

Selected Highlights on Integrated Approaches to Documentation in the Great Lakes Region¹

Documentation remains essential for the displaced to be able to positively contribute to their communities, as well as to access basic services adapted to the needs of a range of demographic groups (children, youth and women). Over the course of the two day learning event, two key themes emerged: **i) documentation and registration and ii) citizenship and naturalisation**. Rwanda's system for refugee registration and documentation and the Tanzania Comprehensive Solutions Strategy (TANCOSS) - Tanzania's decision to grant 162,000 Burundian refugees' citizenship both provide concrete and instructive examples in the Great Lakes region of these two major themes within documentation. These two cases present a clear link between investing in documentation and citizenship and enabling refugees to integrate the hosting society, as a pathway to successful (re)integration.

Documentation and Registration

Documentation contributes positively to forcibly displaced people's access to basic services, especially their access to finance, bank accounts, free movement, the labour market, property, civil registration and healthcare, as well as various levels of formal and technical education for children and youth. This is especially important in protracted forced displacement situations where refugees and asylum seekers remain in host countries for several years, as it fosters their integration. Given the importance of documentation and refugee registration, how do countries in the Great Lakes region ensure that both refugees and returnees within their borders have full access to documentation?

Case Study: Refugee registration and documentation in Rwanda

Key Features



Systematic registration of all asylum seekers



All asylum seekers given temporary residency permits



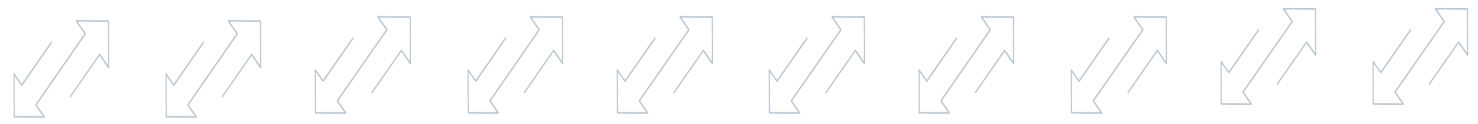
All refugees receive a Machine Readable Convention Travel Document



Equal access to the national civil registration and vital statistics system

The Rwandan government (GoR) recognizes the importance of issuing relevant documents to forcibly displaced persons, notably asylum seekers and refugees. Issuance of documents starts with the registration of asylum seekers, which includes recording their personal biodata and reasons for seeking asylum. The initial registration of asylum seekers is critical, as it allows the person to legitimately stay in the country as an asylum seeker and protects them from refoulement. After registration, asylum seekers are given temporary residence permits pending a decision on their application for asylum. This is the first document the asylum seeker receives as soon as they seek asylum in Rwanda and it **allows the recipient to legally reside in the country pending the final decision from the refugee determination committee**. The same document will help them to get necessary assistance from the UNHCR. Once the applicant is approved by the National Committee as an eligible refugee the GoR, in collaboration with UNHCR, issues the certificate of registration to refugees with age of majority. These documents - registration certificate and identity card - are equally important, as they constitute proof of legal

¹ This document was developed as part of a year-long series of learning events developed jointly by the World Bank, Samuel Hall, and the Rift Valley Institute on development responses to forced displacement with panelists and government officials from the six countries of the Great Lakes region.



identity of a person which is key in order for persons of concern to be included digitally and socio-economically within the host community.

Additionally, the **GoR also provides refugees with Machine Readable Convention Travel Document**. This document enables refugees to travel internationally for an array of reasons, including business, work, studies, medical treatment, and tourism – and to access services from the local Rwandan authorities. In other words, it provides them with a local identity and a role in contributing to local development. Following the acquisition of the ID card and registration certificate all registered refugees in Rwanda are able to:

- Seek employment and work without applying for a Rwandan work permit. Refugees do not need permission from the Rwandan immigration services to work in the country – their ID or certificate of registration is enough for refugees to seek employment in Rwanda.
- Open bank accounts from which they can receive salaries or remittances.
- Register their own SIM cards and access online services and opportunities.
- Register their own business and acquire a registration certificate.
- Purchase and own property, such as land, and acquire title deeds.
- Legally marry and acquire a marriage certificate and birth certificate for children.

In addition, other documents, such birth and marriage certificates open access to the fulfilment of other rights, including access to citizenship. The **Civil Registration and Vital Statistics system** registers all births and deaths, issues birth and death certificates, and compiles and disseminates vital statistics, including cause of death information. It also records marriages and divorces. **Refugees and the local community enjoy the same rights in accessing civil registration documents**. The Rwandan legal framework also provides **full access to Rwandan nationality to foreigners – including refugees –** through **Articles 8 and 14 of Organic law n° 30/2008 of 25/07/2008** relating to Rwandan nationality.

Main Impacts



Access to national labour market without a work permit



Access to bank accounts



Digital identity: SIM card registration to access online services



Ability to register own businesses



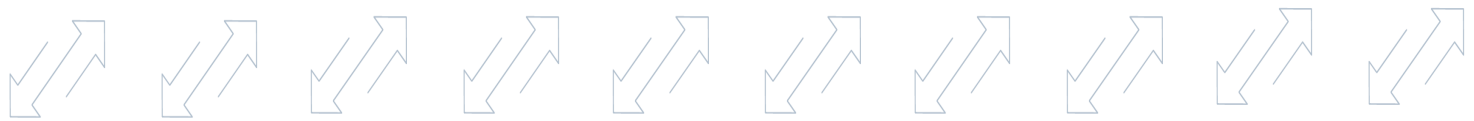
Access to property and land



Inclusion in vital national statistics, and access to citizenship

Naturalisation and Pathways to Citizenship

The increasingly protracted nature of conflicts has contributed to prolonged periods of exile for refugees – with current averages of 20 years. With many states in the Great Lakes region hosting refugees in protracted situations often lasting several decades, questions about naturalisation and pathways to citizenship are always at the centre of discussions about forced displacement in the region. Notably, questions centred on the following themes – how countries in the region have integrated refugees who have been living within their borders for long periods of time, particularly regarding refugee integration via citizenship. Within the Great Lakes region, Tanzania’s actions during the naturalisation process of Burundian refugees between 2007 and 2010 provides one of the flagship cases for refugee integration via naturalisation, as outlined below.



Case Study: TANCOS - Tanzania Comprehensive Solutions Strategy (2007 - 2010)

Key Features Enabling TANCOS



Refugees followed integrated educational programme



Refugees economic, social, and cultural integration



Refugees' access to land in Tanzania under the Open Door policy



Strong commitment from high level government officials

Tanzania provides an instructive case study on naturalisation and pathways to citizenship for refugees in protracted situations for other countries in the Great Lakes region. **Tanzania naturalised 162 000 refugees in 2009/2010**, allowing them to become **full Tanzanian citizens**. In June 2007, the Tanzanian government, in partnership with the Burundian government and UNHCR, adopted the **Tanzania Comprehensive Solutions Strategy (TANCOS)**. TANCOS, launched in 2008, outlined a plan for **durable solutions for those Burundian refugees who had lived in Tanzania since 1972**, including **voluntary repatriation to Burundi, processing citizenship applications** for those who chose naturalisation, and **relocation of the naturalised refugees** from the refugee settlements to other regions of Tanzania. The Tanzanian government and UNHCR organized a census and individual registration, which recorded aspirations and detailed information about refugees' social, demographic, and economic situations. The majority – 79 percent – of refugees chose to become Tanzanian citizens, with the remaining 21 percent choosing to repatriate to Burundi. The relocation plan within Tanzania was suspended – with naturalised refugees allowed to choose if they wished to be relocated or remain in refugee settlements. The programme was lauded as a **model for progressive solutions to displacement** and was the **first time any state naturalized a large group of refugees under UNHCR protection**. A total of **162,156 applications for naturalisation** were received in June 2010, with a **98 percent approval rate**.²

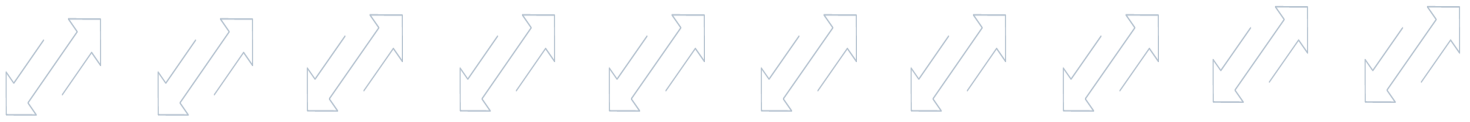
Processing naturalisation applications was a crucial component of TANCOS, which involved digitising application forms, establishing naturalisation processing centres, and ensuring ample registration and office equipment in remote locations where the population lived. Setting up this logistical procedure included assisting applicants with their application forms, identifying witnesses for residence declarations, gathering fingerprints and conducting cross-checks in police archives in Dar Es Salam, review and approval of applications by Tanzanian immigration officials, renunciation of previous citizenship (Burundi), and oath taking before Tanzanian commissioners.³

Access to land played a central role in the implementation of TANCOS policy. The policy was made possible due to the Burundian refugees' access to land in "old settlements" – on which they cultivate, sell products in local markets, and contribute to the local and national economy. **Former Burundian refugees' decision to choose Tanzanian citizenship was typically motivated by their difficulties in accessing land in their native Burundi** and their perceived abundance of available land in Tanzania. Due to the naturalization process, **new citizens can legally remain on land they occupied temporarily for the previous 40 years**.⁴

² Lawrence Masha (2010) Statement to Parliament by Lawrence Masha, Minister of Home Affairs. Dodoma: Parliament of Tanzania, 25 June, translated from Kiswahili by Nicolous Praygod, University of Dar es Salaam.

³ UNHCR (2009) UNHCR Statistical Yearbook, <https://www.unhcr.org/4ce532ff9.html>

⁴ Amelia Kuch (2017) Naturalization of Burundian Refugees in Tanzania: The Debates on Local Integration and the Meaning of Citizenship Revisited, *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 30:3(468-487)



Burundian refugees who arrived in Tanzania in 1972 were welcomed under the 'Open Door' refugee policy, born out of President Nyerere's commitment to Pan-African ideals, as well as recognition of the opportunities refugees presented for attracting development resources for remote areas.⁵ The Tanzanian Government established **three agricultural-based settlements for Burundian refugees** – Ulyankulu in Tabora Region and Katumba and Mishamo in Rukwa Region.⁶ The **1972 Burundian refugees were given land to farm and live on**.⁷ There were particular characteristics of the Burundian refugee population that contributed to the government's willingness to consider naturalization in Tanzania. The **majority – 82 percent– were born and raised in Tanzania**⁸ and had **followed the Tanzanian curriculum and spoke Kiswahili and English**, compared to refugees in camp settings who followed the Burundian school curriculum and spoke Kirundi and French. Their level of **social, economic, and cultural integration** prompted the Tanzanian Minister of Home Affairs to proclaim that "these people have no home other than Tanzania".⁹ Furthermore, the **refugee settlements were self-reliant** via crop cultivation and self-sufficient in producing cash crops, such as tobacco. The **refugees stopped receiving international aid in 1985**. This unique historical context also facilitated the implementation of this durable solution for Burundian refugees.

Main Impacts



162,000 Burundian refugees naturalised



98% of naturalisation applications approved



Economic benefits to Burundian economy from returnees

Other Questions and Issues to Think About

Documentation and Registration

For further examples of documentation and registration for refugees, **see: Uganda's documentation regime**, which is accessible and free. This includes conventional travel documents, free student passes, and work permits. With these documents, refugees can integrate communities and apply for citizenship after 20 years in the country. Burundi's system similarly gives refugees access to documentation that allows them to open bank accounts, purchase SIM cards, work, and access civil registration documents. **Burundi presents another case study** for documentation access in displacement in the Great Lakes region. Refugees in Burundi – including those living in urban areas – can own businesses and can get marriage certificates from the district authority in which the camp where the marriage took place is affiliated.

Digital Identities

As discussed above, a lack of identity documents hinders refugees' access to basic services – including mobile phones, finance, education, healthcare, and employment. UNHCR launched a **Biometric Identity Management System (BIMS)** in 2015 to digitally collect and save asylum seekers' fingerprints, iris data and facial images, which are encrypted within a personal ID card facilitating quick identity validation.¹⁰ Digital technology – particularly mobile technology – has been increasingly leveraged in order to support displaced populations and supporting organisations. These methods have been implemented in several countries within the Great Lakes region – as evidenced by **mobile money facilitated humanitarian cash transfers to support displaced populations in Rwanda**.¹¹ Central banks in Rwanda amended mobile money identification verification regulations in order to allow UN-issued identification – i.e. refugee IDs – as acceptable for humanitarian financial transactions. Relatedly, **mobile network operators in Tanzania have developed mobile birth registration application systems**, which has facilitated efficient and accessible data collection and registration for refugee populations.¹²

⁵ Sreeram Chaulia (2003). The Politics of Refugee Hosting in Tanzania: From Open Door to Unsustainability, Insecurity and Receding Receptivity. *Journal of Refugee Studies* 16:147-166

⁶ UNHCR (2009) UNHCR Statistical Yearbook, <https://www.unhcr.org/4ce532ff9.html>

⁷ Sreeram Chaulia

⁸ SA3 (2007). Study of Tanzania's Old Settlement Hosting the 1972 Refugees from Burundi, Dar es Salaam, December

⁹ Lawrence Masha (2008), interview for the film Home Free: Three Burundian refugee stories, Burundi Film Centre.

¹⁰ GSMA (2017) Refugees and Identity: Considerations for mobile-enabled registration and aid delivery

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.