No Identity, no protection

Addressing documentation gaps to combat modern slavery

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AGENDA

- About the Freedom Fund
- No identity, no protection: An overview of the research
- Impact of being undocumented
- A call for action: promising policy interventions

The Freedom Fund

The Freedom Fund is a global fund with the sole aim of helping end modern slavery. We partner with grassroots organisations and communities on the frontlines of modern slavery. Standing in solidarity with our partners, we aim to dismantle the local and global systems that create the conditions for modern slavery to exist.

WHERE WE WORK



Overview of the research: No identity, no protection

Global evidence review

The scale of the problem

- The importance of being documented is reflected in SDG 16.9, which calls on governments to “provide legal identity for all including free birth registrations” by 2030.
- In 2021, the World Bank estimated that one in nine (approximately 850 million) people around the world lacked official proof of their identity.
- At the same time, nearly 50 million people, including more than 12 million children, are estimated to be in situations of modern slavery globally.



Overview of the research: No identity, no protection

Methodology

Data collection

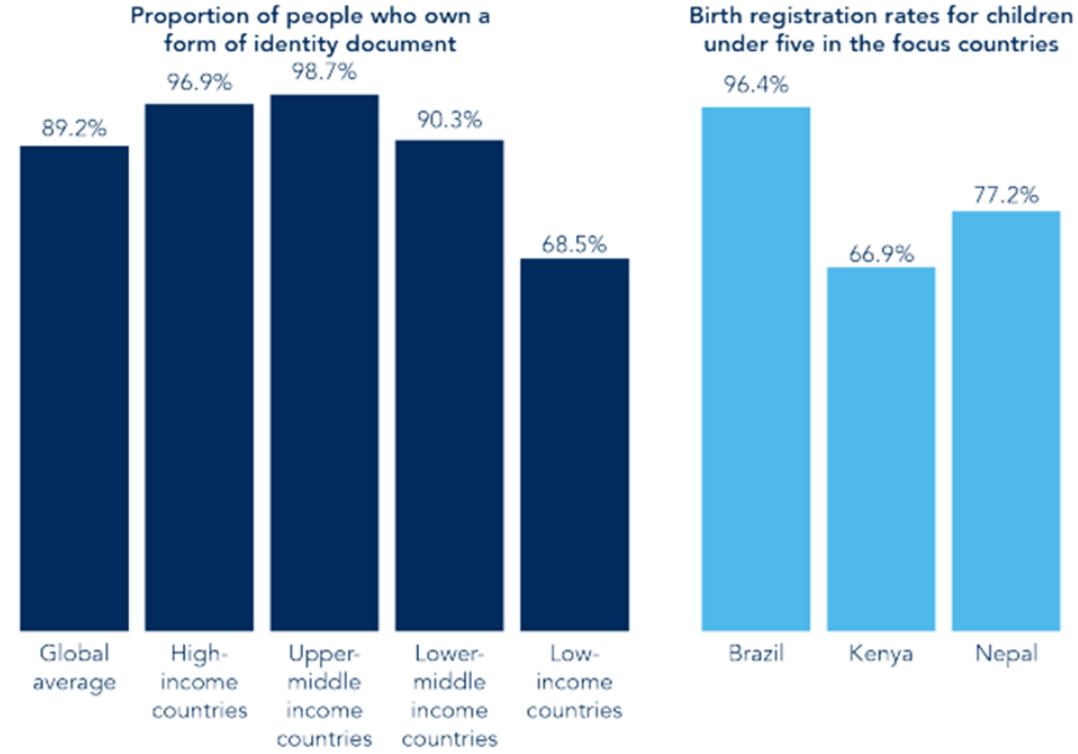
A total of 173 interviews were completed in the three focus countries – Brazil, Kenya and Nepal:

- 20 Global (UN, international financial orgs, civil society, academia)
- 56 Brazil
- 39 Kenya
- 56 Nepal

Validation workshops

Validation and engagement workshops were held in each of the focus countries.

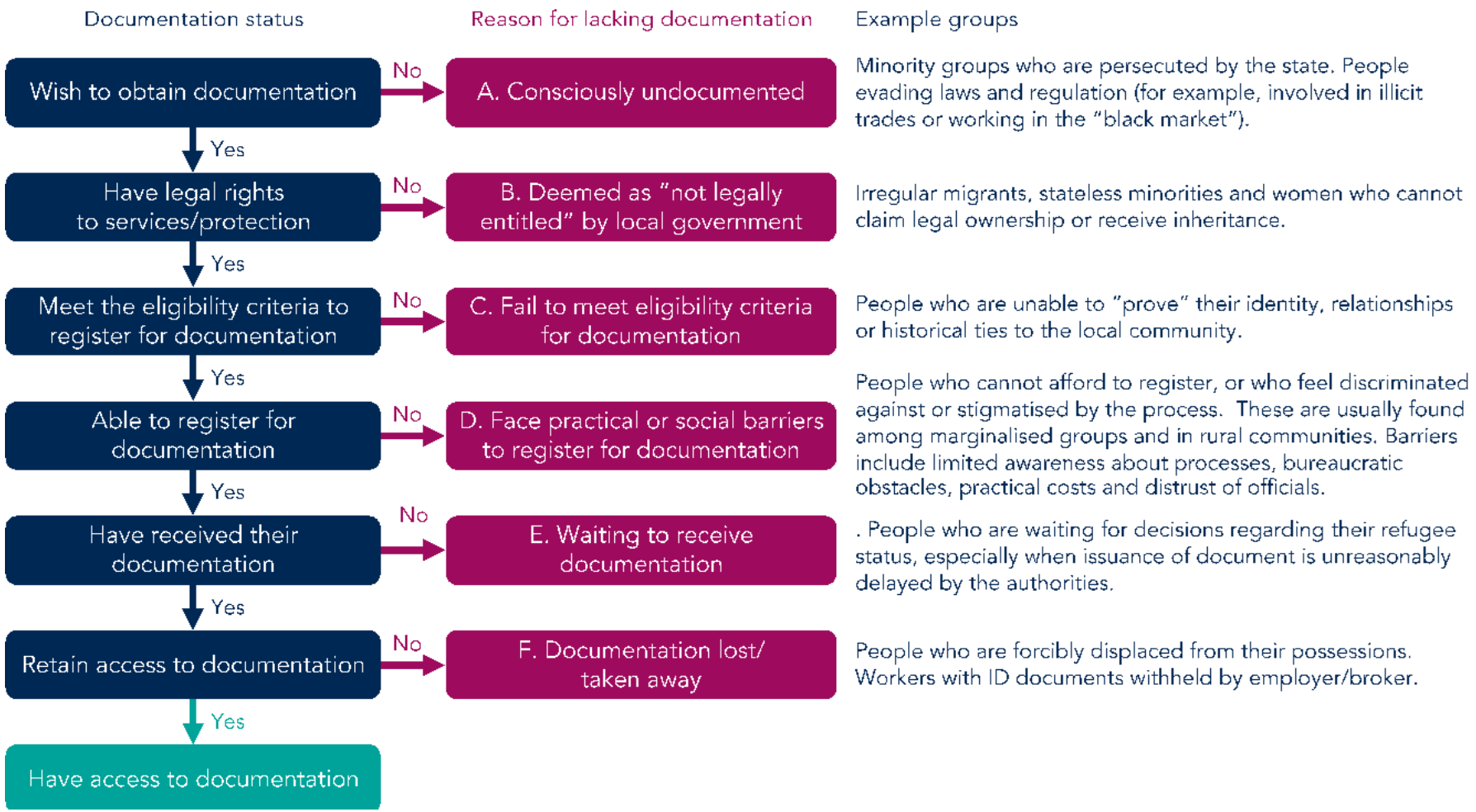
Figure 1: Access to identity documents, globally and in the focus countries



(Source: World Bank, 2021; UNICEF, 2023)

Overview of the research: No identity, no protection

The paths to a lack of documentation



Impact of Being Undocumented and Modern Slavery Risks

Place of work and vulnerability:

- **Sector-Specific Risks:** Individuals are at higher risk in sectors like agriculture, factory work, and "4D" jobs, often transitioning between formal and informal economies.
- **Lack of Comprehensive Data:** Insufficient data on unregistered adults and their specific occupations hinders understanding and mitigation of exploitation risks.

Psychological and Physical Impacts:

- **Mental Health:** Constant fear of detection and deportation generates severe stress, anxiety, and depression, compounded by social stigma and isolation.
- **Physical Health:** Lack of access to healthcare leads to untreated medical conditions and chronic illnesses, perpetuating a cycle of poverty and exploitation.
- **Social Exclusion:** Restricted access to education, employment, and political participation further deteriorates quality of life and increases reliance on exploitative arrangements.

Economic	Social	Legal
• Access to Employment and Financial Services • Low-Wage, Unregulated Sectors • Government and Relief Services	• Isolation and Discrimination • Education Barriers • Gender-Specific Vulnerabilities	• Systemic Inefficiencies • Lack of Legal Support • Impact of Gender-Discriminatory Laws

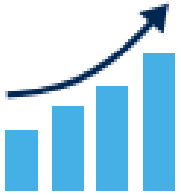
Promising Interventions



Enhancing support services: Establish legal clinics, paralegal support programs and mobile registration units to make legal documentation more accessible to excluded populations.



Promoting community engagement: Empower marginalised groups to lead advocacy efforts and build long-term partnerships with NGOs to improve awareness of and demand for legal documentation.



Improving data collection and research: Collect more reliable data on undocumented populations to support evidence-based policymaking, resource allocation and impact monitoring.



Strengthening collaboration and integration: Adopt a holistic human rights approach in designing identity initiatives and integrating them into border management, modern slavery prevention and civil registration systems.



Addressing policy gaps and barriers: Incorporate the needs of undocumented groups into national laws and policies, ensuring their access to universal rights. Implement people-centred digital systems with robust governance structures.

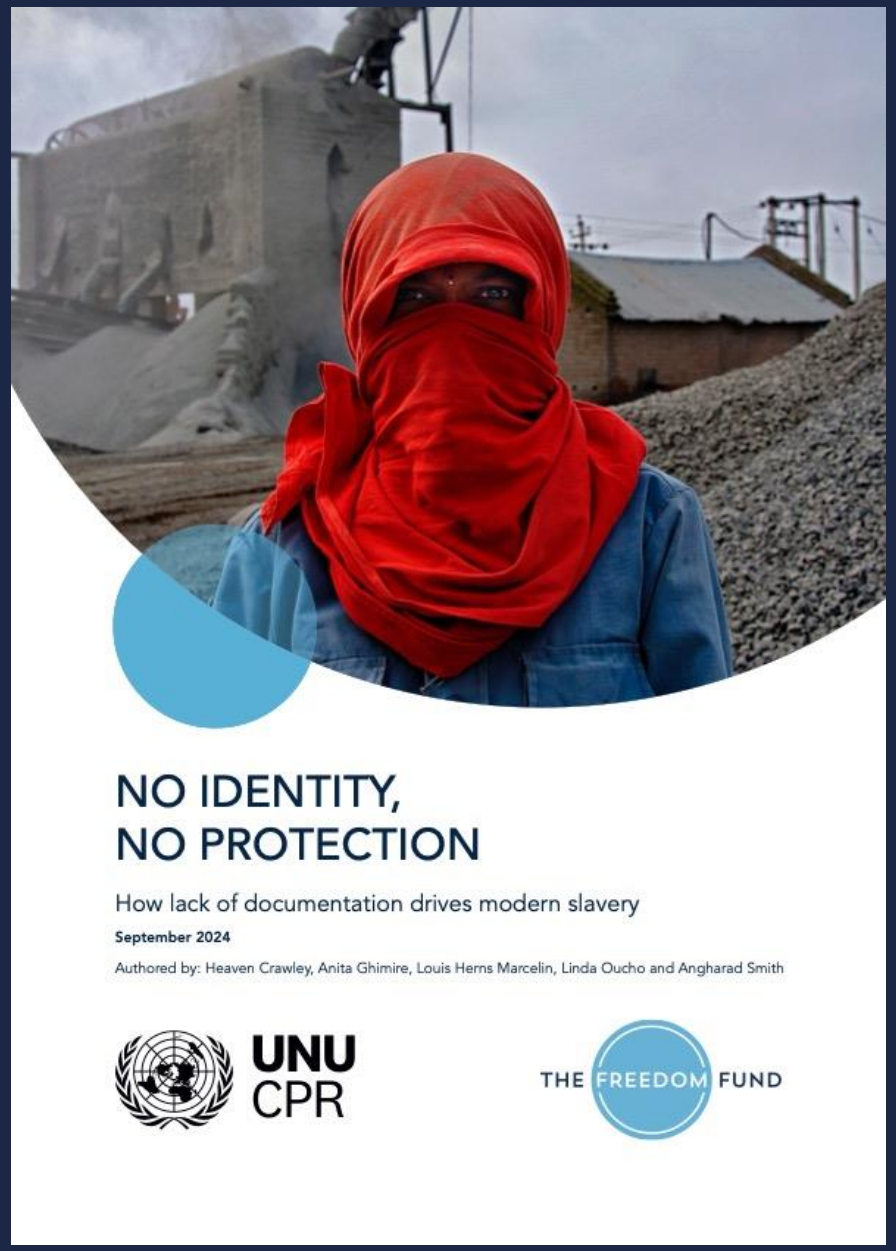


Policy brief





Policy brief



Full report available at:

https://www.freedomfund.org/no-identity-no-protection/

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THANK YOU

Contact **research@freedomfund.org** for more information

