

**UNHCR**United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees  
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Issue 1

# COMMEMORATIONS NEWSLETTER

## Regional Dialogues with Women and Girls

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UNHCR is in the process of staging a series of Dialogues around the world with more than 500 forcibly displaced refugee women and girls, as well as some men and boys.

The first was held in the Indian capital, New Delhi, in November 2010. This was followed by Dialogues in Medellin, Colombia, in January-February 2011; Amman, Jordan, in February 2011; Kyangwili, Uganda, in March 2011; and Lusaka, Zambia in April 2011.

### Expert Meetings

#### ***Expert Meeting on Climate Change and Displacement, Bellagio, Italy 22-26 February***

Participants at this meeting, which included 19 experts from 15 countries, discussed the impact of climate change on displacement.

They examined the global, regional and national frameworks which apply to both external and internal displacement, as well as institutional responses. They noted that whilst some movement will be cross-border, most will be internal.

Participants recognized that there is a policy and legal gap regarding cross-border movers. Whilst the 1951 Refugee Convention is a useful framework, its

These have provided important platforms for refugees to come together with UNHCR staff, implementing partners, government officials and community-based organizations to discuss the main protection problems they face and to recommend possible solutions.

The findings of these Dialogues will also feed into the commemorations: refugee women will participate in a side event

at UNHCR's Standing Committee and in the NGO Consultations in Geneva in June, and two will speak before the ministerial-level meeting in December. It is also anticipated that these Dialogues will inspire States to make concrete, forward-looking pledges to address some of the most pertinent issues facing refugee women and girls.

The remaining Dialogues are taking place in Thailand and Finland in May.

For documents on these expert meetings, see: <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/4d22f95f6.html>

application is limited. They discussed the need to develop a global framework for situations of external displacement, especially in the context of sudden onset disasters. States and UNHCR were encouraged to explore this further.

#### ***Expert Meeting on Complementarities between International Refugee Law, International Criminal Law and International Human Rights Law, Arusha, Tanzania, 11 -13 April 2011***

Participants at this meeting, which included 32 experts from 22 countries, discussed complementarities between international

refugee law, international criminal law, and international human rights law. They examined the interconnected nature yet distinct purposes of each of these specific international legal regimes. Topics of discussion included the prohibition of forced displacement; persecution under international refugee law and international criminal law; the impact of international criminal law developments on exclusion from refugee status; and the use in asylum proceedings of criminal evidence and other information from international criminal law institutions.

## Expert Meeting Series on Statelessness

UNHCR has successfully completed two of three expert meetings on statelessness, with the help of Open Society Justice Initiative.

The first was held in Prato, Italy, from 28-29 May 2010. It addressed the topic of statelessness in international law, in particular the definition of who constitutes a 'stateless person' under article 1(1) of the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the concept of *de facto* statelessness.

The second meeting, from 6-7 December 2010 in Geneva, explored mechanisms for determining who is stateless, the status of stateless persons and appropriate standards of treatment once they are recognized as such under national law.

## High Commissioner's Dialogue

**Geneva, 8-9 December 2010**

The 2010 High Commissioner's Dialogue was the first major event forming part of the commemorations. Discussions were based on the timely theme, 'Protection Gaps and Responses', with participants focusing particularly on three topics:

- Gaps in the international protection framework and in its implementation;
- International cooperation, burden sharing and comprehensive regional approaches; and
- Reduction of statelessness and the protection of stateless persons.

A background paper, session reports and other documentation is available on:  
<http://www.unhcr.org/pages/4ca099226.html>

## Regional Meetings on Statelessness

Material available at <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/4ceb97e06.html>

### ***Southeast Asia - Bangkok, Thailand, 28-29 October 2010***

This roundtable – which covered the entire region of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), but focused in particular on Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Thailand, and Viet-Nam – provided many insights into recent good practices from the region. The Roundtable report, *Good Practices: Addressing Statelessness in South East Asia*, highlights a number of key experiences that emerged during the meeting and makes recommendations on how to shape further efforts to address statelessness in the region and beyond.

This roundtable was convened by UNHCR and the National Human Rights Commission of Thailand,

with funding from donors, including the European Commission.

### ***Middle East and North Africa - Amman, Jordan, 18-19 Feb 2010***

At this roundtable, experts discussed a wide range of topics including: how to apply the definition of stateless persons in situations in MENA; the causes of statelessness in the region, programs and initiatives underway to overcome statelessness, particularly with respect to prevention and reduction of statelessness; and solutions for protecting the human rights of stateless people in MENA.

It was convened by UNHCR and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

## Preparing for the Ministerial-Level Meeting

Preparations for a ministerial-level meeting of all Member States of the United Nations, scheduled for 7 and 8 December 2011 in Geneva, are well underway.

This will be the culminating event in the commemorations calendar and will provide an important opportunity for States, and possibly other actors, to make concrete pledges to address particular forced displacement and statelessness issues. It is also envisaged that States will agree on an outcome document.

The first preparatory meeting took place on 4 March at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, during which States agreed on a rough agenda for the ministerial-level meeting, mapped out the preparatory process and elected officers, and adopted rules of procedure for the ministerial-level meeting.

Two further preparatory meetings will be held on 24 June and 22 September.

## Inter-Parliamentary Union – 124<sup>th</sup> Assembly

**Panama City, 15-20 April 2011**

The 124<sup>th</sup> Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union met in Panama City on 15-20 April 2011. To mark the commemorations year, the Assembly adopted a statement in support of UNHCR and the protection of forcibly displaced and stateless people. UNHCR also co-organized a panel presentation during the International Humanitarian Law Committee's Open Session, entitled *20th Century Norms and 21st Century Realities: Protecting the Stateless, Refugees, and Civilians Today*. The host country, Panama, is the first State to have announced it will accede to the 1954 and 1961 Statelessness Conventions in this commemorations year.

## Statelessness Initiatives

### Preventing Statelessness among Children

Several initiatives are underway to support greater awareness of the importance of preventing statelessness among children. In Geneva, Plan International and World Vision International have convened several gatherings to sustain ongoing advocacy for an Executive Committee Conclusion to address birth registration and statelessness in 2012. To date, 11 NGOs have signed a Position Paper on an ExCom Conclusion on Birth Registration.

Also in Geneva, UNHCR and the *Open Society Justice Initiative* gave a briefing on statelessness and the children's right to a nationality to the Children's Rights Committee on 3 February 2011. This promoted the CRC's consideration of issuing a General Comment on the scope of CRC article 7 and encouraged the CRC to increase scrutiny of State practice on birth registration and respect for CRC article 7 in its Concluding Observations. The *Justice Initiative* briefing can be accessed here:

[http://www.soros.org/initiatives/justice/focus/equality/citizenship/articles\\_publications/publications/children-right-nationality-20110202](http://www.soros.org/initiatives/justice/focus/equality/citizenship/articles_publications/publications/children-right-nationality-20110202)

### Multimedia Tools

UNHCR has developed a 4-minute multimedia presentation, *A Chance for Childhood: Ending Child Statelessness*, featuring photographs by Greg Constantine of stateless children from Malaysia, Bangladesh, Kenya, and Côte d'Ivoire.

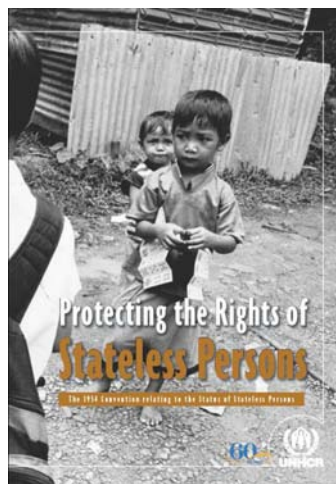
Greg Constantine's photo exhibit, *Nowhere People*, was presented in the Palais des Nations in Geneva during the High Commissioner's Dialogue from 8-9 December 2010 and is available to be commissioned for public viewings. For further information, please contact UNHCR's Photo Editor, Suzy Hopper ([hopper@unhcr.org](mailto:hopper@unhcr.org)).

### Measuring Statelessness

The collection of reliable data on stateless populations is a great challenge for all statelessness advocates. To overcome information gaps on stateless populations, UNHCR organized a workshop on *Measuring Statelessness* from 24 to 26 January 2011 in Istanbul, Turkey. This workshop brought together UNHCR protection staff from 17 field offices and 5 external partners.

This was the first joint effort by UNHCR's Division of International Protection (DIP) and Field Information and Coordination Support Section (FICSS) to exchange good practices on measuring statelessness and the issue will begin to be better integrated into all UNHCR trainings on statelessness.

### Recently Published: Brochures to support the Statelessness Conventions Campaign

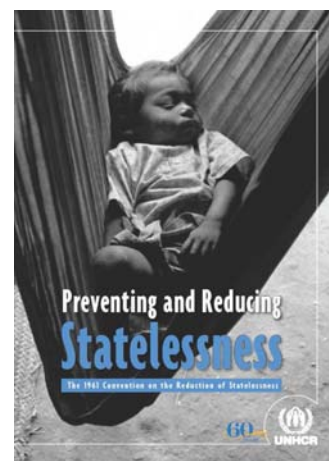


*Protecting Stateless Persons: The 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons*

<http://www.unhcr.org/4ca5941c9.html>

*Preventing and Reducing Statelessness: the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness*

<http://www.unhcr.org/4ca5937d9.html>



## Upcoming Events

- UNHCR and the Open Society Justice Initiative will convene an *Expert Meeting on Preventing Statelessness among Children* from 23 to 24 May 2011 in Dakar, Senegal.
- UNHCR is organizing an Expert Meeting on International Cooperation to Share Burden and Responsibilities in Amman, Jordan, from 27-28 June 2011.
- UNHCR's Annual Consultations with Non-Governmental Organizations will take place from 28 – 30 June 2011 at the International Conference Centre Geneva (ICCG). A panel event, *Addressing Statelessness among Children and Youth*, will be held on Tuesday, 28 June 2011 from 14:00 – 15:45 in ICCG Room 4.