



Press release:

PEER-LEARNING EVENT ON COMPREHENSIVE DURABLE SOLUTIONS FOR REFUGEES IN THE GREAT LAKES REGION

Bujumbura, 1st February 2023 – Refugee Management Commissioners from ICGLR Member States, parliamentarians, national ICGLR coordinators, representatives from refugee-led organizations, NGOs and multilateral agencies working with displaced people gathered in Bujumbura from 31 January to 1 February to exchange good practices and propose policy changes to strengthen refugees' livelihoods and to advance comprehensive durable solutions for refugees in the Great Lakes Region.

The Great Lakes region hosts more than 4.68 million of refugees in the twelve ICGLR countries with many spending at least five years in their host country and others have more than two decades in displacement, mainly living in refugee camps in their countries of asylum without livelihood and self-reliance opportunities.

Since the 2019 Global Refugee Forum, the region witnessed significant progress on over 80 pledges made by the ICGLR Member States, the ICGLR Secretariat and others which aim to unlock the untapped potential that refugees can bring to their host communities through further inclusion into national services and labour markets, and advance comprehensive solutions for refugees in the Great Lakes region.

This regional exchange drew findings from two interlinked regional research products. The Regional Durable Solutions Secretariat for the Great Lakes (ReDSS GL) composed of 10 international Non-Governmental Organizations reviewed the refugee situations in Burundi, Rwanda, Uganda, DRC, and Tanzania to explore levels of self-reliance, livelihoods opportunities and alternatives to encampment among displaced populations. Through a legal lens, the ICGLR research on solutions reviewed situations long-term refugees in their host countries face around the risk of statelessness and to encourage that it is mitigated through access to civil registration, nationality, and identity documents.

Building on the 2019 High-level meeting of Ministries in charge of refugees in the Great Lakes region States, this regional event sought to collect ideas and good practices from the different actors to inform the development of a regional strategy and action plan to promote comprehensive durable solutions for refugees. Returning refugees shared their insights on return and reintegration in Burundi. Refugees from Uganda and Burundi equally provided their testimonies highlighting the importance of dignified access to livelihoods in their host countries while searching for any durable solution to their plight. In her compelling testimony, a highly skilled Burundian returnee young woman who pursued her tertiary education in the region appealed to the international community to *“invest in reintegration to unlock her potential to serve her homeland”*. Her call was echoed by refugees who also shared their aspirations to be equipped with the job skill set to meet their needs without having to any longer plead for and depend on aid.

The event culminated with the adoption of an [outcome document](#) providing key recommendations to comprehensively advance durable solutions for refugees in the Great Lakes region. Main recommendations include the importance to continuously search for the three durable solutions for refugees - either voluntary return with continuous efforts for sustainable reintegration, both in countries of return and in host communities; resettlement and complementary pathways to third countries; or when States elect for it, local integration in the host country. Other recommendations included agreement to support further socio-economic inclusion of refugees and increase their livelihoods and self-reliance in their host country. Informed by these recommendations, the ICGLR Secretariat reaffirmed its readiness to support the development of a regional strategy on comprehensive durable solutions for refugees in the Great Lakes region and its plan of action in cooperation with ICGLR Member States, UNHCR, ReDSS, and development actors.

This regional peer-to peer meeting was hosted by the Government of the Republic of Burundi and co-organized by the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), the Regional Durable Solutions Secretariat for the Great Lakes (ReDSS GL) and the United High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), with funding from the European Union (EU) Africa Trust Funds.

For more details on this event: https://icglr.org/ova_doc/outcome-document-peer-learning-event-on-comprehensive-durable-solutions-for-refugees-in-the-great-lakes-region/

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