

Prevention and Reduction of Statelessness in Lebanon

By Myriam Aziz, April 2024



Since 2023, with the generous support of PRM, UNHCR has supported the Government of Lebanon in reforming the civil registration and nationality law through advocacy and providing technical advice to enhance simplified administrative procedures that could help prevent and resolve statelessness situations.

UNHCR also provided legal aid to stateless persons to remedy their lack of nationality or to access documentation. UNHCR therefore supports the State's capacity for the provision of free, quality legal aid, while ensuring the effective implementation of laws, and addressing challenges in practice.



A Focus Group Discussion on Statelessness

in Mansoura, Bekaa, Lebanon, serves as a platform where stateless individuals and their family members actively engage in learning and discussing the matter of statelessness.



They explore ways to counter it in Lebanon through services offered by UNHCR and its partners and learn about the documents required by the Government of Lebanon to proceed with the issuance of identity documents. This active participation underscores the importance of their involvement in shaping the solutions to this issue.



Saoud, pictured below, is the **Statelessness Community Focal Point**. He reaches out to individuals in his community who might be interested or benefit from the sessions to sort out their own paperwork. He then very generously hosts the sessions in his home, accounting for the difficulty of movement for stateless individuals without identity documents. As a stateless individual himself, his goal is to spread awareness and knowledge on the process and documents needed to issue a Laissez-Passer or other identity documents as applicable.





With pride and relief, Malek holds up his very first Laissez-Passer, which he finally managed to issue in September 2023 after being completely undocumented his entire life. Malek's entire life changed upon issuing his very first identity document: he could finally be issued a phone number and a driver's license, manage his tuk-tuk driving business, and, most importantly, enjoy the dignity of freedom of movement.



Rabiaa, with two of her children, Razan and Bayan received a visit from UNHCR's mobile clinic.

Statelessness Mobile Clinics: Rabiaa and Ammar's Story.

One of the main obstacles a stateless individual faces is the inability to move freely because of fear of being stopped or detained at checkpoints with no identity documents. As such, UNHCR and its partners engage in mobile clinics, where they visit individuals in their homes and consult them on the spot. Rabiaa, a Lebanese citizen, is married to Ammar, a stateless individual. Their children are also stateless because Lebanese law does not allow Lebanese women to pass down their citizenship to their spouses or children. Following a first mobile clinic visit by UNHCR and its partners, Ammar began the process of reclaiming his Lebanese citizenship through his father. In 2021, Ammar finally became a Lebanese citizen, and so did his children. Rabiaa expressed the "complete and utter relief" once her children became citizens because she could finally enroll them at school, have them go on field trips, and, most importantly, get vaccinated at the local Primary Health Care Centre. Rabiaa also described how her husband restored his confidence and self-worth once he received his paperwork. He felt like "a real person again." He found a renewed sense of purpose, with his freedom of movement instated and receiving full-time benefits at work.

Legal Desks in Community Development Centres (CDCs).

In UNHCR's Community Centres, legal desks are also another available means to access counseling and legal assistance to acquire documentation and prepare legal briefs to be submitted to the court. Community members are well aware of their existence and approach our teams to receive the counselling and services they need, which is another step towards combating statelessness.





We extend gratitude to PRM and the people of the United States of America for your generous contributions. Your support for the prevention and reduction of statelessness in Lebanon is truly changing lives.

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