



Multi-Country Office (MCO) for Côte d'Ivoire

STATELESSNESS REPORT 2024

MCO COTE D'IVOIRE

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Statelessness remains a concern for the UNHCR Multi-Country Office (MCO) for Côte d'Ivoire, covering Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Liberia, and Togo, with hundreds of thousands of people (including over 900,000 in Côte d'Ivoire) estimated to be stateless or at risk. The causes include weaknesses in civil registration systems, the presence of undocumented nomadic or border populations, restrictive or discriminatory nationality laws, and historical migrations. All MCO countries have appointed a government focal point under the aegis of ECOWAS, and all, except Ghana where the process is ongoing, have acceded to the UN statelessness conventions.

UNHCR continues to support the countries covered by the MCO for Côte d'Ivoire in identifying, protecting, and finding solutions for stateless persons or those at risk of statelessness.

In the context of the [2023 Global Refugee Forum](#), the countries concerned have made significant commitments towards the prevention and reduction of statelessness.

The priority actions of the UNHCR MCO for Côte d'Ivoire are centered around the following areas:

- Maintain an **advisory and supportive role with governments** on legislative reforms and the implementation of statelessness status determination, as well as in finding solutions to eradicate statelessness.
- **Collaborate with United Nations Country Teams (UNCT), development organizations, and the other relevant actors to identify permanent solutions to statelessness;** UNHCR can also support transitional solutions, which may include innovative digital identity programs aimed at ensuring universal access to basic rights and services – while considering system interoperability, privacy parameters, and goal compatibility.
- Continue to lead efforts and encourage multi-stakeholder partnerships for the production and analysis of quantitative and socio-economic **data on statelessness.**
- Encourage the countries under its coverage to accede to and operationalize the [Global Alliance to End Statelessness](#).

Operational context

Côte d'Ivoire is the only country in West Africa that has conducted a quantitative and qualitative study funded by the UNHCR and carried out jointly with the National Institute of Statistics in 2018. Based on further elaborations on the study's results, as of December 2024, UNHCR estimates a population of approximately 931,000 stateless individuals and those at risk of statelessness. This population comprises various profiles, including descendants of historical migrants who do not meet the criteria to obtain Ivorian nationality through descent; other at-risk groups include foundlings born to unknown parents and individuals not registered at birth, whose parents lack proof of nationality.

Ghana, Togo, and Liberia have initiated the process of adopting **national action plans** to combat statelessness. The two countries that have already adopted these plans are Benin (since 2014) and Côte d'Ivoire (2020-2024). Côte d'Ivoire and Benin are also the two countries in the sub-region that have established **procedures for the determination of stateless status** in connection with the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons.



All MCO countries attended the Annual General Assembly of ID4Africa on digital identity held in Cape Town from May 21-24, 2024. UNHCR organized a special event on the last day.

Identification and protection

Côte d'Ivoire:

- In 2023-2024, a national bill on statelessness, based on the African Union's regional model law, was prepared by an interministerial technical working group with the support of the UNHCR. The bill includes the safeguards outlined in the 1954 Convention. Its implementing decree was drafted by the same group during 2024.
- The Directorate of Aid and Assistance to Refugees and Stateless Persons (DAARA) has established a coordination mechanism with the consular authorities of sub-regional countries as part of the stateless status recognition procedure. This platform will facilitate exchanges and responses to applicants for stateless status who have ties to these countries, allowing them to confirm whether the applicants are their nationals.
- The national commissions on stateless status, both at first instance and on appeal, have ruled on 33 cases. In 2024, seven individuals were recognized as stateless by the commissions.
- **1,782** individuals at risk of statelessness have been identified, including 250 foundlings, abandoned children, and orphans. The most severe cases have been handled by the legal clinics of the Association of Women Lawyers (AFJCI).
- **3,748** individuals have received legal counselling on issues related to statelessness, legal identity, and nationality.

Prevention

In the context of preventing statelessness for forcibly displaced populations from the central Sahel:

- At the two transit sites for asylum seekers in Timalah and Nioringue (northern **Côte d'Ivoire**), 189 newborns have been registered and received their birth certificates.
- In **Benin**, two mobile court hearings were held at the Banikoara Town Hall to facilitate the issuance of civil status documents to refugees, asylum seekers, and host communities in the Alibori department.
- UNHCR and UNICEF advocated for refugees' access to civil documentation in northern **Ghana**, which resulted in the issuance of 44 birth certificates.
- In **Togo**, 64 birth certificates were issued to refugee students to facilitate their school enrolment. Advocacy efforts continue to ensure that forcibly displaced children can access education without having to present their birth certificates.

Main achievements and impact

In the context of assisting individuals at risk of statelessness in Côte d'Ivoire:

- **250** birth certificates have been issued for abandoned children of unknown parents, and **750** for at-risk adults through the partner Association of Women Lawyers of Côte d'Ivoire (AFJCI).
- In 2024, Côte d'Ivoire extended for the second time a special initiative allowing free late birth registration and the decriminalization of identity fraud, aiming to regularize civil status documents for individuals living in Côte d'Ivoire. This special measure will end in 2027.

Reduction

In Côte d'Ivoire, **279** nationality confirmation documents have been issued - **101** nationality confirmation documents were provided to adults at risk of statelessness, and **178** Ivorian nationality certificates were issued, with unknown parents.

Communication

In Côte d'Ivoire, the AFJCI, through its project assistant lawyers, conducted **117** mass awareness activities. These included **82** public awareness sessions and **35** sessions specifically addressing the issue of foundlings and abandoned children, targeting key actors involved in child protection. This second component of activities is part of the project «Ensuring Every Child's Right to an Identity and Nationality,» funded by the United States.

All these activities were supported by performances from theater troupes skilled in participatory theater, to amplify the message inclusively.

20,154 people were directly impacted by these activities.

During the reporting period, **49** U-Report teams (*) were mobilized, involving 245 U-Reporters in the awareness activities.

(*) U-Report is a social platform available via Facebook, Twitter, and SMS, developed by UNICEF and available in 50 countries worldwide. It allows young people to express their opinions on issues that matter to them.

Miscellanea

From May 21-24, 2024, all MCO countries attended the Annual General Assembly of ID4Africa in Cape Town on digital identity guarantees (DPI) and digital transformation. The UNHCR organized a special session on the last day, which some attended. Côte d'Ivoire was a key speaker, with participation from the government focal point and the Director General of the National Identification Agency (ONECI).

The UNHCR funded an external consultation to evaluate the National Action Plan to End Statelessness (2020-2024) in Côte d'Ivoire. This evaluation aims to inform the next phase of government engagement, identify remaining tasks, and determine the best approach to secure diversified funding. The impact of this evaluation will be crucial in guiding future actions.

Cover story : Joseph, a former stateless foundling who obtained nationality with the help of UNHCR and its partners and is now studying economics, stands near his home in Côte d'Ivoire. Foundlings—children who have been abandoned by their parents—represent a significant proportion of stateless individuals in Côte d'Ivoire. Since 2019, the country has allowed children of unknown parentage to obtain a birth certificate and a nationality certificate.

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For more information

Silvia Loschiavo, Stateless Officer
Côte d'Ivoire, Abidjan
loschiav@unhcr.org

Alpha Seydi Ba, Senior Communications Officer
Reg Bureau West & Cent Africa SEN
baalp@unhcr.org

Charlotte Maquin, Senior Protection Officer
Reg Bureau West & Cent Africa SEN
maquin@unhcr.org

Francis Djaha, Assistant Protection Officer
Côte d'Ivoire, Abidjan
djaha@unhcr.org



Cover Story:

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