UNHCR
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Regional Bureau for the East and Horn of Africa and Great Lakes (EHAGL)

Complementary Pathways Newsletter – Edition 1

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Nurses registered as refugees in Kenya who travelled to Canada through the Economic Mobility Pathways Pilot (EMPP) in 2021. Bahati Ernestine, Micheline Muhima and Agnes Mude. ©UNHCR

Regional Highlights

Since 2022, Complementary Pathways for admission of refugees to third countries have significantly expanded in EHAGL. Additional resources are enabling new and stronger partnerships involving NGOs, universities, employers, other actors in civil society including the diaspora of (former) refugees and the private sector, governments in both sending and receiving countries, key regional actors such as the East African Community (EAC), Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), the UN migration agency (IOM), and donors.

The UNHCR Regional Bureau in Nairobi together with the Division of International Protection supports EHAGL country operations and numerous partners to develop expertise, to share knowledge, to address government policies and practical barriers affecting refugee access to programs, to design and implement programs with appropriate protection safeguards, and to establish systems for referral and practical support.

The result is a significant increase in the number of refugees able to access jobs, vocational training and education in other countries, to reunite with family and to travel through private sponsorship pathways.
The variety of different people, businesses, institutions and community organisations who are willing and able

to welcome refugees to their own country and offer assistance is also growing. Our activities have brought together a wide range of actors both within and outside the humanitarian sector who have cooperated effectively to ensure the right to family unity and to create opportunities for refugees in third countries additional to resettlement. Not only are refugees who access complementary pathways provided with safety and security, in many cases they benefit from life-changing experiences in higher education, career development and self-fulfillment, and a resulting level of financial, social and economic security that benefits refugees including extended family and communities in their home country and in other countries of asylum.

In 2022, 121 refugees received job offers in Canada, under the Economic Mobility Pathways Pilot (EMPP), while 290 refugee students registered in the EHAGL region benefitted from scholarship opportunities in third countries.

By the end of June 2023, UNHCR country operations and partners in the EHAGL region had screened and supported 835 individuals for Canada's EMPP. At least 27 have received job offers and 24 have departed to Canada. Additionally, 50 refugee students received offers for scholarships at various universities within the EHAGL region such as the African Leadership University, Egerton University, and the United States International University-Africa, and beyond the region in Italy, Germany, France, Türkiye, Mexico and the United States for the September 2023 intake. These figures under-represent the total number of refugees who access education and work opportunities in third countries, as many do not require UNHCR or partners' direct assistance.

Family Reunification and Sponsorship Pathways

Data relating to departures to third countries through family reunification and sponsorship pathways is not yet available. At the regional level and globally, UNHCR has observed a welcome growth including new refugee sponsorship programs offering additional pathways for admission to the United States (Welcome Corps) and New Zealand (CORS) to complement existing programs for private sponsorship to Canada (PSR) and Australia (SHP) as well as the enhanced community reception arrangements and post-arrival support of sponsors for the integration of resettled refugees in countries such as Australia (CRISP) and Germany (NesT).

UNHCR country operations in the EHAGL region have continued to support applicants with family members or other private sponsors in receiving third countries, notably with respect to the facilitation of interviews and requests for exit permits. Barriers persist in several countries, particularly for applicants registered by the host State as asylum-seekers whose refugee status has not (yet) been recognised by the relevant government authorities in the host country, as well as applicants in locations where the receiving State does not have any consular capacity or representation (e.g. for collection of biometric data). The UNHCR Regional Bureau has highlighted these and other challenges in the course of advocacy and dialogue with regional actors including the EAC, IGAD, and ICGLR, and State counterparts from both host countries and receiving countries, supported by IOM as an operational partner and key stakeholder.

Education Pathways

UNHCR and partners in the EHAGL region continue to expand opportunities for refugee scholarships through engaging and identifying new universities and funding programs within Africa and beyond. We are currently working with several partner universities of established funding institutions including Mastercard Foundation, WUSC (Canada), UNIV'R (France), DAAD (Germany), UNICORE (Italy), Habesha Project (Mexico), and University of Barcelona (Spain) among others.

Through 2022, the UNHCR Regional Bureau facilitated several virtual information sessions to bring together refugee candidates and other refugees in the diaspora, university representatives and country operation focal points to better understand the scholarships being offered and selection criteria. This greatly improved success rates as refugee students were able to ask the universities direct questions about the application process. It also enabled UNHCR focal points to guide and better support applicants.

There is an ongoing need to advocate for funding to cover the associated costs of education pathways for refugees to study in third countries, such as visas and flights, which can otherwise prevent refugee students from taking up scholarships outside of their countries of asylum.
The UNHCR Regional Bureau has initiated advocacy with the Inter-University Council of East Africa (IUCEA), comprising 140 member universities, to create more scholarship opportunities for refugees within EHAGL,

as study opportunities within the region are more cost-effective and mitigate some of the challenges related to travel cost and visas.

"Education is the one human right that, when made available, transforms the lives of disadvantaged people in our societies. Please help those who cannot access education if you can".

***Lam Mathew Joar**, Oxford University UK. Upon graduation, Lam secured a job as a Programmes Officer at 'One Young World', UK. [One Young World | Forum For Young Leaders]*

***Siham Bushra**, Student at University of Barcelona, Spain. ©Ikrae Mahmud*

As a refugee, I faced numerous challenges on my journey to safety. Despite the chaos and hardships, my unwavering desire to pursue a Master's degree in human rights advocacy kept me going. My aim was to help others and give them a voice to be heard. One day, an opportunity presented itself, and all the hard work and sleepless nights spent studying finally paid off. I firmly believe that opportunities come to those who exhibit exceptional promise and determination.

My journey from being a refugee to winning a scholarship with the help of UNHCR showed that no obstacle is too great to overcome when you have a dream and the determination to pursue it. I hope my story serves as an inspiration not only to refugees but to everyone who hears it. To all the young refugee girls out there, hold on to your dreams, work hard, and believe in yourself. With determination and the right support, you can achieve anything you set your mind to. Your dreams are not out of reach, and success is within your grasp.

I sincerely hope that my story serves as a beacon of hope for all the young refugee girls who once thought their dreams were out of reach. I encourage you to embrace every opportunity, for scholarships can be the key that unlocks the door to your dream. Work hard, persevere, and let your potential shine through.

"Through the Mastercard Foundation Scholarship Program, I found the key to unlock my dreams."

***Safari Etienne**, Student – United States International University, Nairobi. ©Safari Etienne*

I was born in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. My early life was marked by war, displacement, and uncertainty. My mother, a brave woman, gave birth to me in the midst of chaos and named me "Safari," signifying the journey of my life.

Regardless of all the challenges I faced growing up, I did not give up because I had faith and hope that there is no condition which is permanent and no wound without a reason.

As I grew up, I became increasingly aware of the opportunities and limitations of life in the settlement. I always dreamed of a better future, one where I could use my education to make a difference" says Safari.

My life took a turn when I got the opportunity to study at USIU-Africa through the MasterCard Foundation Scholars Program. Education at USIU-Africa has brought happiness and purpose to my life.

United States International University Africa (USIU) Nairobi. EHAGL Refugee Scholarship winners - ***Rebecca Ndinayo, Prefina Rebecca, Samuel Gebreselasie, Raba Abdirahman Hakim, Jean Nepo****. ©USIU Africa*

Nhial Deng*, Refugee Advocate, Storyteller, Community Activist & Organiser. Nhial is currently pursuing a bachelor's degree at University Canada. © UNHCR/Samuel Otieno*

Nhial is a young South Sudanese man, who grew up in Ethiopia in a situation of forced displacement. He fled to Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya in 2010 after an armed attack on his village in Ethiopia where his father had moved five decades prior due to conflict in Sudan.

In March 2021, Nhial received an offer to study for a bachelor's degree at the prestigious University of California, Berkeley in the US, however, the admission did not come with any financial aid, and Nhial did not have other means to fund his studies. This did not deter Nhial from pursuing his dream. Eventually, three US university application experts from the United World College of South East Asia (UWCSEA) and Kenya Scholar Access Program (KenSAP) heard about his story and joined forces with UNHCR to support Nhial. The experts helped Nhial to look for other opportunities, and he applied to two more universities in Canada and in the US. Both universities accepted him – one with a full scholarship and the other with a partial scholarship.

After much deliberation, Nhial decided to take the offer from Huron University College in Canada, where he is currently studying for a Bachelor of Global Studies and Digital Communications. In December 2021, Nhial returned to Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya to run a mentorship program for young girls in high schools in the camp.

Nhial's journey has been a unique experience for the UNHCR sub-office in Kakuma, where he brought different actors including college counsellors from

abroad to help make his dream come true, and then continued to make an important difference in the lives of other young refugees since returning to Kenya. "US university application is not an easy task for a refugee" says Nhial. Having three college counsellors conversant with college admissions for less privileged international students played a key role to his success. It was a true piece of teamwork and cross-organisational, inter-continental collaboration. Watch Huron's offer to Nhial here.

Labour Mobility

In addition to Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda and Ethiopia where UNHCR and partners are currently piloting the Canadian EMPP, a new pilot for refugee labour mobility has also been launched in Tanzania in partnership with the International Rescue Committee (IRC), and other potential pilots are being discussed with Talent Beyond Boundaries (TBB) for employment pathways to the UK and Australia. Ultimately, UNHCR seeks to enable and empower refugees to access job opportunities in third countries independently.

Throughout 2022 and the first half of 2023, UNHCR country operations in EHAGL laid the foundations for growth of employment pathways by forming strategic partnerships. With the support of TBB and TalentLift Canada, labour mobility programs are already being implemented by RefugePoint (Kenya), Finn Church Aid (Uganda)) and Save the Children (Rwanda).

"Accessing employment in Canada through the Canadian EMPP is a very dignified way for me to get work and not feel I'm being done a favour. I am here because i am needed and that my skills are needed".

***Bahati Ernestine**, Nurse – EMPP, Canada. Since moving to Canada, Bahati has worked with Glen Haven, Glen Haven Manor – building momentum and vitality, McLeod Group MacLeod Group, and is currently consulting with RefugePoint.©Refugee-Led Research Hub (RLRH) – Oxford University.*

***Hassan Mahamed Hassan**, Awbarre refugee nurse, Ethiopia. – Has received job offer in Canada through the EMPP ©UNHCR/ Zamzam Abdi Jama*

Hasan Mahamed Hassan is a Somali refugee nurse from Awbarre Camp in Ethiopia. He graduated from Bahir Dar University with a Bachelor of Science in Nursing with a specialisation in neonatal care. Hassan has two years of experience working as a paediatric nurse and medical ward aid in various hospitals in the region, such as Felege Hiwot Referral Hospital, Jigjiga Referral Hospital, and Goday General Hospital.

Hassan is the fourth refugee in Ethiopia to receive a job offer to work in Canada as a Personal Care Attendant, and when asked what does this opportunity mean to him, he said, "This allows me to enhance the quality of life for my family and myself and in the future, I hope to also help all those who are suffering from hardship and displacements so they can also have a good life." Hassan is currently undergoing the visa application and work permit process to go to Canada.

*"The EMPP was the golden opportunity that opened a new door for my life". **Tekle Mehari**, Refugee Nurse, Ethiopia - Has received job offer in Canada through the EMPP.*

Refugees from Dadaab and Kakuma camps attending the Regional Labour Mobility workshop in Nairobi in October 2022. The candidates have all received job offers in Canada through the Canadian EMPP and are yet to travel to Canada.

*From left to Right: **Sabriye Abdifatah Abdulle Muhumed Ahmed Muktar, Nelly Ingabire Sarah Giselle, Patricia Kamssor Omar, Saido Hassan Abdinoor**. ©RefugePoint.*

Refugee candidates in Kenya talking to employers from Canada - MacLeod Group: and The Shapiro Foundation about their experiences of applying for jobs through the Canadian EMPP ©RefugePoint.

Partnerships and External Engagement

In addition to strengthening existing partnerships, UNHCR has continued to forge new relationships and identify additional opportunities for regional pathways in collaboration with colleagues and partners engaged in refugee livelihoods and education, and the office of the Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa. Between January and June 2023, the EHAGL Regional Bureau with the support of the UNHCR Private Sector Partnerships Service at Headquarters initiated discussions with private sector organisations having a presence in the EHAGL region and also in the UK, as well as the global (former) refugee diaspora to gain further support for expanding regional initiatives and promote possible pledges for complementary pathways projects at the 2023 Global Refugee Forum.

Diaspora Engagement

The UNHCR Regional Bureau has continued to expand the **EHAGL Refugees Diaspora Project** which aims to engender the support of (former) refugees originating from the region, including those who have previously accessed Complementary Pathways opportunities such as students/ graduates, entrepreneurs, celebrities and influencers. Through their personal lived experiences, UNHCR believes the diaspora network can provide an invaluable resource for future generations of refugee candidates for education and labour mobility pathways as well as the long-term success of family reunification and private sponsorship programs.

Advocacy and External Engagement

In January 2023, a mission to Edinburgh enabled the UNHCR Regional Bureau to participate in a national forum on the role of the UK higher education sector in responding to a global increase in forced displacement. The forum provided an opportunity to engage with UK universities alongside other stakeholders to explore strategic approaches to refugee inclusion in higher education in the UK and globally, using the available assets of the sector and ensuring coordinated action towards the objectives of the 15by30 Roadmap. The event brought in various perspectives of participants

including UNHCR, civil society and universities as well as refugees.

Training, Learning and Development

In Q4 of 2022, the Regional Bureau in partnership with RefugePoint hosted a workshop on Labour Mobility in Nairobi, Kenya. Over three days, the workshop brought together a variety of global stakeholders including non-profits, NGO's, diplomatic missions, employers, labour mobility candidates among the refugee population in EHAGL, regional actors and representatives from 11 UNHCR country operations as well as country offices in Ireland and Canada, and UNHCR Headquarters. The presenters offered practical guidance for participants to expand and consolidate their engagement in labour mobility with a goal of enhancing refugee access to jobs in third countries.

In the first half of 2023, the Regional Bureau facilitated two Labour Mobility webinars for country operations, delivered by TalentLift Canada and Talent Beyond Boundaries respectively.

The UNHCR Regional Bureau delivered internal training on complementary pathways for refugee admission to third countries to the Private Sector Partnerships Service to inform fundraising initiatives for the EHAGL region, and to new RefugePoint deployees working on third country solutions to further promote knowledge exchange and experience sharing.

The Regional Bureau also provided training to UNHCR colleagues and refugee-led organisations engaged in outreach through Telling the Real Story and other such activities for communication with communities, and the referral of potential candidates for Labour Mobility, with a particular focus on Ethiopia, Somalia and Sudan.

Good Practices

Uganda: Contact Group on Information sharing: Following significant system building and discussions with partners, and given increased refugee departures from Uganda for admission to third countries through complementary pathways (at least 2,226 persons in the first half of 2023), a contact group will be launched in the Uganda country operation in Q3 of 2023, aiming to improve information sharing with due consideration of data protection and privacy, engage humanitarian and development partners more broadly, coordinate more effectively and expand advocacy efforts.

Kenya: Extending IELTS Language Training: Increasing the duration of IELTS (International English Language Testing System) language training from one week to two weeks has provided refugee candidates more time and resources to adequately prepare for the exam, increasing their chances of achieving the required score for demonstrating English language proficiency.

Expanding Skills Beyond Healthcare: Expanding the range of vocational skills to include other professions such as carpenters, chefs, cooks, and more creates a wider array of labour mobility opportunities for refugees. By diversifying their skills to meet global market demands for workers, refugees can apply for jobs in different industries and increase their chances of finding employment in a third country.

Rwanda: In Rwanda, refugees can now directly submit applications for **Machine Readable Convention Travel Documents (MRCTDs)** online. MRCTDs are issued by the Directorate General of Immigration and Emigration (DGIE). Applications cost 20,000 RWF and may be made through the DGIE website, in Kigali or in camps with the support of Camp Immigration Officers. Issuance of MRCTDs takes approximately three working days and refugees can collect their MRCTDs in Kigali or in the camps.

Thanks to the accessibility of a MRCTD and quick processing, Bienvenue Irankunda, a Congolese refugee, recently travelled to Spain for an education scholarship. See his story here.

Useful links:

Complementary Pathways - How can refugees move to a third country? - YouTube

Education Pathways: Scholarships for refugees can completely transform their lives - YouTube

Labour Mobility / Employment Pathways: Working abroad can help refugees rebuild their lives - YouTube

Family Reunification: Reuniting families crucial for their survival and happiness - YouTube

Private Sponsorship Pathways: Private Sponsorship Pathways | UNHCR

Humanitarian Pathways: Humanitarian Pathways | UNHCR

For enquiries, suggestions for future newsletters or to learn more about Complementary Pathways initiatives in the EHAGL region, please contact the Durable Solutions Unit at kenrbpathways@unhcr.org copying Gemma-Tracee Apiku Hingley: hingley@unhcr.org.