



**CONFERENCE ON ADDRESSING STATELESSNESS IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC
24-26 November 2016, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
Summary Report**

At the Conference on Addressing Statelessness in Asia and the Pacific (the “Conference”), from 24 to 26 November 2016, representatives from over 40 civil society organisations from across Asia and the Pacific and representatives from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) met in Kuala Lumpur with the aim of building and strengthening cooperation among civil society actors and our collective capacities to address statelessness. A key outcome of the Conference was the launch the Statelessness Network Asia Pacific (SNAP).¹

The goal of SNAP is to promote collaboration and information sharing on statelessness in Asia the Pacific.

UNHCR estimates that statelessness affects at least 10 million persons worldwide and that a stateless child is born every 10 minutes. Asia and the Pacific has the highest concentration of stateless persons than any other region in the world. Populations who are stateless, or at risk of statelessness, often have limited or no access to basic human rights such as education, employment, housing and health services. They are at a heightened risk of exploitation, human trafficking, arrest and arbitrary detention because they have difficulty proving who they are or links to a country of origin. Stateless persons, and those at risk of statelessness, are also often unable to pay taxes, buy and sell property, open a bank account, legally marry or register a birth or death. Statelessness can also be a cause and consequence of forced migration.

Civil society actors are in a unique position to respond to the challenge of statelessness in Asia and the Pacific through civil society’s existing direct engagement with stateless populations and decision makers. However, currently, there is limited collaboration and information sharing between civil society actors on activities focused on preventing and resolving statelessness. Thus, SNAP aims to bridge this gap. Collaboration and exchange between civil society actors will enhance individual actors’ impact and create opportunities for collective action.

The launch of SNAP is an important contribution to global efforts to address statelessness, including the [Global Action Plan to End Statelessness](#), UNHCR’s [#Ibelong campaign](#), the [Global Campaign for Equal Nationality Rights](#), the [Coalition on Every Child's Right to a Nationality](#), and the growth of complementary civil-society networks in Africa, Europe, North Asia and the Americas.

¹ For further background on the development of SNAP, see Outcome Document, Civil Society Retreat on Resolving Statelessness in Asia and the Pacific, June 2015, http://aprrn.info/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/final_outcome-document_civil-society-retreat-on-resolving-statelessness-in-asia-and-the-pacific_june20151.pdf.

Areas for Potential Collaboration

Throughout the first two days of the Conference, participants engaged in discussions regarding each of the following topics:

- what statelessness is (and what it is not)
- the size and location of some of the larger stateless populations in Asia
- the relationship between the Sustainable Development Goals and efforts to address statelessness
- the links between statelessness, discrimination, civil registration and documentation, detention and forced migration, and the impacts of statelessness on children
- some of the activities and initiatives that are known to have effectively addressed statelessness for certain populations in Asia
- the progress being made by UNHCR at national and regional levels to end statelessness in Asia, and its approach to implementing the Global Action Plan to End Statelessness
- the work done by existing networks and organisations with respect to addressing statelessness in Asia and the Pacific and potential areas for collaboration with SNAP
- the development of the Coalition on Every Child's Right to a Nationality, and the relevance of this to addressing statelessness in Asia and the Pacific
- methodologies for addressing statelessness through research-based advocacy, strategic litigation, monitoring States' compliance with human rights norms, and collaboration between academics and other civil society actors
- the socio-economic consequences of statelessness and strategies to support the socio-economic empowerment of stateless populations
- approaches for engaging with the media and using social media for statelessness advocacy

A roundtable discussion with stateless persons born and residing in Malaysia, and a panel discussion with Conference participants who were formerly stateless or who are personally connected to stateless communities, were also facilitated. Such opportunities provided participants with new and important insight into the experiences of stateless populations.

The first two days of the Conference established a solid platform for participants to discuss potential areas for collaboration. These discussions were held on the third day of the Conference, when participants also provided feedback on SNAP's draft terms of reference. SNAP's potential future activities and initiatives, as developed by Conference participants are detailed below against SNAP's three, key long-term objectives.

Objective 1: To strengthen and support, and build solidarity and cooperation between stateless communities, civil society actors and other stakeholders working on nationality, statelessness and related issues

- Analyse the materials and presentations shared during the Conference and any subsequent like events, to identify information and research gaps and opportunities for collaboration
- Create a resource that pools information about SNAP members' work on addressing statelessness in Asia and the Pacific and potential areas for collaboration
- Develop an online platform to link stateless communities, SNAP members and other stakeholders (which includes linking stateless communities with trauma and psychological counselling resources)
- Coordinate focal points to support collaboration

- Actively identify and include new members in SNAP's activities and initiatives, through engaging with UN agencies and other networks
- Support the development of children's groups that are inclusive of stateless children

Objective 2: To increase knowledge, visibility and understanding on the right to nationality and the issue of statelessness amongst civil society actors and other stakeholders

- Develop materials on key themes and issues, with respect to statelessness in Asia and the Pacific, to share with regional bodies (such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), and UN agencies (such as UNHCR))
- Collate currently available publications on statelessness in Asia and the Pacific and provide SNAP members with access to these publications (and translate publications into languages spoken in the region)
- Support the development of national level trainings and roundtable events with stateless communities, government representatives, civil society actors, inter-governmental organisations and UN agencies on the relevant national laws, policies and procedures with respect to statelessness and key themes and issues
- Support efforts to include childhood statelessness issues in alternative reports to the Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC)
- Use the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and the Protection of the Rights of Women and Children (ACWC)'s statements and recommendations that relate to resolving and preventing statelessness, as a platform for raising awareness as to the relationship between children's rights, gender equality and statelessness
- Use the ASEAN Regional Plan of Action on the Elimination of Violence against Children (RPA-EVAC) to bring awareness to the experiences of stateless children and children at risk of statelessness with respect to exposure to violence
- Support the development of documentaries and publications that record the experiences of stateless communities
- Engage with the media to increase public awareness as to statelessness
- Join public campaigns, such as the #Ibelong campaign, at national and regional levels
- Support initiatives that build awareness in schools and universities as to the causes and consequences of statelessness
- Train stateless youth to facilitate trainings and disseminate information on the causes and consequences of childhood statelessness

Objective 3: To develop and support initiatives that promote practical solutions to statelessness at national and regional levels

- Regularly compile and share information on positive practices, key themes and issues and lessons learned based on consultations with SNAP's members, stateless communities and other stakeholders in Asia and the Pacific
- Improve access to mapping and data collection tools and other relevant resources of UN agencies and inter-governmental organisations
- Support collaboration around reporting on statelessness in countries in Asia and the Pacific to the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) (i.e. both trainings on the process for submitting to the UPR and support with drafting submissions)
- Coordinate joint submissions between SNAP members to the CRC

- Advocate to the United Nations for a thematic special rapporteur on statelessness
- Support the development of a training course on utilising the Institute on Statelessness and Inclusion's toolkit for civil society, titled [Addressing the Right to Nationality through the Convention on the Rights of the Child](#)
- Develop research and advocacy campaigns which aim to address the links between the marginalisation of ethnic and religious minorities and statelessness
- Advocate for universal access to education and birth registration
- Develop initiatives that support the goal of universal access to education and birth registration, such as fostering relationships between civil society actors and government-run hospitals and schools

SNAP's Membership

While SNAP is evolving, there will be no criteria for membership, except the requirement that members are civil society actors. Civil society actors include:

- non-governmental organisations,
- community-based organisations,
- faith-based organisations,
- academic institutions,
- law firms, and
- individuals (including formerly stateless persons, stateless persons, persons at risk of statelessness and other experts).

Civil society actors that receive email updates from SNAP will automatically be members of SNAP, unless they notify otherwise.

Governance Board

SNAP's Organising Committee is currently in the process of composing a Governance Board for SNAP and will be accepting nominations for the Governance Board until **12 January 2017, 5pm Bangkok time**.

Civil society actors wishing to become members of SNAP and/or join SNAP's Governance Board are invited to contact SNAP's Organising Committee via snap@statelessnessnetworkasiapacific.org.

Conclusion

Conference participants provided positive feedback with respect to the Conference's programme and its coordination, and welcomed the launch of SNAP and the recommendations for SNAP's future activities and initiatives. SNAP's Organising Committee wishes to acknowledge the kind participation and contributions by the chairs, panellists, presenters, rapporteurs and participants at the Conference and we look forward to future collaboration on addressing statelessness in Asia and the Pacific.

statelessnessnetworkasiapacific.org

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