



## **#IBELONG CAMPAIGN TO END STATELESSNESS: TOWARDS A NATIONAL PLAN OF ACTION TO ERADICATE STATELESSNESS IN NIGERIA**

Abuja, Nigeria: 5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> December 2018

### **COMMUNIQUE**

We, the representatives of Government Agencies, UN Agencies, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and the Academia, having actively participated in a 2-day Workshop (5<sup>th</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> December 2018) to review and enrich the draft National Action Plan (NAP) to end statelessness, have deliberated on the subject cognisant of the provisions of the 1954 Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons; the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness; the 2015 Abidjan Declaration on the Eradication of Statelessness in the ECOWAS Member States; the 2017 Banjul Plan of Action on the Eradication of Statelessness; and the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended), amongst others.

Whilst acknowledging the support provided by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) towards a NAP to eradicate statelessness and address the situation of people at risk of statelessness in Nigeria;

Whilst acknowledging that Statelessness is an issue of concern to the Nation, and that the Government is committed to end Statelessness by reviewing the NAP on the basis of the Global Action Plan (2014-2024) to end Statelessness;

We acknowledge that Statelessness in Nigeria is largely a result of gaps in the existing law provisions on citizenship and other factors such as limited access to documentation, including birth certification, nomadism, migration and transfer of territory, amongst others.

We understand that stateless persons are deprived of a range of fundamental human rights, such as the right to vote, the right to access services, right to free movement, the right to documentation, the right to dignity, etc.

We appreciate that there is limited information on the situation of Statelessness in Nigeria and that it is important to develop and establish a coordinated process to assess the scope, numbers and risks. Lack of comprehensive data on the population also makes it difficult to fully assess and establish the extent of the risk in Nigeria; and to engage in evidence-based advocacy.

We recognize that Nigeria, through the Ministry of Interior (MOI), as per Article 21 of the Abidjan Declaration, has taken steps including support for the global #IBelong campaign to end statelessness; collaboration with UNHCR and other stakeholders towards the eradication of statelessness in Nigeria.

In preparation for the October 2019 High-Level Event on Statelessness for the mid-point of the #IBelong Campaign, States including Nigeria, will be expected to showcase meaningful contributions made to end statelessness.

Based on the above, we (the undersigned participants herewith in the attached list) have revised the draft NAP prepared in 2016, reducing the 10 action points to 5 key priority areas that take into consideration Nigeria's international obligations and commitments, in addition to relevant applicable strategies within the overall strategic directions of the Global Action Plan (2014-2024).

### **WE HEREBY RECOMMEND that:**

1. Five (5) key areas of actions to end statelessness be prioritised for Nigeria as follows:<sup>1</sup>
  - I. Research, Advocacy and Sensitization
  - II. Prevent Childhood Statelessness
  - III. Prevent Statelessness in Transfer of Territory

<sup>1</sup> Details of activities and partners are captured in the reviewed draft NAP of December 2018.



- IV. Address Gender and other forms of Discrimination in Issues of Citizenship Documentation
- V. Ensure Protection of Stateless Migrants/Persons

2. Sustained evidenced-based advocacy and sensitization of top level administrators and policy makers be fully commenced. Advocacy should factor the security, economic, treaty obligation and responsibilities Nigeria has towards the eradication of statelessness by 2024;
3. Urgent steps (including through regulations, as provided under Section 32 (1) 1999 Constitution), should be initiated to provide clarity on the: status of children of naturalised Nigerians; grant of nationality to foundling and children who would otherwise be stateless in Nigeria; gender discrimination and matters of indigeneity; as well as establish procedures to ease citizenship acquisition and resolve cases of disputed Nigerian citizenship;
4. The current coordination platform be re-energised to a coordination group led by the National Focal Point for Statelessness in the Ministry of Interior (MOI) to facilitate the finalization and adoption of the reviewed National Action Plan (NAP) by the first quarter of 2019 and monitoring of its implementation;
5. Submission of the draft NAP to the Minister of Interior for Ministerial seal as soon as possible; and presentation by the Minister to the Federal Executive Council (FEC) within the first quarter of 2019;
6. Advocate for mainstreaming of the NAP into national planning and policy streams as well as inclusion of statelessness issues into relevant educational curricular;
7. Data collection and processes in identifying and documenting stateless persons be re-examined, including engaging the National Population Commission (NPopC) to factor in 'statelessness' concerns in Nigeria's plans and templates for the proposed 2020 census; relevant variables to capture data on statelessness to be clearly outlined in collaboration with UNHCR;
8. A Statelessness Determination Procedure (SDP) similar to the Refugee Status determination (RSD) be established and prioritised in the NAP;
9. A nationality and citizenship law in Nigeria be swiftly enacted to address the existing gaps in the Nigerian Constitution that inhibit access to documentation and registration.

  
**Aisha A. Rufai**

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On behalf of participants