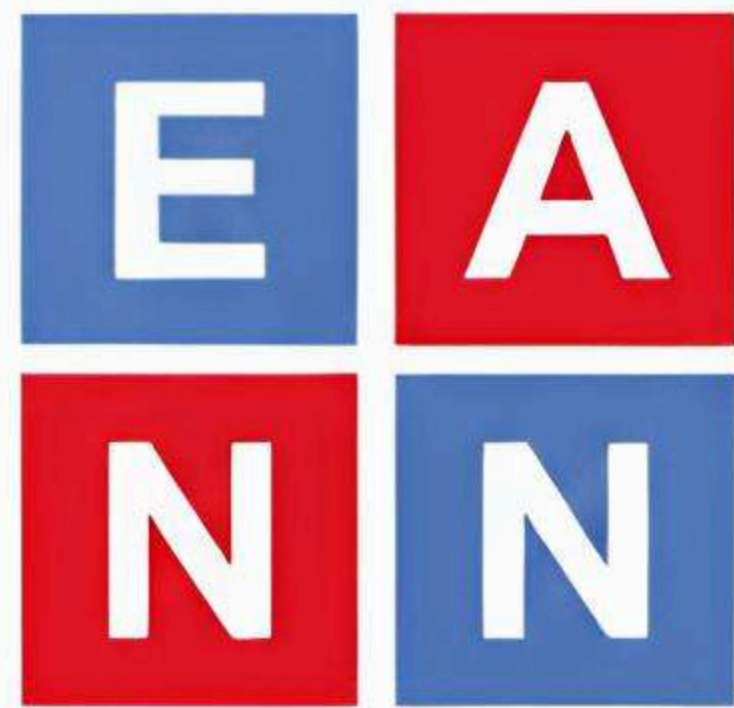
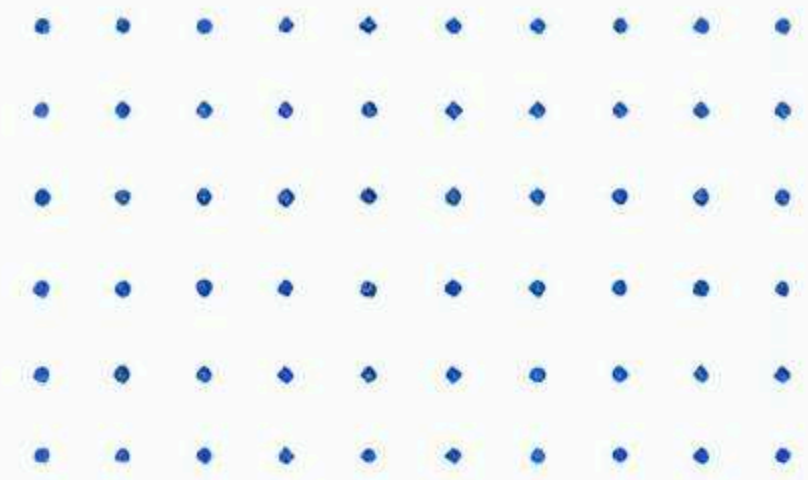




Eastern Africa  
Nationality  
Network



# NEWSLETTER



Issue 1 | 2026



Third Edition  
Since Launch



January -  
June 2026



## THEME

*Advancing Nationality Rights, Legal Identity and  
Inclusion Across Eastern Africa*



MEMBER  
ACTIVITIES



REGIONAL  
DEVELOPMENTS



NETWORK  
UPDATES



EDITORS' NOTE

“ Welcome to Issue 1 of the Eastern Africa Nationality Network Newsletter 2026 – our third edition since the launch of the EANN Newsletter Series.

In this issue, we highlight inspiring activities and research led by our members, share important network updates, and spotlight regional developments and conversations shaping nationality rights and statelessness across Eastern Africa.

Thank you for being part of this growing community of practice and solidarity. We hope these stories inform, connect and strengthen our collective action.



KNOWLEDGE AND RESEARCH SPOTLIGHT

1 Understanding Ethnicity, Citizenship and Statelessness in Kenya

SAMANTHA BALATON-CHRIMES

Deakin University, Australia



**New Book**

*Knowing Ethnicity: Politics, Classification and Pluralism in Kenya*

Cambridge University Press



DISCOUNT CODE: **KGEY26**

**20% discount at checkout**

**Blog Article**



**The Conundrum of Ethnic Recognition and the Limits of Group-Based Citizenship Campaigning in Kenya**

Critical Statelessness Studies - 2025 April Blog

2 New Doctoral Research

**Childhood Statelessness in Kenya: An Appraisal of Legislative Compliance with International Human Rights Law Obligations**

DR. JULIE I. LUGULU – KENYA

University of Western Cape, South Africa



Julie’s research highlights gaps in protections for vulnerable children. Her work exposes legislative shortcomings, advocating for reforms to prevent statelessness among children and uphold Kenya’s human rights commitments toward the right to a nationality for all.

**BLOG ARTICLE**

Julie has also published a blog article with our partner network, the European Network on Statelessness, examining Foundlings at Risk of Statelessness in Kenya: Towards Strengthened Legal Protection.

Read it below:  
<https://www.statelessness.eu/updates/blog/foundlings-risk-statelessness-kenya-towards-strengthened-legal-protection>

[Read Samantha's blog post on the Critical Statelessness Studies blog: The Conundrum of Ethnic Recognition and the Limits of Group-Based Citizenship Campaigning in Kenya](#)



# MEMBER HIGHLIGHTS

## Advancing Gender-Equal Nationality Rights in Somalia



### Somali Gender Hub (SGH) – Somalia

**Africa Regional Convening on Gender Equality in Nationality**  
In February 2026, SGH participated in the Africa Regional Convening on Gender Equality in Nationality Laws in Nairobi, Kenya, which brought together governments, civil society, researchers, UN, and development partners from across Africa to share experiences, strengthen partnerships, and advance efforts to end discriminatory nationality laws and prevent statelessness.

SGH highlighted Somalia’s nationality law reform process, underlining the importance of gender-equal nationality rights, evidence-based advocacy, and collaboration between government and civil society. The convening strengthened regional partnerships and identified opportunities for continued joint advocacy and knowledge exchange to support nationality law reform across Africa.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qgNQER6ilnc>



**Global Legal Atlas on Gender Discrimination in Nationality Laws**  
Somali Gender Hub contributed to the Global Legal Atlas on Gender Discrimination in Nationality Laws, a global mapping study representing Somalia. The Atlas is an interactive resource mapping gender discrimination in nationality laws around the world and brings together law, policy, and data in one place. Explore below: <https://legal-atlas.equalnationalityrights.org/>



**Policymakers Workshop: Advancing Gender-Equal Nationality Rights in Somalia**  
In March 2026, the SGH organized its 2nd Annual Policymakers Workshop on Advancing Gender-Equal Nationality Rights in Mogadishu, Somalia. The workshop brought together government representatives, relevant ministries, civil society organizations, academics, and community members to discuss legal and policy barriers to gender equality in Somalia’s nationality law. The workshop provided a platform for constructive dialogue on reform priorities, strengthened collaboration among key stakeholders, and reinforced the importance of evidence-based policy development to advance equal nationality rights and reduce the risk of statelessness in Somalia.

**Youth Training on Advocacy and Gender-Equal Nationality Rights**  
For the second year running, SGH conducted a two-day Youth Engagement, Advocacy, and Activism Training in Garowe, Somalia, to equip youth with knowledge and Advocacy skills on gender-equal nationality rights. The training enhanced their understanding of gender-discriminatory provisions in Somalia’s nationality law and gave them practical advocacy skills to engage in policy dialogue and public awareness campaigns. A key outcome was the establishment of a cohort of informed youth advocates committed to supporting ongoing advocacy for equal nationality rights and the prevention of statelessness in Somalia.



**Media Dialogue on Gender-Equal Nationality Rights and the Role of the Media**  
Building on the outcomes of 2025 interventions, SGH organized a media dialogue on the role of the media in raising awareness of gender-equal nationality laws and preventing statelessness in Somalia. Legal experts, human rights advocates, and media professionals discussed the implications of Law No. 28, including women’s ability to confer nationality, the risk of statelessness, birth registration, and social inclusion. The dialogue highlighted media’s role in amplifying lived experiences, promoting informed public debate, and supporting legal reform, while strengthening collaboration. See more [here](#)



MEMBER HIGHLIGHTS

# Digital Identity Systems: Ensuring Inclusion and Protecting Rights



## Nubian Rights Forum ( NRF) – Kenya

As digital identity systems continue to expand across Africa, questions around inclusion, accessibility, and protection of rights remain critical for communities affected by documentation barriers.

EANN member Nubian Rights Forum ( NRF) participated in the HR4ID CSEO Workshop during ID4Africa 2026 in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, where it brought the experiences of Nubian and other at-risk stateless communities into discussions on digital identity systems.

NRF highlighted challenges including exclusion of persons without foundational documents, barriers created by mandatory digital identity requirements, biometric and technical challenges, and privacy and data protection concerns.

The organisation advocated for human rights-centred digital identity systems that include alternative pathways for persons without documentation, strong data protection safeguards, independent oversight, meaningful participation of affected communities, and strengthened civil registration systems.



**Digital identity systems must be designed and implemented in ways that uphold rights, promote dignity, and leave no one behind.**



### KEY MESSAGE

**Digital identity systems should advance inclusion and must not reproduce existing forms of exclusion.**



# MEMBER HIGHLIGHTS

## Shamiri Sisterhood Initiative (SSI) – Kenya

### Centering Lived Experience Leadership in Ending Statelessness

Shamiri Sisterhood Initiative (SSI) continues to highlight the importance of lived experience leadership in shaping responses to statelessness and building solutions that are inclusive, effective, and grounded in human rights.

In November 2025, SSI Founder and Executive Director Nosizi Dube participated in the launch of the *Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights on the Specific Aspects of the Right to a Nationality and the Eradication of Statelessness in Africa* in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

In June 2026, Ms. Dube participated as a guest speaker in the 15th Online Statelessness Course organised by the International Institute of Humanitarian Law in Italy.



### Lived experience leadership that drives solutions and rights



Drawing from her lived experience of statelessness, Nosizi Dube highlighted that recognition of nationality must be accompanied by meaningful social, legal, and economic inclusion.



She emphasized the importance of implementing the AU Protocol to strengthen safeguards against statelessness and ensure no one is left behind.



Ms. Dube called for stronger protection against arbitrary deprivation of nationality and for effective remedies for those at risk or already stateless.



She underscored the urgency of promoting gender-equal nationality rights so that women and children can enjoy equal protection and access to nationality.



She urged States to improve birth registration systems and ensure that affected communities are included in the design, implementation, and monitoring of solutions.

### Sharing lessons and building knowledge



At the 15th Online Statelessness Course in June 2026, Ms. Dube shared Kenya’s experience in addressing statelessness among the Shona, Makonde, and Pemba communities.



She highlighted lessons from community advocacy that amplifies voices, builds awareness, and drives systemic change.



She underscored the value of strategic policy engagement that informs law and policy reforms grounded in rights and inclusion.



She emphasized partnerships across civil society, academia, government, and international actors as critical to sustainable progress.



She reinforced the need for continued support beyond recognition of nationality to ensure real inclusion and improved livelihoods.



### KEY MESSAGE

SSI’s engagements continue to demonstrate the value of affected communities shaping policy discussions and solutions on statelessness.



MEMBER HIGHLIGHTS



Haki Na Sheria Initiative (HSI) – Kenya

Centring Community Voice Through

Documentary, Art, And Civic Participation

In the first half of 2026, Haki na Sheria Initiative (HSI) deepened its work at the intersection of storytelling, creative advocacy, and civic participation across Garissa, Tana River, and Lamu counties in Kenya. Between April and July, HSI completed and screened three short documentary films following how HSI paralegals help communities navigate exclusion from identity systems and the environmental pressures that compound it. The films are now available on HSI's website: <https://hakinasheria.org/>

This creative work points toward a longer-term vision: the BUNI Art Hub Pavilion, planned as Kenya’s first dedicated infrastructure of its kind - co-designed and built by pastoralist women in Garissa as a contemporary reinterpretation of the traditional a’qal. Sited within HSI’s compound, it will host digital identity forums, performance and exhibitions, legal aid clinics, and public research. HSI is currently fundraising for its construction, with further information available on our website.

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The impact of creative approaches is already evident: a pilot series of theatre-based community education forums on Maisha Namba, Kenya’s digital identity system, lifted understanding from 24% to 87%, and ability to identify digital ID’s rights, risks, and benefits from 18% to 75% — gains legal briefings and town halls rarely achieve. 67% of participants were women (75% at Waberi Ward), and 48% were youth.

Ahead of 2027, a separate project reached over 800 community members, mostly women, with knowledge of ID and voting rights rising by up to 50 points in some locations.



Creative expression and community participation are powerful tools for advancing rights, inclusion, and dignity.



Hold the Child Organization - South Sudan

Expanding Access to Nationality

Documentation in South Sudan

From January to June 2026, Hold the Child Organization, in partnership with UNHCR, implemented a statelessness prevention and response project in Aweil, Northern Bahr el Ghazal State.

The project focused on improving access to nationality documentation, increasing awareness of nationality rights, and supporting people at risk of statelessness through legal assistance and referrals to the Directorate of Civil Registrar, Nationality, Passports and Immigration (DCRNP).

During the reporting period, Hold the Child conducted community awareness activities on nationality rights, birth registration, and civil documentation. The organization also identified people at risk of statelessness, provided legal counselling, and supported access to age assessment certificates and nationality registration procedures.

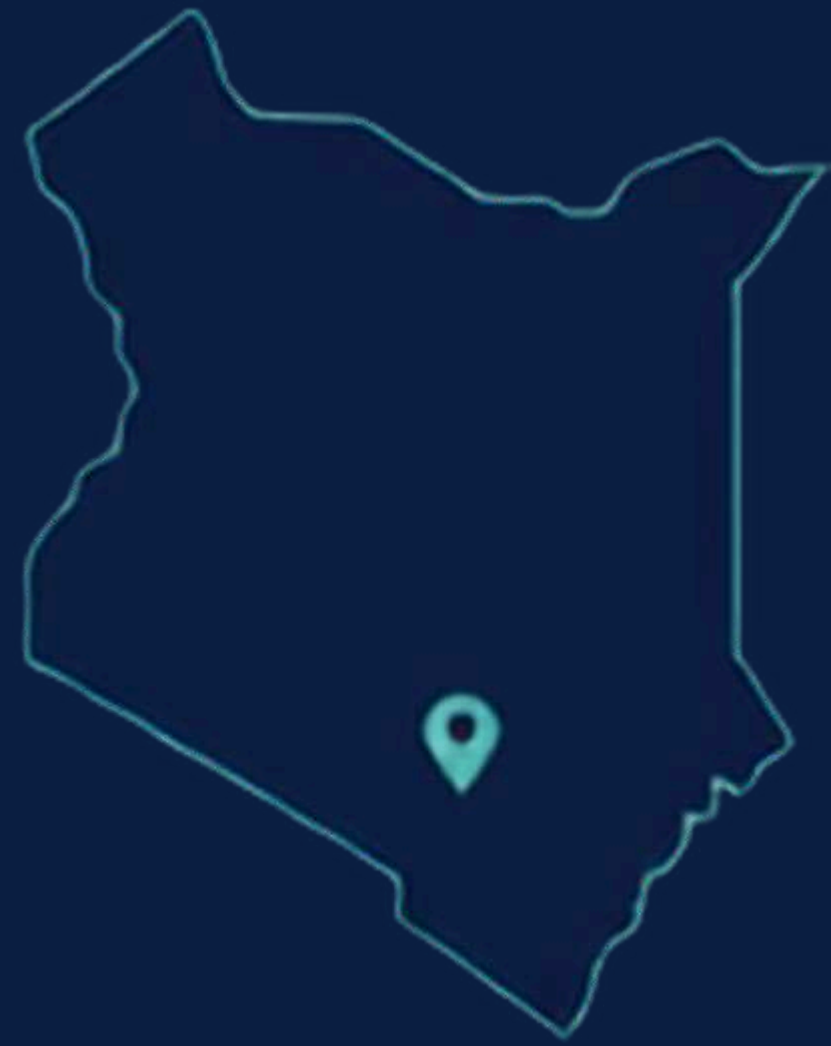
The project further strengthened coordination with local authorities, community leaders, and protection partners, contributing to improved access to legal identity and reduced risks of statelessness among vulnerable communities in Aweil.



Stronger systems. Informed communities. Secure identities. A future without statelessness.



# KENYA



Kenya continues to offer important lessons in addressing statelessness, with progress in the recognition of formerly stateless communities alongside ongoing efforts to strengthen legal reforms, documentation systems, and social inclusion.



While recognition of nationality represents a significant milestone, EANN members and community-led organisations continue to highlight the importance of ensuring that affected communities can fully access their rights, documentation, services, and opportunities.



During the first half of 2026, EANN members in Kenya advanced legislative advocacy, supported documentation initiatives, and strengthened community-led approaches to addressing remaining nationality challenges.



## Advancing Legal Reform to Address Remaining Statelessness

**The Kenya Human Rights Commission (KHRC) and Haki Centre** contributed to advocacy efforts around the Kenya Citizenship and Immigration (Amendment) Bill, 2025, following the National Assembly's call for public submissions.

KHRC submitted recommendations supporting amendments to sections 15 and 16 of the Kenya Citizenship and Immigration Act to remove time limitations that have restricted access to citizenship applications for stateless persons and migrants who qualify for Kenyan nationality. The organisation also recommended stronger legal safeguards to prevent children from being stateless.

Haki Centre paralegals and affected communities submitted memorandum highlighting the need to remove restrictive time-bound provisions and expedite legislative reforms to address prolonged challenges faced by stateless communities.



The engagements provided an opportunity to discuss unresolved and emerging issues following recognition of nationality, strengthen protection of rights, and promote social and economic inclusion. UNHCR and the U.S Embassy reaffirmed their commitment to working with the Government of Kenya and other stakeholders to address remaining protracted statelessness situations.



Haki Centre, UNHCR, and the U.S. Embassy's Disaster and Humanitarian Assistance Specialist undertook follow-up missions with stateless and formerly stateless communities in Kenya.

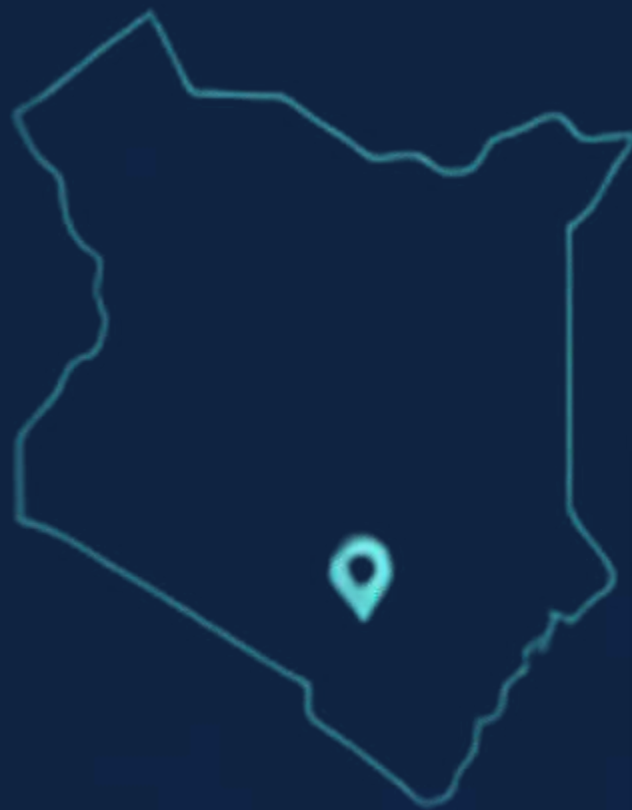
### The missions engaged with:

- The **Pemba community**, whose Kenyan nationality was confirmed in 2023;
- The **Makonde community**, who acquired Kenyan citizenship in 2016-2017; and
- The **Rundi community**, who remain stateless.





# Community-Led Organizations Advancing Inclusion and Rights



## Makonde Development Organization (MDO) – Kenya

MDO, a stateless-led organization representing the Makonde community, continues to build on the community’s journey from statelessness to citizenship by strengthening civic participation and supporting access to legal identity and documentation.



Between March and May, MDO conducted community forums across five locations in Kwale County to strengthen awareness of citizenship rights, civic responsibilities, and community participation. The forums identified local resource persons who were subsequently trained as paralegal to provide community-level guidance on legal identity and documentation.



Following the training, MDO established a volunteer-led birth registration support initiative, with community resource persons assisting households to navigate registration procedures and access documentation.



MDO also participated in a Makonde Bible Translation Seminar in Malindi, contributing to language preservation, literacy, and cultural identity.



## Pemba Community Forum (PCF) – Kenya

PCF, a stateless-led organization representing the Pemba community, continues to support the community’s journey from recognition of nationality to meaningful inclusion and access to legal identity.



The Pemba community was granted Kenyan citizenship in December 2022. During the first half of 2026, PCF focused on addressing remaining documentation challenges, strengthening awareness of nationality rights, and promoting community participation.



Through documentation initiatives in Lamu, Kwaale, Mombasa, and Kilili counties, PCF identified community members facing challenges in accessing legal documentation and generated information to support continued advocacy and engagement with relevant stakeholders.



Conducted community sensitization to provide feedback, raise awareness on nationality rights, and create spaces for the community to share experiences and challenges in accessing legal identity and nationality documents. The organization further engaged county authorities on barriers to documentation, including challenges experienced within digitalized identity systems.



### Key Issue

Access to legal identity and documentation remains a major barrier to full inclusion for stateless communities.



**2,000+**

**community members** reached through forums, sensitization meetings, and documentation initiatives across coastal counties in the first half of 2026.





# COUNTRY SPOTLIGHT: KENYA

## Community-Led Organizations Advancing Inclusion and Rights



### Taita Taveta Human Rights Network (TThRN) – Kenya

- TThRN, an affected community-led human rights organization, continues to advocate for nationality rights, recognition, and inclusion of the Pare community and other minority and marginalized groups in Taita Taveta County and beyond.
- Through community-led advocacy, legal empowerment, and engagement with government institutions, TThRN has supported efforts to address exclusion and discrimination affecting the Pare community. The organization has worked closely with the Pare community to strengthen collective advocacy, including supporting the establishment of the Pare Council of Elders and engaging relevant government institutions on recognition and inclusion.
- In April 2026, TThRN participated with the Pare community in a public participation forum convened by the Ethnic Minority and Marginalized Ethnic Communities Unit in the Office of the President. The engagement provided an opportunity for community participation in policy discussions and input into the Minority Bill.



### Northern Aid and Welfare Organization (NAWO) – Kenya

- In the first half of 2026, NAWO strengthened efforts to address documentation barriers affecting communities in Mandera County through community outreach, legal awareness, and capacity building.
- Through forums in Mandra East and Banissa sub counties, NAWO reached community members with information on documentation rights and access to civil registration. The organization also supported local leaders and paralegals with knowledge to assist affected communities in navigating citizenship and documentation processes.
- These efforts contributed to strengthening awareness of legal identity rights and improving community support systems for persons facing documentation challenges.



### Kenya Spotlight Reflection

Kenya’s experience demonstrates that ending statelessness requires more than recognition of nationality. Community leadership, legal reform, access to documentation, and sustained efforts to promote social and economic inclusion remain essential to ensuring that formerly excluded communities can fully enjoy their rights.





NETWORK UPDATES:



EANN Launches Its New Website

EANN developed and launched its new website, creating a dedicated platform to share the network's work, member activities, resources, and updates on nationality rights and statelessness across Eastern Africa.



Visit the EANN website: <https://eanationalitynetwork.org/>



EANN Welcomes 10 New Members

EANN welcomed 10 new members during the first half of 2026: Pemba Community Forum, Shamiri Sisterhood Initiative, Makonde Development Organization, Taita Taveta Human Rights Network, Nalafem Collective, Somali Gender Hub, Zanzibar Legal Aid and Human Rights Organisation (ZALHO), Julie Lugulu, Samantha Balaton-Chrimes, and Nothern Aid and Welfare Organization (NAWO).

We warmly welcome all of them to the EANN family and look forward to strengthening collaboration, knowledge exchange, and collective advocacy for nationality rights and the eradication of statelessness across Eastern Africa.



Building on Partnerships to Strengthen the Network

Since April 2026, EANN has partnered with the Global Statelessness Fund (GSF) through an 18-month partnership that builds on the network-strengthening support previously received through the Global Alliance to End Statelessness' Marketplace, which concluded on 31 December 2025.

The ongoing partnership with GSF continues to strengthen EANN as a regional network and support stateless-led organisations to take a stronger role in shaping advocacy, policy dialogue, and leading community-based solutions to statelessness across Eastern Africa.



New Comparative Policy Brief on Nationality Laws

EANN, in collaboration with Bronwen Manby, concluded a policy brief comparing the nationality laws of Kenya, South Sudan, and Rwanda and their alignment with the AU Protocol on the Specific Aspects of the Right to a Nationality and the Eradication of Statelessness in Africa.



Stronger Together for Nationality Rights

Thank you to all our members and partners for your continued commitment to advancing nationality rights and ending statelessness across Eastern Africa. Together, we are building a region where everyone belongs.





EVENTS & OPPORTUNITIES:

1

65th Anniversary of the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness – online Wed 2 Sept 2026 10am - 11:30am (CEST).  
Organized by the Global Alliance to End Statelessness.

2

The 89th Ordinary Session of the African Commission on Human & Peoples’ Rights (ACHPR). Together with other NGO partners, EANN is co-hosting a side event at the NGO Forum titled Claiming African Citizenship: Collective Action to End Statelessness in Africa on 9 October 2026.

3

2026 UNHCR Global NGO Consultations: Regional Networks, Stateless -led Organizations, Civil Society, and the Global Alliance are co-hosting a side event titled “Digital Identity and Statelessness: Towards Inclusive Digital Transformation.”

4

High Commissioner’s Dialogue - 7 – 9 December 2026 - Geneva and online (hybrid).

5

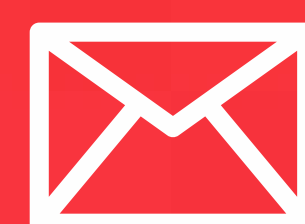
ICGLR Regional Network Lab (RNL) Convening scheduled to take place in Rwanda on 26 -27 October 2026. The RNL will provide an opportunity for regional stakeholders to discuss the implementation and advancement of the AU Protocol on the specific aspects of the Right to a nationality and the Eradication of Statelessness in Africa and strengthen regional collaboration towards its realization.





**Eastern Africa  
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