

Draft website content for the Gender, Women and Children Program

Gender, Women and Children (GWC)

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1. Background and mandate

➤ Establishment of the Program

With the signing of the Pact and its protocols, ICGLR Member States expressed their willingness to mainstream gender, women and children dimensions in all four ICGLR Programs of Action¹. The Gender, Women and Children Program (hereafter referred to as “Gender Program”) coordinated by the ICGLR Conference Secretariat is nevertheless the latest program of the ICGLR. It was established in 2014 following the approval by ICGLR Heads of States of the recommendation made by the ICGLR Women’s Forum, to establish a gender program within the Secretariat².

Prior to the establishment of the Gender Program, the Conference Secretariat had a dedicated Gender Unit from 2007 to 2014, supported by UNWOMEN (UNIFEM at the time). It was composed of three staff including a Senior Gender Expert, a Junior Gender Expert as well as a Communication Specialist. The Unit was part of the Cross-Cutting Issues Program which focused on issues related to Gender, Human Rights, Human Settlement, Youth, HIV/AIDS and Environment. In addition, the Unit was tasked to mainstream those issues in the other four Regional Programs.

The revised organigram of the Conference Secretariat, featuring the new Program of Action for Gender, Women and Children was formally adopted during the ICGLR Heads of State Summit held in January 2014. Since then, the Gender Program became the fifth Program of Action managed by the ICGLR Conference Secretariat. In order to achieve the objectives of the newly set up Program, a Program Director was recruited to oversee its implementation, with the support of a technical assistant.

➤ Vision & Mandate

The ICGLR Gender Program was established with the vision to promote gender, protect the rights of women and children and to improve their social and economic living conditions in the Great Lakes Region³.

It is mandated to carry out three key areas of work⁴

- (i) mainstreaming gender into the ICGLR’s overall programmatic work, by implementing interventions that strengthen the gender dimensions of the four existing Programs of Action (see above)
- (ii) implement gender specific projects in the area of SGBV and Women, Peace and Security, in particular to strengthen women’s role in conflict resolution and peace building

¹ The other programs are: (i) Program of Action for Peace and Security; (ii) Program of Action for Democracy and Good Governance; (iii) Program of Action for Economic Development and Regional Integration (iv) Regional Program of Action for Humanitarian and Social Issues

² 5th Ordinary Summit of Heads of State and Government, Luanda January 15th, 2014: <https://ungreatlakes.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/declaration>

³ Rapport Annuel du Programme Genre Femmes et Enfants, 2014

⁴ Based on the Terms of Reference of the Gender Director

- (iii) Strengthen and facilitate the implementation of the ICGLR gender/SGBV normative framework, in particular: support ICGLR Member States in the domestication and implementation of ICGLR's SGBV protocol and the implementation of Kampala Declaration⁵ decisions, develop a gender policy/strategy for the Great Lakes Region and strengthen the capacities of ICGLR's Regional Women' Forum.

2. Activities since 2014

Since the Gender Program was established in 2014, several activities were carried out both at national and regional level. The main areas of the program's intervention have been among others supporting women's involvement in conflict resolution, security and peace-building, women's equality and empowerment in democracy and good governance, in particular the electoral process, preventing ending impunity and assisting victims of gender-based sexual violence in line with the Kampala Declaration, and mainstream gender in the fight against illegal exploitation of natural resources.

Key program activities in recent years include the elaboration of the [ICGLR Gender Policy](#) and the [ICGLR Regional Action Plan 2019-2024 for the implementation of the UNSCR 1325](#) on Women Peace and Security. In addition, in 2019, the Gender Program successfully organized a [High-Level Consultation of ICGLR Ministers of Gender and Justice](#) which resulted in the adoption of a [Regional Guide to fast-tracking criminal procedures](#) as well as the up-dated [Status report on the implementation of the Kampala Declaration](#).

The Gender Program further played an import role to ensure that gender related activities are included in all the ICGLR programs of action. In 2016 for example, the Gender Program and the Peace and Security Program jointly organized a training workshop for the ICGLR's Regional Pool of Mediators composed of 28 members, including 9 males and 19 females, on mediation and mediation technics. The Gender Program also worked in synergy with the Democracy and Good Governance to mainstream gender in the mineral sector in general and in the RINR whistle blowing mechanism tool specifically. This was done through sensitization activities which took place in Kigali in 2015 during a training workshop on mainstreaming gender in the mineral sector, and in Bukavu in 2017 during the launch of the pilot phase of the implementation of the whistle blowing mechanism. Additionally, the Gender Program [developed Guidelines on Gender and Mining](#), which is in the process of being updated.

Although first steps were made in terms of synergy between the gender directorate and the other programs of action, more efforts are needed to increase collaboration among programs of action as this will facilitate the process of mainstreaming gender into the other areas of intervention of the ICGLR.

Operational plans have been very useful instruments to effectively plan and monitor the program's activities. In addition, [Annual Reports of the program's activities](#) have regularly been elaborated since 2014.

⁵ <https://www.icglr-rtf.org/publication/view/kampala-declaration-2011/>

3. The Program and related ICGLR regional organs/centers

➤ Regional Women's Forum

Between 2010 and 2015, the ICGLR Women, Youth, Civil Society and Private Sector fora were established to enable implementation of the Protocol on Good Governance and Democracy. They were conceived to be the link between the State and the various categories of stakeholders at grass-roots levels (i.e. youth, women, civil society and private sector). The mandates of the fora have been further elaborated in the Accords that further formalized the establishment of each forum.

The **ICGLR Women's Forum** was established in 2010 with the following objectives, to (i) provide for a platform for exchange of experiences and good practices, establish lasting alliances, and harmonize strategies for effective advocacy and monitoring of implementation of appropriate instruments and policies, (ii) ensure the establishment of a regional framework for dialogue, (iii) advocate and lobby for the implementation of the Protocol on Prevention and Suppression of Sexual Violence against Women and Children and (iv) advocate for the inclusion of gender issues in national and regional development processes⁶, (v) promote the role of Civil Society in democratic processes including access to information and participation in good governance and democratic processes at the national and regional levels, (vi) promote participation of women in peace negotiations and mediation at National and Regional levels, (vii) advocate and lobby for the establishment of a Fund to support women political candidates as well as the adoption of positive discriminatory measures in favor of women candidate with a view to promoting and facilitating women's participation to political processes .

The promotion of gender and the protection of women and children rights in the Great Lakes region have always been at the core of the forum's objective. To this end, the forum has led several regional efforts which have contributed to setting up a process that resulted in the adoption of the Kampala Declaration on sexual violence and also contributed in its implementation. Furthermore, it was through strong advocacy efforts at regional level by the Regional Women Forum that a program of action specific for gender issues was established within the Conference Secretariat. However, in spite of these achievements, the forum is facing some challenges. In 2019, the UNPA East and Southern Africa Regional Office in collaboration with key stakeholders commissioned an organizational assessment of ICGLR fora under the EU-funded Programme UN in support of peace and security in the Great Lakes region. The assessment supports that the principles under which the Regional Women Forum was established remains highly relevant, i.e. involving the grass-root level in policy and decision-making processes. The assessment highlights achievements of the forum, but also gaps and challenges that impedes its functioning, such as resource and capacity constraints, and provides recommendations for how these challenges may be addressed.

➤ ICGLR Regional Training Facility (RTF)

The prevention, criminalization and punishment of acts of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) both in peacetime and time of war, has been at the core of the ICGLR's mandate. To address this, different instruments and structures have been established, including The Pact on Security, Stability

⁶ Accord on the Setting up of the Regional Women Forum of Member States of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, April 2011

and Development for the Great Lakes Region, December 2006 Amended November 2012 (the Pact), The Protocol on the Prevention and Suppression of Sexual Violence against Women and Children, 2006 (SGBV Protocol) and The Declaration of the Heads of State and Government of the Member States of the ICGLR Region, 2011 (Kampala Declaration). These give a basis for the establishment of the ICGLR Regional Training Facility (RTF) on the Prevention and Suppression of Sexual Gender Based Violence (SGBV) in the Great Lakes Region.

The ICGLR-RTF, launched in 2014, is a decentralized organ of the ICGLR based in Kampala, Uganda mandated to train and sensitize professionals including judicial officers, social workers, medical officers, police, military and all individuals who handle cases of sexual and gender-based violence⁷ in the region. The creation of this institution by ICGLR is a major progress that strengthens the gender sensitivity of the ICGLR.

The ICGLR-RTF has 169 affiliated expert trainers (8 Master trainers and 161 National Trainers) who train other professionals to effectively handle and manage cases of SGBV. The affiliated experts have so far trained 177 professionals. In total RTF has 344 trainers in the region with at least 10 trainers in each country. At a sector level the ICGLR-RTF has 50 Judicial officers, 97 Police officers, 85 Psychosocial workers and 57 Medical officers among whom 150 are female and 194 male.

In the framework of the Regional Project on Peace and Security in the Great Lakes region co-funded by the German government and the European Union, GIZ is supporting the ICGLR Regional Training Facility (RTF) to strengthen its training approach to prevent and respond to Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in ICGLR Member States in [partnership with the Dr. Denis Mukwege Foundation](#)

In the last six years other partners to ICGLR-RTF have included World Bank, Dutch Government through the Netherlands Initiative for Capacity Development in Higher Education (NICHE), UN WOMEN, UN Office of the Special Representative of Secretary General on Sexual Violence in Conflict (UN ORSG-SVC), African Union Commission's department of Peace and Security, UN Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary General for the Great Lakes Region (UN OSESG-GLR), Maastricht School of Management (MSM), FIDA Uganda, Population Council-Kenya, Care International, the British High Commission, and more recently the Dr Denis Mukwege and Panzi Foundations. For more information on the RTF see: <https://www.icglr-rtf.org/>

4. The ICGLR's Gender Normative Framework

The Pact on Security, Stability and Development for the Great Lakes Region, December 2006 Amended November 2012 (the Pact) and its [Protocol on the Prevention and Suppression of Sexual Violence against women and children](#) constitute a strong gender normative framework as gender and its related issues are taken into consideration in these ICGLR instruments:

The Pact in its article 11 stipulates that "The Member States undertake, in accordance with the Protocol on the Prevention and Suppression of Violence Against Women and Children, to combat sexual violence against women and children through preventing, criminalizing and punishing acts of

⁷ Article 6 (9) of the ICGLR Protocol on Prevention and Suppression of Sexual Violence against Women and Children

sexual violence, both in times of peace and in times of war, in accordance with national laws and international criminal law”⁸

The provisions of the Protocol on Sexual Violence aim to fight against impunity of sexual violence in the Great Lakes region. It also established a legal framework under which Member States undertake to prosecute and punish the perpetrators of crimes of sexual violence in the region.

In addition to the ICGLR Pact and protocols, there are other key strategic documents that constitute and strengthen the ICGLR gender normative framework. These include:

- a. The [ICGLR Regional Gender Policy](#), which was elaborated in 2017 serves as a tool for Member States to strengthen existing initiatives that tackle gender inequalities. It aims at facilitating compliance of ICGLR member states to promote gender equality and providing the necessary support to each member country while ensuring that national and regional approaches are harmonized. This includes the identification of gaps, the scaling-up of good practices and also the provision of technical and institutional support to the member states. It is based on certain core principles like diversity, non-discrimination and gender as a cross-cutting issue and reflects a process of institutional and cultural transformation within the region and member countries. The policy is currently being updated ahead of its adoption by the Member States.
- b. The [ICGLR Regional Action Plan 2019-2024 \(RAP\)](#), was adopted in November 2018 by ICGLR Gender Ministers. It is a strategy that aims to accelerate the implementation of commitments made on WPS in the Great Lakes Region in support of the implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325. It builds on the four cornerstones of the international WPS agenda: prevention, protection, participation of women in post-conflict and peacebuilding efforts as well as relief and recovery. The RAP is complementary and mutually supportive to Member States’ own National Action Plans (NAPs) and aims at strengthening their implementation, by providing clear benchmarks against which ICGLR MS will gauge their own responses and respective NAPs with set targets. The RAP is currently being revised in order to facilitate its operationalization.
- c. The [Model Legislation on the Establishment of Special Courts and other mechanisms to Fast Track the Trial of Sexual Violence against Women and Children](#), provides a guiding legal framework for member states to enact national legislation to establish and strengthen special courts, sessions and procedures. It facilitates to fast-tracking of SGBV cases in the police and the judiciary as a means to end impunity for sexual and gender-based violence, among others
- d. The [ICGLR Regional Guide for the acceleration of criminal procedures of sexual and gender-based violence](#), provides a legal framework that officials in charge of prosecuting SGBV cases can rely on to speed up the process at the level of the penal chain. The Regional Guide is organized into four chapters corresponding to the main pillars of the KAMPALA Declaration, which have been transformed into implementation action areas for each Member State in

⁸ ICGLR, The Pact on Security, Stability and Development of the Great Lakes Region, December 2006 amended November 2012

order to meet their needs in the eradication of SGBV through prevention, the fight against impunity, the protection of victims and witnesses and assistance to victims.

5. Partnerships and Collaboration

➤ Joint Regional Project on Peace and Security

In December 2018, a Regional Project on Peace and Security in the Great Lakes Region was launched to support the ICGLR's Peace and Security work. The project is co-funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and the European Union (EU) and implemented by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) and the United Nations Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region (O-SESG-L).

The project seeks to contribute to the consolidation of peace and stability by strengthening the capacity of the ICGLR Conference Secretariat and its decentralized entities to implement the Pact on Security, Stability and Development and its protocols. Key intervention areas relate to peace and security (in particular peace education and mediation), the fight against the illicit exploitation of natural resources, as well as sexual and gender-based violence and the women, peace and security agenda more globally.

➤ Dr. Denis Mukwege Foundation & Panzi Foundation

In the framework of the Regional Project on Peace and Security co-funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and the European Union (EU), GIZ is supporting the work of the ICGLR Gender Directorate and the RTF to prevent and respond to cases SGBV. In a joint planning workshop with the ICGLR partners, it was agreed that a more holistic and harmonized approach towards the prevention and response to SGBV was needed within ICGLR Member States, in particular with regards to SGBV training.

To this effect, a partnership was initiated in May 2019 between the ICGLR RTF, the [Dr. Denis Mukwege Foundation](#) and [Panzi Foundation](#) and GIZ to integrate Panzi's holistic model of care to SGBV survivors (psycho-social, medical, legal assistance and reintegration support) in the RTF's training modules with the idea to pilot the initiative in five pilot countries initially. These include the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Zambia, Rwanda, Uganda and the Central African Republic.

The first SGBV pilot training jointly delivered by experts from the RTF and Panzi Foundation, took place in December 2019 in Goma and Kinshasa in the DRC. As a result of the training, a total of 73 professionals (including 40 male and 33 female) involved in the SGBV response in the DRC, including medical and psycho-social personnel, judicial and police officers increased their knowledge and skills to handle SGBV cases more adequately and address the holistic needs of survivors of sexual and gender-based violence.

As the initiative is expected to further roll out in Rwanda, Zambia, Uganda and CAR in 2020, the Gender Directorate will support the building partnerships and conduct advocacy within the pilot

Member States to implement holistic SGBV service delivery, reparations, Special courts etc. This will include peer-learning visits to exchange experiences and best practices on the holistic model with key stakeholders in the Member States.

➤ African Union

Since August 2019, the ICGLR has been preparing the ground for the implementation of its mediation work while strengthening the collaboration with the African Union and its supporting structures within the AU Peace and Security Department. As the AU is looking into rolling out its own mediation framework, the involvement of the ICGLR as a regional platform will be a key contribution towards the implementation process of the AU mediation framework. Following an exchange visit by the ICGLR Gender Directorate and the AU Mediation Support Unit (MSU) in August 2019, the Gender Director was invited as an additional member to the MSU coordination mechanisms with the Economic Communities on the continent. This has the potential for the MSU to have an additional gender focus in its work, taking into account the realities in the Great Lakes Region. Furthermore, the ICGLR Director has initiated collaboration with the Office of the AU Special Envoy on WPS to ensure the ICGLR's work on Women, Peace and Security is streamlined with the [AU Continental framework on Women, Peace and Security](#) and to collaborate closely in the implementation of the WPS monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.

➤ Other partnerships

Since 2014, Gender Directorate engaged in several partnerships to support the implementation of its activities. These include the Office of the UN Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, [Office of the Special Envoy of the UN Secretary General for the Great Lakes Region \(O-SESG GLR\)](#), UN WOMEN, Swiss Cooperation, World Bank, as well as civil society actors such as the Concertation des Collectifs des Associations Féminines de la region des Grands Lacs (COCAFEM – GL), CARE International, Global Fund for Women, Accord and Nairobi Peace Initiative - Africa (NPI-Africa).

6. Future Perspectives

To further implement its mission to “promote gender, protect the rights of women and children and to improve their social and economic living conditions in the Great Lakes Region”, the Gender Directorate will continue to strengthen its interventions at the regional level. The ICGLR Gender Policy and Regional Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security, currently under revision, as well as the 2011 Kampala Declaration, constitute important frameworks to support regional and national actions in the area of gender, SGBV, and the Women, Peace and Security.

In light of the current pandemic situation, a [meeting of ICGLR Ministers of Gender is planned to discuss the COVID 19 pandemic and the repercussions on women and vulnerable groups](#) in the Great Lakes region. The Gender Directorate together with the ICGLR Program on Humanitarian and Social Issues will be involved at first-hand as such issues are of particular concern to both programs.

The Gender Directorate is also looking into supporting an initiative for the economic recovery of vulnerable women and SGBV survivors in the Great Lakes region and Burundi. The program furthermore aims to commission a study on children's vulnerability in the region.

With the view to further strengthen synergies with other ICGLR action programs, the Gender Directorate plans to organize, in collaboration with the Democracy and Good Governance Program, the first regional conference on Gender, Women and Mines. The program also plans to contribute to the updating of guidelines to mainstreaming gender in the mineral sector, which outcomes will feed into the foreseen regional conference.

In addition, joint collaboration with the Peace and Security program is also foreseen in the Gender Directorate activities, particularly with regard to the launch of the Campaign “Zero Tolerance Child Soldiers in the Great Lakes region” as well as the Round Table of Actors engaged in peace initiatives in the Great Lakes region.