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Nowhere People

Whether a result of conflict, shifting borders or the manipulation of the laws and tools used to administer modern day society, stateless people are unwanted and unwelcome and find themselves excluded from society by forces beyond their control. Not only are they some of the most vulnerable and marginalised people in the world but they are also some of the most invisible as well.

Exposing the faces and the real-life stories and struggles of the stateless provides invaluable documentary evidence of the human consequences of their complex and often misunderstood situations. More importantly, it adds a visual and human dimension to the legal, human rights and humanitarian communities in their efforts to combat statelessness and give a voice to people who in most cases have none.

Photographs by Greg Constantine. Part of the ongoing project: Nowhere People.

Greg Constantine (greg@gregconstantine.com) is an award-winning photojournalist based in Southeast Asia. Since early 2006, he has been working on an ongoing, long-term project called Nowhere People, which documents the struggles of stateless people around the world. www.gregconstantine.com

1. Nubian elders in Kenya: "Politics and access to resources, including employment, are all based on ethnic computations and even the allocation of resources for development for communities: schools and education, for example. All of that is based on being clearly identified as part of the Kenyan community. To feel always discriminated against or to be reminded that you came from Sudan is not a very good thing for young people growing up who want to feel that they actually belong to this country."
2. Bohje, a Dalit man in southern Nepal, carries firewood in Dhodhana to sell in the markets of Lahan. "Without citizenship, I cannot have a passport. Without a passport, I cannot travel outside of Nepal and work in Qatar, UAE or Malaysia, like many other people from Nepal. I cannot send money home to help my family."
3. Young Filipino boys push around wooden carts in Safma fish market in Kota Kinabalu. Up to 30,000 children in Sabah, Malaysia, are stateless. Many have no form of identification, which makes them ineligible for admission to Malaysian schools. Without access to an education, many children are thrown into the workforce at a young age.
4. A Dalit man and his grandson rest in the morning. The man's family has lived in the Terai region of Nepal for over five generations yet he is still without Nepalese citizenship.
5. Bihari youth gather at a rally in Talab Camp in Dhaka, Bangladesh. Bihari across the country consider Bangladesh their home and feel it is essential they are recognised and provided with the rights granted to all Bangladeshi citizens.
6. Dalit women in a village in southern Nepal. None of the women in the village have Nepali citizenship. "Without citizenship we can't take any cases to court that deal with women's rights and violence against women. Here in Nepal, women are lower than second-class people. If we have citizenship, then we can fight to get our rights. If we have citizenship, then we are proud to be Nepali, but we don't have citizenship and I feel we are not Nepali."
7. The village where this Dalit woman and child live was too remote for Nepal's mobile citizenship unit to visit in 2007. Many people in the village who later went into town to register were turned away by local officials. None of the women in the village have Nepalese citizenship and none of the children have birth certificates.
8. A slum in Telipok, 40 kilometres outside of Kota Kinabalu in Sabah, Malaysia, is filled with stateless children. It is a struggle to get documents. Those children who possess documents are able to attend private schools and some public primary-level schools. Those who do not have documents are shut out of most public programmes.
9. After having their land seized and unable to travel outside of their town to find work, these men felt they had no choice but to leave Burma for Bangladesh. "Since we don't have nationality, we don't have any right to call any land our home. We can't live in peace because we don't have nationality. In Burma, they say we are from Bangladesh. When we come to Bangladesh, they say we are from Burma. People view us as if we don't exist." Zafar, 30
10. A 60-year-old man in Pat Godam Camp in the town of Mymensingh, Bangladesh, holds a photo of himself at the age of 19. "My family had 41 acres of land. We moved into the camp when the Bangladesh government seized it from us. In 1971, everything was taken from us."