

# Comprehensive Report: School Outreach Program on Birth Registration and Citizenship Certificate

नागरिकताबाट प्रभावित व्यक्तिहरुको सञ्जाल  
नेपाल



Citizenship Affected People's Network  
Nepal

**Date: 3<sup>rd</sup> November, 2023**

## **A. Introduction**

In Nepal, a child's legal identity is determined only by a birth registration certificate and/or Minor Identity Card issued by the local registrar or Chief District Officer respectively. An individual is entitled to an actual citizenship certificate only after reaching the age of sixteen years and even then, they need to fulfil certain conditions under the Citizenship Act to acquire the citizenship. Thus, until the age of 16, a child is entitled to enjoy its fundamental human rights and child rights based on their birth registration certificate and Minor Identity card.

The acquisition of birth registration in Nepal is followed by numerous procedural and administrative challenges. More specifically, a child born through a single mother has to go through a cumbersome process and administrative challenges. Additionally, many individuals and communities in Nepal continue to take civil registration such as birth registration as optional and do not consider it significant to make an application until they are asked for it while exercising any rights or services.

To address the above-mentioned problems, the Citizenship Affected People's Network (CAPN) in partnership with the Institute of Statelessness and Social Inclusion (ISI) and in collaboration with Nationality for All (NFA) under the project head "*Securing Birth Certificate, Ensuring Education*", implemented a school outreach programs for grades 7 and 8 students of 5 different schools in Kathmandu, Lalitpur and Bhaktapur districts. The primary objective of the program was to raise awareness among students regarding the significance of these rights, elucidate their current status, and elucidate the application process.

## **B. Background**

Nepal's birth registration rates have significantly increased from 35% in 2006 to 77% in 2019 for children under five. SDG 16.9 aims for universal legal identification by 2030, and the National Planning Commission acknowledges birth registration's importance in this goal. Yet, reaching 100% registration remains a challenge.

CAPN, in its quest to secure legal identity for Nepali people, has identified key factors hindering this goal. These include a lack of awareness about birth registration rights and duties, but the major obstacle lies in gaps within existing laws and their enforcement. For example, Section 20(2) of the National ID and Civil Registration Act, 2019, which governs birth registration, prohibits the registration of children born to parents without citizenship. This conflicts with the fundamental right of all children to be registered and may potentially lead to statelessness.

The Government of Nepal has expressed its commitment towards birth registration through international commitments, the Constitution, and various legislation. Nepal has ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), The Child Rights Convention (CRC), and the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) that underline mandatory birth registration and protects the birth registration right of every child. However, the national laws continue to create barriers to universal birth registration.

Given the legal and administrative obstacles, CAPN recognizes the importance of educating children about their fundamental right to birth registration. It's crucial for children to understand its impact on education and to empathize with others facing this challenge. These informed children will grow into adults who shape society and its values, making it vital for them to be aware of their registration rights and those of all children.

Recognizing this, CAPN has created a child-friendly school program to simplify the topics of legal identity, birth registration, statelessness, and their effects engagingly and enjoyably. CAPN has partnered with the international organization Institute on Statelessness and Inclusion to mark November as Childhood Statelessness and Education Awareness Month. The school outreach program may involve children showcasing their understanding or interest in the issue through creative works like art and poems during this special month.

### **C. Approaches and Achievements**

The school outreach program strengthened the capacity of 187 students (94 females, 93 males) from 5 different schools. CAPN's outreach team, comprising 4 members; Executive Director Ms. Deepti Gurung, Director of Programs Advocate Dechen Lama, Legal Aid and Advocacy Head Advocate Neha Gurung, along with the office assistant Miss Sangita Karki led the school outreach.

The school's outreach program had the following goals:

- To aware students about the citizenship rights of mothers and children
- To aware students about challenges faced by children worldwide regarding identity and documentation
- Develop empathy and deeper understanding among students about this issue
- Fostering awareness about the importance of equal citizenship rights and rights of all children

The school's outreach program had the following approaches:

- **Child-friendly Approach:** Children's story books, stories, art, and games will be used to explain relevant topics.
- **The best interest of the child:** Sessions are planned with consideration to the best interest of the child.
- **Safe Space:** A safe environment will be created where students can openly share their thoughts and participate freely. Their inquisitiveness will be encouraged and appreciated.

Target Group:

The school outreach program's targeted audience was:

- Grade 7 and Grade 8
- Duration: 4 hours

## **D. Program Activities**

### **1. Game Activity: Entry Pass Challenge**

To initiate engagement and provide an experiential understanding of citizenship and statelessness, a unique game activity was organized. Each student received a numbered entry pass, except for 10 students who received blank entry passes.

These blank passes initially excluded them from entering the classroom. However, these students were eventually allowed in after successfully answering questions related to general knowledge. This activity aimed to convey the notion of being 'excluded' as a stateless person and ignite a sense of empathy among students.

### **2. Introduction Session**

Following the game activity, organizers introduced themselves to the students and explained the significance of the day's program. To create a sense of community, students were encouraged to imagine the creation of their own country, Bermuda. This interactive session aimed to foster an understanding of citizenship by allowing the students to 'build' a nation together.

### **3. Video Presentation**

Two impactful videos were shown to students to illustrate key concepts related to human rights and the challenges faced by stateless individuals. The first video was dedicated to highlighting the importance of human rights, while the second shed light on the struggles faced by stateless people. A question-answer session followed each video presentation, enabling students to clarify their doubts and gain a deeper insight into these critical topics.

### **4. Storytelling Session**

In a bid to make the topics more relatable, students were presented with compelling stories about citizenship and statelessness from the storybook 'The Girl Who Lost Her Country'. Out of the numerous stories, the stories from three countries - the Dominican Republic, Cote D' Ivor, and Malaysia - were read out by Advocate Neha Advocate Dechen, and Ms. Sangita. Before launching into the storytelling session organizers inquired whether the students had read the stories provided earlier (handouts were provided before the program day) and invited some students to summarize their understanding.

This session aimed to foster empathy and facilitate a deeper understanding of the challenges associated with citizenship and statelessness. Subsequently, a question-answer session was conducted to encourage students to actively engage with the material.

## **5. Lunch Break**

The program schedule included a 30-minute lunch break, during which students had the opportunity to relax and recharge before the afternoon session.

## **6. Interactive Discussion: Blank Entry Pass Interpretation**

Upon resuming the program, students who had initially received blank entry passes were asked to share their feelings and thoughts regarding their exclusion. This reflective activity allowed these students to express feelings of sadness, discrimination, and confusion, providing valuable insights into the emotional impact of statelessness. It was then revealed to them that the blank entry passes symbolized statelessness, further emphasizing the importance of the topic. The students were subsequently educated about statelessness, its implications, and its relevance in the real world.

## **7. Presentation on Birth Registration Rights**

Ms. Deepti Gurung delivered an informative presentation on birth registration rights, providing students with a comprehensive understanding of the legal implications and administrative procedures attached to it. This session was designed to empower students with knowledge about the process of birth registration, making them aware of their rights and responsibilities. A brief question-and-answer session followed the presentation, enabling students to seek clarification and engage in discussions about birth registration.

## **8. Child Rights Discussion**

Ms. Neha Gurung and Ms. Dechen Lama introduced students to the Child Rights Convention, emphasizing the importance of recognizing and upholding the rights of every child. The students actively participated in a discussion about their rights, and these rights were noted on a chart paper as a visual representation of their commitment. Several students were selected as representatives to sign the chart paper, signifying their pledge to uphold these fundamental rights.

## **9. Letter and Question Writing Activity**

Students were encouraged to express their thoughts and questions related to the stories they had heard earlier by writing letters to Neha. This creative activity allowed students to articulate their understanding of the stories and seek further clarification on the topics discussed during the program.

## **10. Distribution of Storybooks and Bookmarks**

To conclude the program on a positive note, storybooks, and bookmarks were distributed to all participants. These materials served as tangible reminders of the information shared during the outreach program, encouraging continued reflection and learning.

## 11. Art Competition Briefing

Before concluding the program, students and teachers were informed about an upcoming art competition. This announcement aimed to inspire students to further explore and express their understanding of citizenship and birth registration through artistic means.

### E. Some Letters and Questions sent to the different characters of the book “Girl Who Lost Her Country” by the children of different schools:

**Khushi:** Dear Neha, I know that you have suffered a lot. It must be a hard time for you. Hope you are okay, everything will be fine. Never lose your hope. How was your journey? How many friends have you made? Hope you have learned a lot about the documentation. I hope you had a great journey with lots of memories. It will be the most beautiful part of your life.

**Pranita Parajuli:** It is just unfair that you have to go through all of that simply because of a lack of a sheet of paper. Didn't it feel unfair when you weren't allowed into the school? Did you want to raise awareness about it? Was your adventure fun? I hope you answer my questions as soon as possible.

**Anonymous:** How did you feel when you did not have your birth certificate and citizenship? Why don't you have one? What were the problems you faced when you did not have your birth certificate? Why should we have our birth certificate and why is it important for a person? How many other countries have this kind of problem?

**Roshani Khadka:** Dear Neha, Hello! You have faced many problems due to birth registration. How did you feel when you were not able to study? What kind of problems did you face due to this? Have you ever felt that all this is your fault or felt that this is not your fault? Did you ever feel that this is your parent's fault? What kind of problems did you find people from other countries facing? How did you feel when you finally had your citizenship? --- Can I also become a member of your organization? How did you handle all the problems? Did you have to face problems due to helping other people who are facing similar issues?

**Aayusha Tamang:** Dear Neha, How did you feel when they did not allow your sister to take the exam? How many countries did you travel to?

**Tekendra:** Dear Neha, I read your story. I want to know what knowledge did you gain during your journey. How many friends did you make on your journey?

**Supriya Acharya:** Dear Neha, What did you feel when you did not have a birth certificate? If your parents had committed suicide, then what would you do to receive your birth certificate and citizenship? If your parents were stateless, then you would also be stateless right? What problems did you face when people discriminated against you just for the lack of a birth certificate? How do you feel when the ward chairperson tells you that you cannot have citizenship because you do not have a birth certificate?

**Ruchita Koirala:** Dear Neha, How do you feel when you do not have a birth certificate? Is it easy to deal with other people? Do you find it easy or difficult to make friends? How many countries did you visit? Did you at any point feel that all this was happening because of your parents? What were the problems you had to face when you did not have a birth certificate or citizenship?

**Angelina Wagle:** How did you feel when you were denied your citizenship certificates? How many friends did you make while traveling to different countries? What did you have to listen to when you did not have your citizenship certificate?

**Shital Rai:** Dear Neha, I know you are suffering from a difficult situation due to a lack of a birth certificate. And that you traveled to many countries to seek justice. I understand how must have felt. But I have some questions on my mind: How did you feel when no one listened to you? What problems did you face due to the lack of certificates? Did your school Principal or Ward Chairperson extend any help? What thoughts crossed your mind? You traveled to many countries to understand about birth registration and nationality, did you find any differences between Nepal and other countries regarding nationality laws and birth certificates? What were the differences in terms of society and government of Nepal and other countries?

**Dolma Moktan:** Dear Neha, I know you have faced many problems, but you are strong and you are good. Nepal does have many problems! How did you feel when you did not have citizenship?

After you acquired your citizenship, did you also fight for other children's rights who were just like you? (Ganisha Tamang)

Can you tolerate the pain that you went through? (Aayush Karki)

Do you think it was right how other people behaved with you without your birth registration and you could not do anything about it? (Rijan Nagarkoti)

How does it feel like to grow up without your father? (Sweata Rai)

How did you feel when you were deprived of your education? (Anisha Nagarkoti)

We are already born but why does just a piece of paper decide that we are born? (Akritti Raut)

Is this discrimination only in Nepal or in other countries too? (Prasiddha)

Why a simple piece of paper can ruin your whole life and what is the cause of this? (Yeshi Gurung)

How does it make you feel without having a birth certificate and how can you live through your life without the simplest right? (Kashvi Khatiwada)

What are your problems without having birth registration and how did you cope? (anonymous)

What would you do if you got your nationality? (Jigme Norbu)

What can we do to help you all get your nationality back? (Manish Pariyar)

Is it that hard to live to be stateless? (Sweta Yonzan)

What do you think about the rules made by the government? (Migma Ghale)

Have you ever wanted to know about your biological parents? (Dawa Dolma)

Why the children whose parents do not have citizenship do not get their Birth Registration?

What is the reason that 40% of children from Nepal do not have their birth registration?

Dear Neha, Can we become friends? I have faced so many troubles because I also don't have my father, why do we not get any type of support?

Dear Neha, Can you please visit my country Nepal? I would love to share my problems with you in person, maybe it could also help you.

What problems are you facing to get your birth registration?

## **F. Conclusion**

The Citizenship and Birth Registration Outreach at 5 different Schools served as a dynamic platform for educating grade 7 and 8 students about their citizenship and birth registration rights. By incorporating engaging activities, insightful discussions, and real-life scenarios, together with stories from the book 'The Girl Who Lost Her Country', the program successfully enhanced students' understanding of these crucial rights and their implications.

Seeing and hearing the curiosity and questions procreated by a child's brain was eye-opening. The letter along with questions that they wrote to the characters of the book was compassionate, kind, altruistic, and smart. It depicts that everychild is special, kind, and capable of doing anything. They are just left behind because of the cumbersome procedures and ambiguous laws relating to legal identity and birth registration in Nepal.

The program concluded with a group photo capturing the smiling faces of the organizing team, students, and teachers. This collective image symbolized the unity and commitment demonstrated by all participants toward promoting awareness and ensuring that every child's right to citizenship and birth registration is acknowledged and upheld.



## G. Annexes

### Annex I

#### Program Schedule

Time	Activity	Conducted by	Remarks
9:00 am 9:15 am	Collect numbers at the door and find your place ( game of exclusion)	organizers	<p>Around 10% of students will receive numbers at the gate but won't find their allocated seats. They will be told to stand by so that if we have extra seats only then they will be accommodated.</p> <p>Numbers will be placed on their tables as well but some seats won't have any numbers.</p> <p>Later once students who numbers have matched finds their place, we will ask them few simple funny questions and only will they be allowed to choose their place after answering them correctly. (Remember this activity and we will come back to it after a while)</p>
9:15 to 9 :25	First video	Organizer	Check if they understood and ask few questions
9:30 to 9:40	Second video	Organizer	Referring to their homework ask questions
9:40 to 10: 40	Story from the book  1. Dominican Republic 2. Cote d'Ivoire 3. Malaysia	Students will read stories  Students are encouraged to share their stories if they wish.	
10:40 to 10:50	Questions and Answer related to the stories	Organizers	
10:50 to 11:00	Break		

11:00 to 12:00	Write a letter to a stateless person- group work	Organizer	Display few pointers on the screen
12:00 to 1:00	Lunch Break		
1:00 to 1:15	discussion on how students felt when they entered the hall and didn't find their seats	Organizer	
1:15 to 1: 25	Presentation		
1:25 to 1:45	Write a letter to the government for requesting Regulations (नियमावली) which is pending because of which many children are still waiting to be citizens.		Collect the letters from students
1:45 to 2:00	Word of thanks and book distribution		End of the program

## Annex II

### Pictures from School Outreach



### Samata School



### Kitini Higher Secondary School



**Kathmandu World School**



**Vidyasagar School**

**Boudha Secondary English School**



**Annex III**

**Layout of the Book**

**Annex IV**

**Flyer**









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