

## THEME 1: BORDERS & BELONGING

In this theme, participants reflect on their place in the world by exploring the ways in which borders and the idea of belonging to a particular country shape our identity and our interactions with others. Teaching about statelessness in this context allows participants to critically assess the role that borders and nationality play in defining human relationships and communities, in order to consider how this system can create exclusion and to think about how we could build a world that is more inclusive.

### What can be found in this theme?

This theme is structured around six activities, divided into three learning units:

### UNIT 1: THE WORLD AND OUR PLACE IN IT

**1.1 A: Defining our borders** allows the learner to reflect on the way borders can define our sense of belonging and how they can cause exclusion when (re)drawn at the level of a community.

**1.1 B: The changing world map** takes a step further and shows that as borders are constantly changing, they redefine the world map and our place in it.

### UNIT 2: CREATIVITY AND CRITICAL THINKING

**1.2 A: Welcome to earth** urges the learner to critically reflect on how borders and belonging are organized at a global level, identify the loopholes and re-imagine the way this system is shaped.

**1.2 B: Storytelling statelessness** offers learners the opportunity to express their thoughts on the exclusion stateless people face and the fairness of a system that allows that to happen.

### UNIT 3: RIGHTS AND ACTIVISM

**1.3 A: Challenging exclusion** aims to encourage activism by urging participants to take action and address a situation of exclusion within a role-play exercise.

**1.3 B: A right to belong** introduces learners to the UN as a forum to advocate for the right to belong and urges them to critically reflect on existing actions against statelessness.

## **How are the activities connected to *The Girl Who Lost Her Country*?**

Neha's encounters in *The Girl Who Lost Her Country* raise certain questions that are addressed in this theme and the relevant parts of the book:

- Question 1: What is a nationality? Does everybody get the nationality of the country where they were born? (p.12, 50)
- Question 5: Why do people who have a nationality sometimes lose it? (p.22, 54)
- Question 8: If the government refuses to give you nationality, or takes your nationality away, what can you do to change your situation? (p.37, 58)

Real-world examples encountered by Neha and included in this theme show how the (re)drawing of borders and identity politics can leave people excluded:

- The Bajau Laut, a nomadic community in Malaysia where borders are drawn through their (nomadic) community. (p.30-33)
- The Kurds in Syria who are “maktoum”, which means not registered in Syria. (p. 35-36)
- The Makonde in Kenya who were stateless but marched to Nairobi to meet the president and demand their rights. They are now citizens! (p. 37-40)

## **Before you begin**

Before you begin with any of the activities, take a look at the main issues that will come up in this theme. You can also ease the participants into the activities in the form of a warm-up discussion around the concepts set out below.

### **Borders**

In this theme, we use the term borders to refer to dividing lines between different areas of territory or separating different communities. Ultimately, the borders we explore are the geographic boundaries between different countries – as you would see on a modern map of the world. These country borders have not always existed: the world's surface has been divided up by humans through borders which have been drawn, shifted, disappeared, and reappeared over time. The borders determine what land belongs to what country. People also form a part of this system and are organised in relation to these borders and countries via citizenship (also known as nationality). A person who has citizenship is considered to “belong” to that country, to be a member of that community. This citizenship is most commonly acquired through their parents' citizenship, by being born in the country, or by moving to the country and meeting certain requirements to prove belonging and be recognised as a citizen. However, some countries have bad rules, like not allowing women to pass on their nationality to their children or saying that people who belong to certain minorities cannot have a nationality. Other countries have good rules that are not practiced properly. For all these reasons, there are still many people in the world who don't have a nationality. Another reason people can lose their nationality is when borders change. For example, some individuals used to be citizens of the Soviet Union, but once the country ceased to exist and its land became divided into different countries, people who had been citizens of the Soviet Union were required to get the nationality of the new country they were in. Most of them did, but some, even today, have no nationality because each new country set its own rules and some people were not included.

### **Belonging**

Human beings have an emotional need to be an accepted member of a group: to “belong”. Whether it is family, friends, co-workers, a religion or something else, people have an 'inherent' desire to be a part of something greater than themselves. Our sense of belonging and identity are intertwined. The identity of a person is often influenced by where they are considered to “belong”. In the world of today, citizenship is an important form of belonging – it is the recognition of a person as a full member of the community of a country and that they can live within that

country's borders as their home. By saying that some people do belong, and others do not, we create an "us" and a "them". This could be for a sports team, where players on the green team recognise themselves as a group that belongs to the green team and recognise players on the blue team as not belonging to the green team. These blue team players are labelled as "the others" that don't belong to the "us" of the green team. This isn't necessarily a bad thing; however, when people are treated in harmful ways or as "less-than" for not belonging to a certain group, then this dynamic of "us" vs. "them" becomes harmful. Xenophobia is an example of a harmful "us" vs. "them" dynamic. Xenophobia is when people who are from another country or who are viewed as foreigners are treated badly. People who are stateless could be considered to be foreign no matter where they live, as they do not have citizenship of any country. Although stateless people often do have strong ties to the country of their birth or ancestry and may feel a strong sense of belonging to "their" country, this is not formally recognized through the enjoyment of citizenship. And since being a citizen is a form of belonging, stateless people do not officially "belong" to any country.

If you choose to start a discussion prior to the activities, here are some questions about borders and belonging you may ask the participants. These questions can also pop up during the activities:

- What are the borders of your school? How do you know this? Why does the school have borders? Who can cross the school borders? Who cannot? Who decides who can and cannot cross the school borders?
- What other places have borders? What do those borders look like? Who decides them and are they necessary?
- Why do countries have borders? What purpose do borders serve for a country? Who can pass through borders of the country we are in now? Who cannot pass through? Why? Are there times when borders have caused problems for you?
- In what kind of groups do you belong? Is the feeling of belonging important to you? Do you feel that you belong to a certain country?

### **Key Takeaways of this theme**

1. Borders are manmade and dynamic and as they shift, they influence our sense of belonging and can lead to exclusion.
2. Nationality is a manmade system that determines who gets to belong and who doesn't. However, as this system is not predefined, there is room to re-imagine and improve it.
3. It is important to speak out against exclusion and fight for the right to nationality for everyone. There are different fora and actions to affect change regarding statelessness.

### **Key Words**

Borders; Belonging; Citizenship/Nationality; Identity; Inclusion/Exclusion; Xenophobia.

## UNIT 1: THE WORLD AND OUR PLACE IN IT

In this learning unit, learners reflect on their place in the world by exploring the ways in which borders influence our idea of belonging and shape our identity and our interactions with others at a community and a global level.

### 1.1 A: DEFINING OUR BORDERS

We experience borders every day in our lives. From the borders of our homes, our schools, our communities and throughout the world, borders are all around us. These borders order and define our movement and access to different parts of the world, but also have a big influence on our sense of belonging and how we interact with others from ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ our community.



**Defining our borders** is a creative activity involving ‘mapping’ the learners’ own community, discussing its borders and considering how the community might be affected if its borders change and exclude some of its people. Learners are also invited to critically reflect on the meaning and function of borders, as well as the way their community is defined by borders and how this shapes their own place in the world.

### 1.1 B: THE CHANGING WORLD MAP

The world map is not static. Countries are formed, borders are determined, countries disappear, and borders are changed. This dynamic characteristic of maps and borders means that questions of belonging can be complicated. For example, if a country changes its borders or ceases to exist, certain individuals might be excluded and lose the citizenship of that country. Sometimes people receive a new citizenship right away, but often it is a much more complicated process.



**The changing world map** is an activity that allows learners to explore borders as temporary and shifting rather than fixed and permanent, and understand how this could lead to changes in human relationships and belonging – including how it can lead to exclusion.

## 1.1 A: Defining our borders

### Instructions:

1. Divide the participants into groups of around five and give each group a large piece of blank paper.
2. As a group, have the participants draw a map of their community. The participants can choose to include whichever aspects of their community they find most important, but encourage them to think of what areas of their community are necessary for them to live their lives and to include these areas in their map (e.g. hospital, park, shops, bus station). Have the participants clearly mark their houses with their initials and mark where the school is on the map. Have the participants name their community (e.g. Community A). Congratulations, you are all citizens of “....”.
3. After the participants have had some time to work on their community maps, have them discuss in their groups where they might go within their community on a typical weekday and how they would spend their weekend. How would they get to the different places within their community?
4. Next, the facilitator should go around and draw a line on every group’s map clearly dividing the community. The line can be drawn anywhere and does not need to be straight or follow any pattern, but it should divide the members of the group into two separate communities. Tell the participants that the part of the community that gets to keep its original name is the one with the school in it (Community A) and the other part must come up with a new name (Community B). Members from each side of the now divided community can no longer cross the line to the side where, for example, their peer’s house is on, as the line represents a new border.

#### *Remember!*

*Borders are lines drawn by humans to separate regions by a boundary based on the idea of shared characteristics among the people living within a border (e.g. common language, history, culture). Borders have an important effect on people’s lives as they can demarcate a community while imposing requirements (e.g. passport) for other people to access it.*

5. In their groups, have the participants discuss question 3, but in light of the new border. What has changed in the participants’ routines? Where do they no longer have access to? How will they visit their friends? Will all the participants be able to attend school? What would the participants need in order to attend school now that the border has been put in place?

**Duration:** 45 minutes

**Level of complexity:** 2

### **Knowledge/Subjects:**

Art, Civics, Geography, Governance, Social Studies

### **Skills:**

Comparative Analysis, Creativity, Critical Thinking, Self-Awareness, Spatial Reasoning

**Values/Attitudes:** Sense of identity

### **Objectives:**

- For learners to explore borders within their own community and how losing access to certain areas of their community would disrupt their lives.
- For learners to understand how statelessness can be produced and impact our sense of belonging and experience of borders.

### **Materials:**

Large blank paper & pen/pencil (preferably markers/crayons/coloured pencils)

### **Connection to**

#### **“The Girl Who Lost Her Country”:**

“Bajau Laut are a nomadic community in Malaysia where borders are drawn through their (nomadic) community. They live on boats and work at the sea fishing or pounding cassava or rice. Bajau Laut children don’t go to school because Malaysia does not recognise them as nationals. In Malaysia, Neha met Riki who told her how she and her siblings have never set foot in another country, but Malaysia still won’t accept them. “The government thinks Bajau Laut are Filipinos,” she says. “So even before I was born, my fate was decided. I would be stateless. I would inherit statelessness from my parents, who inherited it from my grandparents.” (Neha’s book p. 30-33)

**6.** Now have them imagine the following scenario:

**Community A offers citizenship ONLY to those who were born within its new borders while Community B offers citizenship ONLY to those who live within its new borders the moment it was formed.**

**7.** What will happen to those who live in community A but were born where community B is now? How would lack of citizenship affect their lives? Where might a stateless individual not be able to go within the community map? Will they face obstacles even within their own community?

**8.** Reflecting on the activity discuss with the whole group: Even if divided, how could it become possible for the members of the two communities to come together and easily visit members of their family which might live in the other community?

### **Further the Activity**

If a border is what it takes to split a community into two, what would it take for a community to be recognised as an actual country? You can find out by watching a six-part BBC series following comedian Danny Wallace as he takes up the challenge and begins the unlikely odyssey of setting up and running his own country:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7HLzbowqnUc&list=PLADOhGXs97LlNwNTtCNaDbwaLVqxc8L>

## 1.1 B: The changing world map

### Instructions:

1. With the whole group watch the video on <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ymI5Uv5cGU4> showing how borders have changed over time. (Note: The video is 16 minutes long, so we would recommend either speeding up the video via Youtube settings or show parts of it).
2. Divide the participants into pairs or small groups. Instruct them to access <http://geacron.com/home-en/> and research how world maps have changed across time. Encourage participants to research the country you are currently in, an area of the world that is of interest to them or an event or period of history that your group is studying.
3. Have the participants discuss their findings. Were they surprised by how borders have changed throughout time? Has their view on borders changed at all? How does the changing of borders affect people? How are border changes decided? What do the participants think borders will look like in 20 years? 50 years? 100 years? 1000 years? Do participants think that borders will still be used in the future?
4. Next the participants are going to think about the question of how nationality comes into play when borders change. Introduce the following case study with regards to borders and nationality:

**In 1991, the Soviet Union (also known as the USSR) was dissolved, meaning it ceased to exist as a country. Anyone who was previously a Soviet citizen lost their citizenship because the country no longer existed. The land which had been previously recognised as the Soviet Union was now held by a number of different groups wanting to form independent countries. Fifteen of these were recognised as countries at some point after the end of the Soviet Union.**

- a. Take a look at the map handed out to you which outlines the area of land that formerly belonged to the Soviet Union, and the countries that arose from the Soviet Union. How was the citizenship of individuals who lived in these areas influenced by the dissolution of the Soviet Union?
  - *People who had been citizens of the Soviet Union were now required to get the nationality of the new country they were in. Most of them did, but some, even today, have no nationality because each new country set its own rules and some people were not included.*
- b. How is an individual recognised as a citizen of a country? Who decides that and what options exist for determining citizenship? What if a person doesn't meet the criteria? Can someone lose their citizenship and how?
  - *Each country has its own rules about how you can become a member: rules (or laws) that set out which people are granted nationality. Some countries give nationality to anybody born there. Other countries give nationality to anybody who has a parent from the country. Most countries allow people who have lived there for a long time or married someone from the country, to apply for nationality. In this way the real-life connections that a person has with a country form the basis for becoming a national.*

**Duration:** 45 minutes

**Level of complexity:** 1

### Knowledge/Subjects:

Civics, History, Geography, Politics, Social Studies

### Skills:

Critical thinking, Comparative Analysis, Research, Self-Awareness, Spatial Reasoning

**Values/Attitudes:** Sense of identity

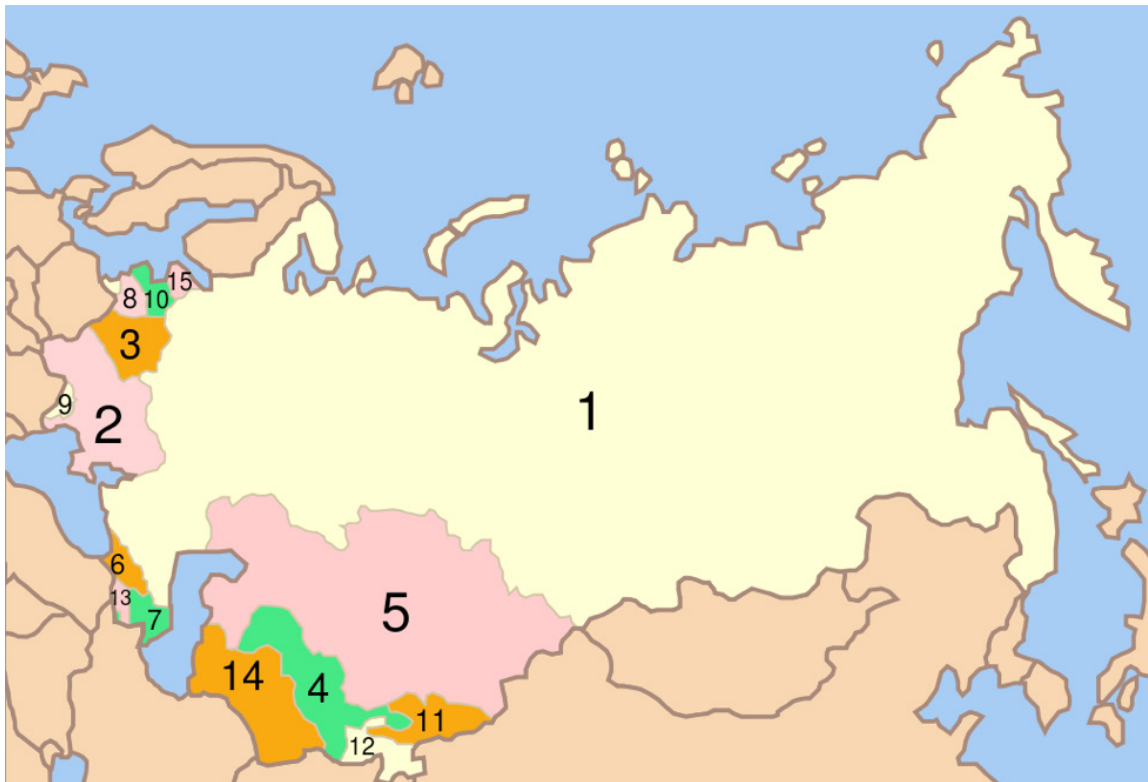
### Objectives:

- For participants to explore borders as changing and not static and understand how this could lead to changes in human relationships and belonging – including how it can lead to exclusion.

### Materials:

Internet access (PCs, Laptops, Tablets), Photocopies of the Soviet Union map

- *If someone doesn't meet the necessary criteria regulated by a specific country, they are not granted this country's citizenship. If the country they live in ceases to exist or splits up in two or more countries, people can also lose their nationality and may end up without one. Some countries also take away citizenship, even without the re-drawing of borders. In the Dominican Republic, Rosa and her family (p.17-21) lost their nationality because a new bad law was made taking away the nationality of those who belong to a particular ethnic minority group. Some countries have also decided that they can take away nationality of people who do very bad things. People who join wars against their own country, or engage in terrorism, can lose their nationality. These are difficult issues for a country to deal with but as long as there is punishment under the law, there is no need for them to have their nationality taken away and there is also no proof that this makes countries any safer. Sometimes these laws are also used in the wrong way to target activists and their children, although they haven't done anything wrong.*
- c. What other issues might arise as new countries (and thus new governments) are formed and individuals are no longer citizens of the country they were previously citizens of?
- *When people lose the nationality of the country they were previously citizens of and are not recognised as citizens of the new country, they can face all sorts of difficulties. They can be seen as not belonging to the new country and become unable to participate in life in the same way as others. They might not be able to go to school, see a doctor or have a job. This can happen if the new country requires individuals who live within its borders to have a nationality to be able to enjoy these things. This is clearly wrong and must change. When new countries are formed, people should not be left without a nationality.*



### Republics of the Soviet Union:

1. Russia
2. Ukraine
3. Byelorussia (now Belarus)
4. Uzbekistan
5. Kazakhstan
6. Georgia
7. Azerbaijan
8. Lithuania
9. Moldavia (now Moldova)
10. Latvia
11. Kirghizia (now Kyrgyzstan)
12. Tajikistan
13. Armenia
14. Turkmenia (now Turkmenistan)
15. Estonia

### Further the Activity:

As a take-home assignment, have participants look more closely at actual borders on a map from today (participants can pick a particular area and focus on it). What kinds of borders do the participants notice? How are they shaped? Are there any particular landscape structures such as rivers or mountains that seem to be influencing borders? Why do you think there are particular shapes or landscapes around certain borders? Do these borders all make sense? Might some of them cut through communities that have close ties? Have the participants write a few paragraphs on what they found as they examined the borders.



## UNIT 2: CREATIVITY AND CRITICAL THINKING

This learning unit urges learners to critically reflect on how borders and belonging are defined and shaped on our planet and on the fairness of a system that leaves stateless people feeling excluded from society.

### 1.2 A: WELCOME TO EARTH

The way borders and belonging are organised and undertaken here on earth is not an inherent system. On the contrary, it was created and developed over time so there is plenty of room for change and improvement. Learning from each other by exchanging perceptions on citizenship and thinking about how it is experienced in different contexts can help us reflect on the fairness of the system. The starting point should be that everyone has a right to belong.



**Welcome to earth** is a creative activity that cultivates learners' critical thinking and their ability to collaborate as a group to inquire into how borders and belonging are organised on Earth, identify the drawbacks of our system and re-imagine the way it is shaped.

### 1. 2 B: STORYTELLING STATELESSNESS

Not having a nationality can influence the way stateless people go through life. It creates a lot of hardships and restricts what they are able to do and where they are able to go. As stateless people do not officially “belong” anywhere and are considered outsiders no matter which side of the border they are on, they often feel unwelcome and excluded from society.



**Storytelling statelessness** is a creative writing project challenging participants to express their thoughts on the exclusion stateless people face and the fairness of a system that allows for that to happen. This way learners can understand and empathise with the life stateless people lead and the hardships they might face.

## 1.2 A: Welcome to earth

### Instructions:

1. Briefly present the following scenario to the group:

**An ambassador from Mars is coming to visit today with his/her delegation and wants to learn about nationality. The ambassador of Earth and his/her delegation have agreed to meet with him/her and to teach him/her about what nationality means. The delegation from Earth would also like to learn about how things work on Mars as they recently learned that Mars does not have a system of countries, borders and nationality like we do here on Earth!**

2. Divide the group into two subgroups (or four subgroups if the group is large). One subgroup is going to be a delegation from Earth and the other the delegation from Mars.
3. Have one subgroup prepare a presentation on Earth to the members of the Mars delegation. They can give a brief background of the planet and describe how it is organised in terms of the division of land using borders and the idea of having different countries, governments and nationalities. The Mars team will then address the same issues and how they are dealt with on their planet. Participants can be as creative as they want, they can make up terms, ways of organising, or whatever else they can think of. Make sure to point out to the Earth delegation that the delegation from Mars is likely to be unfamiliar with Earth vocabulary so they will need to think of a way to explain the system to them.
4. Once each planet has given their presentation (around 5 minutes), have the participants discuss what they liked and what they think could be improved about each planet's way of structuring itself. How does lack of borders or nationality impact life on Mars? What would happen if a Martian is not happy with their current place of residency and wanted to move somewhere else? Does the way Mars is organised make the participants feel differently about how things are organised on Earth? How? Why? What would be different if there was no borders, no separate countries and no nationality on Earth? Would it redefine our sense of belonging? Are there elements from each planet that could be drawn out and used to think about borders, belonging and citizenship on the other planet?

### Further the Activity

The Earth is considering making a settlement on another planet and is seeking for advice on the ideal system of borders, belonging and citizenship to apply on its settlement. In the form of a play, have the Earth and Mars delegations act out this scenario (possibly for other classes, parents etc.) by presenting their own systems and coming up with the ideal system of borders, belonging and citizenship for Earth to apply on its new settlement.

**Duration:** 45-60 minutes

**Level of complexity:** 2

### Knowledge/Subjects:

Art, Civics, Governance, Politics, Social Studies

### Skills:

Comparative Analysis, Creativity, Critical thinking, Decision Making, Deducting Reasoning, Effective communication, Group collaboration, Spatial Reasoning

### Values/Attitudes:

Sense of identity, Value diversity

### Objectives:

- For participants to explore how borders and belonging are organised on Earth, identify the drawbacks of our system and re-imagine the way it is shaped.
- For participants to understand the meaning of belonging and the role borders play in our interaction with the world around us.

### Materials:

Paper and pen/pencil.  
Art supplies (if available)

## 1.2 B: Storytelling statelessness

### Instructions:

In this activity, participants will be asked to produce their own piece of creative work. Before that, as a group, read the short story “**Melancholy**” written by one of the two authors of Neha’s book, Amal de Chickera. Discuss the participants’ thoughts on the story. Some guiding questions that could be used include:

1. What happened when the boy’s grandfather missed his registration?
2. Why was the boy so sad that he missed the library registration?
3. Why do you think the registration period for the grandfather was so short? What could be done to fix this problem?
4. What is the story trying to tell us? What would you think is the message of the author?
5. Is the feeling of belonging important? How can nationality affect our feeling of belonging? What happens when someone does not have a nationality?

Short stories, poetry, plays, and performances are all great ways to discuss issues such as exclusion and statelessness, and how it can influence an individual’s sense of belonging and their experience of the world around them. Using creativity allows you to get a message across in a unique and oftentimes more memorable way than just explaining about something. The short story you just read is one example of this. The book, *The Girl Who Lost Her Country*, is a much longer piece of prose that tries to help convey information and share some key messages on the issue of statelessness. Other poetry examples on the issue of statelessness can be found online at <http://www.kids.worldsstateless.org/create/poetry>.

Now it is time for participants to create their own short story, poem, play, drawing or cartoon. The only guideline is that it relates to borders, belonging or exclusion in some way. Participants can work in groups or individually on the activity. Create a scrapbook containing everyone’s creation and, if there is a printing capacity create copies for everyone. If you are in a school environment, you can also circulate it in the school.

### Further the Activity:

Every story has an author and sometimes more than one! Get to know a little bit about the second author of Neha’s book, Deirdre Brennan. You can read her interview in Appendix IV on her inspiration and experiences that guided the story, how Neha’s book came to be and her plans to write a sequel! Next, you can interview another participant on their inspiration and goals when producing their creation for this activity. Make sure you’ve read the creation of the other participant carefully and reflected on what the message of their piece is to discuss it in the interview.

**Duration:** 60+ minutes

**Level of complexity:** 2

### Knowledge/Subjects:

Art, Civics, Literature, Writing

### Skills:

Creativity, Critical Thinking, Empathy, Reading Comprehension

**Values/Attitudes:** Sense of identity

### Objectives:

- For participants to express their thoughts on the exclusion stateless people face and the fairness of a system that allows for that to happen through a short story, poem or play.
- For participants to understand and empathise with the life stateless people lead and the hardships they might face.

### Materials:

It would be beneficial for all participants to have a copy of the short story, and paper/pen to write down their own work

### Connection to

#### “The Girl Who Lost Her Country”:

Sima and her family are Kurdish Syrians living in Germany. Sima’s dad, Sami explained to Neha: “we are Kurds, I was born in Syria like my wife and my children, and we lived there all our lives before the war broke out. However, not one of us has Syrian nationality. We are “maktoum”, this means that we are not registered in Syria. When a census was carried out in 1962 many Kurdish Syrians were not registered. My grandfather was on bad terms with his landlord at the time and when the census committee visited his landlord, he did not pass on my grandfather’s name for registration. My grandfather instantly became stateless and we have had to inherit this status and pass it down to our own children ever since.” (Neha’s book p. 35-36)

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## Melancholy

By Amal de Chickera

Melancholy.

May-lan-kho-lee

It's a big word isn't it? It means 'a feeling of sadness'. This is the word I thought of when I first met the boy. He was crumpled on the floor in the corridor near the library. Looking melancholic. Staring into nothing. Deep in distant thought.

I had to stop and ask him why he was sad. He looked up. I noticed the stain of recently dried tears. I sat down next to him and instinctively took his hand.

'I missed it' he said.

I looked quizzically at him and he knew I wanted to hear more.

'I was too late. The library was closed. I was going to register so I could borrow books'.

I told him to meet me there the next day, half an hour earlier.

We filled out all of the forms. I learnt his name. he even got his library card at once.

'There, that wasn't so difficult was it?' I asked. 'All that sadness yesterday, wasted... you could have saved it up for something really sad'.

This brought a half smile to his face. 'I thought I missed my chance. I thought if I couldn't register, I would never be able to borrow a book. Ever!'

What a strange little boy I thought.

We laughed.

We became good friends. Best friends even.

One day, I remembered what he had said about the library and decided to tease him about it.

'you were very dramatic about your library card weren't you?'

He grunted embarrassed.

'I guess'.

'but that's what happened to my great grandad'.

'he couldn't join the library?' (I asked)

'where do you think I'm from?' he asked me in return

'why here. Just two streets down'. (I didn't say 'in the dirty part of town'.)

'which country do you think is mine?'

'why this one! Same as me! What does this have to do with your great grandad's library card?'

I was struggling to follow and increasingly perplexed (which is another big word for puzzled).

It was then that he told me his story.

Just like him, his great grandad too had missed a simple registration. Unlike him though, it wasn't because his great grandad was late. He simply didn't know. You see, he lived out in the countryside and he travelled a lot. They hadn't bothered to announce the registration there. Only the city folk knew.

It wasn't a registration for a library card though. It was a registration to say you belonged to this country. And everyone who missed it, all of a sudden didn't. Their children didn't either. Or their children's children. All for missing a registration they never knew about.

And so my friend, who lived in and loved this country as I do, did not belong to it as I do. He never would. Perhaps this is why he lived in the dirty part of town. Maybe the nice part was only for the ones who had registered.

I now understood my friend's melancholy the day we first met.

This made me very sad and angry.

I'm sorry. I asked one of the questions I promised myself never to ask.

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## UNIT 3: RIGHTS AND ACTIVISM

This learning unit urges learners to stand up against rules that are unfair and lead to exclusion by taking action that promotes recognition and belonging. Learners are then invited to explore the United Nations (UN) and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) as a platform to advocate for the protection of the right to belong and critically reflect on existing actions against statelessness.

### 1.3 A: CHALLENGING EXCLUSION

Countries, governments, groups and organisations sometimes make rules that are unfair and negatively impact people's lives by leaving them feeling unwelcome and excluded. It is important to speak out and fight back against these rules. Within society, different voices are often heard unequally. However, the more the voices are raised, the louder each individual voice is heard. When we have the opportunity, it is also important to use our own voice and speak out for people who might not be able to.

**Challenging exclusion** is an activity that aims to stimulate activism through role-play. Participants are invited to organise themselves and take action to affect change by promoting recognition and belonging against a scenario in which some of their peers are excluded.



### 1.3 B: A RIGHT TO BELONG

The United Nations (UN) was formed after World War II as a platform to help countries working together to solve issues around the world. One of the first acts of the UN, in 1948, was to adopt the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), outlining the rights that every human is entitled to just because they are human. Article 15 of the UDHR states that every person has a right to a nationality. Statelessness is a violation of this right. Using the UN as a forum and the UDHR as a tool, actors can thus advocate for the right to nationality for everyone – spurring international action against statelessness.



**A right to belong** introduces learners to the UN as a forum to advocate for the right to nationality for everyone using the UDHR as a tool and urges them to critically reflect on existing actions against statelessness.

## 1.3 A: Challenging exclusion

### Instructions:

*Important note! At a particular stage of this activity participants will be divided into three distinct groups. As an example, we have suggested shirt colour as a way to divide the participants. You can replace wearing either blue or red with hair colour, eye colour, other shirt colours or whatever feature will clearly distinguish between three different subgroups and adapt the activity accordingly. The activity also situates participants in a school setting. If it is carried out in a different environment, feel free to adapt it accordingly.*

### Round One

Divide the participants into groups of 4-5 people. Read the following news report and then give the participants time in their groups to come up with a response to the decision that has just been announced. Their plan can include reasons why they disagree with the ruling, potential compromises that can be reached, how the ruling would affect people, and anything else they deem necessary. The news report is as follows:

**“The head teacher has announced that, starting today, those who wear blue must pay a small fee in order to enter the school building. This is because the colour blue has been shown to increase electricity costs within the school and the school must save money in any way it can right now. This change is effective immediately and there will be absolutely no exceptions. Any students with blue clothing must pay the fee in order to enter the school.”**

Have a spokesperson from each group briefly read the plan the group has come up with.

### Round two

After each group has shared their plan, announce the following:

**“In response to the complaints we have received regarding the fee involving the colour blue, we have decided to outlaw all blue from campus. Anyone wearing blue will not be allowed to enter the school from this point forward. Also, all those who wear the colour red are no longer allowed to use the school restrooms as red has been shown to reflect light and damage mirrors and floors. These changes are effective immediately.”**

Give the participants time to again develop a response to the recent development. However, this time, if the participants want to, they can combine teams in order to come up with a response.

**Duration:** 60+ minutes

**Level of complexity:** 3

### Knowledge/Subjects:

Governance, Politics, Social Studies, Social Activism

### Skills:

Activism, Critical Thinking, Comparative Analysis, Group Collaboration, Decision Making, Effective Communication, Empathy, Persuasive Argumentation, Research

### Values/Attitudes:

Belief that people can bring about change, Commitment to participation & inclusion

### Objectives:

- For participants to experience first-hand how bad rules can lead to exclusion, organise themselves and take action to affect change by promoting recognition and belonging.

### Materials:

Paper and pen/pencil to brainstorm and write the plan. Art supplies, if available, to allow for creatively designing campaigns

### Connection to

#### “The Girl Who Lost Her Country”:

In Kenya Neha met the Makonde. They were stateless but marched to Nairobi to meet the president and demand their rights. They are now citizens! Talking to the Makonde, Neha learned that they were first brought from Mozambique to Kenya by the British in 1936. Despite living there for generations since, they were later treated as foreigners. On various occasions they were promised that they would be registered, but this never happened, and they faced many hardships. After trying all legal processes, they decided to march to Nairobi to meet the president. They gathered in Makongeni in the coast region, started with prayers and then began the march. In total, the Makonde trekked 526 kilometres, until they reached the president’s house in Nairobi. They faced many challenges on the way. They were even stopped by the police. But they kept on going. When the president finally did meet them, he asked for their forgiveness, because it took such a long time to end their exclusion and bring justice to them as fellow Kenyans. The Makonde are now Kenyan citizens! (Neha’s Book p. 37-40)

As the participants work in their groups, announce the following:

**“The Parent-Teacher Committee has decided that at this time, all students involved in the negotiations who are wearing red or blue must leave the negotiating room in accordance with the rules that have been passed and for the safety of all.”**

After this statement is read have all the participants wearing red and blue go to one area of the room which will be deemed “outside school property”. Here the participants may discuss with one another how to attempt to combat the rules, but they may not interact with the participants who are still on school property.

Give the participants a few more minutes and then have them present their plans. However, the group of participants who are “outside school property” must present last, and they only have one minute to present their plan, so cut them off from speaking after around one minute. It is up to you if you tell the “outside school property” group if they have less time or if you simply gently cut them off without letting them know they get less time.

### **Round Three:**

After the groups have presented, provide feedback (in the name of the school and Parent-Teacher Committee) to all the groups except for the “outside school property” group. Feedback could include letting the groups know areas you were interested in or would be open to negotiating, as well as areas or arguments that you do not agree with and will not work. Then read the following announcement:

**“The Parent-Teacher Committee has decided it acted too rashly in its former decision and those wearing red should not have been banned from the school grounds while the investigations into the safety of red are ongoing. Thus, effectively immediately those wearing red are allowed to re-enter the school. The school has agreed with this decision and supports the re-entrance of those in red until further investigations have been completed.”**

Have those wearing red re-join their groups and give them time for another round of discussions and then a very brief presentation. Once again, give the “outside” group a short time to present before cutting them off.

After the presentations are completed have a de-briefing discussion about the experience and the arguments the participants made. Some guiding discussion questions are:

1. What do you think of the decisions that the school and the Parent-Teacher Committee made?  
How did they make you feel?
2. Were there any arguments presented from any of the groups or from the school and Parent-Teacher Committee that you thought were particularly convincing? Why?
3. Why or why not did you team up with other group(s) when given the opportunity?
4. For the group that had to be “outside school property”, how did you feel about being removed from the rest of the participants? Did it make your negotiating harder or easier?
5. For the participants that weren’t in the “outside” group, how did you feel when the “outside” participants were removed from your groups?
6. Did you notice anything about the response and presentation time for the “outside” group?  
How did the differences in what they were allowed versus what others were allowed make you feel?  
What does this difference represent?
7. Are there people in our own community that have more of an opportunity to speak and to get what they want? Why do they have this privilege? Are there people who have less of an opportunity to speak or are not given as much attention? Why?

8. How does this activity relate to statelessness and other situations of exclusion?
9. How can we amplify the voices of those who are not being heard?

After this discussion, revisit the story of the Makonde from Neha's book (p. 37-40). The Makonde are a great example of how a group that is discriminated against can together demand rights and recognition. The participants can also watch a video about the Makonde, available here: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-PG8chfAX\\_U](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-PG8chfAX_U). After reading from the book and watching the video, have a brief discussion about how the Makonde were able to gain their right to citizenship.

### **Further the Activity:**

Apart from learning about statelessness, you can also act! You can find inspirational ways of action at <http://www.kids.worldsstateless.org/act>. For example, you can campaign, act and raise awareness within your own community – asking people to come together and make a real change to end statelessness or help stateless people! So, get out there and get active! And let us know what you've done by writing us at [neha@institutesi.org](mailto:neha@institutesi.org).



## 1.3 B: A right to belong

### Instructions:

Before beginning the activity, it might be helpful to refresh participants' knowledge on statelessness as a global problem by sharing some quick facts:

- There are an estimated 15 million people who are stateless in the world meaning that they are not considered as nationals by any state.
- Statelessness is often the result of bad rules, like not allowing women to pass on their nationality to their children or saying that people who belong to certain minorities cannot have a nationality.
- Stateless people are often unable to see a doctor, get a job or even get married because of their status. For children who are stateless it can also mean that they can't go to school, play, be with their families and carers and enjoy their childhood.

It is often difficult for countries to deal with global issues such as statelessness on their own. Sometimes it is countries themselves who have bad rules that lead to statelessness. To help them deal with such issues, countries have created the United Nations (UN) as a place in which they work together to help them get along, improve living conditions for people all over the world and make the world a better place. One way the UN works together and tries to hold countries accountable for their actions is via written and agreed upon documents including declarations, compacts, and treaties. There is a very important document called the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which sets out the rights of every single person in the world such as going to school or being able to see a doctor. The Declaration also says that "everyone has the right to a nationality". This means that nationality rules should be fair, and everyone should be able to get a nationality somewhere. No one should be stateless. Everybody should belong somewhere!

Alternatively, you can refresh participants knowledge on statelessness through this video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iQ9SzaumyW0> and provide a brief introduction to the United Nations through an educational rap video available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9l2W7Ikrp6Y> and to the UDHR through an witty educational video at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ew993Wdc0zo>.

Next, have a discussion about Article 15 of the UDHR and statelessness. You can write Article 15 on the board or hand it out to the participants:

- 1. Everyone has the right to a nationality.**
- 2. No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his nationality nor denied the right to change his nationality.**

Guiding questions for the discussion include:

- 1.** What does Article 15 mean? If nationality is a right, how come there are 15 million stateless people in the world?
  - *The right to a nationality is a fundamental human right. Statelessness is the most extreme violation of this right because it leaves people without a nationality, anywhere. However, stateless people can still be found in all regions of the world as many countries have bad rules that lead to statelessness like not allowing women to pass on their nationality to their children as in*

**Duration:** 45 minutes

**Level of complexity:** 2

### Knowledge/Subjects:

Civics, Politics, International Relations, Social Activism

### Skills:

Activism, Creativity, Critical Thinking, Empathy, Research

### Values/Attitudes:

Belief that people can bring about change, Commitment to participation & inclusion, Respect for people & human rights

### Objectives:

- For participants to explore the UN as a forum to advocate for the right to nationality for everyone using the UDHR as a tool.
- For participants to critically reflect on existing actions against statelessness.

**Materials:** Internet access (optional)

*Kuwait and Syria, or saying that people who belong to certain minorities cannot have a nationality like Myanmar excluding the Rohingya people. Another reason why people have no nationality is the change of borders. For example, some individuals used to be citizens of the Soviet Union, but as its land became divided into different countries, not all people got the nationality of the new country they were in and became stateless. This is clearly wrong, goes against every human's rights and must be changed. Sometimes it is difficult to persuade a country to change its nationality rules or include stateless people as citizens because of discrimination, intolerance and stigma. For example, if a group have been treated as 'outsiders' for a long time, because they are stateless, it can be hard to change people's attitudes and to convince the public and/or the government that they have the right to belong and should be recognised as citizens.*

**2. Do you think progress has been made on statelessness since the UDHR came into force in 1948?**

- *The UDHR marked an important moment in history for the issue of statelessness: for the first time, nationality was recognised to be a fundamental human right. Today, the right to nationality is protected by lots of different treaties and international courts and committees of experts are helping to ensure that laws and practices that make people stateless are changed. In the last decade in particular, statelessness is becoming more and more visible as an issue that affects millions of people across the globe and requires an immediate response by the international community. More and more NGOs and activists are working together on statelessness and there have been important successes for individuals (like Neha – see p. 81-83 of the book) and whole communities (like the Makonde in Kenya – see p. 37-40 of the book). Lots more work still needs to be done, to ensure that everyone enjoys the right to a nationality and there are lots of people around the world fighting to make this happen. They are running campaigns, speaking to leaders, protesting and doing all kinds of interesting and important things to change the situation. It can take a lot of time and hard work, but it is worth it: we must do everything we can so that everyone enjoys the right to a nationality!*

Now it is time to explore an action dedicated to statelessness. The UNHCR is the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. This is one of the specialised agencies within the United Nations and it focuses on helping refugees and also individuals who are stateless. As a group or individually, look at the UNHCR's #IBelong campaign located at <https://www.unhcr.org/ibelong/>. After reading about the campaign and discovering a bit about the aims of the campaign, ask participants to critically reflect on the images that were developed to promote the #IBelong campaign and encourage people around the world to get involved (these can be found in Appendix V). What are the strengths and weaknesses of these images? (How) are they effective in communicating the goals of the campaign and/or what statelessness means? If time allows, ask participants to also brainstorm alternative ideas for posters, images etc. to promote the message of the #IBelong campaign.

**Further the Activity:**

A great way to address the issue of statelessness is by campaigning to raise awareness on and encourage action against statelessness. The UNHCR's #IBelong campaign is such an example. To show your support sign #IBelong's open letter to contribute in ending statelessness here: <https://www.unhcr.org/ibelong/sign-the-open-letter/>. You can also start a campaign in your school or community by encouraging people to also sign the letter. For more information about how people around the world are fighting for everyone's right to a nationality visit: <http://www.kids.worldsstateless.org/act/campaign-act-raise-awareness>.



## **APPENDIX IV: Get to know an author - Deirdre Brennan**

Deirdre is one of the two authors of *The Girl Who Lost Her Country*. She wrote the book together with Amal de Chickera, a co-Director of the Institute on Statelessness and Inclusion, while she was doing a Fellowship with the organisation. Find out more about what drew her attention to this issue and how she experienced writing a book about it in this interview with Deirdre...

### **1. When did you first learn about statelessness?**

In 2011, when I just turned 21, I interned at an anti-human trafficking charity in northern Thailand. The charity is based at the border between Thailand and Myanmar and they run a school for children who, because of their citizenship status, cannot access mainstream schools and universities. I met children and young adults the same age as me who explained to me what statelessness was, and how it was impacting their lives and their ability to enjoy the freedoms I was privileged to. Because of them, I've remained committed to working on this issue ever since.

### **2. What was the hardest part about writing the book? The nicest/most interesting part?**

After years of talking about statelessness to other adults I found it quite hard not to use words that were too big or boring! So, at first, I found it difficult to get into the mind of a kid and to know what they would enjoy reading. I thought about my favourite books as a kid, and how I always loved reading about what food the characters ate. Then I remembered my trip to see Neha and her family at their home a few years ago, and how Deepti, Neha's mother, lay out a spread of foods from around the world, everything from samosas to potato salad. She said she loved cooking foods from different countries because it was a way for her daughters to be able to travel without citizenship. I decided to centre some of the stories in the book around a shared meal or drink, and I ended up having lots of fun researching foods from different parts of the world, while doing my best to describe them in temptingly delicious ways!

### **3. What do you hope children will learn from the book/take away from the book?**

I hope this story sparks a curiosity in those who read it, a curiosity to learn more about statelessness, to investigate whether there are stateless populations in their home country, and whether there are local organisations they can support to help end statelessness.

### **4. Do you have a nationality and if yes, which one?**

Yes, I'm Irish, although I live in Australia. Irish citizenship entitles me to apply for visas to live, work or even study in different countries, a privilege sadly not afforded to millions of people around the world.

### **5. When you were in middle school (11-14 years old) what did you want to be when you grow up?**

I wanted to be a car saleswoman!! This still makes me laugh, especially because I don't even own one car now, never-mind a shop full of them.

### **6. Planning on writing any more books?**

I would love to write a sequel to the *Girl Who Lost Her Country*. There are many more stories of stateless children that I think deserve to be told, including those of the children I met living at the border of northern Thailand all those years ago. Deepti, the mother of Neha and Nikita, said she would love to read part two, and we joked about how it would follow the girls as they enjoyed their newly received citizenship holidaying on a tropical island somewhere!

## **APPENDIX V: #IBelong Campaign**

The #IBelong Campaign was launched by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in 2014. It aims to end statelessness within a decade, so by 2024. Below are some images developed to promote the #IBelong Campaign and encourage people all over the world to get involved in making it a success. For more about the Campaign, visit [www.unhcr.org/ibelong](http://www.unhcr.org/ibelong).



# #IBELONG

Join us in our campaign to end statelessness



**10 MILLION PEOPLE IN THE WORLD  
HAVE NO NATIONALITY**

Discrimination is the biggest  
cause of statelessness.

In cooperation with  
**UNITED COLORS  
OF BENETTON**

# #IBELONG

Join us in our campaign to end statelessness



**10 MILLION PEOPLE IN THE WORLD  
HAVE NO NATIONALITY**

Without nationality, women and children are more  
vulnerable to trafficking and exploitation.

In cooperation with  
**UNITED COLORS  
OF BENETTON**

**#IBELONG**

10 MILLION PEOPLE IN THE  
WORLD HAVE NO NATIONALITY

© UNHCR





# #IBELONG

Join us in our campaign to end statelessness



**10 MILLION PEOPLE IN THE WORLD  
HAVE NO NATIONALITY**

Without a nationality, people can remain  
invisible from cradle to grave.

In cooperation with  
**UNITED COLORS  
OF BENETTON**

# #IBELONG

Join us in our campaign to end statelessness



**10 MILLION PEOPLE IN THE WORLD  
HAVE NO NATIONALITY**

Statelessness is often passed from  
generation to generation.

In cooperation with  
**UNITED COLORS  
OF BENETTON**

# #IBELONG

Join us in our campaign to end statelessness



**10 MILLION PEOPLE IN THE WORLD  
HAVE NO NATIONALITY**

In 27 countries mothers cannot pass  
their nationality to their children.

In cooperation with  
**UNITED COLORS  
OF BENETTON**