



European
Network on
Statelessness



The Open
University



Middle East
Centre



WHY CITIZENSHIP IS RELEVANT TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

SDG 10 Reduce inequality within and among countries

Lack of citizenship documents blocks people from accessing regular labour markets, exacerbating social, economic and political exclusion, particularly for individuals already facing barriers because of gender, disability, race or belonging to an ethnic minority.¹

People without access to citizenship can be unable to enjoy orderly, safe and regular migration pathways. Large scale and forced migration can also make access to birth registration and citizenship more difficult for both migrants and their children, putting them at risk of statelessness.²

People without citizenship are often absent from development measures and indicators.³

WHAT TO CONSIDER:

- (a) Does documentation and lack of citizenship create barriers to accessing labour markets or being considered within measures of poverty and development? How does this intersect with existing barriers related to gender, race, ethnicity, disability etc.?
- (b) Does existing law, policy and practice prevent certain individuals or groups from accessing citizenship?
- (c) Is statelessness effectively identified and responded to in migration and asylum processes, such as nationality screenings, access to resettlement pathways and family reunification?

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

The 1954 Statelessness Convention⁴ states that stateless persons should be treated as favourably as possible regarding access to labour markets (article 17) and the same as nationals regarding social security and labour legislation (article 24).

EXAMPLE OF GOOD PRACTICE:

Makonde of Mozambican origin living in Kenya since the 1950s have long suffered discrimination in labour, education and interactions with authorities due to lack of documentation. In 2015, the President launched an interdepartmental taskforce to examine the situation of statelessness in Kenya, concluding that Makonde people and others experiencing statelessness should be registered and given citizenship.

In October 2016, having still not received citizenship, hundreds of Makonde marched to Nairobi. In response, the government upheld the 2011 Citizenship and Immigration Act by waiving citizenship application fees and documentation requirements. Within a year, thousands of Makonde Kenyans had been issued birth certificates, 1,500 registered as citizens, and 1,200 received national IDs. This has given them access to regular work, social rights, and educational opportunities.

LINKS TO OTHER SDGS:

Reducing inequality will be crucial to ensuring people are not impoverished or made hungry because they lack access to citizenship (**SDG1**, **SDG2**). Part of reducing inequality will be the need to ensure everyone has access to decent work (**SDG 8**), education at all levels (**SDG 4**) and also ending all forms of discrimination against women and girls, including those related to citizenship practices (**SDG5**).

¹ Relevant Targets: 10.1, 10.2, 10.3, 10.4

² Relevant Targets: 10.7

³ Relevant Targets: 10.1.1, 10.2.1, 10.3.1, 10.4.1

⁴ https://www.unhcr.org/ibelong/wp-content/uploads/1954-Convention-relating-to-the-Status-of-Stateless-Persons_ENG.pdf