"Exploring levels of self reliance, livelihood opportunities and alternatives to encampment among displaced populations in the Great Lakes region of Africa".

Objectives of the report:

- Panorama of refugee displacement in the Great Lakes region and legal/policy environment
- Looking at the different traditional approaches to durable solutions (voluntary repatriation, resettlement in a third country and naturalization) in the five countries covered by the study: Uganda, Rwanda, Democratic Republic of Congo, Tanzania and Burundi
- Looking at how the five countries implement socio-economic inclusion as a prerequisite to advance durable solutions.
- Providing recommendations towards a regional but localized approach to refugee livelihoods to advance durable solutions in the Great Lakes region

1. Panorama of refugee displacement in the Great Lakes region and legal/policy environment

A) Displacement situation in the Great Lakes region

- With the exception of Tanzania, countries in the Great Lakes region have generated refugees in significant numbers since their independence and all have hosted refugees.
  - **Totals by country of origin**:
    - Democratic Republic of Congo: 783,923
    - Burundi: 320,671
    - Rwanda: 26,619

  - **Total by host country:**
    - Uganda: 1,500,000 - 57% from SSD and 32% from DRC
    - DRC: 525,000 - Majority from CAR, Rwanda and SSD.
    - Tanzania: 247,207 - 2/3 from Burundi
    - Rwanda: 121,239 – Majority from DRC and Burundi
    - Burundi: 88,599 – Majority from DRC

- Drivers of displacement for refugees
  - Rwandan civil war (1990-1994)
  - Outbreak of the Burundian civil war (1993-2005) and crisis in Burundi (2015)
  - First (1996-1997) and second (1998-2003) Congo wars + ongoing conflict in Eastern DRC
  - Outbreak of civil wars in South Sudan (2013)
  - Civil war in the Central African Republic (2012)

→ After shocks of these events still evident in the region today, with refugee populations that still have to find a place to call home.

B) Legal infrastructure and policy environment

- International legal instruments : **1951 UN Refugee convention and its 1967 protocol** – ratified by the five countries of the Great Lakes with some initial reservations with regards to some aspects of the convention but with limited impact on national policies on the ground.
- Regional and sub-regional legal instruments:
  - **1967 OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa** : Collective undertaking by the OAU Member States to receive and protect refugees in accordance with their national legislations. Application to all refugees without discrimination as to race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinions.
  - **2004 ICGLR Declaration on Peace, Security, Democracy and Development in the Great Lakes region**: Commitment by ICGLR Member States to address the root causes of and find lasting solutions to the protracted problems of displaced and refugee populations, notably with regards to their peaceful co-existence with resident populations, their voluntary repatriation and return or local integration, with the full involvement of local authorities and host populations, and within the framework of tripartite agreements where applicable. Encouragement to countries of origin to create the conditions conducive to the return of refugees.

- **2006 ICGLR Framework for the Protection, Assistance and Search for Durable Solutions for Displaced Populations (Refugees and IDPs) and communities that host them**: intends to establish a regional framework for protection, assistance and search for durable solutions for refugees, IDPs and the burden placed on communities that host them. Concrete activities at the regional level were envisioned such as:
  - Agreeing on a mutually consistent legal framework on the treatment of refugees to reduce inefficiencies and contradictions that would make them difficult to apply regionally – harmonization of national laws and policies on refugees
  - Use existing initiatives such as Development Assistance for Refugees (DAR) and Development through Local Integration (DLI) in areas of return and areas hosting refugees and IDPs.
  - Initiate or strengthen tripartite agreements for the voluntary return of refugees
  - Resettlement countries to increase their quotas since resettlement was also one of the durable solution to the refugee problem
- **2019 High Level Meeting of Ministers in charge of refugees in the Great Lakes region** – Munyonyo outcome document: Member States recommended the ICGLR to develop a regional strategy on comprehensive durable solutions for the Great Lakes region and an action plan to implement this strategy.

- **EAC refugee Management Policy**
- **IGAD instruments related to migration management**, including the 2019 Kampala declaration on jobs, livelihood, and self-reliance for refugees, returnees and host communities.

→ Inspiration and lessons learned for the establishment of an ICGLR regional strategy and action plan.

2. Approaches to durable solutions in the Great Lakes region

A) <u>What do we mean by durable solution and how is their implementation influenced in the Great Lakes?</u>

- Refugeehood may formally terminate under four circumstances:
  - Repatriation following the cessation of refugee status
  - Voluntary repatriation in the country of origin
  - Resettlement in a third country
  - Naturalization in the country of asylum

- Factors that influence their diverging implementation across the Great Lakes region:
  - Nature of the situations from which refugees have fled
  - Relationships between the government of the country of asylum and the government of their country of origin
  - Domestic realities of the country of aslym
  - Length of the refugee situation (from protracted to long-term refugeehood)

B) Varying approaches to durable solutions amongst countries of the Great Lakes

B.1. Voluntary repatriation

- *Regional Trends*
  - Commonly described by governments of the region as the preferred solution – reiterated during the 2019 high level meeting in Kampala where ministers highlighted that ''voluntary return remain the preferred solution in the majority of refugee situations'' and '' acknowledged the ongoing efforts and new commitments to establish Tripartite Commissions with the support of UNHCR''.
  - Most significant effort to promote voluntary repatriation in the region in recent years has been the repatriation of Burundian refugees, particularly those hosted in Tanzania.

- *Trends by country of the Great Lakes region*
  - **Tanzania:** the main objective of Tanzania's refugee strategy for several years has been to promote the return of Burundian refugees who entered the country and limit new influxes. Since 2017 Tanzania, Burundi and the UNHCR have increased the pace of voluntary repatriation of Burundian refugees with more than 200,000 returns as of July 2022.

- **Rwanda:** The government of Rwanda, with the support of UNHCR, started to facilitate returns of refugees to Burundi in August 2020. Since then, more than 28,000 Burundian refugees have been assisted. Thousands of others have returned outside of the formal repatriation process. Voluntary repatriation for Congolese refugees is not envisaged at the moment, given the current insecurity in Eastern DRC.
- **Democratic Republic of Congo:** Assisted voluntary returns of refugees from Burundi and the Central African Republic remains low compared to other countries of refuge. Between September 2017 and June 2021, some 5842 Burundian refugees have returned to Burundi.
- **Uganda:** Assisted voluntary returns remains the rhetorical focus but in practice local solutions are available, leading to de facto integration.
- **Burundi:** In 2009, a tripartite agreement with the government of DRC and UNHCR to facilitate voluntary returns but due to ongoing insecurity in their zones of origin, few refugees have already returned to the DRC. The last convoy of Congolese refugees repatriated to DRC dates back to 2014.

❖ *Important elements pertaining to voluntary repatriation to be taken into account in a potential ICGLR regional strategy:*

- Voluntary nature of repatriation – Hosting countries should refrain from creating conditions that force refugees to seek repatriation.

- Need for consultations with refugee-led associations in host countries to determine the parameters of their voluntary repatriation and/or any other durable solutions – return may not suitable (e.g refugees have spent all their life in their country of asylum, do not know their country of origin).

- Need to invest in long-terms efforts in countries of return to ensure sustainable and dignified reintegration of returnees, taking into account the needs of both the returnees and the host communities.

- Need to invest into returnees welcoming areas to improve access to land, formal employment and self-employment.

- If these criteria are not met, consider alternative solutions for refugees in host countries.

B.2. Resettlement in third countries

- *Regional trends*
  - Solution that is much desired by many of the region's refugees but, in reality, remains available to only a fraction of the refugee population.
  - Number of resettlement places is limited to several thousand individuals every year and is supposed to be use primarily as a protection tool reserved to the most vulnerable.
  - Knowledge that resettlement places are not available shapes decisions around potential return or onward migration.

- *Trends by country of the Great Lakes region*
  - **Uganda**: resettlement to a third country offered to a relatively small number of Congolese refugees
  - **Rwanda**: resettlement of Congolese refugees to a third country has remained at roughly 1-2% of the Congolese refugee population, creating sufficient incentive for many to retain their refugee status.
  - **Democratic Republic of Congo**: Extremely limited. Very few Rwandan refugees are granted access to resettlement in a third country

- **Tanzania**: Congolese refugees identified as more vulnerable have had access to resettlement to third countries (US, Canada Australia, UK). More than 17,700 Congolese refugees have been resettled from Tanzania to third countries between 2015 and 2020.
- **Burundi:** Only a solution for a very small number of refugees. In 2019, 2928 refugees were resettled from Burundi to the United States (mainly Congolese). This number dropped to only 179 in 2020.

❖ *Important elements pertaining to resettlement to third countries to be taken into account in a potential ICGLR regional strategy:*

- Need to further strengthen cooperation between Member States in pursuit of resettlement options within the region, to ease the pressure on countries hosting a large number of refugees.
- Need to encouraged traditional resettlement countries outside of the ICGLR to increase their annual resettlement allocations – high level political dialogue.

B.3. Naturalization

- *Regional trends*
  - Naturalization has long been deeply problematic to host governments of the region with many of them seeing it as a solution that is not politically viable.
  - Refugees themselves might not necessarily be interested themselves in naturalization, particularly if their country of origin does not allow dual citizenship.
  - In some countries, it is known that a small number of refugees have been able to access identity documents informally - a strategy that represents, in effect, a bottom-up ''durable solution''.
  - In terms of formal policies, the most significant processes of naturalization have been ad hoc measures, applied to specific groups of refugees, at specific times, rather than being enshrined in consistent legal procedures.

- *Trends by country of the Great Lakes region*
  - **Tanzania**: 2007 Comprehensive Solution Strategy (TANCOSS) gave Burundians who had resided in the country since fleeing the 1972 violence, the right to opt for naturalization or repatriation to Burundi. This gave more than 150,000 Burundian refugees the Tanzanian citizenship. Process has however stalled in recent years and led to cases of statelessness – 69,000 refugees estimated to be at risk. Similar strategy in the mid 2000s to some 3,000 Somali Bantu refugees – a few still in legal limbo.

- **Rwanda**: The government of Rwanda offered naturalization to Congolese refugees on number of occasions. Very few have taken up this offer. Linked to several factors: hope of returning to their country of origin, assistance tied to their refugee status, hope of resettlement to a third country and DRC not allowing dual citizenship.
- **Democratic Republic of Congo:** Case of 51,000 Angolan refugees granted temporary residency permit after the cessation clause was invoked at the end of the 2012 Angola civil war. 2019 GRF pledge – promote access to civil status documents for the 62% children of Rwandans refugees born in the DRC + 10 years residence permit to 200,000 Rwandan refugees who wanted to stay in the country.
- **Uganda**: Naturalization is not something that the government of Uganda nor development actors have discussed as part of the recent implementation of the CRRF or the GCR.
- **Burundi:** Provided under the Burundian law – foreigners (including refugees) can apply for citizenship after having lived in the country for at least 10 years. No record of such applications having been accepted. More theoretical than applied in practice.

3. Local Integration as a prerequisite to advance any durable solution

A) <u>What do we mean by local integration ?</u>

- **Definition of local integration**: No clear definition under international refugee law. Rather a set of different forms of refugee inclusion enabling refugees to remain in their host country for a long period of time and become meaningful members of society.

- **Description by the UNCHR Executive committee**: a multi-layered and gradual process comprising three distinct but interrelated dimensions:
  - ***Legal dimension of local integration***: providing refugees with a legal status that enables them to enjoy a wide range of rights broadly commensurate to those enjoyed by citizens of the host country.
  - ***Economic dimension of local integration***: self reliance – individuals, households and communities are enabled to increasingly become self-sufficient and can contribute to the local economy. Enablers: (i) freedom of movement; (ii) right to work and access to land; (iii) documentation to open bank accounts or have access to other assets.
  - ***Socio-cultural dimension of local integration***: promotion of positive relations between refugees and citizens through the creation of an environment of tolerance, non-discrimination and mutual respect.

- **Advantages of local integration:**
  - Help increase the sense of local ownership of programs and strengthen the involvement of government actors in the refugee response, while also ensuring that the interventions benefit both refugees and citizens – decrease of the potential for tensions between communities
  - Allows humanitarian objectives to align with longer-term development goals → Helps render interventions more sustainable in a context where humanitarian funding is decreasing

- **Rationale within the Great Lakes:** Some states in the region have decided to promote refugee self-reliance and strategies of local integration that are not designed to formally bring refugeehood to an end but rather to render it more sustainable for refugees, host communities and government.

- **Recommendation of the 2019 Munyonyo Outcome document:** Ministers encouraged the implementation of durable solutions for refugees through the three traditional solutions (naturalization, voluntary repatriation and resettlement to third country) or ''through other local solutions'' and emphasized ''that successful local integration requires legal stay arrangements, freedom of movement of refugees… and inclusion of refugees in national services and systems such as education, health care, social welfare and protection services, community policing and land management''.

B) Integration, development planning and refugee programming

- **Regional trends:** Substantially different approaches within the Great Lakes region – spectrum ranging from:
  - An approach drawing a clear line between humanitarian responses targeting refugees and development projects targeting citizens.
  - A ''whole of government approach'' seeking to integrate refugees into national development planning as a pragmatic representation of the ''humanitarian-development nexus'' and a way to foster self-reliance of refugees.

→ While the concepts of ''humanitarian-development nexus'' and ''whole of government approaches'' might be new and have gained new momentum through the CRRF and the GCR, programs that seek to render refugees self-reliant and link refugee responses to broader development goals have a long history in Africa, dating back to the 1960s.

- Young post-colonial governments settled refugees in designated areas to provide them with land so they could engage in farming and other income generating activities.
- Idea was that these settlements would become self-sufficient and fall within the responsibility of host governments.

❖ ***Trends by country of the Great Lakes region:***

➢ **Uganda:**

- Since the 1990s, policy strategies promoting refugee self-reliance and the integration of refugees into national services have been in place.
- As part of the CRRF implementation, refugees have been included directly into the development plans of refugee-hosting districts and different ministries have developed their own sectoral response plans aiming to address both the needs of refugees and host communities.
  - ✓ Second national Development Plan (2015-2020): Settlement Transformation Agenda and Refugee and Host Population Empowerment framework (ReHope)
  - ✓ Third National Development Plan (2020-2025)
- Leads to response plans addressing issues such as education, health, water and environment, energy, jobs and livelihoods.
- Engagement of various government structures with refugee issues to address both development and humanitarian challenges in a more sustainable manner – ''whole of government approach''

- **Rwanda**
  - Approach to refugee support based on a number of policy documents adopted since 2016 that create an environment for the inclusion of refugees in society, no longer confined in camps.
    - ✓ 2016-2020 Joint GoR-UNHCR strategy for Economic Inclusion of refugees in Rwanda – ambitioned that by 2020 refugees and host communities would all be able to ''fulfill their productive potential as self-reliant members of the Rwandan society who contribute to economic development of their host district''.
    - ✓ 2021-2024 Joint GoR-UNHCR strategy for Economic Inclusion of refugees in Rwanda – incorporates learning from the previous strategy and promotes a broader development approach that more explicitly incorporates host communities + expansion of support for self-reliance of refugees and host communities through graduation approach and market-based interventions. ''Whole of society approach'' emphasized
    - ✓ 2019-2024 Strategic Plan for Refugee Inclusion as an operational document detailing how the government's commitments to the CRRF will be implemented
    - ✓ Financial inclusion of refugees through explicit references in the National Financial Inclusion Strategy of Rwanda.

➢ Democratic Republic of Congo:

- Recent efforts to promote the inclusion of refugees in development programming: 2018 letter of development policy to the World Bank, the government of DRC committed to promoting the socio-economic inclusion of refugees a provincial and local levels, in addition to re-confirming existing practices of equal access to services and freedom of movement.
- However, in practice the response remains mainly humanitarian:
  - ✓ National development plans provide scant mention to refugees. Same goes for provincial and local development plans.
  - ✓ Unsurprising given the scale of development challenges in DRC and the fact that other displacement challenges take up much of the capacity of both government and international actors.
- For effective inclusion of refugees in development programming and implementation on the ground:
  - ✓ Reinforce capacities of provincial and local authorities to promote integration of refugees in their plans and support them.
  - ✓ Problems related to fiscal decentralization and lack of budget at provincial level need to be addressed.

- **Tanzania**
  - Initial commitment to improve inclusion and self-reliance of refugees as part of the CRRF (2017)
    - ✓ Foreseen revision of the 2003 refugee policy and the 1998 refugee act to move away from encampment towards enhanced economic inclusion and self-reliance.
    - ✓ Withdrawal from the CRRF in January 2018 led to a shift in policy towards refugees.

  - Needs of refugees should be addressed through humanitarian support in camps, to cater to for their immediate needs until they are able to return to their country of origin.
    - ✓ As such, there is a clear distinction between refugee programming and development projects for Tanzanian citizens.
    - ✓ Little indication for a change in policy.

- **Burundi**
  - Refugees are not mentioned in Burundi's development plans and only a very small proportion of the national budget is foreseen to provide support to refugees
    - ✓ Most funding for the refugee response comes from international donors
    - ✓ The repatriation and reintegration of Burundian refugees puts further pressure on limited resources to support refugees living in Burundi and receives more attention and investment international actors working on displacement

  - In its strategy to access World Bank Funds, the government of Burundi:
    - ✓ Said that it would promote an area-based approach that would benefit both refugees and host community members and support agricultural livelihoods as well as promote self-reliance
    - ✓ Recognized the need to integrate humanitarian and development approaches to benefit both refugees and host community members as they face similar challenges of inadequate access to basic services and insufficient livelihoods
  - The World Bank has committed to support efforts of the government of Burundi tin promoting inclusion of refugees in local development plans at the level of communes – Turikumwe project.

C) Freedom of movement

- ***Regional trends***
  - Despite varying approaches to the integration of refugees, the emphasis of refugee programming in the Great Lakes region remain on designated camps, sites or settlements, in which assistance is provided to refugees.
  - The common tendency among all five countries has been to discourage refugees from settling in urban areas by avoiding providing support to refugees who reside outside their designated areas.
  - Nonetheless, the extent to which countries have enabled refugees to move freely varies greatly across the region.
  - Even in the countries that have limited the assistance they provide to ‘’self-settled’’ refugees, the mere freedom that allows refugees to move often enables them to access opportunities and lend support to each other.
  - The extent of freedom of movement of refugees also depends on how a given community of refugees is perceived by the host community and on the relations between the host state and the country of origin.

❖ ***Trends by country of the Great Lakes***

➢ **Uganda**

- While refugees freedom of movement is ''legally'' subject to reasonable restrictions, refugees are free to move and mobility is often a response to scarcity
- Those who have the financial means often travel between settlements, between settlements and urban areas, and even between Uganda and its neighboring countries.
- Freedom of movement plays an important role in self-sufficiency, not least because it enables various practices of informal social protection within refugee communities that help cope with the limited and unreliable availability of aid or employment.
- Registration and aid provision policies can also impact the availability of refugees to move

➢ **Rwanda**

- While refugees enjoy freedom of movement in Rwanda, in practice humanitarian assistance continues to be tied to camp residency.
- The process to obtain permission to leave the camps for extended periods of time has become significantly easier and quicker over the last years but many still lack the required documentation to do so. GoR has taken significant steps to increase access to documentation for refugees since2018.

- **DRC:**
  - The government does not prevent refugees from moving outside of the camps. Important to note that 75% of refugees live outside of the camps and only 25% live in refugee camps or settlements, in designated secure areas where they can access assistance.
  - For those refugees in camps, the government does not prevent them from settling with host communities later, provided they stay far from the border
  - Where restrictions exists for camp-based refugees, such as the need to get CNR permission to leave, those that live in the camps often find ways to bypass them.
  - Decision to move around DRC or across the border, especially for those in the Kivu provinces, is heavily influenced by the presence of armed groups and inter-community conflict. Not only generates protection threats but also limits their access to land and influence their decision to move internally, return or opt for local integration.

- **Tanzania**
  - Very few refugees are granted permission to live outside camps – permits are usually reserved to a tiny number of refugees that reach Tanzania from countries that do not neighbor it or from the Middle East.
  - Some refugees can be granted permission temporarily reside in towns, to access medical treatment, but such permission usually is revoked once the treatment is completed.
  - Some high-profile individuals, who might be at risk in the camps, are also granted permission to reside outside them
  - Refugees that are caught outside the camps or engaging in farming outside of them can be fined or jailed.
  - For the thousands of refugees who reside in urban areas, no assistance is provided to them and the permits limit their movement by allowing them to only reside within a designated urban area.

- **Burundi**
  - Since the end of 2022, freedom of movement for refugees has been severely restricted as the request for permit to leave camps has been suspended
  - Refugees living in urban areas are expected to be self-sufficient (limited opportunities).

D) Economic reliance in practice

- ***Regional trends*** : Approaches to refugee economic self-reliance in the Great Lakes vary between countries and different refugee communities in the region have engaged in different livelihood strategies with different results in terms of economic independence:
  - Where refugee integration and self-reliance has been explicitly rejected as a policy objective, any space or intervention that allows refugees to develop their livelihoods and engage in economic activity has been discouraged → significant impact on economic independence of refugees, negative impact to the local economy and limited space for interaction between refugees and host communities.

  - In countries that have been more willing to allow refugees to cater for themselves, whether through agricultural activities, legal access to wage labor or entrepreneurship, progress has been quite limited:
    - Refugees are often hosted in peripheral regions with long histories of being less developed and registering more poverty: limited private sector activity, formal employment opportunities, or opportunities to engage with markets.
    - Refugees are often active in similar livelihoods strategies as host community members (small-scale agriculture and informal trade)
    - Short supply of fertile and cultivable land for refugees
    - International actors have struggled to promote private sector investment in these regions.

- However, various arrangements have sprung up on the ground where the regulatory frameworks allow for it:
  - Informal arrangements that depend on ties with local communities, either with host or diaspora communities.
    - ✓ Somali refugees in Uganda taking advantage of Uganda's local Somali population to find jobs in Somali-owned businesses
    - ✓ Burundian refugees in DRC employed informally by Congolese citizens valuing their skills in agriculture and work ethics.
    - ✓ Opening of common markets in refugee camps of the Kigoma region enabled interactions between refugees and Tanzanian and boosted the economic activity (now closed).
  - Modest interventions can have an impact when taking into account cultural realities on the ground.

- ***Trends by country of the Great Lakes region:***
  - **Uganda**:
    - Agricultural livelihoods opportunities:
      - ✓ Most common activity among refugees but rendered inadequate for achieving economic self-sufficiency by limited access to land.
      - ✓ Refugee households have on average access to 0.4 acres of land compared to 2.1 acres among host communities. Only 7.2% of refugee households in settlements in West Nile rely on agricultural income while 66.1% rely on aid.
      - ✓ Some refugees reach informal agreements with Ugandan citizens to access additional land for cultivation – underpinned by positive relations between refugees and host communities
    - Non-agricultural livelihood opportunities:
      - ✓ Formal employment opportunities are limited – refugees can legally be employed and have the right to establish their own business but ambiguity regarding the procedures required to employ refugees
      - ✓ Lack of capital and skills, language barriers, stigma and unfamiliarity with local markets
      - ✓ Growing consensus that involvement of private sector is key for creating and promoting employment opportunities

➢ Rwanda

- Significant potential for economic reliance of refugees – strong socio-cultural ties between hosts and refugees, including shared language.
- Agricultural livelihood opportunities
  - ✓ The country's high population density alongside its dependence on agriculture has put increasing pressure on land ➔ led the government to put in place restrictions to access to land for refugees.
  - ✓ However, some progress has been made both in enabling increased access to farming-based livelihoods for refugees and integrating support to refugees and hosts → ex: UNHCR project in the Misizi Marshland – land given by the government to Congolese refugees and host communities to grow significant amounts of Maize.
- Non-agricultural livelihood opportunities
  - ✓ Due to land scarcity, wage employment and viable non-farm sustainable livelihoods should be pursued through market based-skills training, entrepreneurship development and other appropriate ways.

- **Democratic Republic of Congo**
  - Many refugees are left to fend for themselves – difficult general socio-economic situation in rural areas of eastern and northern DRC, where refugees are located.
  - Agricultural livelihood opportunities
    - ✓ Access to arable land for farming is not an issue in most areas where refugees live, except where there is more population density (some parts of the Kivu provinces)
    - ✓ Many refugees involved in agriculture resort to renting a plot of land, as ownership of land by refugees is scant. Unregulated land governance system (involving customary and administrative authorities) can lead to conflicts in some cases.
    - ✓ For the minority of refugees living in camps, formal and informal rules regulate access. Tensions around firewood and fishing areas along with lack of regulation and enforcement has sometimes led to tensions. (Inke refugee settlement)
  - Non-agricultural livelihoods opportunities
    - ✓ Access to financial services (microcredits) and infrastructures is more difficult for refugees than host communities, which already face enormous difficulties in that regard given the low access to financial services in the country
    - ✓ Focus largely on humanitarian assistance despite some efforts (Joint FAO-WFP project in North Ubangi province – skills training and livelihoods support to 13,000 refugees from CAR.

- **Tanzania**
  - Regulation towards refugees in Tanzania makes it difficult for refugees to attain economic self-reliance:
    - ✓ Difficulties to obtain work permits
    - ✓ Only allowed to engage in small income generating activities in the camps - hardly enables them to gain economic independence.
    - ✓ 2018 socio-economic assessment found that while refugees mostly survive on aid, some also engage in skills-based economic activities (tailoring, hairstyling and cooking). Other income generating activities include informal and mall scale trading (procuring goods from Tanzanians and selling them in the camps) and being ''incentivized workers'' employed by NGOs operating in the camps.

  - Promotion of returns rather than incentivizing economic self-reliance

- **Burundi:**
  - In northeastern Burundi, where Congolese refugee camps are located, poverty level among host communities are sometimes high than those of refugees and access to services even more limited – increase the risks of tensions.
  - Agricultural livelihoods opportunities
    - ✓ Limited availability of land makes it difficult for refugees to acquire it – hampers economic self-reliance
    - ✓ Refugees who want a piece of land have to request access from local authorities, joint refugees-host communities cooperatives or informally rent it from host communities.
  - Non-agricultural livelihood opportunities
    - ✓ Refugees can access formal employment in Burundi as long as they obtain and pay for a work permit through the Ministry of Labor. Even with the right paper work, access to formal jobs is difficult (as is the case for citizens). Moreover, formal employment is low, especially in rural areas.
    - ✓ Refugees can register bank accounts, phone numbers and companies using their refugee identification numbers.

4. Towards a regional but localized approach to refugee livelihoods and durable solutions (recommendations)

A) Recognize the importance of a regional approach to national refugee policy

- Each country of the Great Lakes has developed its own refugee policy, and information sharing and harmonization of policies at the regional level limited.
- Refugee crisis in the Great Lakes is of a regional nature – much to be gained from greater regional coordination when it comes to addressing them.
- Such coordination can have a positive impact on several levels:

  - **Policy making and best practices**: bring countries together to discuss shared challenges and approaches to solving them will help disseminate knowledge and good practice
  - **Mediation**: Regional engagement could help in overcoming bilateral blockages related to some refugee situations that can exist between countries of the Great Lakes
  - **Livelihoods**: Regional coordination can help strengthen livelihood interventions and economic developments across the region
  - **Migration management**: refugees respond to policies just as much as policies respond to the movement of refugees – regional approach to refugee programming can help identify these trends and respond to the challenges that drive them more effectively.

- **Cross-border livelihoods**: cross-border networks influence refugees' decisions to move, their livelihood strategies, and their relationship with host communities. International agencies and NGOs that support livelihoods of refugees should take these cross-border dimensions into account and include them in programming.

→ Policies that any country in the region adopts have implications for their neighbors. Useful to reinforce a nascent regional community of practice between different practitioners in the filed of livelihoods support and durable solutions (officials of the different countries, international experts and representatives of refugee and host communities) to promote best practices and ground national decisions related to refugee management in regional thinking.

B) Promote freedom of movement and engage with urban refugees

- Restrictions on the movement of refugees hinder self-reliance and exacerbate the challenges faced by both refugees and host communities – undermine the individuals' ability to engage in income-generating activities and the ability of community networks to redistribute resources and support those in need.
- Countries that impose regulations impacting the movement of refugees should seek to alleviate certain policies and regulations.
- Increase focus on refugees in urban areas (even for those countries that already enable freedom of movement)
  - Refrain from limiting humanitarian and development interventions to camps or settlements only as this creates an incentive for refugees to remain in these areas, where avenues for self-reliance are limited
  - New forms of support should target urban and peri-urban refugees to ensure durable livelihoods and hybrid forms of local integration.
- Promote freedom of movement at the regional level through the introduction of legal arrangements that allow citizens to move between GL countries with greater ease can help reduce pressure on refugee programs + create more space for people to cater to themselves and for transnational community networks to support individuals across borders.

C) Localize interventions and increase support for community-based mechanisms of social protection

- The experience of countries in the Great Lakes region makes clear that policies impact different communities in different context, differently.
- Different communities have not only different livelihood strategies or different experiences of interaction with markets and host communities, but also different traditions and norms of informal social protection that are operationalized in different ways in exile.
- No single policy solution or type of intervention that fits everyone and can simply be duplicated from one context to the other.
  - For concrete interventions to be successful, they must be complemented by robust engagement with the realities on the ground in refugee hosting areas and be both market and demand driven.
  - In the context of livelihoods and self-reliance, there is a need to be more attuned to how different groups help themselves and how they are supported by host communities.
- Currently, interventions by international actors remain ''top-down'' in nature and the involvement of refugees and hosts in the design, implementation and evaluation is limited at best.
  - International actors need to make an effort to localize interventions, including by lending support to refugee-led organizations, local organizations composed of host community members and other community members.
  - Projects need to be informed by the insights of local actors and grounded in context-specific research

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MERCY CORPS
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