

# #IBelong Campaign to End Statelessness Special Appeal



December 2016



**UNHCR**  
The UN Refugee Agency

### **Cover photograph**

*Deborah is 10 years old and stateless. She lives in Côte d'Ivoire. She has been going to school since she was six years old but in two years, when she starts year 6, she will have to present a birth certificate. Without one, she will no longer be able to go to school.*

UNHCR / A. Froger

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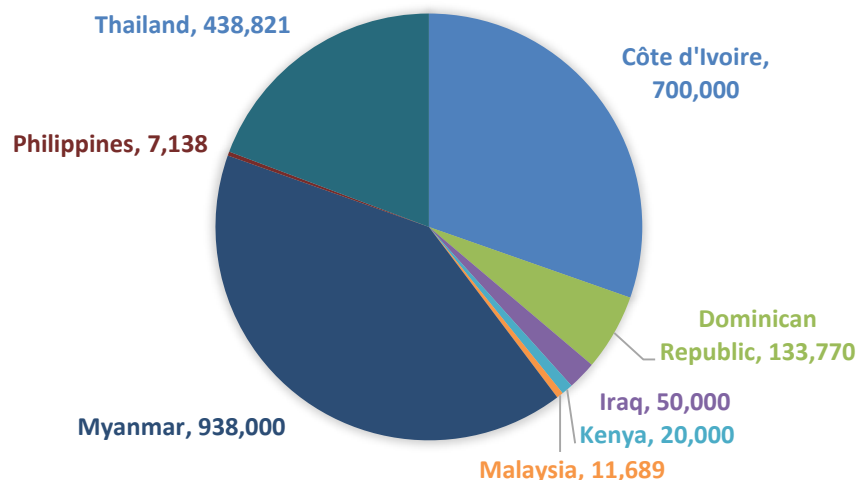
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## AT A GLANCE

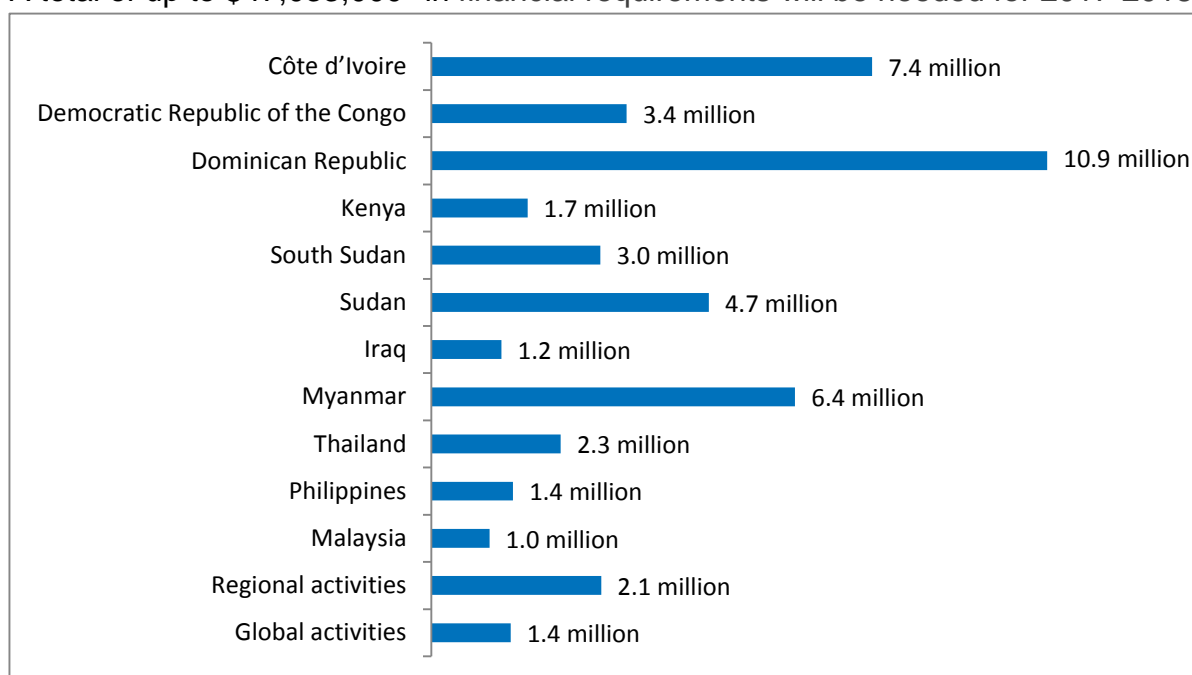
### Over 2 million people of concern



Source: Global Trends 2015

\* No statistics are available for the Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Sudan or Sudan. However, all these three countries are estimated to host significant numbers of stateless people or people at risk of statelessness.

A total of up to \$47,033,000\* in financial requirements will be needed for 2017-2018



\* All dollar signs in this document denote United States dollars. This total includes regional activities and support costs (7%)

# INTRODUCTION

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Statelessness is a global problem with serious ramifications. UNHCR estimates that at least 10 million people around the world are stateless. Yet, experience has shown that with sufficient political will, it can be resolved. Building on the increased awareness and commitment by States to address statelessness, in November 2014, UNHCR launched the [#IBelong Campaign to End Statelessness](#) by 2024.<sup>1</sup> The achievement of the goals of the #IBelong Campaign is based on 10 Actions set out in the Global Action Plan (GAP) to End Statelessness. The GAP calls on States, with the support of UNHCR and other actors, to undertake a range of initiatives, from implementing legal and policy reforms to resolving the largest situations of statelessness and to improving data on the scope and situation of stateless populations. Progress against each of the 10 Actions will be publicly evaluated in 2017 and 2020 against a series of milestones set out in the GAP.

Since the #IBelong Campaign was launched, there have been significant achievements in several countries in terms of preventing and reducing statelessness. In most cases, the progress has been a result of strong collaboration between government authorities, UNHCR and civil society. For example:

- In Kyrgyzstan, in 2014-2015 the Government, UNHCR and NGO partners identified and registered over 10,000 people of undetermined nationality. Over 9,000 cases were submitted to relevant state bodies for acquisition or confirmation of nationality. By the end of 2015, 7,042 people acquired or had their nationality confirmed, or obtained documents proving it, or both. The registration exercise will cover the whole country by the end of 2016, paving the way for full resolution of statelessness in Kyrgyzstan in the next few years.
- In Tajikistan, in 2014-2015 UNHCR and its partners registered over 19,000 people of concern under UNHCR's statelessness mandate, and by the end of 2015, almost 600 of them had their nationality confirmed. Simultaneously, UNHCR supported the Government in a nationality law reform and establishment of a mechanism that would simplify grant of Tajik nationality to tens of thousands of people.
- In Thailand, UNHCR supported the Government's capacity to process nationality applications by stateless people and provided assistance to stateless individuals, raising awareness among decision-makers which led to improved implementation of the nationality law. In 2015, UNHCR supported around 6,000 people to submit nationality applications. In the past three and a half years, more than 23,000 stateless people were granted Thai nationality.
- In Malaysia, in 2014-2016 UNHCR supported a local NGO which identified and registered 12,350 stateless people of Indian/Tamil origin. 10,955 people were assisted to submit nationality applications and by the end of November 2016, 1,503 people had acquired Malaysian nationality.
- In Côte d'Ivoire, UNHCR supports the Government to process applications submitted within the 'naturalization by declaration' procedure. 123,000 applications, including from stateless people, were received by the end of January 2016 when the procedure closed. By mid-2016, around 5,000 formerly stateless people acquired Ivorian nationality. The processing of applications continues, and tens of thousands more people are expected to acquire nationality in 2016 and 2017.
- In the Dominican Republic, Law 169-14 was adopted in May 2014 to address the consequences of the 2013 ruling on nationality of the Constitutional Court which rendered tens of thousands of Dominican-born individuals of foreign descent stateless. The law provided, *inter alia*, for the validation of birth certificates and reacquisition of nationality for individuals born in the country between 1929 and 2007 whose births had been registered (Group A). By November 2015 some 12,000 individuals had obtained their birth certificates or national identity cards, and thousands of individuals are believed to also have been issued their Dominican civil documents in 2016. UNHCR is assisting these individuals to access their documents.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.unhcr.org/ibelong/>

Strides have also been made in a number of sub-regions, with the adoption of intergovernmental initiatives strongly endorsing the #IBelong Campaign. These include the Brazil Declaration and Platform for Action on Refugees, Displaced and Stateless Persons in Latin America and the Caribbean adopted in December 2014 by 28 States in the region; the Abidjan Declaration of Ministers of ECOWAS Member States on Eradication of Statelessness adopted in February 2015; and Conclusions on Statelessness adopted by the Council of the European Union in December 2015. Efforts are underway for the adoption of the African Union Protocol on the Right to Nationality in Africa.

In this document, UNHCR has highlighted the financial requirements in 2017-2018 in 11 countries. Securing funding on a two-year basis is necessary as addressing statelessness requires sustained, multi-year efforts. The 11 countries included in this appeal host major stateless or at-risk populations, and significant progress in these countries in the next few years is crucial for achieving the goals of the #IBelong Campaign. The countries selected fulfil one or more of the following criteria:

- Strong momentum towards the eradication of statelessness already exists, but additional capital would permit an expanded response.
- The legal or policy framework to resolve statelessness exists, but implementation is lacking.
- Initiatives towards law reform to prevent statelessness need to be enlivened through dedicated and targeted response.

At the regional level, efforts to develop declarations or plans of action in regions or sub-regions that have not yet taken or finalized such initiatives—such as ASEAN, the East African Community, the Southern African Development Community, and the League of Arab States—will need to be supported. At the global level, given that 2017 will mark the first of the #IBelong Campaign's official milestone years when progress against each of the 10 Actions will be measured, it is proposed that a high-level event be organized to acknowledge the Campaign's progress to date, encourage the sharing of good practices among States, and to seek commitments to address statelessness to meet the Campaign's goals. The visibility of the Campaign will also need to be enhanced to strengthen public support.

## Financial summary

The total financial requirements for 2017-2018 would amount to \$47 million, should the budget for 2018 be approved by ExCom.

OPERATION	2017 ExCom-approved budget	2018 requirements (Subject to ExCom approval)	Total
Côte d'Ivoire	3,837,000	3,610,000	7,447,000
Democratic Republic of the Congo	1,949,000	1,500,000	3,449,000
Dominican Republic	5,884,000	5,000,000	10,884,000
Kenya	853,000	845,000	1,698,000
South Sudan	1,485,000	1,500,000	2,985,000
Sudan	2,389,000	2,300,000	4,689,000
Iraq	624,000	615,000	1,239,000
Myanmar	3,310,000	3,056,000	6,366,000
Thailand	1,175,000	1,135,000	2,310,000
Philippines	751,000	690,000	1,441,000
Malaysia	515,000	510,000	1,025,000
Regional activities	1,050,000	1,050,000	2,100,000
Global activities	700,000	700,000	1,400,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>24,522,000</b>	<b>22,511,000</b>	<b>47,033,000</b>

## Context and existing response

There is strong momentum towards resolving statelessness in Cote d'Ivoire, as demonstrated by the country's commitment under the Abidjan Declaration of Ministers of ECOWAS Member States on Eradication of Statelessness in 2015, the accession to the UN statelessness conventions in 2013, and establishment of a declaration procedure in which individuals with long-term residency in the country, including stateless people, could acquire Ivorian nationality. The procedure was in place from April 2014 to January 2016. UNHCR is financially and technically supporting the Ministry of Interior to boost its capacity to process the applications, and has also partnered with a legal aid NGO to follow up on cases that were rejected in the first instance or put on hold due to inadequate supporting documents. Over 120,000 applications were received, and as of mid-2016, approximately 5,000 stateless people were granted Ivorian nationality. As the processing of the applications is ongoing, tens of thousands of stateless people are expected to acquire Ivorian nationality by the end of 2017. UNHCR also continues to advocate for reform of the nationality law to bring it into compliance with the statelessness conventions, and for the establishment of mechanism to allow stateless people who could not benefit from the declaration procedure to acquire nationality. In addition, UNHCR supports birth registration activities to help prevent statelessness. Resources are essential to ensuring existing momentum is fully capitalized on, and an expanded response implemented where possible.

## Strategy and partnerships

The Government of Côte d'Ivoire has committed to resolving statelessness in the country, and UNHCR is supporting its efforts through capacity building, technical assistance, and coordination of the various government actors as well as civil society. Ending statelessness in the country by 2024 is a realistic goal and can be achieved through nationality law reform, provision of legal aid, improved access to documentation, awareness-raising, and improved birth registration and administrative practices in the civil status system. The strategy relies on the increased capacity of and coordination between various actors at government, UN and civil society levels. In addition to continued partnerships with the main government partners—the Ministry of Justice and the *Service d'Aide et d'Assistance aux Réfugiés et Apatrides* (Assistance Service for Refugee and Stateless of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs/SAARA)—UNHCR will continue expanding its strategic partnerships with other government actors—notably the Human Rights and Public Liberties Ministry, the Interior Ministry, the National Human Rights Commission—and has established new legal aid and communications and awareness-raising partnerships with NGOs. UNFPA, UNESCO and UNICEF are the key UN actors with which UNHCR will coordinate activities, including through the country-level UNDAF plan, which includes civil registry reform and access to documentation as priorities until 2020. UNHCR will also continue to support an NGO network on statelessness.

## Vision for 2019

- Tens of thousands of individuals have acquired Ivorian nationality.

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