

OBJECTIVES

- Study a select number of protracted refugee populations in Tanzania, Uganda, Rwanda and DRC and assess their risk of statelessness arising from prolonged exile.
- Develop recommendations for local integration pathways that mitigate risks of statelessness and ensure the realization of the right to a nationality, including access to legal identity documentation, in support of durable solutions.
- Inform the development of a comprehensive durable solutions strategy for forcibly displaced persons, including refugees in the Great Lakes region.

Background

The Great Lakes sub-region is characterized by a number of protracted refugee situations. In some situations, several generations of refugees have been born in exile in their country of asylum. Statelessness can arise as both a cause and consequence of displacement, particularly for forcibly displaced populations who have spent a prolonged time in exile. In some instances, refugees have lost their ties with their country of origin, are unable to prove their legal ties to their country of origin, or might no longer be considered citizens by their country of origin, and remain without guaranteed access to the citizenship of their country of asylum and thus might be at risk of statelessness.

In the spirit of the 2019 Munyonyo Outcome Document of the 2019 High Level Conference of Ministers in Charge of Refugees in the Great Lakes, this study, undertaken by the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) with the support of UNHCR, aims at exploring local integration for refugees. It focuses on those living in protracted situations, for whom voluntary return to the country of origin, or resettlement or complementary pathways to a third country are not viable or available options, and who may also be at risk of statelessness.

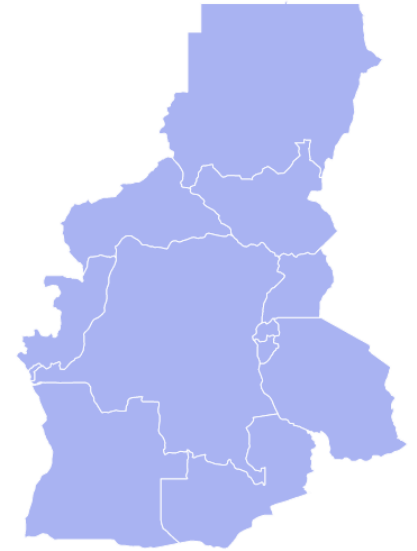
The selected pilot countries serving as case studies for this regional research include Tanzania, Uganda, DRC, and Rwanda. Among these pilot countries, a selected number of protracted refugee situations will be studied, who will be further narrowed down based on length of stay in the country of asylum, risks of statelessness, and prospects for durable solutions, including potential for local integration in light of the pledges made at the 2019 High-Level Segment on Statelessness and 2019 Global Refugee Forum. More specifically, these will comprise the following refugee protracted groups whose members have spent more than 10-15 years and above in exile : (i) Congolese refugees in Rwanda, (ii) 1972 Burundian refugees in Tanzania, (iii) Rwandan refugees in DRC, as well as (iv) Congolese and South Sudanese refugees in Uganda.

The 2019 Munyonyo Outcome Document emphasizes that “successful local integration requires legal stay arrangements, freedom of movement of refugees on the national territory in conformity with the law of the host country, and inclusion of refugees in national services and systems (...)” combined with “access to legal identity documentation, including birth registration”.

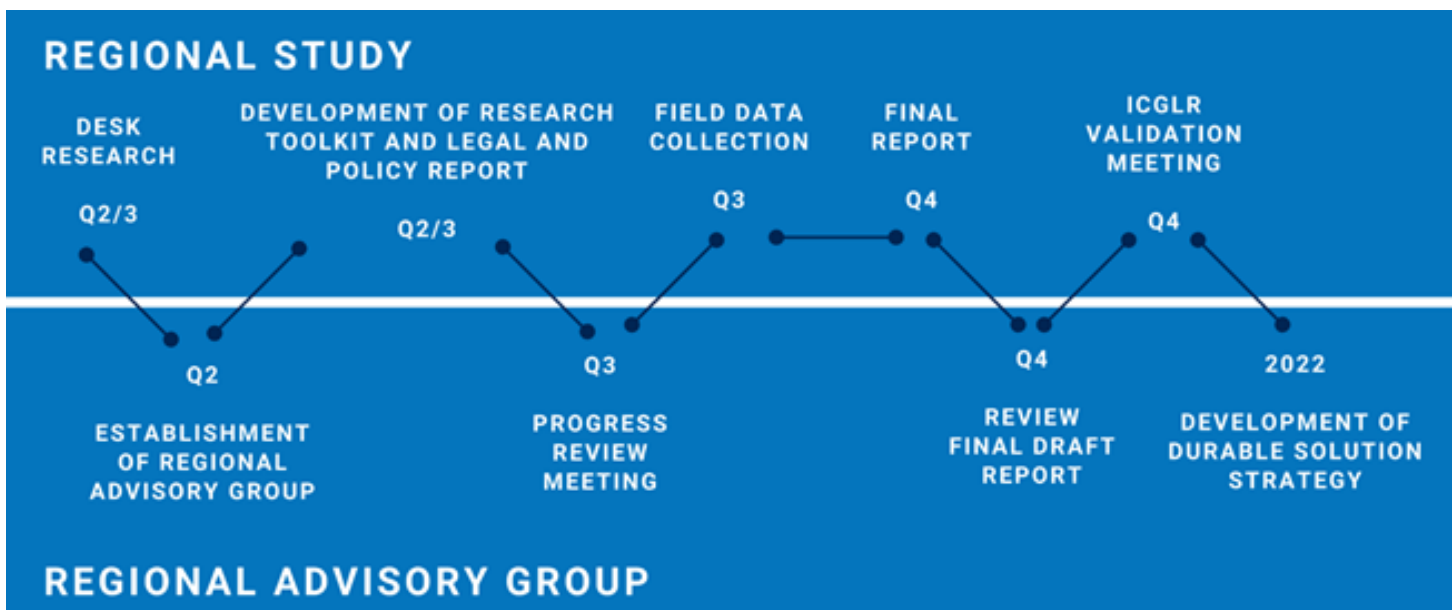
Findings from the study will inform the implementation of some of the 58 pledges made by the ICGLR Executive Secretariat and the 12 ICGLR Member States at the High-Level Segment on Statelessness and the Global Refugee Forum in 2019. These pledges include important commitments to strengthen data on stateless persons and at-risk of statelessness in the region, and to explore prospects for durable solutions. The study will help to advance regional and continental initiatives towards achieving the goals of the 2017 Brazzaville Declaration, and its Consolidated Action Plan on the Eradication of Statelessness in the Great Lakes Region; Agenda 2030, particularly Target 16.9. of the Sustainable Development Goals on legal identity and promotes the objectives and spirit of the 2063 Agenda of the African Union.

Regional Advisory Group

- A Regional Advisory Group (RAG) will be established to advise and guide the study process, recommendations, and findings. The RAG will be chaired by the ICGLR Executive Secretariat, with a Secretariat by the UNHCR Regional Bureau for Eastern and Horn of Africa and Great Lakes. Additional members will be serving as observers and will comprise subject experts and practitioners in matters pertaining to refugees, statelessness, and citizenship.
- The RAG will provide technical inputs to the design of the research toolkit and validate the parameters of the study as well as the final report.
- Following the completion of the study, the RAG will remain available to support the development of a comprehensive durable solutions strategy for refugees and other displaced populations in the Great Lakes region.



Regional Study Process



Expected Outcomes and Impact

- The study will contribute to greater awareness of the causes, specific risk profiles and scale of statelessness arising from protracted refugee situations in countries of asylum in Great Lakes.
- The findings of the study will contribute to improve the overall situation of refugees in prolonged exile as part of finding durable solutions, by developing concrete recommendations for local integration with sustainable alternative legal status in host countries to mitigate risk of statelessness, realize the right to a nationality and ensure access to proof of legal identity in line with S DG Target 16.9.
- The analysis and recommendations will further inform the development of a comprehensive strategy on durable solutions for forcibly displaced persons including refugees in the Great Lakes, supporting the efforts of the ICGLR Member States to address protracted refugee situations and risks of statelessness, which arise from prolonged exile