

United Nations High
Commissioner for
Refugees

UNHCR



MUNUC 36

Model United Nations at the University of Chicago

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CHAIR LETTERS

Hello delegates,

My name is Alexander Puch, and I am a second-year biological chemistry major. I will be one of your two chairs for the UNHCR at MUNUC 36. In the past, I was involved in MUNUC 35 as an assistant chair in the cabinet of Florvil Hippolyte.

This year in UNHCR, the committee will be discussing two very relevant topics: stateless peoples and the role of technology in assisting refugees. As the term suggests, stateless peoples are peoples that have no country. Some examples of stateless peoples that have made headlines in recent years have been the Kurds in the Middle East and the Rohingya in East Asia. Many of these groups have faced oppression in their current countries, and therefore, some have set up self-proclaimed microstates with limited recognition, such as Kosovo. While the United Nations, like its predecessor the League of Nations, supports the right to national self-determination, many believe that not every group should be able to make their own state on a whim, as border changes often lead to wars, and these new nations can often be exploited by larger powers. For this committee, delegates will need to decide how far the right to national self-determination goes, and how to best assist stateless peoples in danger.

Technology, permeating almost every aspect of our daily lives, has become increasingly important in assisting refugees as it has advanced. Many aspects of it, such as advancements in sanitation, medicine, and agriculture, have made refugee camps much safer and more easily able to provide for their residents. Similarly, advancements in communication have made refugees more easily able to stay in touch with their families back home, and have also improved background checks. However, as with most applications of technology, technology's use in assisting refugees can be a very double-edged sword. For example, while most would agree it is good to have food and medicine available at refugee camps, it is debatable how much these should be used, as the refugees could become overly dependent on these handouts and get stuck. Internet and communication advancements, with their huge databases, could also lead to discrimination against refugees in their new countries, as has already been the case with the Rohingya fleeing to Bangladesh. Technology is an extremely broad topic that has applications in basically every area of assisting refugees.

For researching these topics, I would recommend Wikipedia as a great place to start. UNHCR's website, as well as other UN sites, are also very helpful. The CIA World Factbook is also useful for learning about one's own country. I am greatly looking forward to meeting you and observing how you respond to these two topics during MUNUC 36.

Sincerely,

Alexander E. Puch

aepuch@uchicago.edu

Dear delegates,

Welcome to MUNUC XXXVI and the wonderful city of Chicago! My name is Isaac Yoo and I am more than excited to be one of your co-chairs for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees or UNHCR, for short. In this committee, we will be tackling the ongoing refugee crises that deeply affect us as an international community.

A quick introduction: I am a second-year at the College studying History and Statistics and I am in my second year as part of MUNUC. I had no prior MUN experience before joining MUNUC last year as an Assistant Chair for EPCOT — an experience that I enjoyed a whole lot more than I anticipated. I also chair a crisis committee surrounding Phoenician maritime traders as part of ChoMUN, UChicago's intercollegiate conference.

As part of this committee, we will be focusing on two main issues: stateless peoples and the use of technology in assisting refugees. Displaced peoples around the world have been the victims of changing political and economic climates often resulting from a lack of political recognition and have often been unable to utilize many of the fruits of the technological innovations of our ever-advancing world. Thus, we hope that as you attempt to formulate inventive, new solutions and navigate the complexities of these issues, you are able to gain a new perspective and insight about this crucial aspect of international politics and cooperation — all while enjoying yourself, of course!

My excitement for this committee cannot be overstated and I look forward to meeting and getting to know each and every one of you throughout conference weekend. Feel free to reach out with any questions or concerns.

Best of luck,

Isaac Yoo

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HISTORY OF THE COMMITTEE

The United Nations was founded in the aftermath of World War II, which had produced a large number of refugees. As the international organization developed, the refugee crisis was still a huge problem in Europe, and therefore the UN decided to create an organization to deal with it.¹ Thus, the International Refugee Organization, later replaced by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), was created in 1946. Initially, the organization had only 34 members and was given three years to solve the entire refugee crisis on a budget of \$300,000 (\$3,776,302 in 2023). The organization was also told to disband at the end of those three years.

In 1954, the UNHCR received the Nobel Peace Prize² for its efforts helping refugees from the Second World War, and as more refugee crises, many having to do with the Cold War, continued to appear, it was clear the organization needed to stick around. As the UNHCR expanded throughout the Cold War, it also began to help other groups, such as stateless peoples and the internally displaced, since while they are not technically considered refugees, they often have

many of the same problems and needs. This idea became especially important in the breakup of Yugoslavia in the 1990s when wars broke out across the area and many stateless peoples demanded independence.

Today, the UNHCR is present in over 130 countries, has over 18,000 active personnel, and has helped more than 130 million refugees and internally displaced people worldwide. In 2015, the UN passed the 2030 agenda, whose goals included ending poverty, protecting the planet, and improving the living standards of everyone everywhere.³ Refugees, stateless peoples, and the internally displaced are some of those most affected by this plan, and therefore the UNHCR has been extremely involved, now working with the private sector and local governments, to improve the lives of the vulnerable. However, even with progress being made towards the 2030 agenda, refugee crises continue to be a problem around the globe, with one of the most recent resulting from the Russo-Ukrainian War. With this in mind, the UNHCR will need to adapt to a changing technological and political landscape moving forward, and therefore, will need the input of all nations.

¹ “History of UNHCR,” UNHCR, accessed August 20, 2023, <https://www.unhcr.org/history-unhcr>.

² Katherine Zobre, “History of the UNHCR,” Borgen Project, May 15, 2013, <https://borgenproject.org/history-of-the-unhcr/>.

³ “Sustainable Development Goals | UNHCR,” <https://www.unhcr.org/sustainable-development-goals>.

TOPIC A: CITIZENSHIP FOR STATELESS PEOPLES

Statement Of The Problem

According to international legal standards, statelessness is to be understood as “a situation in which an individual (or a group of people) has no membership in any state whatsoever.”⁴ This idea of statelessness comes with the implication that there is such a thing as a “state” and that there are individuals and peoples who fall within the bounds of a recognized political entity.

Both the idea of the recognized state and statelessness is a complex and multifaceted issue that affects millions of people around the world. Stateless individuals are those who are not considered citizens by any country and are therefore denied the rights and protections that come with nationality. This lack of legal recognition and documentation exposes stateless people to numerous challenges and increases the risk that their basic human rights will be violated.⁵

The problem of statelessness arises from various factors, including gaps in nationality laws,

⁴ Matthew J Gibney, “Statelessness and Citizenship in Ethical and Political Perspective,” essay, in *Nationality and Statelessness* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 44–63.

⁵ “About statelessness,” UNHCR, accessed August 20, 2023, <https://www.unhcr.org/ibelong/about-statelessness/>.

conflicts and displacement, discriminatory practices, and the dissolution of states. Many stateless individuals are born into statelessness, inheriting their status from parents who are also stateless. In some cases, nationality laws may exclude certain groups or impose overly restrictive requirements for acquiring citizenship, which effectively renders them stateless. Discrimination based on ethnicity, religion, or gender can also contribute to the marginalization and exclusion of certain populations, leaving them without a legal identity.

Statelessness has severe consequences for individuals and communities. Stateless people often face difficulties in accessing essential services such as education, healthcare, and employment opportunities. Without recognized legal status, they are also often unable to obtain identification documents, making it challenging to travel, open bank accounts, or register property. Stateless individuals are at greater risk of exploitation, trafficking, and arbitrary detention since they lack the protection of a nationality. They may be denied the right to vote, participate in political processes, or access social welfare programs.

The problem of statelessness is exacerbated by the cycle of intergenerational transmission. When parents are stateless, their children are often born

stateless as well,⁶ perpetuating the problem across generations. Statelessness becomes an entrenched condition, with limited opportunities for affected individuals to break free from the cycle and assert their rights. Additionally, stateless people are particularly vulnerable in times of conflict and forced displacement. They are often unable to flee their home countries due to the lack of travel documents, leaving them trapped in dangerous situations. In addition, even if they manage to escape, stateless individuals may face further difficulties in finding protection and assistance in refugee camps or host countries, since their legal status is undefined, and they may not qualify for refugee status.⁷

Addressing the problem of statelessness requires comprehensive and collaborative efforts at the national, regional, and international levels. Governments must review and reform their nationality laws to ensure that they are inclusive, non-discriminatory, and comply with international human rights standards. This includes removing gender-based discrimination in nationality laws, establishing safeguards to prevent statelessness at birth, and providing

pathways to nationality for stateless populations⁸ — something that is often easier said than done.

International cooperation is vital to address statelessness effectively. The United Nations and other international organizations play a crucial role in promoting the protection and rights of stateless people, providing technical assistance to states, and advocating for legal and policy changes.⁹ Collaboration among governments, civil society organizations, and other stakeholders is essential to share best practices, raise awareness, and provide support to stateless populations. In conclusion, statelessness is a pressing global issue that denies individuals their basic human rights and perpetuates cycles of exclusion and marginalization. By recognizing the rights of stateless people and working towards their inclusion and protection, societies can move closer to a world where no one is left without a legal identity and the rights that accompany it. Yet, tackling this mammoth of an issue will likely

⁶ “Ending Statelessness for a Bright Future for Every Child,” UNICEF Thailand, accessed August 20, 2023, <https://www.unicef.org/thailand/livesuntold>.

⁷ “U.S. Asylum Resources,” UNHCR, accessed August 20, 2023, <https://www.unhcr.org/us/asylum-resources>.

⁸ “Evaluation of PRM-Supported Initiatives to Prevent and Reduce Statelessness,” U.S. Department of State, May 18, 2022, <https://www.state.gov/evaluation-of-prm-supported-initiatives-to-prevent-and-reduce-statelessness/#:~:text=In%20general%2C%20PRM%20staff%20evidenced,funding%20to%20work%20on%20statelessness>.

⁹ “About UNHCR,” UNHCR, accessed August 20, 2023, <https://www.unhcr.org/us/about-unhcr#:~:text=U%20N%20H%20C%20R%20the%20U%20N%20Refugee%20Agency%20is%20a%20global%20organization%20dedicated,displaced%20communities%20and%20stateless%20people>.

require comprehensive legal reforms and collaborative efforts. Thus, it is the responsibility of the UNHCR to come to a resolution for this ever growing problem.

History Of The Problem

While statelessness may appear to be a relatively new phenomenon, given the large amounts of stateless people created by modern events such as the Rohingya genocide, statelessness has been present for as long as states have existed. In fact, many scholars have argued that statelessness is the default human condition, since for most of human history, “states” as we know them today have not existed. Throughout history, the stateless were often enslaved or conquered peoples, and states often used deprivation of citizenship to excuse atrocities committed against populations. For example, in the ancient world, slaves were generally not citizens of their countries, and therefore could be treated as property by their masters with little to no protection from the government. Even in the United States, the Dred Scott decision of 1857¹⁰ held that African Americans, slave or free, could not be citizens, and therefore could not sue in court. This, in addition to effectively legalizing

slavery across the entire United States, ensured that African Americans had effectively no legal rights and could be treated as less than human.

However, with the enlightenment in the 18th century and the rise of nationalism in the 19th century, the right of people to nationality, as well as the right to national self-determination, began to take root across the United States. With the spread of these new ideologies, states began to fight against statelessness. For example, after the abolition of slavery in the United States on January 31, 1865, birthright citizenship was adopted in the 14th amendment.¹¹ Statelessness was also brought to the forefront during and after the two World Wars, which created a massive number of stateless people as borders shifted. Most infamous was the Holocaust, in which after being deprived of their citizenship in Nazi Germany,¹² over six million Jewish people were murdered in concentration camps. However, for centuries even before the Holocaust, they had no nation and were victims of widespread antisemitism across Europe. To prevent any such atrocity from happening again, a large portion of Jewish people went to the Middle East after the war to their ancestral lands, where they set up the

¹⁰ “What Was the Dred Scott Decision?,” Encyclopædia Britannica, April 13, 2021, <https://www.britannica.com/question/What-was-the-Dred-Scott-decision#:~:text=The%20Dred%20Scott%20decision%20was,sue%20in%20a%20federal%20court>.

¹¹ “14th Amendment,” Cornell Law School, accessed August 20, 2023, <https://www.law.cornell.edu/constitution/amendmentxiv>.

¹² “Nazi Germany and Anti-Jewish Policy,” ADL, January 1, 2001, <https://www.adl.org/resources/background/nazi-germany-and-anti-jewish-policy>.

state of Israel. However, there were already large numbers of Arabs living in the region, which caused a series of wars in the area, which is a territory that remains divided and in conflict to this day. Also, even though the country was founded by formerly stateless people, statelessness remains a problem in Israel today, due at least in part to the fact that the country does not have birthright citizenship.¹³

One commonly proposed solution to statelessness is giving stateless peoples their own states, which is also supported by the UN founding principle of national self-determination. However, the history of Israel has shown that statehood for stateless peoples is much more nuanced than this, as newly formed countries can lead to regional conflict or the disregard for other people's living in their areas.

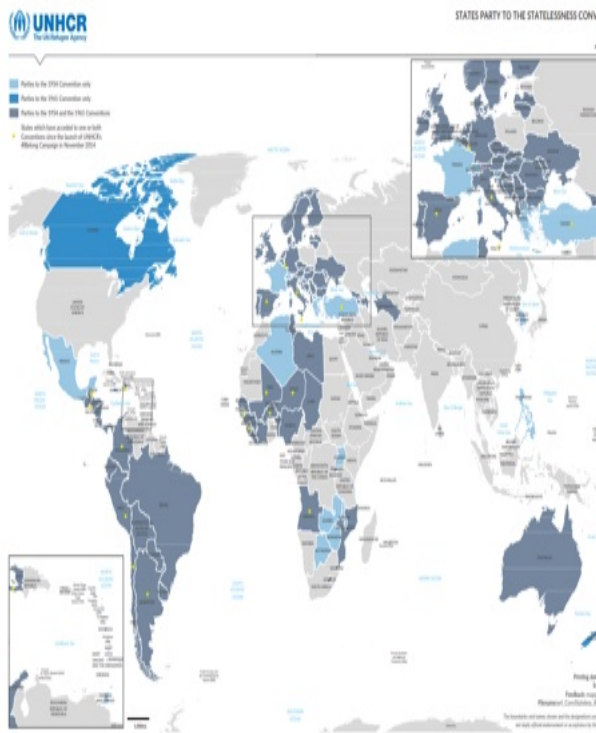
World War II, due to the large amount of statelessness it caused, brought the issue of statelessness to the forefront, eventually prompting the UN to begin to fight it. The first major step towards ending statelessness was the 1954 Commission Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons¹⁴ which was signed by 83

countries, and primarily served to define a stateless person as a person “not recognized by any state under the operation of its law,” as well as to affirm the stateless's human rights. Four years after the 1954 commission went into effect, the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness was created and signed by 61 countries. In addition to reaffirming the ideas of the previous convention, this initiative laid the groundwork for fighting the problem by requiring countries to create safeguards to prevent people from being born stateless and supporting birthright citizenship. The final major convention of the 20th century that involved statelessness was the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child,¹⁵ which affirmed each child's right to nationality, and like the previous two conventions, encouraged birthright citizenship.

¹³ “Stateless Persons,” UNHCR, accessed August 20, 2023, <https://www.unhcr.org/il/en/protection/stateless-persons>.

¹⁴ “UN Conventions on Statelessness,” UNHCR, accessed August 20, 2023, <https://www.unhcr.org/what-we-do/protect-human-rights/ending-statelessness/un-conventions-statelessness>.

¹⁵ “Convention on the Rights of the Child” (UN General Assembly, November 20, 1989).



States that are Parties to the Statelessness Conventions¹⁶

The UNHCR was not initially tasked with supporting the stateless, as they do not technically fall under the category of refugees, but in 1974, the UN General Assembly asked them to begin fighting the problem. The first major project the UNHCR undertook with regards to statelessness was assisting the Tamil people in Sri Lanka, who had largely been denied citizenship in the country since its independence in 1948.¹⁷ This was a rather difficult process, and Sri Lanka still has not ratified the conventions of 1954 and 1961. However, in 1988, Sri Lanka did pass a law

¹⁶ “States Party to the Statelessness Conventions” (UN General Assembly, March 10, 2021).

¹⁷ “Ceylon” (New York: United Nations, September 21, 1948).

to grant citizenship to Indian Tamils,¹⁸ which was a major victory for the UNHCR. The remaining Tamils were granted citizenship in 2003. Another early example of the UNHCR assisting the stateless was in the 1990s shortly after the breakup of Czechoslovakia. During the early years of the Czech Republic and Slovakia, the issue of which Czechoslovak people would get citizenship in which country was hotly contested. With the UNHCR’s help, the two countries passed laws granting citizenship to people living within their borders at the time of Czechoslovakia’s collapse.¹⁹ There was also the problem of the nomadic Roma people, who did not clearly live in one country or the other. Even though it was decided that the Roma could apply for citizenship, at least in the Czech Republic, there are still thousands stateless in former Czechoslovakia to this day.

However, even as the UNHCR worked to solve individual cases, statelessness remained a problem worldwide, with about 12 million people still classified as stateless in 2014. So, in 2014, the UNHCR began the Campaign to End Statelessness in Ten Years, aimed at eradicating

¹⁸ “Grant of Citizenship to Stateless Persons (Special Provisions) Act,” Srilanka Law, September 27, 2016, <https://www.srilankalaw.lk/revised-statutes/volume-iii/447-grant-of-citizenship-to-stateless-persons-special-provisions-act.html>.

¹⁹ “Citizenship in the Context of the Dissolution of Czechoslovakia, European Series” (Geneva: UNHCR, September 1996).

statelessness by 2024. Also known as the IBelong campaign,²⁰ this has had moderate success. The primary ways that the campaign has been run, since the UNHCR cannot interfere with national sovereignty, have been promoting more countries to ratify the 1954 and 1961 conventions on statelessness and to establish birthright citizenship. This has been rather successful, with the percentage of countries without birthright citizenship being as low as 13% by 2020, which is down from 29% in 2014. Kyrgyzstan also notably became the first country to eradicate statelessness within its territory. Still, there have been many problems the UNHCR has run into in the process, one of which has been accurately identifying the number of stateless people. Since they are not registered as citizens of any country, their numbers are difficult to count. Currently, there are about 4.4 million stateless people registered, about half in East Asia and the Pacific, but the true number is estimated to be around ten million. The IBelong campaign also, while it had been steadily decreasing the number of stateless people, was slowed significantly by the COVID-19 pandemic. Finally, the fact that the UNHCR cannot interfere in states' national sovereignty means that it cannot control what countries do without Security Council approval. Thus, many countries continue to deny citizenship to the stateless, and there is little the

UNHCR has been able to do to get them to change their ways. With the 2014 plan reaching its goal year in 2024, there are still many stateless people in the world, and the UNHCR must learn from its successes and failures when planning what to do for the future.

Past Actions

When it comes to an issue as foundationally entrenched in the international system as that of statehood and statelessness, it is imperative that we examine the past actions taken by this committee and other governing international entities regarding this issue for future discussion and decision-making.

The first significant actions taken by the UNHCR, in cooperation with the international community, were the adoption of the 1954 Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons²¹ and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness²². These two conventions aimed to define the rights and protections of stateless individuals and provide a framework for addressing their situation and

²⁰ “#IBELONG,” UNHCR, 2022, <https://www.unhcr.org/ibelong/>.

²¹ UNHCR. 1954. *Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons*. https://www.unhcr.org/ibelong/wp-content/uploads/1954-Convention-relating-to-the-Status-of-Stateless-Persons_ENG.pdf.

²² UNHCR. n.d. “UN Conventions on Statelessness | UNHCR.” UNHCR. <https://www.unhcr.org/what-we-do/protect-human-rights/ending-statelessness/un-conventions-statelessness>.

avoiding statelessness by establishing rules for nationality and citizenship, designed to prevent situations where individuals are left without any legally recognized sense of nationality.

Following this, in 1989 and into the early 1990s, the UNHCR, along with the greater international community, adopted a greater focus on identifying and combating the issue of statelessness, viewing it as a truly global issue and enforcing and facilitating the terms and commitments established in the aforementioned conventions. In doing so, the UNHCR launched an international consultation campaign²³ to address statelessness via conducting surveys to identify stateless populations around the world, promoting the protection of stateless refugees under international law, and enhancing training for international agents responsible for the enforcement of these standards.

This campaign prompted even further action, with the UNHCR calling for a decisive plan for change and the end of statelessness globally in

2013.²⁴ This led up to the creation of the Global Action Plan to End Statelessness: 2014 - 2024, created in partnership with governments and civil society.²⁵ This initiative aimed to prevent and reduce statelessness by listing out ten definitive actions to be enacted in the planned ten years, these being: resolving existing major situations of statelessness; ensuring that no child is born stateless; removing gender discrimination from nationality laws; preventing denial, loss or deprivation of nationality on discriminatory grounds; preventing statelessness in cases of state succession; granting protection status to stateless migrants and facilitate their naturalization; ensuring birth registration for the prevention of statelessness; issuing nationality documentation to those with entitlement to it, acceding to the UN Statelessness Conventions; and improving quantitative and qualitative data on stateless populations. In many ways, this plan of action was the culmination of the previous agreements and doctrines established by the wider international governing community.

As part of the aforementioned action items, the later UNHCR launched the #IBelong Campaign

²³ UNCHR. n.d. "Information Note on UNHCR's Activities for Refugee Law Promotion, Dissemination and Training for the Period July 1989 to July 1990 | UNHCR." UNHCR. <https://www.unhcr.org/publications/information-note-unhcrs-activities-refugee-law-promotion-dissemination-and-training-0>.

²⁴ "Global Action Plan to End Statelessness: 2014 – 2024." n.d.

<https://www.unhcr.org/ibelong/global-action-plan-2014-2024/#:~:text=The%20Global%20Action%20Plan%20includes,identify%20and%20protect%20stateless%20persons>.

²⁵ UNHCR. 2014. "Global Action Plan to End Statelessness: 2014–2024." *UNHCR*. <https://www.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/legacy-pdf/f/54621bf49.pdf>.

to End Statelessness in November 2014²⁶. By utilizing and taking advantage of new technological developments in cellular communication and social media, the UNHCR and this program aimed to expand access and awareness of stateless individuals and refugees across the world, and, in doing so, increase pressure on individual governments and corporations to take more decisive action on



#iBelong Campaign Poster²⁷

To the present day, the UNHCR and the international community have continued efforts to address statelessness. As of 2021, various countries have taken steps to enact legal reforms, amend nationality laws, and grant nationality to stateless populations, with hundreds of thousands of formerly stateless individuals receiving much-needed legal identification and

recognition,²⁸ ever since the plan of action was enacted in 2014. New partnerships²⁹ between governments, NGOs, and international organizations have played a crucial role in making progress toward ending statelessness were formed, all of whom provide essential financial, logistical, and humanitarian support for these efforts. Nevertheless, despite these discernible improvements, the UNHCR stresses the severity of the statelessness issue worldwide, emphasizing how much more work needs to be done.³⁰

²⁶ UNHCR, dir. n.d. “UNHCR #IBelong.” Accessed August 18, 2023. <https://www.unhcr.org/ibelong/>.

²⁷ *One of the Striking “I Belong” Campaign Images Created by United Colors of Benetton, UNHCR* (United Nations, November 4, 2014), <https://www.unhcr.org/news/stories/unhcr-launches-10-year-global-campaign-end-statelessness>.

²⁸ UNHCR. 2023a. “UNHCR Urges Governments to Accelerate Progress and Resolve Plight of World’s Stateless.” *UNHCR*, February 5, 2023. <https://www.unhcr.org/news/news-releases/unhcr-urges-governments-accelerate-progress-and-resolve-plight-worlds-stateless#:~:text=Since%20UNHCR%20launched%20its%20%23IBelong,pathway%20to%20citizenship%20as%20a>.

²⁹ UNHCR. n.d. “Our Partners | UNHCR.” UNHCR. <https://www.unhcr.org/about-unhcr/our-partners>.

³⁰ UNHCR. n.d. “Statelessness around the World | UNHCR.” UNHCR. <https://www.unhcr.org/what-we-do/protect-human-rights/ending-statelessness/statelessness-around-world>.

Possible Solutions

Ever since it was tasked with assisting the stateless in 1974, the UNHCR has tried a myriad of methods to fight the problem, with varying degrees of success. At the end of 2022, there were approximately 4.4 million registered stateless people,³¹ but the true number is estimated to be around ten million.³² This is up from 3.9 million in 2019,³³ but the total number of stateless people has been going down due to improved registration under the 2014 Campaign to End Statelessness in Ten Years. This campaign, also known as the IBELONG Campaign, has not eradicated the problem, in large part due to the difficulties and barriers because of COVID-19, but has had moderate success and can be used as a basis for future plans after its end date of 2024 is reached.

An obvious first step, and the first action used by the UNHCR in the IBELONG campaign,³⁴ is resolving current non-refugee cases of statelessness. While it is understandable that refugees often end up stateless, people who have lived in one country all their lives should not end up in this situation. Unfortunately, many countries have laws that discriminate against certain ethnic groups and bar them from becoming citizens or discriminate against gender. When the IBELONG campaign was launched in 2014, there were about 20 sizable non-refugee stateless populations. For example, in Myanmar, the Rohingya people, despite having lived in the area for centuries,³⁵ are currently being denied citizenship,³⁶ which has led to little to no protections for them under the law, in turn causing a genocide and a refugee crisis. There are

³¹ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. n.d. "Refugee Statistics." UNHCR. <https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/>.

³² "» Statelessness around the World." n.d. <https://www.unhcr.org/ibelong/statelessness-around-the-world/>.

³³ 2023. "Watershed Moment as Countries Step Forward to Tackle Global Statelessness." *UNHCR*, February 5, 2023. <https://www.unhcr.org/news/news-releases/watershed-moment-countries-step-forward-tackle-global-statelessness#:~:text=Globally%2C%20there%20are%20at%20least%203.9%20million%20known,reported%20for%20only%20a%20third%20of%20states%20globally.>

³⁴ "ReFWorld | Global Action Plan to End Statelessness." Refworld. https://www.refworld.org/docid/545b47d64.html?_gl=1*wcrqgm*_rup_ga*MTU1NzgyNDE0OC4xNjg2NTM0NDY1*_rup_ga_EVDQTJ4LMY*MTY4OTY1MzQ1NC4xMi4wLjE2ODk2NTM0NTQuMC4wLjA.

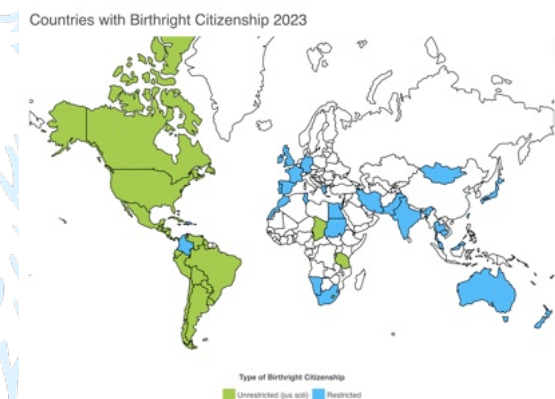
³⁵ Ali, Marium, and Hanna Duggal. 2022. "Rohingya Exodus Explained in Maps and Charts." *Rohingya News | Al Jazeera*, August 25, 2022. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/8/25/rohingya-exodus-explained-in-maps-and-charts#:~:text=August%2025%20marks%20five%20years%20since%20a%20brutal,who%20have%20lived%20in%20Buddhist-majority%20Myanmar%20for%20centuries>

³⁶ Reuters. 2023. "Rohingya Refugees Demand Citizenship and Security on First Return to Myanmar." *CNN*, May 8, 2023. <https://www.cnn.com/2023/05/07/asia/rohingya-myanmar-repatriation-visit-intl-hnk/index.html>.

also several countries in which a mother cannot pass on her citizenship to her children alone, and the father's citizenship is also necessary, which has caused a moderate number of children to be born stateless.

One obvious solution to this problem is to establish birthright citizenship, which means that if a child would not otherwise be given citizenship in another country, they are to be given citizenship in their native country upon birth. Currently, 33 countries have unrestricted birthright citizenship, including Canada, Brazil, Bolivia, and Jamaica, among others, and another 32 countries have some form of the policy.³⁷ Most countries with unrestricted birthright citizenship are in the Americas, and as a result, the Americas have a very low number of non-refugee stateless people. Unfortunately, most countries operate on *Jus Sanguinis* (right of the blood) when determining citizenship, which means that one or both parents must be a citizen for their child to be a citizen. It is also a problem that the UNHCR cannot force countries to do anything in practice without approval from the Security Council, since doing so would be a violation of national sovereignty. Thus, solving the problem of children being born stateless by birthright citizenship is easier said than done and

will require the cooperation of most of the world's countries.



*Countries with Birthright Citizenship 2023*³⁸

Another common way people become stateless is due to state succession. When a new country is formed, there is often debate over who gains its citizenship. This is especially true when multiple states are formed after the collapse of a larger one, as was the case during the collapse of Czechoslovakia in 1993. During this time, Czechoslovakia split into two countries, the Czech Republic (now Czechia) and Slovakia. With the UNHCR's help, it was decided that everyone would get citizenship in whichever country's borders they were living in at the time of Czechoslovakia's collapse. But this solution was not perfect, as the Roma people living in the area were nomadic, and therefore did not officially live in either country's collapse, leading to large numbers of them becoming stateless.

³⁷ World Population Review. n.d. "Countries with Birthright Citizenship 2023." <https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/countries-with-birthright-citizenship>.

³⁸ "Countries with Birthright Citizenship 2023." n.d. Worldpopulationreview.com. Accessed August 20, 2023. <https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/countries-with-birthright-citizenship>.

One solution that has been proposed to prevent this kind of statelessness, even for nomads, has been to allow people to retain citizenship in the collapsed country until they are declared otherwise. This would, combined with birthright citizenship, allow the problem to fix itself, for even if someone did not become a citizen of a new country, all their descendants would. Unfortunately, even this solution is not perfect, as it would be difficult to decide how someone with citizenship in a collapsed country, such as Czechoslovakia, would be treated under the laws of the new countries, possibly allowing them to become *de-facto* stateless by being denied the rights of citizens of all extant states. Since the majority of solutions to statelessness from state succession in the past have had major flaws, the body will need to learn from past mistakes and make a new plan.

Perhaps the most common way that people are born stateless is during migration from one country to another. Often, when people migrate to a new country as refugees, they are unable to gain citizenship, and then have their citizenship revoked in their original country for fleeing. This has been the source of the vast majority of the stateless in North America because although most countries on the continent have birthright citizenship, there have been several migrant crises in recent years, mostly involving large numbers of people moving North to the United States and Canada. Due to these widespread migrations,

there are now 218,000 stateless people living in the United States,³⁹ mostly having migrated from Central or South America. These people are often unable to secure the rights that American citizens have, such as being able to hold a job or receive a driver's license. This problem is not unique to the United States—in fact, when the IBELONG campaign took effect in 2014, only ten states in the world had laws to facilitate asylum or naturalization for migrants because many countries do not consider them stateless. There are also constant fears that people could masquerade as migrants to bring drug or human trafficking business into countries or could take jobs away from current citizens. Giving migrants citizenship rights will require these and other fears to be dispelled, and a wider acceptance of these people as stateless. This itself will require the cooperation of many world governments, which like much of what the UNHCR does year-round, is difficult to do directly without infringing on national sovereignty.

One solution that has been proposed to statelessness that could be very effective but run into similar problems would be to create a worldwide birth registry, in which every child's country of origin would be documented, making it much clearer where their rightful citizenship is

³⁹ “Statelessness | UNHCR US.” UNHCR US. <https://www.unhcr.org/us/what-we-do/u-s-asylum-resources/statelessness>.

and being useful in disputes. However, creating such a registry would take a lot of time and money and require the cooperation of a large number of the world's governments. It would also be the most useful in countries with birthright citizenship, which already have low levels of people being born stateless. This solution was one of the ten points of the IBELONG campaign of 2014, but to this date no such worldwide registry is in effect. In its discussions about what to do moving forward, the UNHCR must decide whether it is worth it to continue pursuing this goal, or if it is a waste of time and money.

To continue, another common cause of statelessness is simply poor recordkeeping by authorities. Even the 4.4 million identified stateless people are not believed to be a majority of the stateless in the world. Often, if there is no birth certificate written when a child is born, that person has an increased chance of ending up stateless. To prevent this, UN assistance could potentially be given to countries in need of better recordkeeping, and the advantage to this solution is that it would be the countries themselves requesting aid, rather than pressure from the UN to participate. It would also be useful for the UN to improve on its own records of the stateless in order to ensure that each stateless person is identified, and to keep track of their well-being and paths to citizenship. The downside, however, would be that it would use up international

funds, and could possibly be exploited by countries that do not actually need assistance.

A final possible solution could be to have more countries accede to the 1954 and 1961 Conventions on Statelessness, which in theory would cause them to take action to prevent the problem within their own borders. This would be especially useful as the majority of countries still have not signed the accords. This was also one of the major aims of the IBELONG campaign, and several countries, such as the Philippines,⁴⁰ are now signatories. However, as seen many times over the course of world history, treaties such as these are very hard to enforce, and it would be almost impossible for the UNHCR to directly punish a country for not abiding by the treaties they signed.

In the end, statelessness is a very complex problem that exists in many forms, and therefore there is most likely not a single solution that will work for all cases. The UNHCR must learn from the successes and failures of its previous actions to end statelessness and examine the problem from all of its angles in order to target and implement specific solutions.

⁴⁰ UNHCR - The UN Refugee Agency. 2022. "UNHCR Lauds Philippines' Accession to 1961 Statelessness Convention." *UNHCR*, December 12, 2022. <https://www.unhcr.org/news/news-releases/unhcr-lauds-philippines-accession-1961-statelessness-convention>.

Bloc Positions

One of the largest challenges when addressing statelessness and stateless peoples is the fact that these populations are often spread across multiple existing nation-states and is thus an issue that often treads upon existing state sovereignties. As a result, there must be careful considerations made for certain countries, in particular the ones in which these stateless peoples reside. The following information aims to bring forward some of these specific considerations and issues with regards to specific regions and territories; however, please note that this list is merely a source of background information and is not intended to sway your position one way or the other, nor is it an exhaustive list of all stateless peoples.

Europe

Even as the birthplace of the modern nation-state,⁴¹ Europe is still home to millions of stateless peoples. For instance, Spain, due to its eclectic history, has been home to multiple people and cultural groups like the Basque, Aragonese, Galicians, and Catalans.⁴² The Catalan independence movement has gained substantial momentum in recent years with a referendum being held in 2017 that had overwhelming

⁴¹ Richards, Howard. 2004. *Understanding the Global Economy*. Peace Education Books.

⁴² Minahan, James. 2016. *Encyclopedia of Stateless Nations: Ethnic and National Groups Around the World*. Greenwood.

support for independence.⁴³ Other groups include the Sicilians and Sardinians that occupy Italy's Mediterranean islands,⁴⁴ the Faroese of Denmark's Faroe Islands,⁴⁵ and the Chechens of Russia, the latter of which has fought multiple wars with their existing nation state.⁴⁶

It is also important to mention the existence of the nomadic Romani people⁴⁷ that are dispersed across the entirety of the continent and whose statehood has continued to be a rather contentious issue.⁴⁸

Middle East & Central Asia

Multiple stateless peoples reside within and across the borders of multiple existing nation states

⁴³ Jones, Sam. 2017. "Catalonia to Hold Independence Vote despite Anger in Madrid." *The Guardian*, December 4, 2017. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/sep/06/spanish-government-condemns-catalonia-over-independence-referendum>.

⁴⁴ Stone, John, Rutledge M. Dennis, Polly Rizova, Anthony D. Smith, and Xiaoshuo Hou. 2016. *The Wiley Blackwell Encyclopedia of Race, Ethnicity and Nationalism*. John Wiley & Sons.

⁴⁵ Adler-Nissen, Rebecca. 2014. "The Faroe Islands." *Cooperation and Conflict* 49 (1): 55–79. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010836713514150>.

⁴⁶ "Russia Acknowledges 3,400 Soldiers Killed in Chechnya since 1999." n.d. <https://www.spacewar.com/2005/050330150830.fsy02lj.html>.

⁴⁷ Cole, Jeffrey E. 2011. *Ethnic Groups of Europe: An Encyclopedia: An Encyclopedia*. ABC-CLIO.

⁴⁸ Bilefsky, Dan. 2013. "Are the Roma Primitive, or Just Poor?" *The New York Times*, October 19, 2013. <https://www.nytimes.com/2013/10/20/sunday-review/are-the-roma-primitive-or-just-poor.html>.

throughout the Middle East and Central Asia. The largest of these is the Kurds whose historical homeland Kurdistan expands across Syria, Iraq, Turkey, and Iran,⁴⁹ which is a fact that has led them to armed conflict with each of these nation-states and to gain a substantial level of autonomy in Syrian Kurdistan.⁵⁰ Other notable examples include the ethnic Turkmen-Iraqis represented by the Iraqi Turkmen Front (ITF);⁵¹ Balochs fighting for their homeland of Balochistan that spans Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iran;⁵² and the Pamiris of Tajikistan whose nationalist efforts resulted in a civil war in 1992.⁵³

Africa

Due to colonial mismanagement and misplanning,⁵⁴ many of the modern nation states of Africa are populated by eclectic groups of different peoples with various tribal and clan affiliations, often leading to major conflicts.⁵⁵ For instance, the nation state of Nigeria has experienced secessionist efforts by the Yoruba-led Oodua Peoples Congress (OPC)⁵⁶ and the Igbo nationalist group, the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB).⁵⁷ These groups are far from the only example — the Oromo Liberation Front is currently in conflict with the Ethiopian

⁴⁹ O'Shea, Maria Theresa. 2012. *Trapped between the Map and Reality: Geography and Perceptions of Kurdistan*. Routledge.

⁵⁰ "Kurds Seek Autonomy in a Democratic Syria." 2012. <https://www.bbc.com/news/av/world-middle-east-19291072>.

⁵¹ Catusse, Myriam, and Karam Karam. 2013. *Returning to Political Parties?: Partisan Logic and Political Transformations in the Arab World*. Presses de l'Ifpo.

⁵² Nauman, Qasim. 2016. "What Is Pakistan's Balochistan Insurgency and Why Is India's Modi Talking About It? – The Short Answer." *WSJ*, August 17, 2016. <https://www.wsj.com/articles/BL-263B-8077>.

⁵³ "The Tajik Civil War: Causes and Dynamics | Conciliation Resources." n.d. <https://www.c-r.org/accord/tajikistan/tajik-civil-war-causes-and-dynamics>.

⁵⁴ Mulinge, Munyae M., and Gwen N. Lesetedi. "Interrogating Our Past: Colonialism and Corruption in Sub-Saharan Africa." *African Journal of Political Science / Revue Africaine de Science Politique* 3, no. 2 (1998): 15–28. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23493651>.

⁵⁵ Mekoa, Itumeleng. 2019. "How Africa Got into a Mess: Colonial Legacy, Underdevelopment, Corruption and Human Rights Violations in Africa." *Journal of Reviews on Global Economics* 8 (February): 43–52. <https://doi.org/10.6000/1929-7092.2019.08.05>.

⁵⁶ ———. n.d. "Oodua Peoples Congress (OPC) Oodua Liberation Movement (OLM) Revolutionary Council of Nigeria." <https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/para/yoruba.htm>.

⁵⁷ Heerten, Lasse, and A. Dirk Moses. 2014. "The Nigeria–Biafra War: Postcolonial Conflict and the Question of Genocide." *Journal of Genocide Research* 16 (2–3): 169–203. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14623528.2014.936700>.

government for Oromo sovereignty,⁵⁸ the Sudan Liberation Movement/Army (SLM/A) that has been in conflict with the Sudanese government led by the Fur,⁵⁹ Zaghawa, and Masalit tribes, and the Sahrawi inhabit the disputed territory of Western Sahara and have been at odds with the Moroccan government for several years.⁶⁰

Americas

When it comes to stateless peoples in the Americas, the issue is primarily concerned with displaced indigenous peoples and tribes. Many of the modern nation-states in the region have enacted legislation and made concerted efforts to remediate the issues caused by this displacement, often endowing them with a heightened level of political autonomy. For instance, Diné people of the Navajo Nation, while still being under the jurisdiction of the United States federal government, has a governmental system that is akin to that of a state, with its own police force, court system, legislation, and president, based

around their traditional clan-based leadership structure⁶¹. Nevertheless, similarly to other indigenous entities like the First Nations of Canada,⁶² Inuits of the Arctic subregions,⁶³ Zapotecs of Mexico,⁶⁴ Mayans of Central America,⁶⁵ Quechwas of Andean South America,⁶⁶ Terena of the Amazon,⁶⁷ amongst others, the

⁵⁸ Dube, Nagessa. 2021. "Ethiopia: Victory for the Oromo Will Come from Winning Hearts and Minds, Not Terrorising People." *The Africa Report.Com*, June 18, 2021. <https://www.theafricareport.com/99330/ethiopia-victory-for-the-oromo-will-come-from-winning-hearts-and-minds-not-terrorising-people/>.

⁵⁹ "BBC News - Who Are Sudan's Darfur Rebels?" n.d. BBC. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/7039360.stm>.

⁶⁰ Zunes, Stephen, and Jacob Mundy. 2010. *Western Sahara: War, Nationalism, and Conflict Irresolution*. Syracuse University Press.

⁶¹ Denetdale, Jennifer. 2007. *Reclaiming Diné History: The Legacies of Navajo Chief Manuelito and Juanita*.

⁶² Government of Canada; Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada. 2017. "First Nations in Canada." May 2, 2017. <https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1307460755710/1536862806124>.

⁶³ "Indigenous Peoples of the Arctic - Institut Polaire Français Paul-Emile Victor." 2019. Institut Polaire Français Paul-Emile Victor. August 20, 2019. <https://web.archive.org/web/20201030024037/https://www.institut-polaire.fr/ipev-en/polar-informatio/in-arctic/peoples-of-the-arctic-2/indigenous-peoples-of-the-arctic/>.

⁶⁴ "INDIGENOUS ZAPOTEC PEOPLE IN MEXICO." n.d. https://prmapping.ku.edu/Mexico_Indigena/ags_indigenuszapotecpeople.htm.

⁶⁵ Nations, James D. 2010. *The Maya Tropical Forest: People, Parks, and Ancient Cities*. University of Texas Press.

⁶⁶ "Quechua - Introduction, Location, Language, Folklore, Religion, Major Holidays, Rites of Passage." n.d. <https://www.everyculture.com/wc/Norway-to-Russia/Quechua.html>.

⁶⁷ Oberg, Kalervo. 1948. "Terena Social Organization and Law." *American Anthropologist* 50 (2): 283–91. <https://doi.org/10.1525/aa.1948.50.2.02a00080>.

Dine people lack a substantial foundation of statehood.⁶⁸

In response to this issue, indigenous advocacy, and empowerment groups like the Coordinator of Indigenous Organizations of the Amazon River Basin (COICA)⁶⁹ and the International Indian Treaty Council (IITC)⁷⁰ have risen to prominence through the representation of the needs of the indigenous peoples of the Americas as a whole. Indigenous peoples have also assumed positions of power in certain nation states. The most recent example would be the former president of Bolivia from 2006 to 2019, Evo Morales, who is a member of the Aymara tribe.⁷¹

South & Southeast Asia

South and Southeast Asia has historically been a rather ethnically heterogeneous region, inhabited by numerous people groups. Thus, with the formation of modern nation-states, many of these people groups have been left to the wayside without statehood, leaving them to obtain political sovereignty through other means. For

instance, the Tamil people that inhabit much of southern India⁷² and Sri Lanka⁷³ have enacted militant and political efforts in the past for a unified Tamil nation-state. Another example would be the ongoing insurgency taking place in the disputed territory of Kashmir, as the native Kashmiri people aim to obtain autonomy from the Pakistani and Indian governments.⁷⁴

Other groups like the Kuki, Zo, Mizo, and Chin⁷⁵ of eastern India, Bangladesh, and Myanmar; the Hmong⁷⁶ of Myanmar, Laos, Vietnam, and southern China; and the Rohingya⁷⁷ of Myanmar

⁶⁸ *United States v. Kagame*, 118 U.S. 375 (1886), <https://caselaw.findlaw.com/court/us-supreme-court/118/375.html>

⁶⁹ "Climate Alliance - COICA." n.d. <https://www.climatealliance.org/indigenous-partners/coica.html>.

⁷⁰ International Indian Treaty Council. n.d. "About IITC | International Indian Treaty Council." <https://www.iitc.org/about-iitc/>.

⁷¹ Sivak, Martín. 2010. *Evo Morales: The Extraordinary Rise of the First Indigenous President of Bolivia*. St. Martin's Press.

⁷² "Tamil Nadu Liberation Army (TNLA)." n.d. <https://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/india/terroristoutfits/TNLA.htm>.

⁷³ Gunasingam, Murugar. 1999. *Sri Lankan Tamil Nationalism: A Study of Its Origins*.

⁷⁴ Slater, Joanna. 2019. "From Scholars into Militants: Educated Kashmiri Youths Are Joining an Anti-India Insurgency." *Washington Post*, March 28, 2019. https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/from-scholar-to-militant-why-more-kashmiri-youth-are-joining-an-insurgency-against-india/2019/03/26/2a6e92c6-45ce-11e9-94ab-d2dda3c0df52_story.html.

⁷⁵ Roy, Esha. 2023. "Ethnicity, Religion, a Shared History: Ties That Bind the Zo Peoples of Manipur & Mizoram." *The Indian Express*, July 6, 2023. <https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/explained-politics/ethnicity-religion-a-shared-history-ties-that-bind-the-zo-peoples-of-manipur-mizoram-8751504/>.

⁷⁶ "Who Are the Hmong? – Hmong American Center." 2018. October 4, 2018. <https://www.hmongamericancenter.org/ufoqs/who-are-the-hmong/>.

⁷⁷ Blakemore, Erin. 2021. "Who Are the Rohingya People?" *Culture*, May 3, 2021.

have all been involved in significant conflicts with their existing nation-state governments.

East Asia

Statehood for stateless peoples has also been an issue of historical significance in East Asia. The Tibetan people have been vying for independence since China's annexation of the region in 1950⁷⁸, while a political independence movement⁷⁹ for the Ryukyuan people of the Japanese-held Ryukyu islands and Okinawa prefecture has been ongoing since the Japanese peace treaty with the United States following WWII.

Oceania

Colonial and imperial influences on the Pacific islands of the region have led to certain indigenous islanders lacking adequate political sovereignty. The Maoris of New Zealand have increasingly used protests⁸⁰ to advocate for their native rights to the land and have gained significant ground politically and culturally. Meanwhile, a substantial subset of the native

Hawaiians that inhabit the American state of Hawaii have expressed their desire for independence,⁸¹ much like the sovereignty they enjoyed as a kingdom before annexation by the United States on July 7, 1898.



<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/culture/people/reference/rohingya-people/>.

⁷⁸ Smith, Warren W. 2008. *China's Tibet?: Autonomy Or Assimilation*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

⁷⁹ Ishiyama, Eiichiro. 2015. "Ryukyu Pro-Independence Group Quietly Gathering Momentum." *The Japan Times*, January 26, 2015. <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/01/26/national/ryukyu-pro-independence-group-quietly-gathering-momentum/#.WJwayIWcfMs>.

⁸⁰ "NEW ZEALAND: TAKAHUE: MAORI PROTEST." 1995. Accessed August 18, 2023. AP Newsroom

⁸¹ Dudley, Michael Kioni, and Keoni Kealoha Agard. 1993. *A Call for Hawaiian Sovereignty*. Na Kane O Ka Malo Press.

⁸² "Hawaiian Sovereignty," 'Ulu'Ulu, accessed August 20, 2023, <http://uluulu.hawaii.edu/themes/hawaiian-sovereignty>.

Glossary

Stateless: not having official citizenship status in any particular state.

State: a politically organized body of people usually occupying a definite territory.”⁸³

Intergenerational Transmission: the transmission of some sort of characteristic or condition across generations.

Displacement: the movement of something away from its initial position. A “displaced person” is a person who, for many possible reasons, has been forced away from their home, often to a distant land.

Genocide: actual or attempted extermination of an entire group of people based on race, religion, culture, or other characteristic.

Sovereignty: “supreme power especially over a body politic.”⁸⁴

De-Facto: existing in reality despite not necessarily existing in law.

⁸³ “Definition of STATE.” n.d. Merriam-webster.com. Accessed August 20, 2023.
<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/state>.

⁸⁴ “Definition of SOVEREIGNTY.” n.d. Merriam-webster.com. Accessed August 20, 2023.
<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/sovereignty>.

TOPIC B: THE ROLE OF TECHNOLOGY IN ASSISTING REFUGEES

Statement Of The Problem

Throughout recent decades, technology has improved at an astounding rate. Practically every field has seen notable advances, and as the impacts of technology continue to expand into more areas, there is inevitably discussion, including within the UNHCR, of using it to help refugees. The three fields that have been of particular interest have been advances in computers, communication systems, and biological sciences, which includes agriculture, sanitation, and medicine. The technology is not a problem itself, but it could very easily become one if used improperly or if it falls into the wrong hands.

U.S. Patent Rate by Year⁸⁵

In order to understand how technology can be used by the UNHCR, it is first necessary to understand the technology itself. Many of the advances in biology and sanitation in recent years have been in genetics. The development of

CRISPR⁸⁶ (Clustered Regularly Interspaced Short Palindromic Repeats) has made gene editing much easier and cheaper, and as a result, genetically modified organisms (GMO) are now commonplace. The most well-known implementation of GMOs has been in food, which has been modified to be more nutritious, more resilient against climate change, and to be more resistant against pests. Many GMOs have been specifically created to help refugees and people in impoverished areas. One example is golden rice,⁸⁷ which contains beta-carotene, a substance that is metabolized into vitamin A, which in turn is used to prevent vitamin A deficiency in malnourished individuals. GMOs have also allowed to produce mass amounts of food, and the world now produces enough to feed a population of over ten billion.⁸⁸ There have

⁸⁵ US Patent Rate by year, Schmitt, Jacques. 2017. "Innovation Waves Associated with Invention and Discovery." Open Organization. February 21, 2017. <https://open-organization.com/en/2017/02/21/innovation-waves-associated-with-invention-and-discovery/>.

⁸⁶ Helmy, Mohamed, Mohamed Awad, and Kareem A. Mosa. 2016. "Limited Resources of Genome Sequencing in Developing Countries: Challenges and Solutions." *Applied & Translational Genomics* 9: 15–19.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.atg.2016.03.003>.

⁸⁷ "Genetically Modified Organisms: The Golden Rice Debate." n.d. NYU Langone Health. Accessed August 19, 2023. <https://med.nyu.edu/departments-institutes/population-health/divisions-sections-centers/medical-ethics/education/high-school-bioethics-project/learning-scenarios/gmos-the-golden-rice-debate>.

⁸⁸ Holt-Gimenez, Eric. 2012. "We Already Grow Enough Food for 10 Billion People -- and Still Can't End Hunger." *HuffPost* (blog). May 2, 2012.

also been experiments with the modification of mosquitoes to prevent the spread of malaria, which could greatly improve the sanitation of refugee camps and impoverished areas. Vaccine development has also become much quicker, with a vaccine for the COVID-19 virus being approved less than one year after the beginning of the pandemic.⁸⁹ Of the potential ways that technology could be used to help refugees, the use of vaccines and crop modification are perhaps the least controversial, as giving people vaccines and engineering more nutritious crops has benefits that spread well beyond refugees, such as cheaper goods and a healthier populace.

The main problem with this kind of technology's implementation, however, is possible overuse of it, in which refugees rely on it so much that they become dependent on it and can never form a life outside the camps. Still, in an effort to arrive at a quick solution to the growing number of refugees worldwide, the UNHCR has already been very quick to implement these technologies, and many of the problems the UN faces come from countries turning away GMO and other forms of applied-technology aid due to fears generated by a

lack of knowledge about its effects.⁹⁰ There has also been no shortage of misconceptions about vaccine technology, especially since they can be developed so quickly in today's fast-paced, technological world. Now, the UNHCR must decide how much aid is necessary to encourage refugees to become independent, as well as raise awareness to prevent fears about this technology's effects.

Another major breakthrough in technology in recent years has been in Big Data, which is the creation of huge data networks to be analyzed by machines. One common application of this technology is in tracking systems on the Internet, which gather data about what every Internet user is effectively doing all of the time, especially when using search engines.⁹¹ While this has allowed companies to produce more effective marketing tailored to their target audiences, it has also created a myriad of security and privacy concerns. In the same way, the implementation of Big Data by the UNHCR could be used for great good or great harm. On one hand, it could be used to run streamlined background checks and match refugees with new jobs. On the other hand, it

https://www.huffpost.com/entry/world-hunger_b_1463429.

⁸⁹Solis-Moreira, Jocelyn. 2020. "How Did We Develop a COVID-19 Vaccine so Quickly?" Medical News Today. December 15, 2020. <https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/how-did-we-develop-a-covid-19-vaccine-so-quickly>.

⁹⁰"Angola Rejects GM Food Aid." 2004. Scidev.net. April 2, 2004.

<https://www.scidev.net/global/news/angola-rejects-gm-food-aid/>.

⁹¹June. n.d. "Internet Tracking: How and Why We're Followed Online." Norton.com. Accessed August 19, 2023.

<https://us.norton.com/blog/privacy/internet-tracking>.

could also be used to discriminate against refugees, as their status would be relatively “public.” This has already been a problem for Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh, who have faced difficulties getting jobs.⁹² There was a much larger problem at hand, but the issue was partially exacerbated by the actions of the UN, since the UNHCR shared data, including biometrics, on these refugees without their consent. If the UNHCR is to continue using Big Data to handle refugees, it will need to find a way to do so without infringing on their right to privacy.

Perhaps the most well-known area of technology that has advanced in recent years has been computers and digitalization. Due to this technology, communication across the world can happen in seconds, and this process has allowed refugees to stay in contact with people in their home countries. It has also allowed refugees to receive aid payments without ever having to stay in refugee camps, thereby increasing their independence.⁹³ This is made even easier by the fact that smartphones have become cheaper, and in turn available to a greater portion of the population.

⁹²Fakih, Lama. 2021. “UN Shared Rohingya Data without Informed Consent.” Human Rights Watch. June 15, 2021. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/06/15/un-shared-rohingya-data-without-informed-consent>.

⁹³“How Technology Is Affecting the Refugee Crisis.” 2016. Mercy Corps. June 9, 2016. <https://www.mercycorps.org/blog/technology-refugee-crisis>.

The communication advances have also brought greater awareness to refugee crises, allowing the UNHCR and other humanitarian agencies to gather funds more easily. Another major advancement in technology has been in artificial intelligence, in which computers have been used to automate organization of companies and other organizations.⁹⁴ There is even the possibility of using this technology to assist in the management of refugee camps, as automated management would not get tired or get confused, would not need to be paid, and would be less susceptible to biases. However, there are some confirmed cases of bias in generative AI,⁹⁵ and such systems are not immune to malfunctions. Additionally, there is concern over whether automating such management would take away a significant human component of refugee crises. Automated systems may also have a hard time responding to the needs of specific individuals or situations not previously encountered. There is also the problem that such AI technology, as with much modern technology, is still very new, and must be tested in greater depth and detail before it is applied to the most vulnerable populations. If the UNHCR is to implement such solutions as AI

⁹⁴Asana. n.d. “Asana Work Management - Features, Uses & Product •.” Asana. Accessed August 19, 2023. <https://asana.com/product>.

⁹⁵Cousins, Barry. 2023. “Uncovering the Different Types of ChatGPT Bias.” Forbes. March 31, 2023. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbestechcouncil/2023/03/31/uncovering-the-different-types-of-chatgpt-bias/>.

into its processes, it will need to weigh the money and time saved against the possible loss of the human element of its work and the problems responding to new situations.

As with most technological revolutions, the modern advances in technology are not inherently problematic, but could be used for both great good and great harm. Perhaps most importantly, since the pace of technology's advancement does not seem to be slowing down, the UNHCR should find a way to deal with future advancements in technology. This could range from a new committee to oversee the implementation of technology to teams testing it before applying it on a larger scale. Whatever the UNHCR decides, however, it will need to be applicable to both current and future technological advancements.

In the end, the advances in technology in the 21st century have happened at a speed unrivaled in history and can be a very double-edged sword. Biological advancements could be used for better nutrition and sanitation in refugee camps but should not be overused to the point where refugees become dependent on them and cannot leave. Big Data could streamline background checks and help match refugees with jobs in their new countries but could also lead to privacy violations and discrimination. Finally, computers and artificial intelligence could be used to streamline the management of refugee camps and increase global awareness but could take away the

human element of the UNHCR, and should not be recklessly implemented before its effectiveness is confirmed. New technology is not inherently a problem, but the UNHCR must work to prevent it from becoming one and use it to the maximum benefit of refugees.

History Of The Problem

While refugee crises and the forced migration of peoples have been long-standing phenomena and issues of geopolitical prominence, the relatively recent emergence of various technologies have been greatly impactful in addressing these mass migration events and the issues surrounding them. Whether it be advancements in communication, biological sciences, or computing technologies, it is important to understand the origin and historical development of these rapidly evolving forces.

The first significant technological development used in mass refugee events was the emergence of information databases created by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the mid to late 1990s. One of these notable databases was that of ReliefWeb that was founded in 1996 in response to the ongoing Rwandan genocide and the resulting refugee crisis.⁹⁶ Now under the purview of the United States Department of State

⁹⁶ "ReliefWeb's Early Days." 2021. ReliefWeb.

August 10, 2021.

<https://reliefweb.int/blogpost/reliefwebs-early-days>

and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), it provides essential information about the thousands of refugee and humanitarian issues around the world.

Around this same time, the public health realities faced by these refugees became a growing concern for many international organizations. Deadly bacterial diseases like cholera often ran rampant in refugee camps and killed many in a matter of days and weeks. For instance, in 1994, in the Lake Kivu region of the modern-day Democratic Republic of the Congo, 42,000 Rwandan refugees died in a major cholera outbreak.⁹⁷ As a result, a strict set of humanitarian standards called the Sphere Project was established and agreed upon by over 200 international humanitarian organizations that came together to discuss the issue in 1997. These standards include protocols such as maintaining an adequate number of oral rehydration solutions and intravenous fluids, cleaning up camps, and creating proper isolated treatment areas⁹⁸ — an

application of modern medical techniques and technologies to these refugee settings.

Later, in the early 2000s, larger global initiatives became widespread, as organizations dedicated their time to expanding Internet access and connectivity to underserved portions of the world. For instance, the NGO Internews launched the Global Internet Policy Initiative in 2001,⁹⁹ which was formed largely in response to the mass migration of Afghan refugees following the Taliban incursions,¹⁰⁰ soon expanding at a rapid pace into other underserved regions.¹⁰¹ No longer was the data and information consolidated in these databases only accessible by larger organizations, but instead was also accessible by the refugees that relied and needed the information the most.

Beyond access to information from international and governmental organizations, new technologies emerged in the 2010s that enabled refugees to communicate with one another. For example, the refugee crisis caused by the ongoing Syrian Civil War, which began in 2011, has left

⁹⁷ “Public Health Impact of Rwandan Refugee Crisis: What Happened in Goma, Zaire, in July, 1994? Goma Epidemiology Group.” 1995. PubMed. February 11, 1995. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/7646638/>.

⁹⁸ Shannon, Kerry, Marisa Hast, Andrew S. Azman, Dominique Legros, Heather S. McKay, and Justin Lessler. 2019. “Cholera Prevention and Control in Refugee Settings: Successes and Continued Challenges.” *PLOS Neglected Tropical Diseases* 13 (6): e0007347. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pntd.0007347>.

⁹⁹ Internews. 2023. “History - Information Saves Lives | Internews.” Information Saves Lives | Internews. June 13, 2023. <https://internews.org/about/our-history/>.

¹⁰⁰ “USCR Country Report Afghanistan: Statistics on Refugees and Other Uprooted People, Jun 2001 - Afghanistan.” 2001. ReliefWeb. June 19, 2001. <https://reliefweb.int/report/afghanistan/uscr-country-report-afghanistan-statistics-refugees-and-other-uprooted-people-jun>.

¹⁰¹ “Global Internet Policy Initiative.” n.d. <https://www.internetpolicy.net/>.

millions displaced, for whom many rely on cellular devices to communicate with other refugees, support entities, and find necessary shelter and resources.¹⁰² This rise in telecommunication technology and the growing usage of cellular devices also led to the development and adoption of mobile money transfers, something that the World Food Programme did to help Nepalese people displaced by the 2015 earthquake.¹⁰³

In the late 2010s and early 2020s, when genomic research and biotechnology began to emerge, developments were being made to help people better fight off disease and improve refugees' quality of life. While certain genetically modified (GM) crops like golden rice — a man made rice variant with heightened levels of vitamin A and beta-carotene — had been in development as early as the 1990s, it was not until 2019 until nations like the Philippines finally approved the GM crop to be used for human consumption,¹⁰⁴

a move that has caused some major controversy¹⁰⁵ but that has also garnered a lot of optimism from scientists and humanitarian organizations.¹⁰⁶



*GM Golden Rice*¹⁰⁷

Additionally, other GM crops like drought-resistant maize crops have increased in prominence in many areas of sub-Saharan Africa ravaged by drought and civil war¹⁰⁸ during this time, providing much needed agricultural

¹⁰² “How Smartphones and Social Media Have Revolutionized Refugee Migration | UNHCR Blog.” n.d.
<https://www.unhcr.org/blogs/smartphones-revolutionized-refugee-migration/>.

¹⁰³ “History | World Food Programme.” n.d.
<https://www.wfp.org/history#:~:text=Created%20in%201961%20at%20the,the%20experiment%20proves%20its%20worth.>

¹⁰⁴ “Philippines Approves Golden Rice for Direct Use as Food and Feed, Or.” 2020, International Rice Research Institute. July 8, 2020.
<https://www.irri.org/news-and-events/news/philippines-approves-golden-rice-direct-use-food-and-feed-or-processing.>

¹⁰⁵ Slezak, Michael. 2013. “Militant Filipino Farmers Destroy Golden Rice GM Crop.” *New Scientist*, August 9, 2013.
<https://www.newscientist.com/article/dn24021-militant-filipino-farmers-destroy-golden-rice-gm-crop/>.

¹⁰⁶ Wu, Felicia, Justus Wesseler, David Zilberman, Robert M. Russell, Chen Chen, and Adrian Dubock. 2021. “Allow Golden Rice to Save Lives.” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* 118 (51).
<https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2120901118>.

¹⁰⁷ Robin McKie, “Block on GM Rice ‘Has Cost Millions of Lives and Led to Child Blindness,’” *The Guardian*, October 26, 2019,
<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/oct/26/gm-golden-rice-delay-cost-millions-of-lives-child-blindness.>

¹⁰⁸ Working Group on Climate Change and Development. n.d. “Africa – Up in Smoke?” *Newseconomics.Org*. Accessed August 18, 2023.
https://neweconomics.org/uploads/files/23309733e2566126a4_0tm6bontk.pdf.

stability to these impoverished regions. This new biotechnology is not only used for the production of GMOs; many vaccines for prevalent diseases like measles, mumps, hepatitis, malaria, etc, while commonly used in developed countries, became much more widely available to displaced communities during this time,¹⁰⁹ largely in part of new biotechnological developments.

The historical development of these technologies is far from a static phenomenon, and this process will only continue to develop at an increasingly rapid pace and intensify their impact on refugees and displaced people. Whether it be the emergence of augmented and virtual reality systems to garner empathy and support for refugees crossing the treacherous Mediterranean waters,¹¹⁰ the emergence of the blockchain with the potential to revolutionize the transfer of capital and act as a decentralized identification system,¹¹¹ or new improvements to remote

healthcare services,¹¹² all of these examples are only the beginning for these ever developing technologies, and the possible positives and negatives of these developments is something that must be grappled with thoroughly and effectively.

Past Actions

As the United Nations's main authority on international governance and policy regarding refugees and displaced people, the UNHCR has made numerous decisions and enacted various initiatives and programs dedicated to addressing the advent of new technologies for these displaced individuals. Yet, as these technologies rapidly develop, it is important to look back at previous actions taken by this committee and other entities of its scope as a starting point for future decisions and actions.

Starting as early as the 1980s, the UNHCR and other international agencies began using early computerized systems for collecting and managing refugee data, but the implementation of these technologies was not formalized until 2001, when the United Nations Information and Communication Technologies Task Force (UNICTTF) was established. This newly formed task force helped consolidate the data collected by these organizations and began establishing projects aimed at helping refugees and displaced

¹⁰⁹ McCullers, Jonathan A. 2008. "Advances in Vaccine Technology And Their Impact on Managed Care." PubMed Central (PMC). January 1, 2008. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2730064/>.

¹¹⁰ Streep, Abe. 2020. "One Startup's Quest to Save Refugees with Virtual Reality." *WIRED*, January 8, 2020. <https://www.wired.com/2016/07/ryot-darg-mooser-disaster-vr/>.

¹¹¹ Culbertson, Dimarogonas, Costello, and Lanna. 2019. *Crossing the Digital Divide: Applying Technology to the Global Refugee Crisis*. RAND Corporation.

¹¹² *Crossing the Digital Divide: Applying Technology to the Global Refugee Crisis*, p. xii

persons gain access to these new technologies,¹¹³ with the UNHCR soon incorporating many aspects of the task force into its humanitarian efforts. These technological developments and humanitarian efforts soon came to a head in the mid-2000s and the early 2010s, as mobile phones rose to prevalence in major human displacement events. This technology was used in the form of the Ushahidi social platform that connected Kenyans to one another and to information from international organizations like the UNHCR¹¹⁴ and then again to map out victims of the earthquake that devastated Haiti in 2010,¹¹⁵ all efforts aimed to enhance access to information, education, and communication for refugees. To expand on this technological growth, the UNHCR has enacted major programs and initiatives primarily dedicated to providing refugees with the necessary hardware and

¹¹³ “UN INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES (ICT) TASK FORCE LAUNCHED TODAY AT HEADQUARTERS | UN Press.” 2001. November 20, 2001.
<https://press.un.org/en/2001/dev2353.doc.htm>.

¹¹⁴ “Ushahidi - Inform Decisions & Empower Communities.” n.d.
<https://www.ushahidi.com/about/our-story/>.

¹¹⁵ Martin-Shields, Charles, ed. 2021. *Digitalization in Displacement Contexts: Technology and the Implementation of the Global Compact on Refugees. Reference Paper for the 70th Anniversary of the 1951 Refugee Convention*.
https://www.unhcr.org/people-forced-to-flee-book/wp-content/uploads/sites/137/2021/10/Charles-Martin-Shields_Digitalization-in-Displacement-Contexts-Technology-and-the-implementation-of-the-Global-Compact-on-Refugees.pdf.

connectivity to take advantage of technologies,¹¹⁶ such as the Digital Inclusion program¹¹⁷ that reflects their philosophy of viewing “connectivity as aid.”¹¹⁸

Based on this technology, the UNHCR has created specific software programs dedicated to aiding these refugees; more specifically, using them for biometric identification purposes. For instance, the agency developed and implemented the Kiosk Automated Services and Information (KASI) system in the Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya,¹¹⁹ which provides these people with much needed legal assistance and protection. The technology behind these identification systems has also been utilized as a significant means for

¹¹⁶ Evans, Conner, Andrew Parsons, Mariah Samadi, Jamie Seah, and Caroline Wallace. n.d. *Leveraging Humanitarian Technology to Assist Refugees. World House Student Fellows 2016-2017*.
<https://global.upenn.edu/sites/default/files/perry-world-house/HumanitarianTechnologyReport1.pdf>.

¹¹⁷ “Digital Inclusion Programme - UNHCR Innovation.” 2023. UNHCR Innovation. April 12, 2023.
<https://www.unhcr.org/innovation/digital-inclusion/>.

¹¹⁸ Marchant, Eleanor. 2020. “Internet Governance in Displacement.” *UNHCR: Digital Access, Inclusion and Participation*. UNHCR. Accessed August 18, 2023.
https://www.unhcr.org/innovation/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Internet-Governance-in-Displacement_WEB042020.pdf

¹¹⁹ “Continuous Registration in UNHCR Operations – UNHCR – Guidance on Registration and Identity Management.” n.d.
<https://www.unhcr.org/registration-guidance/chapter8/continuous-registration-in-unhcr-operations/>.

these refugees to receive and send funds¹²⁰ and improves their access to essential healthcare services and resources.

Beyond KASI, the UNHCR launched the larger Population Registration and Identity Management EcoSystem (PRIMES) in 2018¹²¹ in collaboration with other governmental agencies and NGOs to consolidate and manage information regarding refugee identification and UNHCR operations to an unprecedented degree.



*Boy in front of Water Fillers*¹²²

The UNHCR has also taken action in regard to the rising wave of biotechnology and improving healthcare and sanitation infrastructure in

refugee settings overall. Initiatives like Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS),¹²³ Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH),¹²⁴ HIV protection, amongst others are all major priorities for the agency, while experimental entries into genetic engineering like with potential water-borne hazards in Nepal¹²⁵ and a grown usage of telemedicine¹²⁶ programs and technology¹²⁷ have become significant pillars of the UNHCR's healthcare efforts.

¹²³ UNHCR - The UN Refugee Agency. n.d. "Mental Health and Psychosocial Support | UNHCR." UNHCR. <https://www.unhcr.org/mental-health-and-psychosocial-support>.

¹²⁴ "Water, Sanitation and Hygiene | UNHCR." UNHCR. <https://www.unhcr.org/what-we-do/protect-human-rights/public-health/water-sanitation-and-hygiene>.

¹²⁵ "Nepal: Bio-Engineering to Mitigate Water-Induced Hazards, Environment in UNHCR Newsletter, Vol. 5, Issue 2 | UNHCR." UNHCR. <https://www.unhcr.org/media/nepal-bio-engineering-mitigate-water-induced-hazards-environment-unhcr-newsletter-vol-5-issue>.

¹²⁶ 2018. "Using Telecommunications to Improve Clinical Healthcare in Refugee Camps - UNHCR Innovation." UNHCR Innovation. May 22, 2018. <http://www.unhcr.org/innovation/using-telecommunications-to-improve-clinical-healthcare-in-refugee-camps/>.

¹²⁷ Unhcr_Admin. 2018. "Using Telecommunications to Improve Clinical Healthcare in Refugee Camps - UNHCR Innovation." UNHCR Innovation. May 22, 2018. <https://www.unhcr.org/innovation/using-telecommunications-to-improve-clinical-healthcare-in-refugee-camps>.

¹²⁰ Hughes, Nick, and Susie Lonie. 2007. "M-PESA: Mobile Money for the 'Unbanked' Turning Cellphones into 24-Hour Tellers in Kenya." *Innovations* 2 (1-2): 63-81. <https://doi.org/10.1162/itgg.2007.2.1-2.63>.

¹²¹ UNHCR - The UN Refugee Agency. n.d. "Registration and Identity Management | UNHCR." UNHCR. <https://www.unhcr.org/what-we-do/protect-human-rights/protection/registration-and-identity-management>.

¹²² Andrew McConnell, *Boy in Front of Water Fillers*, UNHCR (United Nations, 2021), <https://www.unhcr.org/what-we-do/protect-human-rights/public-health/water-sanitation-and-hygiene>.

Possible Solutions

Considering the growing role of technology in assisting refugees, it is imperative that the UNHCR and other intergovernmental entities find ways to utilize new developing technologies for the benefit of displaced people while mitigating the potential downsides. The solutions presented below that are based on recent technological developments, along with their upsides and downsides, warrant further consideration and discussion. Please keep in mind, though, that these solutions are not exhaustive and are instead intended to serve as a basis point for further research and idea generation.

In regard to digital identity and biometric technology, its implementation has the possibility to streamline aid distribution, prevent fraud, and enhance the legal protection of vulnerable refugees. In effect, this technology can also facilitate access to essential services such as healthcare and education, as seen in refugee camps in Kenya¹²⁸ and Malaysia,¹²⁹ something

that would not be granted to them without this identification status. Despite these upsides, there are many reservations that must be considered — concerns over data privacy, security breaches, and potential misuse of biometric information are all significant issues that could arise.¹³⁰ Most of all, this technology can only be properly implemented and utilized when the existing technological and legal barriers are overcome, an entirely larger issue in its own right.

Along with this biometric technology, is the larger blockchain technological infrastructure that could raise some new exciting possibilities but could also be a Pandora's box of unforeseen consequences. Blockchain can enhance transparency, accountability, and efficiency in aid distribution and can provide a tamper-proof record of transactions, reducing corruption and ensuring that aid reaches intended recipients¹³¹ — as seen by its implementation in a Jordanian

¹²⁸ “Continuous Registration in UNHCR Operations – UNHCR – Guidance on Registration and Identity Management.” n.d. <https://www.unhcr.org/registration-guidance/chapter8/continuous-registration-in-unhcr-operations/>.

¹²⁹ Anis, Mazwin Nik. 2020. “Rohingya Refugees Have No Right or Basis to Make Demands, Says Home Minister.” *The Star*, April 30, 2020. <https://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2020/04/30/rohingya-refugees-have-no-right-or-basis-to-make-demands-says-home-minister>.

¹³⁰ Farraj, Achraf. n.d. “REFUGEES AND THE BIOMETRIC FUTURE: THE IMPACT OF BIOMETRICS ON REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS.” *COLUMBIA HUMAN RIGHTS LAW REVIEW* 42: 891–941.

<https://iow.eui.eu/wp-content/uploads/sites/18/2013/04/07-Rijpma-Background4-Refugees-and-Biometrics.pdf>.

¹³¹ Morrow, Monique J., Mark Kovarski, and Akram Alfawakheeri. n.d. “The Promise of Blockchain and Safe Identity Storage for Refugees.” *UNHCR* (blog). Accessed August 18, 2023. <https://www.unhcr.org/blogs/wp-content/uploads/sites/48/2018/04/fs.pdf>.

refugee camp.¹³² However, just like with other technological developments, integrating blockchain systems requires technical expertise and infrastructure. This new development also leads to regulatory challenges,¹³³ especially with the need for international cooperation in adopting blockchain standards may pose obstacles.

These new developments in communication infrastructure and digital identification also provide the capability to conduct medical services remotely, something known as telemedicine. Via telemedicine, medical professionals can provide medical consultations, diagnostics, and mental health support to refugees in remote and often dangerous areas,¹³⁴ thus improving the ease of access to healthcare and further reducing travel costs and expanding the geographic range that

these services can be provided.¹³⁵ However, similarly to the other technologies, telemedicine networks rely on stable internet connectivity and access to necessary medical equipment, something that may not always be available in every region around the world. Additionally, telemedicine is not always suitable for emergencies and is largely ineffective in situations that require physical examinations and contact. Telemedicine has seen some beneficial improvements in studies conducted in Bhutan¹³⁶ but more insight is definitely necessary.

When it comes to an issue of this nature and scale, one of the most significant solutions stems from the cooperative relationships that the UNHCR forms with corporate, government, and humanitarian entities. Previous partnerships with corporations like Microsoft,¹³⁷ NGOs like Relief

¹³²Juskalian, Russ. 2020. "Inside the Jordan Refugee Camp That Runs on Blockchain." *MIT Technology Review*, April 2, 2020. <https://www.technologyreview.com/2018/04/12/143410/inside-the-jordan-refugee-camp-that-runs-on-blockchain/>.

¹³³ Cheesman, Margie. 2022. "Blockchain for Refugees - Data & Society: Points." *Medium*, June 9, 2022. <https://points.datasociety.net/blockchain-for-refugees-a46b41594eee>.

¹³⁴ "Through Computerisation, UNHCR Helps Increase Access to Health Services along the Contact Line in Eastern Ukraine - UNHCR Ukraine." n.d. UNHCR Ukraine. <https://www.unhcr.org/ua/en/41297-unhcr-helps-increase-access-to-computerisation.html>.

¹³⁵ Talhouk, Reem, Sandra Mesmar, Anja Thieme, Madeline Balaam, Patrick Olivier, Chaza Akik, and Hala Ghattas. 2016. "Syrian Refugees and Digital Health in Lebanon." *CHI '16: Proceedings of the 2016 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems*, May. <https://doi.org/10.1145/2858036.2858331>.

¹³⁶ Gupta, P. P., Salina Khatoon, Neemesh Khatiwada, Abishekh Mishra, Narendra Bhatta, and Antoine Geissbuhler. 2022. "Implementation, Effectiveness and Monitoring of Telemedicine Program in Bhutanese Refugees Camp in Eastern Nepal." *Journal of Family Medicine and Primary Care* 11 (1): 256. https://doi.org/10.4103/jfmpc.jfmpc_1801_21.

¹³⁷ UNHCR US -. n.d. "Microsoft | UNHCR US." UNHCR US. <https://www.unhcr.org/us/about-unhcr/our-partners/private-sector/microsoft>.

International,¹³⁸ and financial support from various donor governments¹³⁹ have provided much needed financial and logistical support to the UNHCR. These partnerships are a significant means of promoting technological development for refugees. However, too great of a dependence on external partners may limit the entity's control over technology initiatives and render committees vulnerable to conflicts of interest.¹⁴⁰ Nevertheless, there is a fine balance that must be maintained when it comes to these delicate relationships.

A Business Model for Technology Investment¹⁴¹

¹³⁸ “UNHCR Global Consultations with Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) - List of Participants by Organization | UNHCR.” UNHCR.
<https://www.unhcr.org/media/unhcr-global-consultations-non-governmental-organizations-ngos-list-participants-organization>.

¹³⁹ “Donors | Global Focus.” n.d. Global Focus.
<https://reporting.unhcr.org/donors>.

¹⁴⁰ Bojicic-Dzelilovic, Vesna. 2019. *Aspiration or Ambivalence? The Frustrated Ambitions of Business Partnerships and the SDGs. United Nations at LSE Policy Brief*.
<https://www.lse.ac.uk/ideas/Assets/Documents/project-docs/un-at-lse/UN-Policy-Brief-July-2019.pdf>.

¹⁴¹ Shelly Culbertson and James Dimarogonas, *A Business Model Canvas for Technology Investment in Refugee Settings*, Rand (Rand Corporation), accessed August 21, 2023,
https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR4300/RR4322/RAND_RR4322.pdf.

Bloc Positions

North America & Europe

While it is not the case everywhere, North America and Europe are generally composed of WEIRD¹⁴² (Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, & Democratic) countries, and therefore these countries tend to use a lot of new technology. These areas also, due to being “WEIRD,” tend to receive a large number of refugees, with the most recent refugee influx resulting from the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine. As the refugees entered their new countries, automation and Big Data were used to match them with jobs at a rapid pace, which saw varying degrees of success.¹⁴³ North America and Europe are also very medically advanced and have been able to vaccinate the majority of their

¹⁴² The Daily Dish. 2010. “Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, and Democratic.” *Atlantic Monthly* (Boston, Mass.: 1993), October 4, 2010.
<https://www.theatlantic.com/daily-dish/archive/2010/10/western-educated-industrialized-rich-and-democratic/181667/>.

¹⁴³ “Here’s how automation has helped Ukrainian refugees get jobs and housing” *Fastcompany.com*. Accessed August 18, 2023.
<https://www.fastcompany.com/90855526/heres-how-automation-has-helped-ukrainian-refugees-get-jobs-and-housing>.

populations against the Coronavirus^{144,145}, as well as employ widespread GMOs in their food supply. However, there are considerable populations that resist both technologies. Due to their high technological advancement and vast breadth of resources, North American and European countries will be able to implement technology in refugee aid without much international support and will be very open to doing so due to their constant streams of refugees. While this does not apply to all North American and European countries, these regions will most likely be the most homogenous in their opinions on this issue of any region in the world.

East Asia & Oceania

East Asia and Oceania are very diverse in their governments, economic statuses, cultures, and technological advancements, so this region will most likely be divided on what to do on this and most other issues. There are a number of WEIRD countries, such as Australia, New Zealand, and arguably Japan and South Korea, that will most likely align with North America and Europe. However, there are also many developing countries, as well as several countries

with non-Western outlooks and perspectives. There are also many Muslim countries in Asia which may more closely align with those nations of the Middle East and Central Asia.

Within recent years, there have been several countries that have received a large number of refugees, such as Bangladesh, which has received over 700,000¹⁴⁶ Rohingya refugees fleeing from Myanmar. However, after the UNHCR shared the data of a large number of these refugees without their consent,¹⁴⁷ many of these refugees faced discrimination and had a difficult time getting jobs. Bangladesh, as with many other countries in East Asia, is very densely populated, and therefore jobs are in high demand, with the Coronavirus only worsening unemployment.¹⁴⁸ Therefore, these countries may favor the use of Big Data to improve background checks, as this could help them filter for people who could easily get jobs. As refugees have poured into some countries in Asia, they have also been leaving

¹⁴⁴“US Coronavirus Vaccine Tracker.” 2023. USAFacts. August 16, 2023. <https://usafacts.org/visualizations/covid-vaccine-tracker-states>.”

¹⁴⁵“COVID-19 Vaccine Tracker.” n.d. Europa.Eu. Accessed August 18, 2023. <https://vaccinetracker.ecdc.europa.eu/public/extensions/COVID-19/vaccine-tracker.html>.

¹⁴⁶ Reid, Kathryn. 2023. “Rohingya Refugee Crisis: Facts, FAQs, and How to Help.” World Vision. March 25, 2023. <https://www.worldvision.org/refugees-news-stories/rohingya-refugees-bangladesh-facts>.

¹⁴⁷ Fakhri, Lama. 2021. “UN Shared Rohingya Data without Informed Consent.” Human Rights Watch. June 15, 2021. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/06/15/un-shared-rohingya-data-without-informed-consent>.

¹⁴⁸ “3.6m to Stay Unemployed in 2022: ILO.” n.d. New Age | The Most Popular Outspoken English Daily in Bangladesh. Accessed August 18, 2023. <https://www.newagebd.net/article/160264/36m-to-stay-unemployed-in-2022-ilo>.

others, such as Afghanistan and Myanmar, usually due to persecution by the governments.¹⁴⁹

In the case of Afghanistan, the overthrown Islamic Republic of Afghanistan still holds the UN seat,¹⁵⁰ and since it no longer manages its own country's economy, it will most likely want to help refugees by any means necessary, thereby being very supportive of most technological measures to offer support. Myanmar and countries like it may be less supportive, though, especially if it is demanded that they give any support to the people fleeing their lands. There are also many countries in Asia that are open to using technology to help improve their own infrastructures. However, they will need financial assistance to provide food and medical care to refugees entering their countries and will therefore need to be more supportive of using international funds such as the IMF. Overall, Asia & Oceania is perhaps the most diverse area in opinions on the application of technology in specific refugee instances, and refugee crises in general.

Middle East & Central Asia

While there are notable exceptions such as Israel, Armenia, and Lebanon, most countries in the Middle East and Central Asia are homogeneously Muslim and may share similar opinions on most topics. Due to the Syrian Civil War, over six million¹⁵¹ refugees have poured into the neighboring Middle Eastern countries, who now have been dealing with this crisis for years. With these huge numbers of refugees, these countries have been forced to use Big Data to keep track of them. For example, in Jordan, Syrian refugees are issued SIM (Subscriber Identity Module) cards for their mobile phones to protect their identity and help them communicate with family still in Syria.¹⁵² In fact, mobile phones have become one of the most important ways Syrian refugees keep their independence. There has, however, been the problem of getting refugees to adopt new technologies, as many see them as untrustworthy. This is partly one of the reasons why increasing education within refugee camps is so important since it may be a way to alleviate this reluctance. Technology has also been used to help refugees

¹⁴⁹ July. n.d. "Afghanistan Refugee Crisis Explained." Unrefugees.org. Accessed August 18, 2023.
<https://www.unrefugees.org/news/afghanistan-refugee-crisis-explained/>.

¹⁵⁰ Roth, Richard, and Caitlin Hu. 2021. "Taliban Request Representation at the United Nations, Kicking off Credentials Battle." *CNN*, September 21, 2021.
<https://www.cnn.com/2021/09/21/world/taliban-unga-intl/index.html>.

¹⁵¹ Todd, Zoe. 2019. "By the Numbers: Syrian Refugees around the World." Frontline PBS. November 19, 2019.
<https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/article/numbers-syrian-refugees-around-world/>.

¹⁵² Marr, Bernard. 2015. "Big Data, Technology and the Middle East Refugee Crisis." *Forbes*. October 15, 2015.
<https://www.forbes.com/sites/bernardmarr/2015/10/15/big-data-technology-and-the-middle-east-refugee-crisis/?sh=5376ffc6210d>.

leave refugee camps and survive on their own, giving them funds in the forms of debit cards instead of direct goods in the camps.¹⁵³

Many countries of the Middle East have had to rely on international funds such as the IMF¹⁵⁴ to provide for the refugees they host, which became especially important in the delivery of COVID-19 vaccines. In general, the Middle East has had the most experience of any region with refugee crises and has previously utilized technology to give refugees independence and keep track of them. However, funds to support them have been an issue, and refugees must be educated on the benefits of technology, as well as how to use it.

Africa

Though they have not had as much experience with refugees, most North African countries are Muslim and may generally align with Middle Eastern countries. In Sub-Saharan Africa, however, there has been a great resistance to the adoption of technology, especially biotechnology,

due to fears that its long-term effects are unknown and possibly dangerous. For example, Angola has turned away 19,000 tons of genetically modified corn during a food shortage in 2004,¹⁵⁵ and many other African countries have outright placed bans on GMO food. On the matter of computers and Big Data, Africa has not been as reluctant and has learned to use online learning to provide education to refugees in areas where schools are overcrowded or underfunded.¹⁵⁶ Also, as many countries in Africa are impoverished, African countries will most likely support using international funds to pay for technology that refugees can utilize to their benefit. In general, Africa tends to be reluctant to use technology, especially biotechnology, to help refugees, and the technology they support the most for refugees is computers that are used in education and communication.

Central & South America

Central and South America have faced a number of refugee crises in recent years, most significantly those fleeing drug cartels and corruption in the

¹⁵³ Pozniak, Helena. 2020. "Refugees and Technology: On a Journey of Self-Discovery." Theiet.org. February 17, 2020. <https://eandt.theiet.org/content/articles/2020/02/refugees-and-technology-a-journey-of-self-discovery/>.

¹⁵⁴ "Vaccinating Refugees: Lessons from the Inclusive Lebanon Vaccine Roll-out Experience." 2021. World Bank. World Bank Group. June 21, 2021. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2021/06/18/vaccinating-refugees-lessons-from-the-inclusive-lebanon-vaccine-roll-out-experience>.

¹⁵⁵ Wines, Michael. 2004. "Angola's Plan to Turn Away Altered Food Imperils Aid." *The New York Times*, March 30, 2004. <https://www.nytimes.com/2004/03/30/world/angola-s-plan-to-turn-away-altered-food-imperils-aid.html>.

¹⁵⁶ "Innovation transforms education for refugee students in Africa" *Unhcr.org*. Accessed August 18, 2023b. <https://www.unhcr.org/news/stories/innovation-transforms-education-refugee-students-africa>.

Northern Triangle (El Salvador, Guatemala, & Honduras)¹⁵⁷ and those fleeing the economic downturn in Venezuela.¹⁵⁸ Between these two crises, there have been over seven million refugees.¹⁵⁹ The majority have moved both North and South, with countries such as Mexico and Bolivia bearing much of the crisis. Due to the huge number of refugees in such a short time, large sums of money have been needed to deal with the crisis, with demand for COVID-19 vaccines only exacerbating the problem.¹⁶⁰ Big Data and cheap GMO food could be used to alleviate these costs, and Central and South American countries, being big agricultural centers, have been especially supportive of GMOs. However, there has been growing resistance to the crops in these areas as well, largely due to concerns over long-term effects on

human and environmental health.¹⁶¹ Central and South American countries, as well as the United States, will also support streamlined background checks to help alleviate concerns about drug and human traffickers from the Northern Triangle taking advantage of the refugee crisis to help with their smuggling. Overall, Central and South America have faced rather sudden refugee crises, and have been scrambling to deal with them, which will potentially incentivize them to want to address the problem. Technology will generally be supported by them to ensure the refugees' safety and the security of countries accepting them.

¹⁵⁷ Thelwell, Kim. 2020. "What Is the Northern Triangle?" The Borgen Project. March 5, 2020. <https://borgenproject.org/what-is-the-northern-triangle/>.

¹⁵⁸ Abouzeid, Rania. 2021. "Millions of Venezuelans Are Fleeing to the South—through South America's 'Poetic Heart.'" *National Geographic*, October 4, 2021. <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/culture/article/millions-of-venezuelans-are-fleeing-to-the-south-through-south-americas-poetic-heart>.

¹⁵⁹ Roy, Diana. 2015. "Central America's Turbulent Northern Triangle." Council on Foreign Relations. November 23, 2015. <https://www.cfr.org/background/central-america-s-turbulent-northern-triangle>.

¹⁶⁰ "\$1.79 Billion Needed to Help Venezuelan Refugees and Migrants." 2021. UN News. December 9, 2021. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/12/1107522>.

¹⁶¹ Tegel, Simeon. 2013. "In Latin America, a Growing Backlash against Genetically Modified Food." The World from PRX. January 2, 2013. <https://theworld.org/stories/2013-01-02/latin-america-growing-backlash-against-genetically-modified-food>.

Glossary

Genetically-Modified Organism (GMO): An organism that has been intentionally genetically modified by humans, generally excluding selective breeding.

Beta-Carotene: A red-colored chemical that is metabolized by the body into vitamin A, an essential vitamin for human life. It is commonly inserted into GMOs, such as golden rice, for use in areas with vitamin A deficiency.

Big Data: Huge data networks unable to be processed by humans, instead requiring machines with huge computing power to interpret them.

Digitalization: The increased reliance of the world on digital technology.

Telecommunications: Communication by electrical systems. Examples of telecommunications include telephone calls, text messages, and emails.

Biotechnology: Technology based in biological sciences. Examples of biotechnology include GMOs, vaccines, and drugs.

Maize: A synonym of corn.

Augmented Reality (AR): A version of reality modified by digital systems. Pokemon Go is an example of augmented reality.

Virtual Reality (VR): A reality entirely created by digital systems. Google cardboard is an example of how this technology has been applied to education.

Blockchain: A large network of data created and shared publicly. This is most commonly used in cryptocurrencies, which use blockchains to keep track of their owners.

Connectivity: Capacity for an electrical platform to connect with others.

Biometrics: Measurement of the characteristics of a human body. These can include fingerprints, blood type, and facial structure, and are often used in big data.

Telemedicine: Medicinal programs that primarily use telecommunications. This is often used to deliver healthcare services to remote and/or dangerous areas.

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs): An organization not affiliated with any state's government. Examples of NGOs include Doctors Without Borders, the Salvation Army, and Oxfam. The United Nations is not an NGO, and rather an IGO, which is an intergovernmental organization.

WEIRD (Acronym): As an acronym, WEIRD means Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, and Democratic. Examples of WEIRD states include the United States, Australia, and France.



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