

#HearItFromUs: Piloting an approach to promoting the voices of people affected by statelessness in Europe



One of the European Network on Statelessness' key priorities is to improve how we work with people affected by statelessness to inform and deliver our mission, and to strengthen and diversify the voices speaking out on statelessness. In July 2018, with support from EPIM we started our **#HearItFromUs** project with a pilot year. The purpose of the pilot was to:

1. identify existing community engagement across our membership;
2. provide opportunities for refugee and migrant communities affected by statelessness to have their voices heard and to engage with the debate;
3. explore and develop participation approaches with stateless communities in order to support them to become further involved in our work

This document outlines what we did in the pilot year of the project, what we found out and learned about effective community engagement as a result, and what needs to happen now to enable further engagement with and empowerment to communities affected by statelessness.

WHAT DID WE WANT TO KNOW?	METHODOLOGY: WHAT DID WE DO TO FIND OUT?
What are our members currently doing in terms of community engagement?	Online member survey Workshop at our Annual Conference for members
Who and where are communities affected by statelessness?	Mapping of community organisations representing groups affected by statelessness in Spain, the UK and the Netherlands supported by partners
What are the key issues and priorities of people affected by statelessness? What solutions/changes do people affected by statelessness want to see? How can we best support ongoing engagement and work together to achieve these changes?	Workshops with community representatives in the UK, Spain and the Netherlands supported by national partners

WHAT DID WE FIND?

KEY ISSUES

Across the participatory workshops, participants identified common issues facing people affected by statelessness.

1. **Access to rights** (including the right to work, healthcare, freedom of movement, civil and political rights)
2. **Routes to naturalisation** (including language requirements, length of residence requirements and application & citizenship fees)
3. **Access to legal procedures** (including settlement, residency & asylum procedures in the UK and the statelessness determination procedure in Spain)
4. **Lack of understanding and awareness from authorities** about statelessness
5. The impact of statelessness on **mental health**
6. The impact of statelessness on **identity & belonging**, and not wishing to identify with the term 'stateless'
7. **Childhood statelessness** and the intergenerational effects of statelessness
8. The **lack of information available to stateless people** about statelessness
9. Statelessness **intersects with other issues** such as racism and sexism leading to further marginalisation
10. Being made to feel **voiceless** as a result of being stateless



WAYS OF WORKING TOGETHER

Community representatives who attended the workshops identified ways in which ENS and affected communities could work together. ENS members also provided suggestions.

1. **Workshops, trainings and information** provision within communities
2. Create **national forums/advocacy groups** for stateless communities
3. Public **awareness raising** using the media, art and other platforms to share people's stories
4. Arrange regular **joint meetings** or trainings with **relevant authorities** and affected communities
5. **Collaborate with researchers and universities** on research projects and mobilise student activism on the issue
6. **Collaboration between national NGOs and community-led organisations** including joint funding proposals & training stateless people to provide service delivery/volunteer

WHAT DID WE LEARN ABOUT EFFECTIVE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT?

The process of planning and delivering the three workshops provided various learnings for developing and improving our work with stateless people.

1. Communities affected by statelessness are interested in working on the issue
2. Building connections with community organisations is both crucial and challenging

Why is building connections challenging?

- Location/distance may prevent participation
 - Lack of knowledge or identification with the word stateless
 - Lack of trust with an unfamiliar NGO or negative experiences 'engaging' with NGOs in the past
 - Lack of community development support for communities to engage on statelessness
 - Community organisations often run on a voluntary basis, impacting on their ability to be active on statelessness
 - The impacts of statelessness on mental health may affect ability and desire to work on the issue
3. Community engagement requires time, skills and resources to be effective and sustainable
 4. Meaningfully representing the diversity of people affected by statelessness (such as women, migrant *and* in situ stateless people) is important and challenging
 5. Effective interpretation is essential for productive engagement

WHAT NEXT?

The pilot year of the **#HearItFromUs** project has laid the groundwork to improve how we and others effectively engage with people affected by statelessness. We have outlined recommended actions for ENS, its members and other actors to enable further engagement with and empowerment of communities affected by statelessness:

1. Commitment from civil society, policy makers and donors to work together with stateless people on the issue
2. More and better investment in communities and community development support
3. Develop and support national and regional platforms for people affected by statelessness to coordinate, organise and advocate on the issue
4. Information and knowledge provision on statelessness for affected communities
5. Diversify ENS' network to better represent individuals and community organisations affected by statelessness
6. Incorporate the impacts of statelessness on mental health into awareness raising and advocacy messages
7. Take an intersectional approach to statelessness

If you would like to know more about the **#HearItFromUs** project & how to get involved or to read the full report on our pilot approach, please contact Khadija Badri (Khadija.Badri@statelessness.eu).