

Written evidence submitted by Institute on Statelessness and Inclusion, Imkaan Welfare Organisation and University College London on Monday 9th December 2024
International Development Committee
Inquiry: In Development

The following submission represents the collated views of legal and third sector experts from the Institute on Statelessness and Inclusion¹ (ISI) and Imkaan Welfare Organisation² (Imkaan) and social science academic experts from the UCL Social Research Institute³ (SRI) at University College London (UCL).

The *ISI* is the first and the only human rights NGO dedicated to promoting the right to a nationality and the rights of stateless people globally. *Imkaan*, based in Pakistan, is an NGO that works with marginalized and stateless communities, those impacted by challenges due to poverty and identity issues, particularly women and children. Alongside the multi-disciplinary, comprehensive work conducted at the *UCL Social Research Institute*, this collective is well placed to respond to this inquiry by the IDC.

A. Executive summary

A.1. Stateless people are amongst the most vulnerable and persecuted globally and fall between the cracks in relation to UK development and humanitarian efforts.

A.2. Statelessness can act as a driver of conflict and refugee flows internationally and within countries.

A.3. Statelessness disproportionately impacts women and children and hinders the attainment of multiple global sustainable development goals (SDGs 3, 4, 5, 10 & 16).

A.4. The issue of Statelessness should be examined closely by the IDC in relation to recipients of ODA spending and the requirements of LDCs and LMICs of this spending, particularly nations in South and South-East Asia, Africa and Caribbean Nations with a focus on education, rights to health care and nationality.

Main Submission

B. Why should the International Development Committee examine this area?

Despite the UNHCR's #IBelong campaign⁴ which aimed to eradicate statelessness by 2024, globally an estimated 15 million people⁵ continue to experience statelessness and are not considered as a national by any state under the operation of its law. Further, the nationality of tens of millions is at risk. Statelessness is an issue which needs urgent attention from the International Development Committee (IDC) from a **human rights and development standpoint**. Stateless individuals are vulnerable to discrimination persecution and unequal treatment and lack basic protections granted to those with nationality including access to state institutions connected with education, healthcare, social security, justice, labour

¹ <https://www.institutesi.org/>

² <https://imkaan.org/>

³ <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/ioe/departments-and-centres/ucl-social-research-institute>

⁴ <https://www.unhcr.org/ibelong/>

⁵ <https://www.institutesi.org/resources/statelessness-in-numbers-2020-an-overview-and-analysis>

protection and housing. The complexity of the issue means that it can act as a **driver of conflict and refugee flows**. Statelessness occurs due to redrawing of borders, wars, states gaining independence and citizenship stripping in the name of national security. It is also caused and perpetuated by discrimination on grounds like race, ethnicity, gender and poverty. Stateless peoples often reside in the most **vulnerable localities susceptible to climate change** and face further **risk of displacement**.

C. Why is it the right time for the Committee to examine this area and why would this area benefit from parliamentary scrutiny?

Given current global political instability alongside climate-based uncertainty, now is the opportune moment for the IDC to conduct a wider investigation to examine the issue. In seeking to investigate this issue, the IDC would be addressing key UN Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG10 (reduced inequalities), and SDG16 (Peace, justice and strong institutions) as well as SDGs 3,4 and 5 (good health and wellbeing; access to quality education and gender equality). Given the stateless are among the most structurally disadvantaged people globally, the IDC is urged to prioritise statelessness in keeping with the core principle to 'leave no one behind'.

The hidden nature of statelessness means that stateless people are **falling between the cracks in relation to the UK's development and human rights programmes**. We urge that this issue is first examined closely in relation to firstly the **recipients of ODA spending**, and secondly the **requirements of LDCs and LMICs of this spending**.

No country including the UK is immune to Statelessness. However, there are certain nations with former and present close ties to the UK, including Commonwealth countries within which proportionate communities face deep challenges to their survival and thriving because of the denial of equal nationality rights and resultant statelessness. These LDCs and LMICs ODA recipient countries which warrant scrutiny include those in **South and South-East Asia**⁶ (Pakistan⁷, Nepal, Bangladesh⁹, Malaysia¹⁰, Myanmar¹¹ and India¹²) but also **Caribbean Nations** (Haiti and the Dominican Republic¹³) and **Africa** (Kenya¹⁴, South Africa¹⁵, Cote D'Ivoire).

D. How could Government policy in this area be developed or improved?

Government policy should seek to address within these nations, at a minimum, firstly the **right to education for all children** including stateless and undocumented children;

⁶ <https://nationalityforall.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/SEAP-2023-First-Edition-1.pdf>

⁷ https://files.institutesi.org/UPR42_Pakistan.pdf

⁸ Dr Iqbal (UCL), has conducted extensive research on statelessness amongst the ethnic Bengali community in Pakistan, see <https://poistudy.com/tracing-the-story-of-the-pakistani-bengali-community/> & <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/p0gqf2rg>. They are soon to begin a study on the impact of statelessness on mental health.

⁹ Dr Redclift (UCL) has conducted extensive work in Bangladesh around the issue of statelessness: <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/mono/10.4324/9780203096871/statelessness-citizenship-victoria-redclift>

¹⁰ https://files.institutesi.org/CRC_Malaysia_2024.pdf

¹¹ <https://www.institutesi.org/focus-areas/rohingya>

¹² https://files.institutesi.org/UPR41_India.pdf

¹³ https://files.institutesi.org/DOMINICAN_REPUBLIC_Together_We_Can.pdf

¹⁴ https://files.institutesi.org/UPR49_Kenya.pdf

¹⁵ https://files.institutesi.org/UPR41_South_Africa.pdf

ensuring that all stateless and undocumented people have **the right to public health care** and the call for **equal nationality rights** and non-discriminatory implementation of policies around the **right to citizenship**. Aside from a close investigation of ODA spending and the requirements attached to this spending, the IDC should additionally consider the extent to which the recent UNHCR's [#IBelong campaign](#)¹⁶ made a difference around the issue of statelessness and the success of the UK contribution within this. Lastly the ODA should explore how the UK can support the newly launched [Global Alliance to End Statelessness](#)¹⁷.

Acknowledgments

This response has been prepared by UCL Social Research Institute, Institute of Statelessness and Inclusion and Imkaan Welfare Organisation with contributions from:

- Dr Humera Iqbal¹⁸, Associate Professor of Social and Cultural Psychology; Dr Victoria Redclift¹⁹, Associate Professor of Political Sociology; **UCL Social Research Institute, University College London.**
- Amal de Chickera²⁰, Director, **Institute on Statelessness and Inclusion**
- Tahera Hasan²¹, Founder and Director, **Imkaan Welfare Organisation.**

We would be pleased to speak further about our response. Please contact Dr Humera Iqbal (h.iqbal1@ucl.ac.uk).

Additional Information:

Have you ever engaged with Parliament before (e.g. made a submission to a select committee)?

- Yes – presented to the All-Party Parliamentary Human Rights Group in 2023 (oral and written work).

Do you have personal, or field experience related to international development issues?

- Yes – each of the contributors has experience of the issue (advocacy, field and policy based)

If you are invited to pitch your idea to the Committee, would you be able to travel to London and back within the same day?

- Yes

¹⁶ <https://www.unhcr.org/ibelong/>

¹⁷ <https://statelessnessalliance.org/>

¹⁸ <https://profiles.ucl.ac.uk/48631-humera-iqbal>

¹⁹ <https://profiles.ucl.ac.uk/66893-victoria-redclift>

²⁰ <https://www.institutesi.org/about-us>

²¹ <https://imkaan.org/director-and-management-team/>