



## **Furthering the spirit of the 1961 Statelessness Convention Statement on 60th Anniversary of Statelessness Convention**

August 30th, 2021

In 2021, the world celebrates the 60th anniversary of the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, an important international standard which has improved the lives of many persons, especially children, who would otherwise have faced statelessness and all the difficulties this status implies. However, in Myanmar, while we will never give up hope there is not much to celebrate at present.

Myanmar holds one of the largest population of stateless persons and persons at risk of statelessness worldwide. Besides the well-known difficulties of the Rohingya in Rakhine State, access to civil documentation is –due to an inadequate legal framework based in the 1982 Citizenship Law, arbitrariness, corruption and discriminatory practices– actually difficult for almost everyone and much harder for ethnic and religious minorities.

Access to rights in Myanmar has gotten much worse for everyone. The state of legal identity rights was already precarious before the Covid19 pandemic and the February 2021 coup d'etat. The situation is now untenable for thousands of individuals and families who cannot access basic human rights due to their lack of legal and civil documentation and citizenship.

Despite facing this harsh and unpredictable reality, the Smile Foundation will continue to work with vulnerable communities at all levels, to build capacities and to advocate to help ensure that they are able to access civil documentation and citizenship and hence enjoy the human rights they are entitled to in dignity and equality.

We will spare no efforts and continue to pursue the goals of the 1961 Convention through our activities and we will further promote its spirit of equality and protection for every human being.