

Special Lecture



Date: Thursday, November 27, 2025
Time: 4:30 PM ~
Venue: GSID Lecture Room 3



Title: Universal Legal Identity and the Sustainable Development Goals: Leaving No One Behind?

Lecturer: Dr. Christoph Sperfeldt (Senior Lecturer at Macquarie Law School and Visiting Researcher of CALE)

Abstract:

Establishing one's legal identity has become fundamental to modern life. Yet, the World Bank estimates that around one billion people do not have any official government-issued proof of their legal identity. This is reflected in target 16.9 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which aims to 'provide legal identity for all' by 2030. A proliferation of registration and digital identification initiatives has accompanied the implementation of this goal. Yet, in a context of weak institutions and complex political economies, the expansion of digital identification can lead to new forms of exclusion for some unregistered, stateless, mobile or marginalised populations – threatening the SDG's 'leave no one behind' agenda. It is no coincidence that more than 75 per cent of the world's known stateless belong to minorities. This seminar talk draws out some of the deeper complexities in order to understand the risks associated with the way policies and programs implemented in furtherance of SDG 16.9 are enacted.

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Lecturer Profile



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Dr Christoph Sperfeldt is Senior Lecturer and ARC DECRA Fellow at Macquarie Law School. He is also a Fellow at the Center for Human Rights and International Justice at Stanford University, Honorary Fellow at the Peter McMullin Centre on Statelessness and Adjunct Professor at the Center for the Study of Humanitarian Law at the Royal University of Law and Economics in Phnom Penh. Christoph pursues socio-legal research in areas of human rights and justice that is empirically grounded with a geographical focus on Southeast Asia, including in the fields of legal and digital identification, and statelessness. Prior to joining academia, Christoph was Deputy Director at the Asian International Justice Initiative, a joint program of the East-West Center and Stanford University, where he supported human rights and rule of law capacity building in Southeast Asia, and Senior Advisor with the Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) in Cambodia.