.

Nordin said based on a 2019 census, the city identified 399 adult Pelahus and 740 children in the city. In the latest viral video of the children jumping into the fountain, he said they were there for three minutes and when city enforcement arrived, they had fled. Pelahus are a group of sea nomads who have been plying the Sulu Sea between Sabah and the southern Philippines.

Some hold Malaysian identification documents while others only have letters to state that they belong to the Pelahu community.

Article C. Thousands find themselves stateless in the Dominican Republic

By WHITNEY PHILLIPS (Cronkite Borderlands Initiative)

SANTO DOMINGO, DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

While politicians in at least 14 states are arguing the merits of birthright citizenship in the U.S., this country is already ruling out citizenship for thousands of people.

Over the past seven years, the Dominican government has re-written its Constitution, re-interpreted old laws and passed new ones, effectively eliminating birthright citizenship. Today, a child born in the Dominican Republic is no longer automatically a citizen; citizenship goes only to those who can prove they have at least one documented parent.

Further, vigorous enforcement of the new rules means that hundreds of thousands of people, mostly of Haitian descent, are finding it increasingly difficult to get access to their birth certificates, which are required to get married, obtain a high school diploma, start a business, get a driver's license or passport or even sign up for a phone plan. It is also needed to get a cédula, the national identity card that is essential for voting and conducting a licensed business activity such as banking.

Without proper documentation, these residents have no legal status in the Dominican Republic, and many who have been in this country for years are unable to prove they are legal citizens of Haiti, either.

They are, in effect, stateless – citizens of no country.

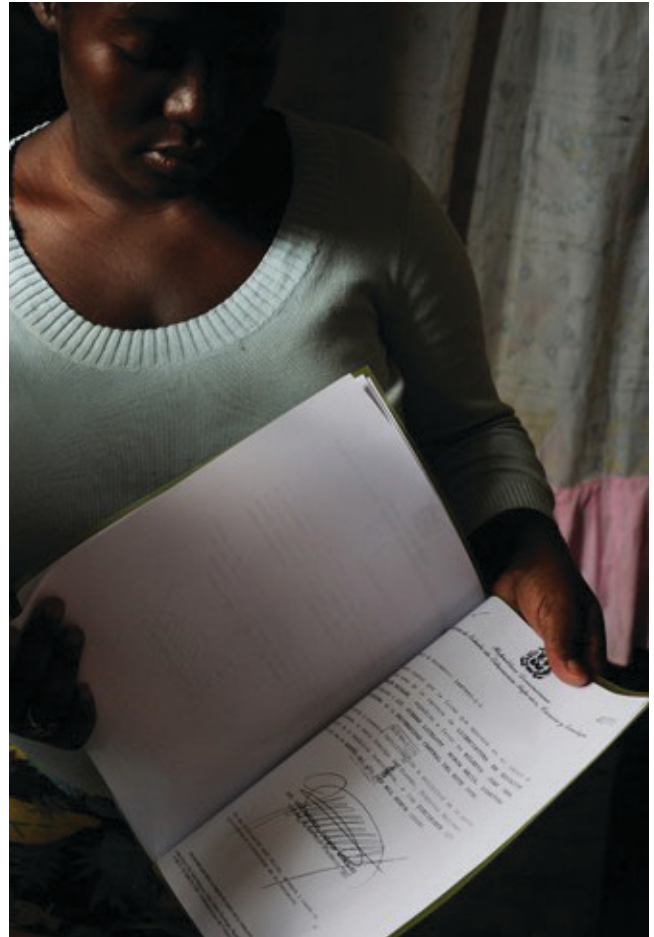
Cristobal Rodríguez, a Dominican human rights attorney and law professor, puts it another way: “Here a civil genocide is being committed,” he said.

NO FUTURE

Miledis Juan looks down at her 1-year-old son Henry, his nose running and eyes swollen from a cold. His arms stretch upward, and Juan picks him up.

She and her son were both born in this country, and that, Juan says, gives them every right to be Dominican citizens. But the Dominican government has another view of the matter, and that leaves Juan worried about her son's future and her own.

“He practically doesn't exist,” she said. “Without documents you are nobody.”



Miledis Juan, a 25-year-old Dominican woman with a teaching degree, cannot find work as a teacher because she was denied access to her birth certificate. Photo by Brandon Quester



Miledis Juan lives with her husband, Henry Claude Joseph, and 1-year-old son, Henry Alberto, who was also denied a birth certificate. Photo by Brandon Quester

Dominican officials say the country's laws were never meant to grant birthright citizenship to the children or descendants of illegal immigrants. And they argue against the term "stateless" as applied to those of Haitian descent born in the Dominican Republic.

José Ángel Aquino, a magistrate for the country's civil registry, the Junta Central Electoral, said Haitian descendants can go back to Haiti and obtain citizenship as long as they can prove their parents are Haitian.

"Because of this, in the case of the Haitians, for us, you can't speak of the 'stateless,'" Aquino said in Spanish. "These Haitian citizens always have the possibility of declaring themselves in their consulate...or simply in Haiti."

But for many Haitian immigrants, like Juan, the situation is more complex.

Born in December 1985 when laws and attitudes were different, Juan was granted a Dominican birth certificate and a national identification card. She has no papers proving she is from Haiti, and to become a naturalized Haitian citizen, she would have to go through a five-year application process, said Liliana Gamboa, a project director for the Open Society Justice Initiative in Santo Domingo.

Besides, Juan doesn't want Haitian citizenship; she has never lived in the country. "I know that Haiti exists because there is a map that I can see where it is, but I actually have no connections with it," she said.

Her life is in Batey Esperanza, a poor, mostly Haitian-Dominican community just outside the nation's capital, Santo Domingo, where she works long days at an embroidery machine in a free-trade zone.

Although she went to college to become a teacher, she is unable to get a teaching job because she can't get a new copy of her birth certificate. The country's civil registries retain every citizen's original birth certificate and issue duplicates upon request. Official duplicates are necessary for every legal act, from applying to a university and purchasing property to obtaining a marriage license and securing most jobs. Each duplicate can be used for only one purpose and expires in a few months.



Henry Claude Joseph holds his son at home in Batey Esperanza. Photo by Brandon Quester

Juan said that when she went to the civil registry, she was told her she should never have been registered as a Dominican citizen because her parents came without documents from Haiti.

"Practically, my hands are tied," she said. "There's nothing I can do because without that birth certificate, I'm paralyzed."

She also needs her birth certificate to get Henry one of his own. Without it, he cannot access public health services or attend school past the eighth grade.

"My biggest fear is that he's in the country without documents," Juan said. "He is nobody in the country."

CHANGING THE GROUND RULES

Before birthright citizenship was abolished, the Dominican Constitution stated that anyone born in the country was a citizen, with the exception of children born to people “in transit,” a term generally interpreted to mean those in the country fewer than 10 days. The first of the changes passed in 2004 redefined “in transit” to mean those in the country illegally. A year later, the Dominican Supreme Court upheld the 2004 law as constitutional.

Six years later, the Dominican government revised its Constitution to further limit citizenship. Since Jan. 26, 2010, citizens must prove they have at least one parent of Dominican nationality to be recognized. At the same time, the Junta Central Electoral, which oversees the civil registries, issued an order known as Circular 17, which directs government employees not to give duplicates of birth certificates and other identity documents if they have any reason to believe the person should not have Dominican citizenship.

According to Gamboa, this means the JCE “decides ...if you are worthy of your documentation” and has led to the targeting of people with French-sounding last names and dark skin.

That’s what Modesta Michel believes happened to her. Michel applied for her national ID card when she turned 18 in 2007. Cédulas are issued at age 18 and must be renewed every six years or when the government issues a new version. At first, all went well. She had an approved copy of her birth certificate, and the civil registry office approved her cédula, giving her a receipt that verified the information that would appear on her identification card. But then she was told that she would not get the official, laminated card after all because her parents immigrated from Haiti, she said. And shortly after, when she needed a copy of her birth certificate to take the national test for a high school diploma, that, too, was denied, she said.

“Every year goes by, and I sometimes feel like hope is going away, but I have to trust God that eventually this will get solved because studying is the only way that I can actually move forward in life,” Michel said through a translator. “It’s the only option that I have.”

MOUNTING CHALLENGES

[...] The Open Society Justice Initiative and other human rights organizations have begun fighting the changes in court.

[...] More recently, they’ve taken up the case of Emildo Bueno. Born in the Dominican in 1975, he had several citizenship documents, including a birth certificate and passport. Even so, in 2007 when Bueno went to obtain a copy of his birth certificate for a visa to join his wife in the U.S., he was turned down because his parents were Haitian nationals.

With Rodríguez, the Dominican human rights attorney, representing him, Bueno took his case to a Dominican national court in 2008, claiming a violation of his basic human right to nationality. The case was unsuccessful.

“In spite of all evidence and proof and the fact that legally I was good, the judge took a decision against me,” Bueno said in Spanish.

He submitted an appeal to the Dominican Supreme Court in 2009, but the court has yet to rule. Meanwhile, Francisco Quintana, a deputy program director and litigator for the Center for Justice and International Law, has submitted the case to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights.

Gamboa said a favorable ruling from the international could draw attention to the problem and pressure the Dominican government into changing its policies.

“At the end of the day, it will be political pressure that will bring the result we expect, which is the recognition of nationality of people of Haitian descent,” she said.

[...] Though the political situation for Haitian immigrants and their children has been bleak, there may be a glimmer of hope on the horizon. Aquino said that he supports a regularization program for Haitian workers. In late July another JCE magistrate, Eddy Olivares, said in a television interview that the children of Haitian immigrants should be given identity papers — especially those that came to the Dominican Republic under labor agreements with Haiti. He further stated that the Dominican Republic's immigration agency, not the JCE, has the authority to make decisions on the validity of identity documents and the JCE, therefore, should not be invalidating documents because a person's parents are immigrants. In the end, however, a major political and legislative shift would have to occur, throughout the Dominican government, to turn the tide against immigrant rights.

THEIR FUTURE

There isn't much Juan, Michel or Bueno can do while citizenship continues to be redefined in the country of their birth.

Juan goes to work each day at the clothing factory, although she would much rather be teaching.

Bueno made it to the U.S. after finally obtaining his visa. He works at a security company in Florida while his case for Dominican citizenship is being appealed. He has temporary residence in the U.S., but has no official citizenship anywhere.

Bueno spoke for them all when he said, "We have no country now."

Along with thousands of others, they hope they are not wrong when they call themselves Dominican.

Article D. Hundreds of thousands of Rohingya people trapped in stateless limbo

By DOCTORS WITHOUT BORDERS

Tuesday, 20 August 2019

‘Two years after a campaign of targeted violence in Myanmar, little has changed for those uprooted.’

Sitting in a teashop in Kutupalong, the massive refugee megacamp in Bangladesh where hundreds of thousands of Rohingya people have settled after fleeing targeted violence in neighboring Myanmar, Bibi Jan tugs on her sleeve. She’s covering up scars inflicted in August 2017, during the events that forced her to flee her homeland: she was stabbed, her two brothers were killed, and her village was razed to the ground.

The Rohingya, a predominantly Muslim ethnic minority from Myanmar’s Rakhine state, have been subject to decades of persecution and state exclusion. Two years ago, starting on August 25, 2017, news of Myanmar’s campaign of targeted violence against the Rohingya dominated the headlines. Since then, little progress has been made to fully address the Rohingya refugee crisis, including issues regarding the lack of legal status for those displaced in the region and the underlying causes of discrimination against the community in Myanmar.

To date no meaningful solutions have been offered to the Rohingya people, who have been pushed to the margins of society in virtually all of the countries to which they have fled. In Bangladesh, more than 912,000 Rohingya still live in the same basic bamboo structures as when they first arrived. They face travel and work restrictions, and remain wholly reliant on humanitarian aid.



Bangladesh 2017 © Pablo Tosco



Bangladesh 2019 © Dalila Mahdawi/MSF

Many of the illnesses Doctors Without Borders/ Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) teams treat at our clinics in Cox’s Bazar are a result of the poor living conditions that the Rohingya endure, with poor access to clean latrines and water. We have provided more than 1.3 million medical consultations from August 2017 to June 2019, and continue to treat tens of thousands of patients a month.

With Rohingya children unable to access formal education, future generations are deprived of an opportunity to improve their situation. “I want to send my children to school, but I don’t have enough money and we can’t leave the camp. It’s difficult to plan a future for our children,” says Bibi Jan. “If we worked, we wouldn’t need rations. We could survive on our own.”

The situation facing Rohingya people who are still in Myanmar is similarly bleak. In 1982, a citizenship law rendered the Rohingya effectively stateless, and in recent years they have been stripped of even more of their rights, ranging from civic inclusion to education, marriage, and family planning rights to freedom of movement and access to health care.



Bangladesh 2019 © Dalila Mahdawi/MSF

do anything more. We hold our frustration inside because we cannot speak out—there are no opportunities for that. We cannot even travel to the next township, so people keep everything inside, bottled up.”

An estimated 550,000 to 600,000 Rohingya are still living across Rakhine state. Their already difficult lives have become harder as they and other communities suffer the consequences of a worsening conflict between the Myanmar military and the Arakan Army, an ethnic Rakhine armed group.

“We just want our freedom, to have our own livelihoods, and to sleep at night without worrying,” says Suleiman. “The longyi [cloth] is a symbol of Myanmar, and all the ethnicities of Myanmar have their own pattern, but not us. We wear the longyi, but we have no pattern. We own nothing. I wish people could look at us and see us for who we are. I just want people to know who the Rohingya are.”

MALAYSIA: PUSHED INTO THE SHADOWS



Iman Hussein in Penang. For the past 10 weeks, his employer hasn't paid him but he continues to work because he lives in a small shelter on the site. Without that shelter, he would be homeless. Malaysia 2019 © Arnaud Finistre

In 2012 violence between the Rohingya and Rakhine communities left entire villages razed. Since then, some 128,000 Rohingya and Kaman Muslims in central Rakhine have lived in overcrowded and squalid displacement camps. Denied both jobs and freedom of movement, as well as access to basic services, they too rely entirely on humanitarian assistance.

“There aren't any real opportunities for employment here; there are hardly any fish to catch either,” says Suleiman, a Rohingya man living in Nget Chaung, home to some 9,000 people. “Because there's so little trade, we can't buy the things we want. People here are sad. They are frustrated that they can't go anywhere or



A young man looks on at the outskirts of Ah Nauk Ye camp. Myanmar 2019 © Scott Hamilton

Rohingya people have also been fleeing to Malaysia over the past 30 years. But those who make the journey end up marginalized and without legal status. Unable to work legally, they often disappear into Malaysia's urban black market economy, where they are vulnerable to exploitation, debt bondage, and hazardous jobs. Walking down the street or even seeking medical care can result in refugees being extorted or sent to detention centers.

Iman Hussein, 22, fled Rakhine in 2015, spending time in Thailand before arriving in Penang, Malaysia. Like many refugees, he has eked out a living by working in Penang's booming construction industry. His employer hasn't paid him his salary for the past 10 weeks, but Hussein says he has no choice but to keep working as he lives on-site and would be destitute if he left.

“Over the past two years, very little real effort has been made to address the underlying causes of discrimination the Rohingya face and enable them to return home safely,” says Benoit de Gryse, MSF operations manager for Myanmar and Malaysia. “If the Rohingya are to have any chance of a better future, the international community must redouble diplomatic efforts with Myanmar and champion greater legal recognition for an incredibly disempowered group.”

Article E. I found a country, but lost my brother - Stateless activist

By EMMA BATHA (Thomson Reuters Foundation)
Monday, 7 October 2019

‘For most people a passport is a travel document, but for me it means everything. It means I exist. It’s finally a sign I belong somewhere.’

As a teenager growing up in Lebanon Maha Mamo lived in constant terror of checkpoints, but her only crime was to be born stateless. With no documents to prove who she was, Mamo feared she could be arrested and locked up indefinitely.

Like other stateless people, she was deprived of basic rights most people take for granted. Everything from going to school or getting a job to even enjoying a night out with friends was fraught with difficulties.



Stateless activist Maha Mamo is photographed after receiving Brazilian citizenship on October 4, 2018, at an event hosted by the UNHCR in Geneva. UNHCR/Susan Hopper

On Monday, Mamo will tell her story to film star Cate Blanchett at the opening of a major intergovernmental meeting on statelessness in Geneva.

Charismatic, down-to-earth and fluent in five languages, Mamo has become a powerful voice in #Ibelong, a campaign to eradicate statelessness which is estimated to affect about 10 million people worldwide.

“For most people a passport is a travel document, but for me it means everything,” said Mamo, who became a Brazilian national last year and now speaks at international events draped in a Brazilian flag.

“It means I exist. It’s finally a sign I belong somewhere.”

MASSIVE IMPACT

Mamo’s fate was sealed before she was born when her Christian father and Muslim mother fell in love in Syria. Interfaith marriages were banned so they eloped to neighbouring Lebanon where she, her sister Souad and brother Eddy were born.

“You can only be Lebanese if your father is Lebanese, and we couldn’t be Syrian because our parents’ marriage was illegal, so we grew up stateless,” she told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

“It has had a massive impact all my life. I had many challenges every day. I was afraid of every single thing.” Mamo was rejected by many schools before eventually being accepted by an Armenian school which took pity on the family.



Activist Maha Mamo (R), who spent 30 years as a stateless person, is pictured with her brother Eddy and sister Souad. Photo supplied by Maha Mamo

A talented basketball player, she was scouted by professional coaches who believed she had potential to play on the national team - until they realised she had no documents.

“That was when my world came crashing down,” she said. “This was the first moment when the deprivations really hit home. But as a teenager I didn’t yet understand how big my problem was.”

Despite good school grades, her applications to study medicine at university were also rejected. Health care was another obstacle. To get urgent hospital treatment for a severe allergy Mamo was forced to pretend to be her best friend. With no papers, even the most mundane things became a logistical nightmare.

“There are simple things you would never imagine that are so impossible; buying a sim card, getting a loan, having a library card or even going to a club to dance with your friends or celebrate a birthday,” she said.

“If they ask for ID you have to give up and go home.”

In Lebanon, there was the added danger posed by checkpoints.

“If the police stop you then you are going to jail just because you don’t have documents,” she said.

“Every time I saw one I had to run the other way just because my existence itself was illegal.”

NEW BEGINNING

Desperate for a solution to her predicament, Mamo sent her story to presidents, ministers and any organisation she thought might be able to help - and was met with a wall of silence. But in 2014 Brazil offered to take Mamo and her siblings under a new humanitarian visa programme it had launched to help Syrians fleeing war.

“I went to Brazil not as a stateless person, but as a refugee. I only knew two things about Brazil - the football and the carnival,” said Mamo, now 31 and fluent in Portuguese. Her arrival in Brazil coincided with the launch of the United Nations’ #Ibelong campaign aimed at ending statelessness in a decade. “For me, my brother and sister that was the hope. In 10 years we would have the chance to be a person, a human being,” said Mamo.

But she did not have to wait that long. In 2017, Brazil changed its law to recognise stateless people and provide a route to naturalisation. Last year Mamo and her sister became the first stateless people in Brazil to be granted citizenship. Mamo, who is writing a book about her life, recalls vividly the moment when she was presented with her Brazilian passport - ending 30 years in limbo.

“I started shaking and crying,” she said. “I did not believe what was happening, that this was my moment when I’m born again and my life would totally change.”

However, the ceremony was bittersweet because her brother could not share in her joy. Just weeks after being granted asylum in Brazil, Eddy had been killed in a street robbery.

“I couldn’t make his dream come true, I couldn’t make him a citizen of this world,” said Mamo. “He died a stateless person.”

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This teaching guide was produced by the Institute on Statelessness and Inclusion (ISI), an independent non-profit organisation committed to realising the right to a nationality for all (www.institutesi.org). We hope that it will serve as inspiration and a practical tool for teachers, youth leaders, activists and NGOs to talk to children about borders, belonging, citizenship and rights – issues that matter to all of us. We especially hope that through exploring these issues with children, we will be able to bring about more positive change in promoting every child's right to a nationality and addressing situations of childhood statelessness.

Many people contributed to the development of this teaching guide. We would especially like to acknowledge:

- Jehna Al-Moushahid, Belén Gómez Arredondo, Sed-Yee Michlyn Chung, Maria Ruzheynikova, Emma Tuininga and Felix Toggi Sames – a group of students who helped us to develop ideas for teaching activities and to gather inputs from teachers in different countries about what could be useful to include in the guide.
- Ashley Walters, who worked on a first draft of the guide, bringing ideas to life in a creative way.
- From ISI's own team: Vera Karanika, Ileen Verbeek and Laura van Waas, who developed and structured the guide further, including drawing out relevant connections to the book *The Girl Who Lost Her Country*, as well as carefully reviewing and perfecting each activity, and the flow between them. Also, Ottoline Spearman for her assistance with copy-editing and Alena Jascanka for design and layouting.

We would also like to thank:

- Tony Daly, who provided expert guidance on how to approach teaching on citizenship and statelessness from the goals and objectives of human rights education, helping us to shape the guide in a way that is truly supportive of the development of knowledge, skills and values in relation to these issues.
- Dian Pu for illustrating the cover and for the illustrations provided for *The Girl Who Lost Her Country* that are reproduced in this guide.
- Greg Constantine for the use of his photographs in activities in the guide.
- Deirdre Brennan for her collaboration in writing *The Girl Who Lost Her Country* and for providing an interview about that experience to be integrated into this teaching guide.
- Everyone else who contributed advice, ideas and inspiration – including teachers who were interviewed or otherwise provided advice along the way, as well as the children with and without nationality who helped to shape *The Girl Who Lost Her Country* and whose experiences of the themes addressed in this teaching guide informed the focus of many of the activities.

We are very grateful to our donors for supporting us to produce this guide: Stichting Weeshuis der Doopsgezinden and the Sigrid Rausing Trust.

Millions of children around the world are stateless today – they have no nationality. Based on the story “The Girl Who Lost Her Country” we have developed a teaching guide filled with activities designed to help educators teach children about statelessness. This way children can take action and become advocates for the rights of stateless children around the world.

Praise for The Girl Who Lost her Country:

‘Rich, wrenching, and illuminating. This is a necessary book.’

William Alexander, winner of the American National Book Award

‘This marvellous book addresses one of today’s most egregious and elusive human rights challenges with admirable clarity and energy. It provides a powerful tool for educators, for youth advocates and for young people eager to understand how a basic lynchpin of human belonging can be denied to millions of people today.’

Jacqueline Bhabha, Professor of the Practice of Health and Human Rights, Harvard University

The Institute on Statelessness and Inclusion

is the first and the only human rights NGO dedicated to working on statelessness at the global level. To learn more about the Institute, visit www.InstituteSI.org

To read The Girl Who Lost Her Country and for lots more information and activities on statelessness, visit www.kids.worldsstateless.org

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