

Kenyan Asian statelessness eradication Initiative

PRESS RELEASE

LONG AWAITED NATIONALITY FOR ASIAN STATELESS IN KENYA

4 decades ago, this issue began by a change in law, split families, and changed a whole generation of people. On the wayside got left behind roughly 4 to 5 dozen individuals. Extremely marginalized.

On Thursday, 02 September 2021, a celebratory ceremony was hosted at KFEET (Karura Forest Environmental Education Trust) grounds to issue certificates of citizenship to stateless members of the Asian Community currently residing in Kenya. Parliament passed the Citizenship and Immigration Act as the law to govern issues of statelessness in 2012.



A group photo at the Asian Citizen celebration ceremony with all recipients on September 2, 2021, at KFEET. Photo/Simran Hindocha

A national taskforce, created by the Government of Kenya in 2019, led to the success of stateless people who have been in a dilemma of being illegal in a country they are born and raised in. Head of National taskforce Eunice Lamba Chacha who is the Director of Foreign Nationals Management at the Directorate of Immigration along with the leadership of the Director General, Directorate of Immigration Alexander Muteshi Imbenzi CBS OGW 'ndc'(k), were key players in the process of them attaining citizenship.

Muteshi said that being stateless is a major human rights issue, "because once you are stateless, it's very difficult for you to be able to engage in any economic activity and it's difficult for your family to access basic services."

The active movement of the group stateless plea was kick started four and a half years ago and led by Sahib Singh Khosla FIA FeASK who reached out to various national and international organizations and government bodies' such as the British and Indian governments since 2018. He never lost hope when nothing could be done from their end.

Sahib said, 'Apart from researching the effects of statelessness on British Overseas Citizen Asian community in Kenya and compiling a verifiable database of people concerned, I provided legal aid services including applications for citizenship documents and advocated for enhancements in Nationality laws and regulations to avoid risk of future statelessness.'

In his speech – he reflected: As Charlie Chaplin said, "We think too much and feel too little". Was I Anxious? Excited?... Tired? Or was it a blend of everything? The day had arrived – a new dawn.

Khosla also praised Malkit Singh Main EBS, who serves as the International Police Association (IPA) Kenya Section Resource Mobilizer and the National Disaster Management Unit (NDMU) Kenya National Coordinator. Malkit has been a dynamic catalyst in this process since his involvement in late 2020. Due to his efforts, stateless applicants from various ethnic backgrounds and groups from as low as one year of being stateless to as high as 50 years of being stateless now have a legal status in their home Country.



Leaders pose for a group photo at the Asian Citizen celebration ceremony on September 2, 2021, at KFEET. Photo/Simran Hindocha

Samwel Okute, representing UNHCR Kenya during the event, reiterated their global advocacy support and congratulated the recipients and all parties involved. He noted their cordial working relationship with CS Ministry of Interior Fred Matiangi & both the Director General and Foreign Nationals Director from the Directorate of Immigration.

Some of the challenges faced by stateless members include Not being able to work legally due to lack of PIN Certificate and National ID card, not being able to travel abroad due to lack of a passport, barriers in investments, bank accounts and even issues in obtaining a mobile phone line or marrying due to insufficient documentation for processes of paperwork.

A jubilant recipient, Khalil Sidi said 'Rather than looking back at the past, I can only hope to look towards the future, to what it holds for all of us here...''.

Multiple unsuccessful attempts have been made by community-based organizations over the past four decades to solve the issue of statelessness. The active efforts of Sahib Singh Khosla and Malkit Singh Main EBS combined with the National Task Force has brought about a promising future of almost 100 members of the Kenyan society.



The Asian Citizen celebration ceremony finale with an 'I AM KENYAN' cake cutting on September 2, 2021, at KFEET. Photo/Simran Hindocha

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