

RESETTLEMENT and OTHER COMPLEMENTARY PATHWAYS TO PROTECTION

Ensuring stateless people have equal access to resettlement

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What's the Issue?

Lack of access to resettlement and other routes to protection can leave stateless people **in dangerous situations** and **put lives at risk**.

- Stateless people may face discrimination in a first country of asylum, with limited or no access to food, accommodation, healthcare, education, birth registration, or other rights.
- Stateless people may be at heightened risk of extreme poverty and being pushed into exploitative situations in order to survive, including trafficking, unfair/dangerous labour conditions, sexual/gender-based violence, or other abuse. Stateless children may be at heightened risk of early marriage or becoming child soldiers.
- Some resettlement programmes exclude certain stateless people; for example, the UK's Syrian Resettlement Scheme [excluded most Palestinian refugees from Syria](#), leaving them without the option of resettlement even if they had high protection needs and would have qualified for resettlement if they had been Syrian nationals.
- Stateless people who do not have access to complementary pathways to protection may be forced to remain in war zones or take dangerous journeys to find safety.

What can I do as a frontline refugee practitioner?

The 4 Rs: Recognise, Record, Refer, and Read up!

1. **Recognise statelessness**

Do not assume that everyone has a nationality or that everyone who is stateless knows they are stateless. Be aware that some people may think of 'nationality' as their ethnicity or community group rather than citizenship. When assessing eligibility for resettlement, consider whether the possibility of statelessness has been adequately addressed in [screening procedures](#), or if initial indications of statelessness have been recorded, and if needed explore further to identify whether statelessness is linked to heightened protection risks or needs. When assisting persons who have been resettled, consider risk of statelessness and any related needs.

2. **Record lack of proof of nationality and indications of statelessness**

If you identify that a person may have a risk of statelessness, or if the person claims to be stateless, record this important information on any paperwork relating to this person. If a form does not have fields allowing you to accurately record this information, make a note somewhere on the form about it, so that there is a record, and inform the person of this and that it may be important in future. Also keep copies of any relevant documents in your file so that they can be accessed later if needed.

3. **Refer to expert advice, support, and information**

If you identify possible statelessness, refer the person to organisations that specialise in statelessness and nationality in your country of work to see if they can help. Some of [our members](#) may be able to assist. Download and use our [guide/poster](#) for refugee response actors and our [short guide](#) for refugees and asylum seekers.

4. **Read up** about statelessness in the resettlement and complementary protection context. There's a bit more information below, and more on our websites (links below).

- [UNHCR's Self-study Module](#) (8.6)
- [UNHCR's Refugee Resettlement Handbook](#) (especially 1.2.3 and 7.2.2)
- [Statelessness among resettled Bhutanese refugees in Europe: An unresolved problem](#)
- [Statelessness and the Ukraine Crisis Response](#)

What needs to change at the policy level?

- States and international organisations should prevent discrimination and **guarantee equal access** to refugee resettlement based on protection needs, regardless of statelessness.
- Resettlement procedures should **make allowances for the specific circumstances of stateless refugees** and family members, including lack of documentation.
- Officials making decisions on applications for resettlement or complementary protection should receive **adequate training and information** about statelessness.
- States should grant stateless people **equal access to all complementary pathways** to protection, including for example temporary protection in response to the Ukraine crisis.

More background information on the issue and additional resources

Resettlement of non-refugee stateless persons may be possible in some situations of acute protection needs. [UNHCR's Self-study Module](#) (8.6) explains that there is "the possibility of providing resettlement places where a stateless person's situation cannot be resolved in the present host country or other country of former habitual residence, and remains precarious". Where the stateless person has no options of naturalisation or stable residency and is left without basic rights, resettlement may be appropriate, even if they are not a refugee.

Requirements for naturalisation of resettled stateless people should be relaxed. For example, some elderly stateless refugees from Bhutan [resettled to Europe](#) have found it impossible to meet language requirements for naturalisation in their new countries. There should be flexibility in these circumstances.

Complementary pathways should include stateless persons. Stateless persons fleeing persecution and armed conflict should have equal access to all pathways to protection, but stateless people are often excluded. For example, EU countries have activated the Temporary Protection Directive in response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine and ongoing armed conflict. This permits Ukrainians to relocate to and within EU Member States. However, there are [limitations on the Temporary Protection Directives's applicability to stateless persons](#), and many stateless persons are excluded to varying degrees in different Member States. Similarly, the [UK's Ukraine visa schemes](#) exclude stateless persons unless they are eligible family members of Ukrainian nationals.

Get more information

[European Network on Statelessness](#)

[Stateless Journeys](#)

[Statelessness Index](#)

[UNHCR's Ending Statelessness site](#)

[UNHCR's Self-Study Module on Statelessness](#)

[Institute on Statelessness and Inclusion](#)

[Statefree](#)

Attend a course at the [Institute on Statelessness and Inclusion](#) or the [University of Melbourne](#).

Organisations in Europe can [contact ENS](#) about training opportunities. You can also [sign up to our mailing list/newsletter](#), follow us on social media (Twitter: @ENStateless) and support the [Stateless Journeys campaign](#).

Statelessness has become a key problem for the resettled Bhutanese communities in the Netherlands, Denmark and United Kingdom.... [I]t is quite strange that such invited guests have been forced to continue living the life of statelessness without any apparent solution.

~ [Ram Karki, former President of the Bhutanese Community in the Netherlands](#)

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