

# VOICES FROM EXILE

Daily realities and future prospects of Congolese and Burundian refugees in the Great Lakes Region

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# Acronyms

<b>AFDL</b>	Alliance des Forces Démocratiques pour la Libération du Congo (Congoese rebellion 1996-1998)
<b>IGA</b>	Income-Generating Activities
<b>CEPGL</b>	Economic Community of the Countries of the Great Lakes
<b>ICGLR</b>	International Conference on the Great Lakes Region
<b>EAC</b>	East African Community
<b>CNDD-FDD</b>	National Council for the Defense of Democracy–Forces for the Defense of Democracy
<b>CNDP</b>	National Congress for the Defense of the People
<b>CNR</b>	Commission Nationale pour les Réfugiés (National Commission for Refugees DRC)
<b>CNTB</b>	National Commission on Land and Property (Burundi)
<b>FNL</b>	Forces Nationales de Libération
<b>RPF</b>	Rwandan Patriotic Front
<b>HCR</b>	UN High Commissioner for Refugees
<b>MHA</b>	Ministry of Home Affairs
<b>MONUSCO</b>	UN Mission for the Stabilisation of Congo
<b>NFI</b>	Non Food Items
<b>ONAPRA</b>	National Office for Refugees and Stateless Persons (Burundi)
<b>PPRD</b>	Parti du Peuple pour la Reconstruction et la Démocratie
<b>RCD</b>	Rassemblement Congolais pour la Démocratie
<b>DRC</b>	Democratic Republic of Congo
<b>UDPS</b>	Union pour la Démocratie et le Progrès Social



Burundian refugee in front of her house, Kenya, DRC.  
Photo: Germain Kilabi (ADEPAE).

# Acknowledgements

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This report is the result of a joint effort between three teams of researchers from ADEPAE, Rema Ministries and SVH, and the technical team of the Great Lakes Programme of the Danish Refugee Council. It is the culmination of a reflection that began in 2010 within the framework of a regional partnership between our four organisations, and symbolises our desire to think together about appropriate solutions to the regional and cross-border problems of exile.

We wish to acknowledge the contribution made by the 231 refugees we met in the course of this research, in Burundi, DRC and Tanzania. We were deeply moved by the tragic accounts of their life journeys, and the sincerity with which they shared their experiences. We would also like to thank the UNHCR office in Dar Es-Salaam, especially M. Austin Makwaia Makani, who helped us obtain the necessary authorisations to gain access to Nyarugusu camp in Tanzania, and to the UNHCR offices in Bukavu and Bujumbura for the information and documentation they provided. Our acknowledgements also to the Tanzanian Ministry of Home Affairs, to the provincial branch of the National Commission for Refugees (CNR) in Bukavu, and to the ONAPRA office in Burundi. We are also grateful to the numerous actors out in the field – local authorities, religious leaders and NGOs – who unhesitatingly pointed us in the right direction and facilitated our access to the different research locations.

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Nairobi, April 2013

**Action pour le Développement et la Paix Endogènes**  
**Danish Refugee Council**  
**Rema Ministries**  
**Solidarité des Volontaires pour l'Humanité**



# Presentation of the Four Organisations

**Action pour le Développement et la Paix Endogènes (ADEPAE)** is a non-profit, non-sectarian NGO founded in South Kivu in the Democratic Republic of Congo in February 1997. With its ambition being for the various communities that comprise Congolese society to live together in harmony, ADEPAE supports local populations in transforming conflicts and promoting good governance to help build lasting peace in the Eastern region of the DRC. Among other things, ADEPAE conducts analyses and promotes inter-community dialogue, and takes a special interest in issues arising from conflicts due to population displacements in the region. ADEPAE's national headquarters are located in Bukavu, South Kivu, and its provincial office in Goma, North Kivu.

**Rema Ministries** is a Burundian NGO working on forced displacement since 1996. It was founded by a group of Burundian refugees living in exile in Nairobi who returned home in 2004. Rema's activities focus on the long term reintegration of forced migrants and returnees, and their overall strategy is to provide support to displaced people so that they can build the confidence needed to solve their own problems through constructive dialogue and advocacy. Rema works in partnership with grassroots organisations representing these forced migrants and returnees, and collaborates with other human rights organisations, key government players and Burundian legislative institutions. The process of participatory action research (PAR) is Rema's main tool for understanding its context of operation and identifying the problems to be addressed.

**Solidarité des Volontaires pour l'Humanité (SVH)** is a non-profit organisation under Congolese law created in May 2003 in response to poor governance, social injustice, intercommunity divisions, environmental destruction and violations of human rights in the territory of Fizi, South Kivu (DRC). Since its creation, SVH participates in efforts for restoring peace, establishing peaceful cohabitation between communities and encouraging sustainable development by supporting communities in the analysis and transformation of conflicts, the defence of human rights and the implementation of mechanisms for local governance. For several years, SVH has been involved in monitoring population displacements in the South of South Kivu province, and has been an active participant in the working groups established by humanitarian actors for assisting the displaced and returnees.

**The Danish Refugee Council (DRC)** is an international humanitarian NGO based in Copenhagen, Denmark. Founded in 1956, it provides humanitarian assistance to populations affected by conflict – refugees, internally displaced persons and host communities – in more than thirty countries in the world. Its Great Lakes Civil Society Programme is a regional programme implemented since January 2010 in six countries of the Great Lakes Region, which aims to support civil society organisations in analysing specific displacement dynamics and searching for long term solutions to conflict and displacement, by proposing realistic and accountable policies from the local to the regional level. The programme is managed out of the Danish Refugee Council's regional office in Nairobi, Kenya.

# Executive Summary

The objective of this study is to bring new light on how Congolese and Burundian refugees live from day to day in exile in the Great Lakes region, and how they perceive and understand the options available to them in this context. The research is a continuation of that started in 2010 in a joint effort between the Danish Refugee Council and the Congolese and Burundian civil society organisations ADE-PAE (Action pour le Développement et la Paix Endogènes), Rema Industries, and SVH (Solidarité des Volontaires pour l'Humanité). Using testimonies gathered from Congolese and Burundian refugees in seven different sites in Burundi, DRC and Tanzania, the purpose of the research is to bring the position of the refugees to the attention of national and local politicians and decision-makers when they deal with the refugees' problems and seek solutions for them. A second objective is to bring a regional perspective to the problems of displacement, exile and return, and to highlight the limits of the three political solutions offered by the existing normative framework: a voluntary return to the country of origin; integration locally into the host country; or resettlement in a third country.

The great majority of these Congolese and Burundian refugees in exile in Tanzania, Burundi and DRC were forced to flee wars and violence resulting from the socio-political history of their countries. In 1972, 1988 and 1993, hundreds of thousands of Burundians fled in waves from political crises and massacres triggered by the interne-cine contest for power between the Hutu and Tutsi communities. In 1996-97, huge numbers of refugees left the DRC when Mobutu was ousted during the AFDL war after thirty years of dictatorship. These movements continued after the second Congolese war of

1998-2003, and do so today in North and South Kivu as the result of repeated clashes between rebel groups and the regular army. These conflicts affect all citizens without exception and whatever their social standing. However, although the victims of war, and particularly refugees, share a common fate, the effects of displacement are felt very differently by each individual. The interviews carried out with the refugees during this project demonstrate just how different each individual case is. Social status, home and community of origin, knowledge of the country of exile and the local language, existence or not of a support system, family situation, depth of sense of identity, as well as the actual physical escape into exile all contribute to the unique case of each refugee.

The manner of departure from the home country has a direct bearing on the refugee's ability to come to terms with exile and to overcome obstacles. Departure is often violent and traumatic, even if experienced differently by different people. All the refugees in the study report having witnessed – directly or indirectly – acts of violence committed by armed groups or civilians while fleeing war in their own country, and the memory of these are particularly painful. Some have been direct victims of violence and still suffer the physical effects. Others have fled out of fear of becoming victims themselves, a fear which prevents them today from envisaging a return home.

The experience of exile ends up having a profound effect on the identity and personality of a refugee. After ten, fifteen or thirty years in exile, the process of reshaping identity is complicated - the refugee is no longer the same person as when he or she left. The process varies according to the personal situation of the refugee and his or her journey into exile: age at the moment of departure; number of years spent outside his or her own country; economic, social, cultural and linguistic differences between the country of origin

and the host country; living in a camp surrounded by compatriots; or trying to integrate into a new social structure, are all variables which impact on the personal identity of a refugee.

Given the circumstances of their displacement and their subsequent trajectories, and in spite of the advantages of assistance and humanitarian protection conferred by their refugee status, the Burundians and Congolese describe daily life as precarious, with heightened levels of vulnerability. Whether in camps or in towns and villages, all the refugees say the reality of their existence is that it is inherently uncertain, the financial means at their disposal are limited, they suffer significant social discrimination, are frustrated with their dependence on aid, and have great difficulty envisaging a mid- or long-term future. This is exacerbated by their very limited knowledge of the assistance frameworks on offer, which creates confusion about the options available and affects their ability to look to the future in an informed and objective way. Although the refugees claim they are grateful for this assistance, all of them express dissatisfaction. They criticise both the quality and quantity of the aid, saying that it never fully meets their needs. The resulting economic insecurity has serious social consequences: many refugees admit to resorting to degrading or illegal activities to make up the shortfall.

Refugees also complain of receiving no reliable or transparent information on their rights, or regarding either the political protection or legal options available to them. Faced with this lack of options for recourse in the event of abuse, rare are those who dare to, or who can afford to, appeal to the authorities of the host country. These frustrations are aggravated by the very limited information they are given on what assistance they are entitled to, which causes confusion on their future options and means they cannot consider their future in an objective and informed way. They are confused about the condi-

tions governing the granting and withdrawal of refugee status, and what exactly is meant by this status. The disconnection between descriptions of the normative framework and the refugees' perceptions is clearly evident in the cases of the Burundian refugees in the village of Kenya, those in Bukavu, and those recently repatriated from Mtabila. The same confusion reigns regarding possibilities for resettlement in a third country; the refugees give numerous examples of the extent of their ignorance as to the precise conditions of eligibility and how to submit an application for resettlement. This confusion leads to unrealistic expectations on the part of some, and ends in feelings of deep despair.

In the face of the day-to-day struggle to meet their needs and those of their families, refugees often have little choice but to find alternative, more or less legal, strategies for survival. Whether in camps or in an urban situation they find food, shelter, medical care and schooling for their children by developing strategies to find employment and other means of livelihood. These strategies are often not very profitable, and can expose the refugees to further vulnerability and different types of abuse. The existence and energy of social groups and networks, whether ethnic, religious or political, helps to arm them against the major disruptions caused by displacement, so that they rebuild bonds and solidarity and overcome daily difficulties together. However, although these networks play an important part in lessening the refugees' suffering, they can also, in some cases, help to accentuate the conflicts between different groups and communities, thus weakening security conditions in exile.

In these circumstances, future prospects are relatively limited, evaluated by each individual according to personal living conditions and specific needs. Basically, refugees are presented with three options by the aid organisations and governments, as mentioned above: a return to the country of origin; integration into the host country; or



relocation to a third country.

Although many of the refugees hope to return home one day, they have very strict conditions to be met before they entertain the idea of returning. They cite the need for political openness, safety and social and economic opportunities in their country of origin. Those who prefer to stay and integrate into the host country are generally those who have been able to forge solid links there over a more or less long period of time. Others, mainly the young and the particularly vulnerable, have such a negative vision of their situation that their only desire is to seek new horizons in the West or in Australia. There is another smaller group of people, disillusioned and traumatised by their experience of exile, who seem unable to envisage any long-term future and who put their lives in the hands of God or UNHCR.

The study concludes by highlighting the need to systematically include the refugees' individual perspectives and needs in deciding on national and regional policies on protection and aid so that they take into account the diversity of each experience and the specificity of individual needs. By giving priority to the refugees' own points of view, the study provides a critical analysis of the applicability of the three options presented to them as durable solutions. Thanks to its regional dimension and coverage of so many points of view from the seven distinct sites, the study reveals numerous similarities between the three countries, and between the behaviour and perspectives of the refugees in each of the different sites. The comparative analysis emphasises that while it is necessary to recognise the numerous and very different experiences the individual refugees have lived through, the solutions found and implemented for their future must be envisaged on the basis of an analysis of the local and regional situation.

The report recommends, among other things:

- An approach to protection and assistance which is both more humane and more inclusive.
- Increasing the options available for the future and envisaging tailor-made solutions that take proper account of the individual vulnerabilities and aspirations of the refugees.
- Defining integrated response strategies implemented by stakeholders at the local, national and regional level.

# Introduction

## Research Objectives

The aim of this study is to bring new light on how Congolese and Burundian refugees experience daily life in exile in the Great Lakes region, and perceive and understand the policy options available to them in this context. The research examines the social, economic and political vulnerability they face on a daily basis, and considers how they appropriate the humanitarian assistance on offer and understand the rights pertaining to their legal status as refugees. The study also considers the informal strategies put in place by the refugees to overcome difficult living conditions and the obstacles that currently stand in the way of a return home after long years in exile, suggesting ways of moving forward that take into account refugees' needs and aspirations.

This research follows from work begun in 2010 by the Danish Refugee Council in partnership with Congolese and Burundian civil society organisations Action pour le Développement et la Paix Endogènes (ADEPAE), Rema Ministries and Solidarité des Volontaires pour l'Humanité (SVH). In 2011, ADEPAE and SVH published a research report about the difficulties faced by Congolese refugees returning to South Kivu (DRC) from Tanzania after several years in exile<sup>1</sup>. A few months later, Rema Ministries carried out a similar assessment of the reintegration problems facing Burundian refugees returning to their country of origin after decades of absence<sup>2</sup>.

These two studies concluded that the humanitarian assistance given to returning refugees by UNHCR, but also by the majority of local and international civil society organisations, was limited to short-

term aid packages, and that this approach could contribute to increasing refugees' insecurity, aggravating latent tensions between communities and engendering new conflicts and displacements in the long term. Significant limitations with regard to the process of reintegration were also noted, and both studies recommended that national normative frameworks and assistance strategies be amended to allow for more effective, durable solutions. A further recommendation was that, in order to better prepare for future returns, and in addition to analysing the living conditions of the refugees who had already returned home, it was necessary to meet with the Congolese and Burundian refugees still in exile in order to better understand the reasons for their resisting repatriation to their country of origin.

In line with these recommendations, our research aims to examine the living conditions of refugees still in exile by analysing them in light of the policy options currently on the table. By collecting stories of the refugees themselves, the main objective is to bring the beneficiaries back into the problem-solving process and into the search for policy solutions at the national and the regional level. Despite numerous actors and humanitarian organisations working to assist refugees and facilitate their return home under dignified and humane conditions, it is surprising that the voice of refugees is not listened to more often and is only rarely the focus of an in-depth and systematic effort at analysing and understanding their concerns. It is precisely this gap - between research and action, theory and practice - that this study seeks to fill. Rather than provide an objective analysis of displacement and assistance, the aim here is to give space to the refugees to tell their stories - to understand their concerns and criticisms, to put them back into context and to see, by way of response, what can be changed and improved in order to take better account of their points of view. The main objective is therefore to give a voice back to the voiceless, and to advocate

on their behalf to political actors and decision-makers. Our analysis aims to be as practical and down-to-earth as possible and will be the first step in opening up such a dialogue, with a view to finding appropriate solutions.

A second objective of this research is to offer a regional perspective on displacement, exile and return. By tackling the diversity of the refugees' individual experiences and analysing the strategies for assistance over seven distinct geographical locations, the report provides a comparative analysis which highlights the differences as well as the commonalities between the three countries, along with the regional trends in perceptions, survival strategies, needs and aspirations of refugees. The research also highlights the cross-border dimension of conflict and insecurity in the region, by painting a complex picture of armed groups and movements that engender daily displacement, and underscoring the cyclical, continual nature of exile and the need to tackle it with approaches that go beyond just the local and national. It also points to the close links that exist between the notions of displacement, identity, nationality and citizenship – a refugee's feeling of belonging being defined by his or her position in the family or community as well as by complex social relationships based on language, ethnicity or economic resources, which invariably spread across boundaries and into the region. Finally, the regional analysis recognises the urgent need to address the refugee problem through regional, as well as national, policies. This would place responsibility with the political authorities and humanitarian actors in the three countries concerned and would pave the way for normative frameworks of assistance that can capture the complexity of identity-related, social, political and economic links between refugees in the region.

The third and final objective of the study is to draw attention to the limitations of the policy options currently available within exist-

ing normative frameworks. The study focuses on the three options traditionally presented to refugees as the only ways out, namely: the right to return to their country of origin, the possibility of local reintegration in the host country, or resettlement in a third country. By highlighting the reality of their living conditions and the limited commitment of the countries of the region to guarantee favourable conditions for return, local integration or reinstallation, the study calls into question the feasibility and durability of these three options, and shows how their way of tackling exile is both too exclusive and "standardised". The emphasis is instead placed on the dynamic and personal nature of displacement and on the need to look for multiple solutions to multiple problems. Finally, the study draws attention to the gap between the promises made by humanitarian agencies and the hopes of the refugees, and to the often far from ideal reality linked to the physical and psychological impact of their exile. It likewise calls for more humanity and for more pragmatism in searching for the right answers to these problems.

## Methodology

A total of 231 refugees were interviewed during the course of this project. The sample included adult male and female refugees of all ages, and took into account social status (relative levels of poverty), vulnerability (orphans, the divorced, young unmarried mothers, etc.), community affiliation, and geographical area of origin. Though the interviewees were selected randomly, the selection process took into account differences in configuration between camps and cities. In the camps, the camp leader and committee members were interviewed first, in order to win the trust of the community leaders and to ensure a certain legitimacy in the eyes of the refugees and camp organisers. Refugees from the camp as a whole were then randomly selected. Outside the camps, a large number of interviewees scattered among the local population in various parts of the urban zone were identified and selected for interview. These included rep-

representatives of “mutuelles” - community-based associations – and members of refugee committees.

The research was conducted using individual semi-structured interviews. The main research questions were translated into questionnaires for the refugees which addressed the following themes: socio-economic well-being, identity and culture, social and inter-community dynamics, and knowledge of the legal framework, security and political context. These themes had been identified as elements which might provide an explanation of why refugees did or did not wish to go home. The semi-structured interview model allowed the interviewer to explore the way the refugees expressed themselves on these issues, and how they rationalised their future according to their perception of their past and present situation.

The research team comprised three Burundian and five Congolese researchers representing a mix of ethnic communities – three Hutu, two Babembe, one Musoba, one Munyamulege and one Mupende – and were assisted by a Belgian technical advisor. More than half the team members had a personal experience of exile which helped them gain an instant trust from the refugees, and enabled an open and frank dialogue as well as a fine understanding of the refugees’ personal accounts. By the same token, the researchers were able to negotiate successfully their access to a range of different actors in each of the locations, whether this was with government authorities or with influential community members. The cultural mix also helped to get away from a national perception of the object of the research, and the combination of a degree of neutrality and considerable knowledge of the different contexts meant that various filters could be included in the collection and analysis of data. The interviews were conducted in Kiswahili, Kirundi, Kibembe, Kinyamulenge, French and English to ensure maximum comfort and comprehension for both researcher and interviewee.

## Research locations

The research was carried out in seven different sites selected among refugee camps and towns and villages in Burundi, DRC and Tanzania. Congolese refugees were interviewed in Bujumbura and in Bwagiriza camp in Burundi, and in Nyarugusu camp and Kigoma in Tanzania. Burundian refugees were interviewed in the town of Bukavu and the village of Kenya in DRC, and in Mtabila camp and Kigoma in Tanzania.

**1) Bujumbura (Burundi):** In Burundi, the majority of the 37,500 Congolese refugees are spread across various parts of the capital, Bujumbura. The rationale for including these Bujumbura-based Congolese refugees to the study was, first, to better understand the complexity of the dynamics of exile in an urban setting, which are very different from those in the camps. The town of Bujumbura also offers an interesting portrait of the various social relations that can exist between refugees and local residents, and of the survival strategies that can develop in an informal setting where there are diverse socio-economic opportunities.

**2) Bwagiriza (Burundi):** Bwagiriza camp, to the east of Burundi in the province of Ruyigi, houses approximately 8,500 Congolese refugees. This site was chosen for a more detailed look at the cohabitation dynamics between different Congolese ethnic communities, and to analyse how social relations between refugees are shaped in exile. The way in which the Congolese communities are represented in this camp are particularly interesting, with the Banyamulenge being the majority group there.

**3) Kenya (DRC):** The village of Kenya, south of Uvira, was an important arrival point for many Burundian Hutus who fled Burundi in successive waves from the 1970s. The location is particularly interesting for analysing the complexity of the cohabitation dynamics

between Burundian refugees and the host Congolese population. As the location is also at the centre of one of the most significant return areas for Congolese repatriates, it also highlights some of the problems of accessing land encountered by Burundian refugees in this same area. Finally, the location of Kenya is interesting for looking at questions of identity and local integration, since a lot of third-generation Burundians in this area have never set foot on Burundian soil.

**4) Bukavu (DRC):** The town of Bukavu hosts around 220 Burundian refugees with fragmented trajectories characterised by repeated displacements. Despite the fact that some of them were born in exile, their Burundian identity and the journeys they have made so complicate daily life that some of them survive by concealing their identity from the local community. This location is particularly interesting for the opportunities it provides to examine not just problems of identity and local integration, but also various assistance programmes such as “financial autonomy” initiatives and revenue-generating activities put in place by UNHCR for the benefit of this target group.

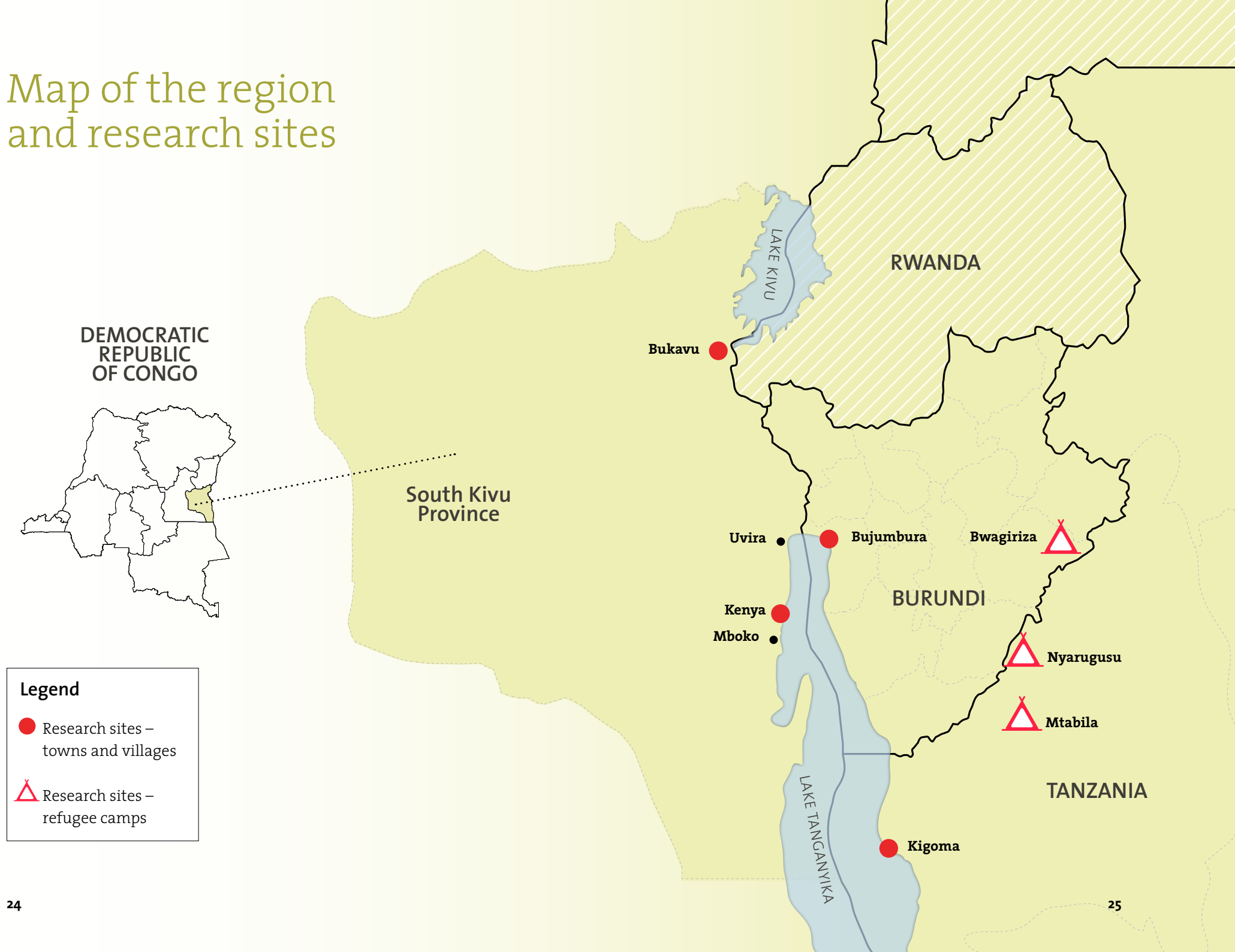
**5) Mtabila (Tanzania):** In Tanzania, hundreds of thousands of Burundians and Congolese have found refuge in Nyarugusu and Mtabila camps since the 1990s. Despite the repatriation of more than 500,000 refugees since the early 2000s, there are still approximately 100,000 Burundian and Congolese refugees left in both camps, who do not wish to leave and whose situation is becoming more and more restricted. For some Burundians who arrived in the 1970s at other locations like Kigoma, political discussions around naturalisation or permanent residency in Tanzania are in progress. For others, particularly the 37,592 Burundian refugees in Mtabila camp, a cessation clause was invoked on 1st August 2012 following the decision in 2009 to close the camp. The rationale for including Mtabila

to the research was to gain a better understanding of the real needs and aspirations of these (ex-) refugees and of the likely impact their return to Burundi will have on peace and stability in the region. The Mtabila camp is also interesting for the perspective it offers on how long periods of exile (for some refugees, over twenty years in the camp) can influence the dynamics of individual identity and the way in which a person envisages the future.

**6) Nyarugusu (Tanzania):** Nyarugusu camp is one of the largest refugee camps in the Kigoma region of Tanzania, hosting more than 65,000 refugees, mainly Congolese. It was chosen for the study because of the many Congolese there, mostly Babembe from South Kivu, who are reluctant to return to their villages because of continuing insecurity in RDC, and because the affinities and political orientations at the heart of this population, which vary with the shifting security and military context in South Kivu, plays an important role in the refugees’ decision to return or not, and in the way they envisage their future.

**7) Kigoma (Tanzania):** Finally, the location of Kigoma is included in the research because of the presence there of a sample of Burundian and Congolese ex-refugees living semi-clandestinely pending regularisation of their papers by UNHCR. From an analysis of some of these cases it is possible to examine the issue of refugees who slip through all formal and legal processes and who, counting on a certain cultural proximity with the indigenous communities, attempt to integrate into the local population.

# Map of the region and research sites







## Chapter 1

# REFUGEES IN THE PLURAL

Burundian refugees' children, Kenya, DRC.  
*Photo: Germain Kilabi (ADEPAE).*

The great majority of Congolese and Burundian refugees in exile in Tanzania, Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo have fled from wars and violence resulting from the long-term political and social unrest in their countries. In 1972, 1988 and 1993, hundreds of thousands of Burundians fled in waves from political crises and massacres triggered by the internecine competition for power between the Hutu and Tutsi communities. In 1996-97, huge numbers of refugees left the DRC when Mobutu was ousted during the AFDL war after thirty years of dictatorship. These movements continued after the second Congolese war of 1998-2003, and do so today in North and South Kivu as the result of repeated clashes between rebel groups and the regular army.

These conflicts affect all citizens without exception and whatever their social standing. However, although the victims of war, and particularly refugees, share a common fate, the effects of displacement are felt very differently by each individual. The interviews carried out with the refugees during this project demonstrate just how different each individual case is. Social status, home and community of origin, knowledge of the country of exile and the local language, existence or not of a support system, family situation, depth of sense of identity, as well as the actual physical escape into exile all contribute to the unique case of each refugee.

## I. DEPARTURE INTO EXILE

### 1. Burundi: ethnic violence and forced displacement

Since its independence in 1962, Burundi's history has been marred by the violent competition for power between its two principal ethnic groups: the Hutu and the Tutsi<sup>3</sup>. After the murder of the Hutu prime minister in 1965 and the concentration of power going to the Tutsi minority, militant Hutu groups appeared in the South, vio-

lently attacking Tutsis and causing hundreds of deaths. This in turn resulted in bloody reprisals against the Hutu by the mainly Tutsi army: some 250,000 people were massacred that year, and 150,000 fled into Tanzania. This was the first large wave of departures and these refugees, some of whom lived in "settlements" (camps), are still referred to as 'the 1972 lot'<sup>4</sup>.

In spite of the reprisals, Hutu rebel movements continued in the North with repeated cycles of violence. In 1988, repression of the Hutu militias led to thousands of people fleeing into Rwanda. Three months after the 1993 elections, the elected Hutu President Ndayaye was assassinated; the country was plunged into nearly ten years of violence during which some 300,000 Burundians died and half a million people went into exile<sup>5</sup>. During this period, the Burundian refugee camps in Tanzania provided a supply of young men for recruitment and organisation into Hutu rebel groups<sup>6</sup>.

Following the signature of peace agreements between the government and the rebel groups in Arusha in the year 2000, an interim government was created and a new framework for all government institutions set up, based on ethnic quotas. However, the main Hutu rebel groups (CNDD-FDD and FNL) refused to accept the peace process. Further negotiations led to the integration of the CNDD-FDD in 2003, and the establishment of an integrated Hutu/Tutsi army.

The 2010 elections heralded a decisive change in Burundi's political scene: following local elections which were won by the ruling party, all the other presidential candidates withdrew from the campaign, thus permitting the re-election of Pierre Nkurunziza with more than 90% of the votes. The opposition led by the FNL declared the election irregular. Agathon Rwasa, leader of the FNL, returned into exile in Eastern DRC, from where the rebellion was able to remobilise. The political arena became more restricted and the human rights

situation deteriorated with more violence and political repression, particularly towards FNL militants remaining in the country<sup>7</sup>.

Although it might seem that the era of armed conflict in Burundi is over, developments following the 2010 elections threaten the stability of a country in serious need of solid legitimate institutions in order to meet the many challenges it faces. First among these are the extent of poverty and the lack of good governance - major causes of the armed violence. Burundians have a new saying, *“old demons are not dead, but they are at least asleep”*<sup>8</sup>. It is possible that refugees consider that the demons are not asleep enough for them to risk returning home. Repression of opposition parties and Rwaswa's return into exile provide a strong disincentive to return - these refugees are mostly Hutu - particularly if they sympathise with these parties.

In addition to this, serious tensions emerged in 2012 around the recovery of land and property belonging to refugees before their departure into exile. A National Commission on Land and Property (the CNTB) is charged with arbitrating conflicts arising in such cases; it is accused by top Tutsi politicians of favouring the refugees in the settlement of these land disputes<sup>9</sup>. The prospect of setting up a Truth and Reconciliation Commission in 2013 provides a good opportunity for arriving at reconciliation, but is not without risk: by reviving the memory of past tragic events, the process could open old wounds and traumas for many Burundians, and pose a threat to today's relative peace<sup>10</sup>. The 2015 elections could be key to enhancing the democratic process – or could similarly lead to its breakdown: the vital issue will be the relationship between the party in power and the opposition.

## 2. DRC: conflicts and structural insecurity

The situation in DRC, and in particular in the Eastern provinces of North and South Kivu and the district of Ituri, remains uncertain

at the beginning of 2013. From some key points of view, the picture is sombre: the 2011 local and general elections were blighted by accusations of serious irregularity and considered unreliable by Congolese civil society and the international community alike. This has weakened the credibility and democratic legitimacy of national institutions. Decentralisation, fundamental to the establishment of grassroots institutions, is at a standstill. Large areas of the Kivus and Ituri are controlled by armed groups and are regularly the scene of armed conflict, either between the different armed groups or with the Congolese army. The army is not a disciplined and unified whole, but is infiltrated by mafia-like networks and incapable of keeping the peace or protecting the people. MONUSCO is also unable to protect the people, due to the limitations of its mandate. With disconcerting ease, the town of Goma fell into the hands of a rebel group backed by Rwanda and Uganda in November 2012. This led to the escalation of regional violence reminiscent of the 'first African world war' which tore the Congo apart from 1998-2003<sup>11</sup>.

The consequences of this war on the security and movements of the population are manifold. From the 1990s, and in particular in 1994, the waves of people fleeing were mainly Tutsis from North and South Kivu. From the end of the 1980s and at the beginning of the 1990s, as a result of the mounting stigma attached to Congolese Tutsis and of the increasing power of the Rwandan FPR rebels in Uganda, many young Tutsis left the Kivus to join the RPF and topple the Habyarimana regime in Rwanda. Once the RPF had put an end to the genocide in Rwanda and two million Hutu refugees had moved into Congo (among whom many armed perpetrators of the genocide), anti-Tutsi feeling ran high in the Kivus and led to the exile of many Congolese Tutsis into Rwanda.

In 1996, with the arrival of the AFDL and with the dismantling of Hutu refugee camps in the Kivus, it was the non-Rwandophone



communities of the Kivu who left in large numbers<sup>12</sup> for Tanzania and Burundi, perceiving the Rwandan support of the AFDL as a direct threat to their interests and their lives. In 1998, when the *Rassemblement Congolais pour la Démocratie* (RCD) rebellion broke out, orchestrated by Rwanda, it was again the non-Rwandophone community who fled. As the *Mai-Mai* groups rose up against the RCD, some members of the Rwandophone population also fled into exile. From 1998 to 2003, all the ethnic communities in Congo had been affected by the violence and attempted to take asylum in neighbouring countries, mainly Tanzania and Burundi for the non-Rwandophones, and Rwanda and Burundi for the Rwandophones. When Laurent Nkunda and Jules Mutebusi (both linked to the RCD) took Bukavu in 2004, the Banyamulenge (Tutsi) fled from South Kivu into Burundi for fear of reprisals. Three months later, some of these refugees from Gatumba, for the most part Banyamulenge, were massacred by armed men.

From 2009 to 2012, people continued to flee clashes between the regular army and numerous armed groups, Congolese and foreign. These movements were for the most part within Congo. Some two million people from North and South Kivu were displaced during that period. Most of the clashes were caused by military operations carried out against the Rwandan Hutu FDLR (from 2009), and clashes between the national army and the CNDP and later the M23 in the territories of Masisi and Rutshuru.

One of the main reasons for armed conflicts and resulting population displacement in the DRC is the extent of the divisions caused by ethnic identity. From the beginning of hostilities with the arrival of the AFDL in 1996, the warring sides have always been identified as belonging to specific ethnic communities, even if such generalisation could be considered as a gross oversimplification. Ethnic hatred has been honed by the various wars, particularly between

the Rwandophone and non-Rwandophone communities. As in Burundi, the ethnic element has been evident in the different waves of departure, in the routes and destinations chosen and in how the refugees organise themselves once in exile.

The wars in Congo are particularly complex, as their causes are at once regional, national and local: a regional agenda can exploit and redesign national and local ones, and vice versa. As a result, although displacement may have been precipitated by armed violence, a return home may be hindered by a multitude of factors, such as tensions between the countries in the region; the presence and/or strengthening of hostile armed groups in the return area; the increase in ethnic tensions resulting from armed clashes; fighting between communities for local customary power; or land disputes between farmers and cattle breeders. These local dynamics and the armed conflicts they lead to have a direct bearing on the problems encountered by refugees: Congolese refugees may be unable to return home for a variety of reasons, according to where they came from and the problems specific to their return area. Though local contexts may vary from one area to another, the volatility of the situation is generalised across the whole Eastern part of the country.

It should also be borne in mind that conflicts in the Great Lakes region are interlinked, especially between Rwanda, Burundi and the DRC. Political developments in these countries impact constantly on their neighbours: the civil war and the genocide in Rwanda in 1994 had a disastrous effect on internal tensions in Burundi, in the same way as the arrival of Rwandan Hutu refugees in the same year triggered the two Congolese wars. In view of the cross-border nature of population movements and the fact that refugee camps themselves are often sources of instability for the refugees' countries of origin, there is an obvious need to take a regional approach

in attempting to put an end to the instability and to address the problems of displacement in the Great Lakes region.

The above elements explain the deep-rooted causes of departure and exile (an effect of political upheavals and insecurity which are still ongoing) in the region, as well as their collective dimension. Long-term solutions to displacement in the region will only be found if these social, historical and political aspects are taken into account. Even then, although these events refer to a common, shared past, each individual has had a unique experience which has affected his personal and family life and feelings differently.

## II. SPECIFICITIES OF HUMAN DISPLACEMENT

Exile is a fundamentally personal experience, with its lot of physical, social, psychological, emotional, cultural and family upheaval and trauma. The testimonies and stories gathered from the refugees in the course of this study are all different and cannot be reduced to a common denominator. This individuality cannot be addressed by standard responses in terms of humanitarian aid, but needs a specific approach taking into account refugees' lives before exile, the events leading up to their departure and the individual journey towards settlement in a foreign country.

### 1. Conditions of departure

The manner of departure from the home country has a direct bearing on the refugee's ability to come to terms with exile and to overcome obstacles. Departure is often violent and traumatic, even if experienced differently by different people. All the refugees in the study report having witnessed – directly or indirectly – acts of violence committed by armed groups or civilians while fleeing war in

their own country, and the memory of these are particularly painful. Some have been direct victims of violence and still suffer the physical effects; others have fled out of fear of becoming victims themselves, a fear which prevents them today from envisaging a return home.

All the refugees have been witnesses to looting, destruction, massacres and rape, whether they are from Congo or Burundi. Some have narrowly escaped death by leaving and watched family members being massacred without being able to do anything but flee. An elderly Burundian lady from the Mtabila camp describes the murder of her two children, and vows never to return to the country in which they died<sup>13</sup>. A Congolese refugee from Nyarugusu who was witness to the massacre of Banyamulenge civilians by young Mai Mai soldiers in Fizi in 1996 is convinced that these people “*will one day be avenged*”, which is enough reason for her not to want to return home<sup>14</sup>. A Burundian man, an illegal immigrant in Kigoma, recounts the massacre, before his eyes, of his older brother, his sisters and his uncle<sup>15</sup>.

Some of the refugees have been direct victims of this violence, for the most part women suffering sexual abuse before or during their journey. Their statements describe particularly violent events, such as the experience of a Burundian woman in Nyarugusu who was raped a number of times by soldiers and who now suffers from HIV/AIDS<sup>16</sup>. The majority of the women interviewed describe cases of attempted rape. A Congolese lady from Bwagiriza sums up her feeling of insecurity: “*Thank God I escaped being raped. But it's the feeling of fear and horror that stays in my head*”<sup>17</sup>. Another woman from Bukavu, exiled in Kigoma, who recently heard that a neighbour in Bukavu has been raped, concludes that “*it's not finished. I'll never go home*”<sup>18</sup>.

Many of the refugees have been lucky enough to escape physical violence, but they are still afraid of becoming victims themselves one day. Their fear is nourished not only by what they have seen, but also by the propaganda that accompanied the waves of departure from both countries. In Congo, during sometimes very long journeys into exile, refugees witnessed meetings by armed group leaders announcing 'bloodbaths' in neighbouring villages, or heard speeches by political leaders inciting to violence and hatred. They admit having often associated these speeches with traumatic events that happened in neighbouring countries, like the Rwandan genocide of 1994<sup>19</sup>.

Such experiences make it very difficult for refugees to come to terms with everyday life. A woman in Bukavu states that her displacement experience was akin to torture, and that, "*considering the story of [her] exile, the feeling of dying at any moment is constantly present*"<sup>20</sup>. The same goes for a woman who is bringing up a child born of rape, or for a Congolese man in Nyarugusu who lost both his legs to cancer and now believes that, "*no one takes any notice of [him], and that [he is] totally on [his] own*"<sup>21</sup>. An elderly man in Kigoma concludes that, in spite of his tiredness, he would like to "*go home to die in the land of [his] ancestors, because life is simply unbearable here*"<sup>22</sup>.

Not all refugees have had to face such direct violence and inhumanity. A smaller group has apparently chosen exile for social and economic reasons rather than for safety, believing that their own country cannot offer them a satisfactory livelihood and that as refugees they have better opportunities. This applies for more recent cases of departure since 2010, and for those who fled in the 1990s because of ethnic discrimination, which closed many social and economic doors. A Congolese Munyamulenge refugee who suffered bad social discrimination and was unable to find employment in South

Kivu, chose to join the camp in Nyarugusu, and says that today he benefits from "*fairer treatment*" from UNHCR<sup>23</sup>. A woman admits to leaving her country to find better education options for her children, tempted by the promise of free schooling in the camps<sup>24</sup>. The interviews reveal yet other reasons for departure: family conflicts around inheritance or land occupation; abuse of power by local authorities; accusations of witchcraft, and death threats. For example a Congolese woman from South Kivu in Nyarugusu camp left her home because of problems integrating into her husband's family: "*I said to myself that by moving to Tanzania, I would have peace at last*"<sup>25</sup>.

The conditions experienced before and during displacement have a significant impact on subsequent life in exile. Those fleeing insecurity and violence in a climate of fear will for the most part have left in a panic, leaving everything behind. One of the Congolese refugees tells a particularly sad story which illustrates this only too well: in order not to compromise the departure of her family, she had to choose to leave her handicapped grandmother behind. To this day, she lives with the guilt of having left the old lady to die alone, abandoned by all<sup>26</sup>. Other refugees had time to plan their departure, sell assets such as land or houses, and take their belongings with them. They could then organise their itinerary according to the possibilities open to them. Their economic situation gave them greater control over their exile than if they had had to escape in a panic. A Congolese refugee in Kigoma, who used to be a merchant, was easily able to move his family to Tanzania. He maintains good relations with the police, which afford him freedom of movement and business opportunities in Tanzania<sup>27</sup>.

An important factor is whether the decision to leave is individual or collective. Conditions experienced by a person alone are very different from those experienced by villagers following a decision by its



elders that the whole village should flee. The same applies for those able to leave with their families; the presence of family members or members of a community is a strong physical, social and moral support – in the same way as it can represent a financial and moral burden and a restriction of personal liberty and freedom of choice. Family heads are faced with the burden of responsibility for their children and the challenges of exile for a family finding itself in a completely alien situation. People leaving alone arrive in the camps with no support systems to help them: such is the case of a Burundian man in Nyarugusu who followed his neighbours into exile at the age of four, when his parents died, and has found the experience particularly difficult, suffering from the complete lack of support from a family or friends<sup>28</sup>.

Burundian refugees in Tanzania, like the Congolese in Burundi, are not in homogeneous groups having followed the same direct routes. It emerges from the interviews that those who left their countries in the 1970s and found themselves in camps in the 2000s have often travelled through, or settled in, tens of villages in the two countries before arriving at their current destination. This is what happened to a Burundian man in Bukavu who left Burundi in 1993 after being separated from his five children, to go to Uvira in the DRC. He settled successively in Kamanyola, Nyangezi, Mazigirwa, Chulwe, Kigurube, Nzovu, Isange (South Kivu), followed by a brief period in the forest of Walikale (North Kivu), before ending up at Kasese in Maniema in 1997. He did not arrive in Bukavu until 2008<sup>29</sup>. Another example is that of a Munyamulenge woman from Vyrwa, who left her village in 1998 to settle in Uvira in 2002. She then fled to Rugombo in Burundi, returned to Bweyera in the Ruzizi Plain (South Kivu) in 2003, left for Cibitoke in Burundi in 2004, arrived in Mwaro in 2006 and finally settled in the Bwagiriza camp in 2007. She says today that *“this journey has impoverished us to the point that we have no other choice now but to stay where we are”*<sup>30</sup>.

## 2. Restructuring of identity in exile

The experience of exile ends up having a profound effect on the identity and personality of a refugee. After ten, fifteen or thirty years in exile, the process of reshaping identity is complicated – the refugee is no longer the same person as when he or she left. The process varies according to the personal situation of the refugee and his or her journey into exile: age at the moment of departure; number of years spent outside the country; economic, social, cultural and linguistic differences between the country of origin and the host country; living in a camp surrounded by compatriots; or trying to integrate into a new social structure – are all variables which impact on the personal identity of a refugee.

The interviews conducted reveal very different experiences. Having travelled across or lived in different countries for many years, the Congolese and Burundian refugees nearly all have complicated identities as a result of spending more time abroad than in their own country and learning new languages and new cultures. Learning a new language, being employed, starting a business or marrying a national of the host country all lead to a feeling of belonging and help to ‘re-situate’ the identity. This is reflected by many of the people interviewed, who mention the advantages of integrating into the new society by marrying a local person, or learning the local language. A Burundian man from the village of Kenya explains that his marriage to a Congolese woman means that he is spared a lot of administrative ‘tracasseries’ (red tape)<sup>31</sup>. A similar case is that of a Congolese man in Nyarugusu, who admits that following his re-marriage to a Tanzanian woman he now benefits from the protection of his brothers-in-law, and is able to circumvent curfew restrictions in the camp<sup>32</sup>. Another example is that of the Burundian refugees living in one of the poorer neighbourhoods of Bukavu, Kadutu, in Eastern Congo. These refugees’ language is Ki-

rundi, which sounds like Kinyarwanda, and their names also sound Rwandan. As anti-Rwandan feeling is high in this area following the Congolese wars, they prefer not to speak their own language in public and use aliases in order to pass themselves off as Congolese<sup>33</sup>. Some have chosen to marry Congolese women, like one Burundian in Bukavu who admits having married his wife *“to camouflage his identity”*<sup>34</sup>.

The acquisition of language is fundamental to the restructuring of identity and can take place over several generations. Second- or third-generation refugees who have hardly - or not at all - known their home country often speak the language of the host country better than that of their parents. A Burundian woman from the village of Kenya says she speaks Kibembe (the local Congolese language) fluently, which means that she can live peacefully among the surrounding communities. She concludes that today *“[she feels] more Congolese than Burundian”*<sup>35</sup>. The same applies to a Congolese refugee from the Mufulero community, who says *“I’ve lost my Fuliru accent, and now have a Tanzanian Swahili one. The only thing that distinguishes me from the Tanzanians is my Congolese vaccination scar”*<sup>36</sup>.

Exile represents a total uprooting, and does not automatically lead to the acquisition of new social and cultural references. After many years in exile, refugees in the Nyarugusu and Kigoma camps, for example, often feel neither Congolese nor Burundian, but have not become Tanzanian either. A Burundian lady in Kigoma confesses that she speaks Swahili perfectly and can pass for a Tanzanian (she has even illegally obtained an electoral card and can thus vote), but she still wants to return to Burundi. She has enrolled her son into a Congolese school so that he will be able to reintegrate easily into the francophone system when they return<sup>37</sup>. Adaptation to the new country is therefore rarely complete; the past is not easily forgot-

ten. Thus a young Burundian in the village of Kenya insists that he wants *“at all costs to save his Burundian culture so that he can one day return to Burundi”*<sup>38</sup>; similarly, many of those interviewed complain of a ‘neither one thing nor the other’ feeling which defines their lives today.

As revealed by many of the interviews with these refugees, it appears that although a cultural relationship with the host country is important in opening the door to integration, it can also lead to a certain disorientation and to problems of identity. Charles, a Burundian refugee from the village of Kenya, is a good example of how such an uprooting can result in a loss of cultural references. Charles was born in Rwanda of Burundian parents who left Burundi in the 1970s in the wake of inter-ethnic violence. He was separated from his parents during the 1994 genocide and took refuge in the village of Kenya in Congo, where he was adopted by a Mubembe Congolese man. He describes the identity crisis he faces and the problems he encounters every day in adapting to his new life - and the fact that whatever he does, he cannot forget his Burundian origins: *“I feel more Burundian than Congolese, and I have thought of returning to Burundi. But I don’t know where to start. I’ve lost all my bearings”*<sup>39</sup>.

Some people go back to their home country only to be treated like foreigners and be denied their nationality by their compatriots<sup>40</sup>. Those still in exile are aware of this stigmatisation, which is particularly strong for people who left in childhood and have developed an accent when they speak their native language. This causes great suffering.

This in-between state is even more difficult for those whose family members straddle national boundaries. One Burundian refugee in Kigoma grew up on the Tanzanian border, and now finds his family torn between his father, who remains in Burundi, and his uncles,

settled in Kigoma in Tanzania<sup>41</sup>. A similar case is that of another Burundian whose two children are naturalised Tanzanians and want to stay in Tanzania, while the other three have returned to Burundi. He wonders about his chances of obtaining dual nationality in order to continue being able to see all his children<sup>42</sup>. For those refugees who can see no hope of returning to their homeland, but cannot imagine staying where they have been living for years, this in-between situation is very painful. The case of a young Congolese man in the Nyarugusu camp clearly demonstrates this pain when he confesses to considering suicide if his request to move to a third country is not granted. Such is his reluctance either to return home, or to integrate locally<sup>43</sup>.

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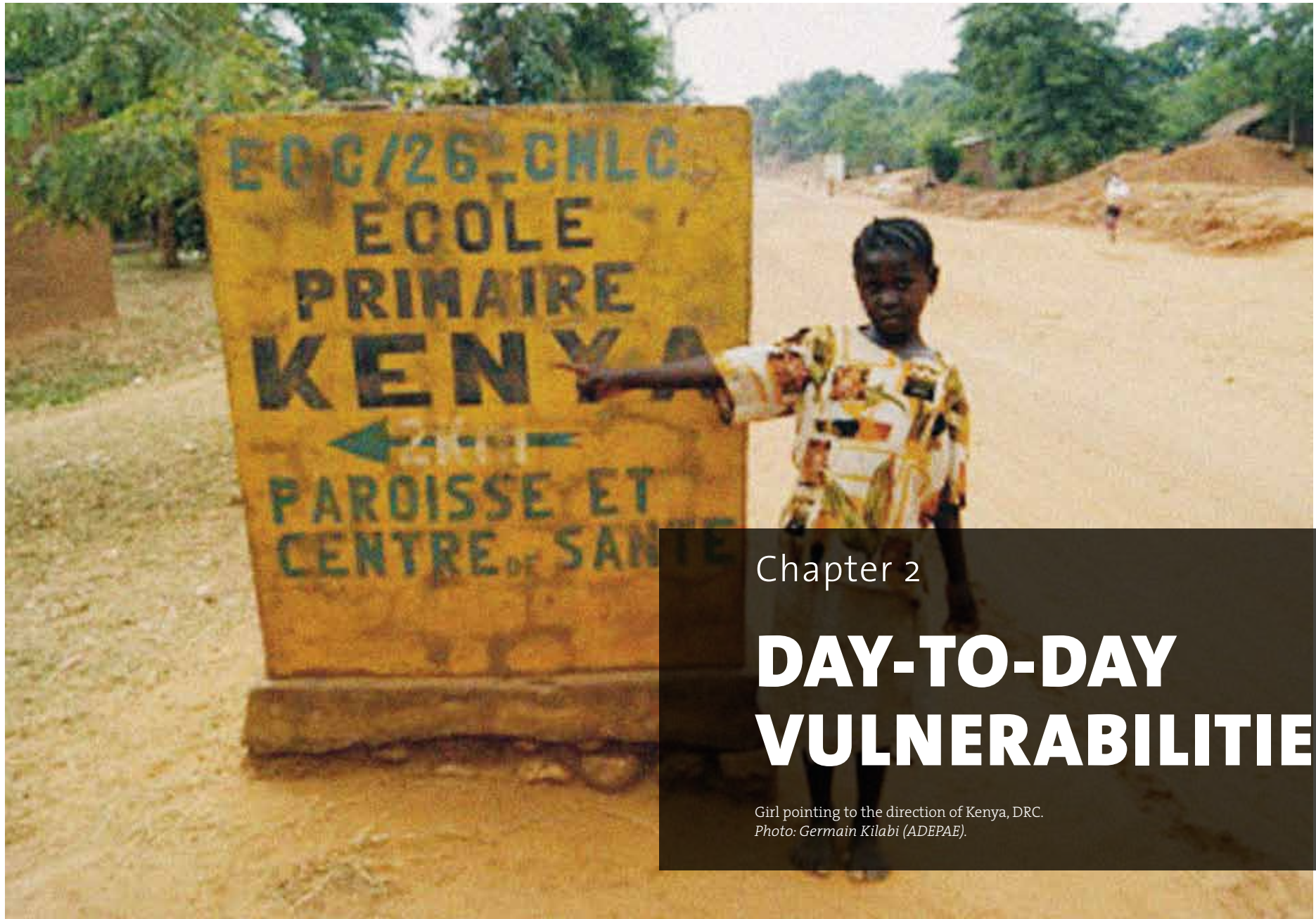
“I feel more Burundian than Congolese, and I have thought of returning to Burundi. But I don’t know where to start. I’ve lost all my bearings.”

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Burundian refugee in front of her house, Kenya, DRC.  
*Photo: Germain Kilabi (ADEPAE).*





## Chapter 2

# DAY-TO-DAY VULNERABILITIES

Girl pointing to the direction of Kenya, DRC.  
*Photo: Germain Kilabi (ADEPAE).*

Given the circumstances of their displacement and their subsequent trajectories, and in spite of the advantages of assistance and humanitarian protection conferred by their refugee status, the Burundians and Congolese describe daily life as precarious, with heightened levels of vulnerability. Whether in camps or in towns and villages, all the refugees interviewed said the reality of their existence is that it is inherently uncertain, the financial means at their disposal are limited, they suffer significant social discrimination, are frustrated with their dependence on aid, and have great difficulty envisaging a mid- or long-term future. This is exacerbated by their very limited knowledge of the assistance frameworks on offer, which creates confusion about the options available and affects their ability to look to the future in an informed and objective way.

## I. SOCIO-ECONOMIC INSECURITY

### 1. Limitations and criticisms of humanitarian assistance

In the camps, the assistance and protection provided by humanitarian organisations (notably UNHCR) consists of a food ration<sup>44</sup>, non-food items<sup>45</sup>, healthcare, access to schooling (primary and secondary), legal protection<sup>46</sup> and specific social services for vulnerable groups<sup>47</sup>. Professional training, university grants, and microcredit or access to IGA are available, based on specific criteria<sup>48</sup>. Non-food items are distributed on arrival but not consistently replaced. Clothes are distributed on an annual basis and only for women. According to the refugees interviewed, plastic sheeting is no longer distributed in Nyarugusu camp, and non-food items have not been distributed at Bwagiriza camp for a year<sup>49</sup>. For the refugees in the towns and villages, basic assistance consists of legal protection, health care<sup>50</sup> and some administrative services<sup>51</sup>. Anything beyond that varies from country to country and from one site to another

depending on which humanitarian organisations are present<sup>52</sup>.

Although the refugees claim they are grateful for this assistance, all of them express dissatisfaction. They criticise both the quality and quantity of the aid, saying that it never fully meets their needs. The food is not varied enough and does not respect local dietary customs, and medical care can only treat the most basic illnesses<sup>53</sup>. They are critical in general of what they perceive as a progressive reduction in assistance in recent years, some going so far as to suggest that this is a strategy by the host country to force them to go home. In Bukavu, Burundian refugees highlight a reduction in their assistance and bemoan the fact that it now seems to be reserved for Rwandan refugees newly arrived from South Kivu<sup>54</sup>. In Mtabila camp, many Burundian refugees speak out against the total withdrawal of assistance in some zones of the camp<sup>55</sup>, which they see as a cruel way of forcing them to return home.

The criticism from refugees in the camps is mainly directed at the inadequate food rations. Refugees in Bwagiriza camp complain that “[the] beans are difficult to cook”, while others say that “[the] rations are inadequate and inappropriate, to such an extent that I wonder whether they are not at the root of numerous illnesses in the camp. People don’t work, they just wait to be fed by UNHCR<sup>56</sup>”. A refugee in Bwagiriza camp blames it on late deliveries of food rations, “which pushes some families into debt with people who have more resources or with Burundian families<sup>57</sup>”. It is the same story in Mtabila and Nyarugusu camps: “Life is not good here because the ration is not enough<sup>58</sup>”; “Life is too hard in the camp. There is UNHCR support which provides us with food to eat, water to drink and medical care. But in such very poor conditions<sup>59</sup>”.

In the camps, the refugees have found the non-replacement of non-food items particularly hard to tolerate. A young woman in Bwagi-

riza camp emphasises that *“although the food ration isn’t enough to make ends meet, we have a great need of non-food items. We need clothes, ‘pagnes’, underwear and shoes<sup>60</sup>”*. A refugee in Nyarugusu camp says *“we haven’t received any NFI (non-food items) for 5 years. The walls of my house, which is covered with straw, are running with moisture. It’s dangerous for the health of my children in this site which gets very cold. I urgently need plastic sheeting<sup>61</sup>”*. A refugee in Kigoma who regularly visits her sisters in Nyarugusu camp, says the same: *“I never wanted to live in Nyarugusu because life in the camps is too hard. Seeing the state of the camp when I visit my brothers and sisters, I don’t think standards of protection for refugees are properly respected<sup>62</sup>”*.

In Mtabila, in addition to the above it is the withdrawal of schooling in 2009 which comes up most often. All the refugees tell of their despair that their children have not been to school for three years, a situation they regard as a blatant violation of their most fundamental rights. A Burundian refugee says: *“I see no advantage to living in this camp as there is no way to improve yourself – the children don’t study. Education for young people is becoming more and more difficult. There’s no future for my family here<sup>63</sup>”*.

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**“The children don’t study. Education for young people is becoming more and more difficult. There’s no future for my family here”.**

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In towns such as Bujumbura or Bukavu, the main criticism concerns the partial defrayal of medical and education costs, and the changes to the terms and conditions over time. Although some refugees were receiving 100% cover on arrival, this was progressively revised downwards, with significant differences occurring from one person to another according to their vulnerabilities. A Congolese refugee in Bujumbura explains, for example, that in 2003 the medical aid offered to her by UNHCR was 100%. This was subsequently reduced to 50% and has now been withdrawn altogether. Her perception of this leads her to conclude that *“We urban refugees [...] are disadvantaged”<sup>64</sup>*. In general, the urban refugees criticise the lack of transparency in the terms and conditions of aid and admit they do not understand the reasons behind its reduction or withdrawal, something they have observed many times. Others see this as a UNHCR strategy to force them out of the towns and back into the camps<sup>65</sup>. Furthermore, the variations between town and camp are a source of discontent for many refugees and seem to have pushed some families into shuttling between camp and town – in other words, living in the town whilst receiving aid from the camp<sup>66</sup>. These illegal practices, which arouse frustration and jealousy in those who cannot do the same, were frequently mentioned in Burundi.

In Bukavu, criticism centres on the microcredit activities enjoyed by some Burundian town-based refugees. Here, UNHCR’s support has been restricted since the arrival of the refugees to medical cover and a monthly cash payment<sup>67</sup>. In order to encourage autonomy, UNHCR initiated in 2007 a microcredit programme supporting small, entrepreneurial projects started by refugee families. In 2010, assistance was reduced to medical costs alone, the rationale behind this being that the refugees were now self-sufficient. Although these initiatives were well intended, they have had mixed results, with real successes and patent failures. Families who succeeded in managing their credit well and creating a profitable business have



found themselves much better off in socio-economic terms than in the past and, today, are financially independent. These are mainly people offering motorcycle taxi services or who have opened a restaurant. Other families whose businesses did not take off, or who could not manage their funds, are now in a much worse situation than before. The money has been spent and they no longer receive the safety net of aid. They are often forced to take on debt and find themselves back in a particularly precarious situation<sup>68</sup>. One refugee tells us he accumulated debts of 250 USD and 25 USD, and feels ashamed that he cannot repay them<sup>69</sup>. Another admits now having to live by begging in the hope of one day repaying his debts<sup>70</sup>.

The refugees blame social discrimination for the failure of these microcredit initiatives. As one refugee, whose business selling telephone credit did not take off, puts it, *“people prefer to buy from those who speak their language or who are from their own family”*<sup>71</sup>. Another says that *“wars have made people think differently. Before 1996, we could work and move around with no problem. Now, they exclude us”*<sup>72</sup>. Other reasons given for the failure of the initiatives are the lack of management training after the money is disbursed. Many refugees were outraged about the lack of support given by agencies at the initial stage, *“They gave us money with no idea whether the project was viable, and without advising us on how to manage it”*<sup>73</sup>. Others blame it on the fact that they were not sufficiently involved in the co-management system which was supposed to be put in place by UNHCR and CNR, and on the fact that there was no tailor-made training for those who had no other resources or prior experience of self-employment.

## 2. Social crisis and stigmatization

The limitations of humanitarian assistance and the resulting precarious economic conditions have serious social consequences. As it is often impossible to send every child in a family to school,

some stay at home to help with the household chores or to carry out small-scale paid work, contributing to the family income. Problems in accessing comprehensive healthcare mean that unforeseen illnesses become an unsustainable cost burden on the household budget. This is particularly true for refugees in the towns and villages, such as Bujumbura, Bukavu and Kenya, and for refugees in Mtabila camp who, just before the closure of the camp in November 2012, were forced to buy their medicine from makeshift pharmacies near the camp<sup>74</sup>.

Faced with these limitations, many refugees admit to having to make up the shortfall by resorting to degrading or illegal activities to buy food or other everyday consumer products for their families. The situation is the same for the camps, where aid is the sole means of subsistence, as the towns, where aid is restricted. Refugees are generally much less well placed than the local population to access this type of activity and, since they have to operate on the informal market, can find themselves at the mercy of unscrupulous bosses or other kinds of abuse of power, against which they often have no recourse. A Congolese refugee in Nyarugusu camp tells how his money-exchanging activity left him vulnerable to attacks and intimidation by the police, and the payment of occasional fines<sup>75</sup>. A Burundian refugee from Mtabila camp recounts how he regularly had to tip the Tanzanian police so that he could leave the camp in search of lucrative activities<sup>76</sup>.

Parents confide their fears that their children will end up committing crimes or taking drugs<sup>77</sup>. In Nyarugusu, Mtabila and Bwagiriza camps, parents say they are afraid their daughters will end up as prostitutes, or that a daughter already has, to provide for her needs. These testimonies are all the more shocking given that, culturally, prostitution is such a taboo subject. A Congolese woman in Bujumbura tells how succumbing to prostitution means that she has lost

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## “Cultural values amongst the young are gradually being lost.”

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all moral authority over her children<sup>78</sup>. A Congolese refugee in Bwagiriza camp tells how her 17-year old daughter had a child as a result of prostitution and how this child is a financial burden on the family and prevents her daughter from following her studies. A Congolese woman from Nyarugusu sums up her dilemma as follows: “*My children have lost their entire culture. My two daughters have become prostitutes to get money for our family to survive. It is unfortunate for their future, but there is no other choice*”<sup>79</sup>.

Economic vulnerability has equally significant consequences for the family and for identity. In the camps, parents can no longer assume the traditional roles of mother and father. The head of the family can no longer shoulder his responsibilities and does not have the autonomy to provide for his family, which makes him feel devalued and frustrated. A Congolese refugee from Bujumbura complains that her children speak a different language (Kirundi) from hers, that some of her sons have started taking drugs and that, for the most part, parents have relinquished their roles. For her, “*cultural values amongst the young are gradually being lost*”<sup>80</sup>. In Nyarugusu camp, an old man tells how he is responsible for his grandson, abandoned by his father, but because he cannot provide for the child’s needs, he has lost all control over him<sup>81</sup>.

Family relationships rapidly break down, and arguments between spouses sometimes end in violence and the ill-treatment of women or children. A Burundian refugee admits that his wife treats him with scorn because he has lost his role as family breadwinner since

coming to Mtabila camp<sup>82</sup>. Changes in family dynamics and between couples are seen more and more, manifesting as suspicion, sexual affairs, and the gradual empowerment of women (which the men refer to as ‘disobedience’) now that they no longer depend on their men<sup>83</sup>. Sometimes this leads to couples making premature decisions to return to their country of origin in an attempt to re-establish the status quo<sup>84</sup>.

To help their parents or in order to buy the same consumer goods as their friends (mobile phones, fashionable clothes, etc.), some of the young attend school less and less often until they drop out altogether. Underage pregnancies are common in the camps, and the girls are rejected and condemned by their peers. In Bwagiriza camp, a 19 year old tells how she had a child “*without wanting it*”, and how numerous others have done the same “*out of boredom*”<sup>85</sup>. Another woman recounts how she sent her pregnant daughter to live with her grandmother to spare her the stigmatization and from being rejected by her husband<sup>86</sup>. This is a particular problem in Mtabila camp, where the schools were closed in 2009, leaving the young to fend for themselves. A Burundian man there goes so far as to call it “*intellectual genocide*”, blaming school closures for the drug-taking and alcohol consumption of the young<sup>87</sup>. In all the research locations, the parents stress the vulnerability of their children in the camps, especially the girls, who are often left to themselves with nothing to do and are prey to boredom.

Social discrimination is also a problem that is often mentioned. Refugees report that, whether inside or outside the camps, they rarely have the same rights as citizens of the host country, and are not respected by them or by the local authorities. The very fact of refugee status can involve a loss of social status, with those who previously held important positions, such as doctors, university professors or big businessmen, finding that, overnight, their standing in the eyes

of others disappears. A Burundian trader in Bukavu complains that it is difficult for her to gain access to the region's markets because she does not speak the right language<sup>88</sup>, and a former administrator from Uvira laments the fact that in Burundi, no-one realises he was formerly an important figure in Congo<sup>89</sup>. Refugees often find such loss of status intolerable.

Some refugees are subjected to ongoing rejection by the host population. Access to decent accommodation is difficult, with landlords refusing to rent to them, or showing them the door when they find out where they are from – a particular problem for Burundian refugees in the town of Bukavu, who are often classed as 'the Rwandan enemy' because of the similarity between their language (Kirundi) and Kinyarwanda. Refugees confirm that discrimination is sometimes so deep-rooted that their women and children are shamed when they go to draw water, or that they have had to leave the area when too many people found out who they were<sup>90</sup>. Another form of stigmatization concerns reports by Burundian women in the village of Kenya of significant social discrimination in relation to the marital dowry. The amount paid for a Burundian bride is less than that for a Congolese from the Babembe community, so Burundian women married to Congolese Babembe or Bafulero men are often less well treated, because their husbands attach less value to them<sup>91</sup>. A Burundian refugee tells how her husband left her two years ago to escape the pressure his family were putting on him for having married a Burundian<sup>92</sup>.

## II. PROTECTION AND SECURITY

The vulnerability of the refugees is also seen in matters of law and policy. Refugees suffer from a political form of stigmatisation attached to their condition as refugees which, given the history of the

region, often triggers deep suspicion in the eyes of host countries and populations. Refugees also see a gap between aid agencies' normative, often highly theoretical, discussions and the realities of their own daily lives, and complain about the lack of transparent, trustworthy information about their rights and the political protection and legal options open to them. Despite efforts by UNHCR, the appropriate authorities and numerous NGOs to raise awareness, the interviews reveal that the refugees' knowledge of the implications of their refugee status is very superficial. Many complain that the laws and treaties governing their status have never been clearly explained. Consequently, they are quick to feel cheated when they notice differences in treatment between refugees. This lack of understanding directly and negatively influences their perceptions of the formal assistance frameworks available and affects their ability to look to the future in an informed and objective way.

### 1. Political stigmatization

This type of vulnerability is linked to the frequent association made between a refugee and the political context of his or her country of origin. Refugees tell of harassment by the host country's political authorities or security forces who associate them with political or military movements in their country of origin. Burundian refugees in the town of Kenya report having been categorised as FNL rebels so that the Congolese military could extort money from them<sup>93</sup>. Burundian refugees in Bukavu are also singled out as 'Rwandans' and rejected. Such stigmatization is worse in times of crisis in the host country, when the resident population becomes more aggressive towards 'foreigners' as more armed groups appear near the borders (the FNL and Interahamwe), or as political tensions between countries reach crisis point. At such times the host population's perception of the refugee camps becomes particularly problematic, fearing they may harbour and mobilise rebel movements. Most Burundian refugees in Mtabila camp, for example, complain of being associ-

ated by their government with FNL elements<sup>94</sup>, and Congolese refugees in Nyarugusu camp complain that the Congolese authorities see the camp as a breeding ground for armed groups (notably the Mai Mai).

Abuse also seems to be rife within the camps themselves and is sometimes committed by local agents who exploit the vulnerability of the refugees for personal profit. In Mtabila, there are reports of refugees being arrested and imprisoned without a warrant by the camp security police, and being transferred to Kasulu prison. This happened to a former FNL leader who was arrested along with religious leaders under the pretext that they were preventing their fellow countrymen from returning home. Members of their families had to pay a fine to have them released<sup>95</sup>. Numerous cases of the destruction by police of fields and harvests have also been reported. This apparently became particularly frequent after the Tanzanian authorities made it clear they were determined to repatriate the refugees<sup>96</sup>. In general, all the refugees in Mtabila object to the fact that they are not free to come and go or to receive visitors - which they see as a flagrant violation of their rights.

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*“I am especially frightened for my daughters who risk rape by the military, particularly outside the camp. I try to keep them very close.”*

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There are particularly damning testimonies from refugees in the camps when it comes to their protection and physical security. In Nyarugusu and Mtabila, grave concerns are raised about the risk of sexual violence and abuse by the law and order forces of the host country. In Mtabila, parents and heads of households with young girls in their care bring this up time and again. They seem obsessed by the risk of rape by the Tanzanian military outside the camp, particularly when their daughters leave the camp in search of firewood. A mother says: *“I am especially frightened for my daughters who risk rape by the military, particularly outside the camp. I try to keep them very close”*<sup>97</sup>. In Nyarugusu camp, the reduction in humanitarian aid has forced many refugees to develop alternative economic activities, exposing them to all kinds of abuse – physical assault, torture, arbitrary arrest and detention – in or near the camp. As with the refugees in Mtabila, the only way to get out of prison in Kasulu and back to the camp is by paying a bribe<sup>98</sup>. There are reports of young women who cannot find the money and who become victims of sexual violence by corrupt police. According to numerous parents in Mtabila camp, the young men also run the risk of being beaten up by the military if they are caught cutting wood outside the camp.

## 2. Lack of recourse

The interviews reveal that the refugees’ vulnerability is accentuated by what they perceive as a lack of options for recourse or appeal in cases of abuse. Very few are bold enough, or have the means, to lodge a complaint before a court in the host country. This results in feelings of abandonment or of being rejected by a system which does not guarantee them the protection they need. The village of Kenya in South Kivu is an example that illustrates the lack of options for solving disputes between refugees and host populations, and for minimising the economic and financial consequences of these conflicts. In the village of Kenya, many 1972 Burundian refugees who had cleared the ground to plant palm groves and produce

palm oil lost most of their investment when the war broke out in Congo in 1996. They were forced to flee the violence, and their palm groves were taken over by the Congolese who, in the meantime, had acquired ownership titles over the land. When the Burundians returned to Kenya, they were forced to work on the land for a meagre wage (between 2 USD and 3 USD a day) in their own palm groves<sup>99</sup>. Given their status in DRC, the refugees are unable to take action against the new Congolese owners. There are many such cases of abuse of power and few means of defence against host country populations or local authorities. All the refugees expressed great frustration with this situation, and said that if they could officially regain ownership of the land, local integration could be durable<sup>100</sup>.

Refugees' complaints addressed to the police and the courts in Kenya have resulted in lengthy, fruitless trials, characterised by continual referrals, payment of a variety of legal fees, and influence-peddling which the refugees do not know how to turn to their advantage – so they grow tired and give up. Their families often advise them to keep a low profile and opt for dialogue for the sake of social cohesion. For the most part, they end up turning to local mediation and conciliation frameworks set up by the NGOs in the community, but these often fail to provide sustainable solutions to their problems<sup>101</sup>.

### 3. Confusion surrounding the granting and withdrawal of refugee status

As shown repeatedly in the interviews, there seems to be a great deal of confusion about the conditions governing the granting and withdrawal of refugee status, and what exactly is meant by this status. This is well illustrated by the case of Burundian refugees who have been in the village of Kenya since the 1970s. Since leaving their country nearly forty years ago, these refugees have only benefited from a *prima facie* refugee status, without any of the official documents which their fellow Burundians who went to Bukavu had ap-

parently been given. This administrative oversight has meant a lot of insecurity over the years - red tape, targeted attacks (especially during the AFDL years), and few avenues of recourse to reclaim their rights. It was only in 2010 that their status was officially recognised through the provision of refugee identity cards by UNHCR and CNR. Although these cards do not come with specific additional aid, they play an important role in protecting refugees and giving them security. The Burundians say that, most importantly, these cards have allowed them to clarify their status with government services and local communities, who now acknowledge them and respect their dignity<sup>102</sup>.

In spite of that, most of them query the absence of any material advantages linked to this status and bemoan the fact that neither UNHCR nor CNR have adequately explained its real implications. In particular, they feel it is regrettable that their contact with UNHCR has been limited to their participation, in 2010 and 2011, in the International Refugee Day in Baraka. By way of protest, no refugee delegate took part in 2012<sup>103</sup>. Some refugees are also very disappointed and frustrated about the isolation they have suffered over the years because of the tardy regularisation of their status, which has meant they have been unable to benefit from the same opportunities for resettlement in a Western country as their compatriots in Tanzania<sup>104</sup>. To date, no refugee from the village of Kenya seems to have benefited from this option.

A second case is that of the Burundian refugees in Mtabila camp who lost their status and were repatriated to Burundi when the camp was closed in November 2012. In 2009, invoking the improved security situation in Burundi, and because they were determined to close the refugee camps on Tanzanian soil<sup>105</sup>, the Tanzanian authorities began to use more aggressive tactics to encourage the refugees to return home. On 1st August 2012, in the face of resist-

ance and after several extended deadlines, they withdrew refugee status from the 38,050 Burundians in the camp and gave them until 31 December to leave the country voluntarily. Faced with the clear refusal of the (now illegal) refugees to leave, the deadline was brought forward, resulting in the forced repatriation of the majority in October 2012. Every day, hundreds were taken, with their goods, to the transit centres in Burundi<sup>106</sup>. The repatriation was completed in November 2012.

Interviews from Mtabila camp show that the refugees do not agree with the two countries' (Tanzania and Burundi) or UNHCR's analysis. To the refugees, the closure of the camp and their forced repatriation are unjust given that the conditions for a permanent return and a lasting reintegration in Burundi have still not been met. They insist that the return is premature, and that many aspects of the current socio-political context in Burundi are still a significant source of concern to them: limited access to land and to means of economic subsistence, failures in the reintegration process of those who have returned since 2003-2004, the presence in the country of many internally displaced persons, and poor security conditions with the ever-present threat of the FNL, unlawful executions, the memory of the most recent killings in Gatumba, and a political climate seen as repressive<sup>107</sup>. These concerns have given rise to a great deal of speculation about the real reasons for their forced repatriation, and most refugees are convinced that it is in fact because the Tanzanian and Burundian governments see the camp as a breeding-ground for Burundian rebels and a significant source of destabilisation in the region.

In order to abide by the clauses pertaining to the withdrawal of refugee status as stipulated in the 1951 Refugee Convention, a screening process was organised to determine whether any refugees had personal reasons, outside the Burundian context, for continued en-

titlement to refugee status. Some 2,715 of them kept their status as a result and were transferred to Nyarugusu camp. It has emerged from several interviews in Mtabila that the refugees were unaware of the grounds for the screening and had no real understanding of the scope of the exercise. The same applies to some of the refugees who were transferred to Nyarugusu who are also ignorant of why they, in preference to others, were given the opportunity to keep their status<sup>108</sup>. Refugees in Mtabila are obviously confused over the closure of the camp and the withdrawal of their status: they do not understand how the status originally granted to them to protect them from insecurity can today be taken away when their security is still not guaranteed. They also want to know how it is that repatriation can be forced, while the three options always put forward for their future (return, integration and resettlement), and on which they have always counted, are supposed to be voluntary. They also feel confused when it comes to the responsibility of the various actors involved. While most refugees thought the final decision would come from UNHCR, they were surprised when, in the end, it was the Tanzanian government that had the last word on their fate.

#### **4. Confusion surrounding opportunities for resettlement**

In general, in all the research locations, the possibility of resettlement in a third country tends to give rise to expectations out of all proportion to reality. Refugees give numerous examples of not knowing the precise conditions for eligibility, and the exact steps to take to lodge a resettlement request. Long waiting times, and the fact that there is rarely a successful outcome, lead to great frustration and a feeling of being rejected by the aid agencies and support staff. These feelings came up on numerous occasions in Nyarugusu camp, and in Bujumbura and Bukavu. Most of the refugees concerned tell of resettlement application files submitted to UNHCR which have yet to receive a response after two or three years<sup>109</sup>. A



Burundian refugee in Bukavu asks why nothing has come of the request he submitted in 2004, while some of his fellow countrymen have since been resettled. He adds that the UNHCR agents concerned are away whenever he tries to meet them, and he does not understand why his fully-completed file is not being followed up<sup>110</sup>. Similarly, several Congolese Banyamulenge refugees in Bujumbura refer to the resettlement in the United States, Europe and Australia of some of their fellow countrymen who escaped the Gatumba massacre and are waiting for, and convinced that they will have, the same opportunity<sup>111</sup>. Some even think that their stay in camp is only temporary, and that resettlement is a given.

The arguments on which the authorities base their decisions are not clearly explained to the refugees, so they imagine that finding alternative strategies will give them a better chance of achieving their ends. They also base their decisions on issues as important as resettlement not on precise knowledge of the documents and formal procedures, but on personal observations or on advice from others which is often just rumour and disinformation. The story of a Congolese woman living illegally in Kigoma is quite telling: on the advice of her cousin who has been resettled in Canada, she tried twice to file a request for resettlement but decided to do this 'through Tanzanian acquaintances' rather than by going directly to UNHCR. She took the decision to leave Nyarugusu camp so that she could be free to make contacts in Kigoma, but in so doing has been the victim of repeated episodes of extortion. She remains convinced to this day that "*those who obtain resettlement here in Tanzania get it by means of corruption*"<sup>112</sup>. The same idea is put forward by other refugees in Nyarugusu and Mtabila camps, who believe that only those refugees with the financial means to pay corrupt agents are able to speed up UNHCR's processing of their cases<sup>113</sup>. Some are also convinced that Tanzanians masquerade as Burundian and Congolese refugees, taking the resettlement place that should have been theirs<sup>114</sup>.

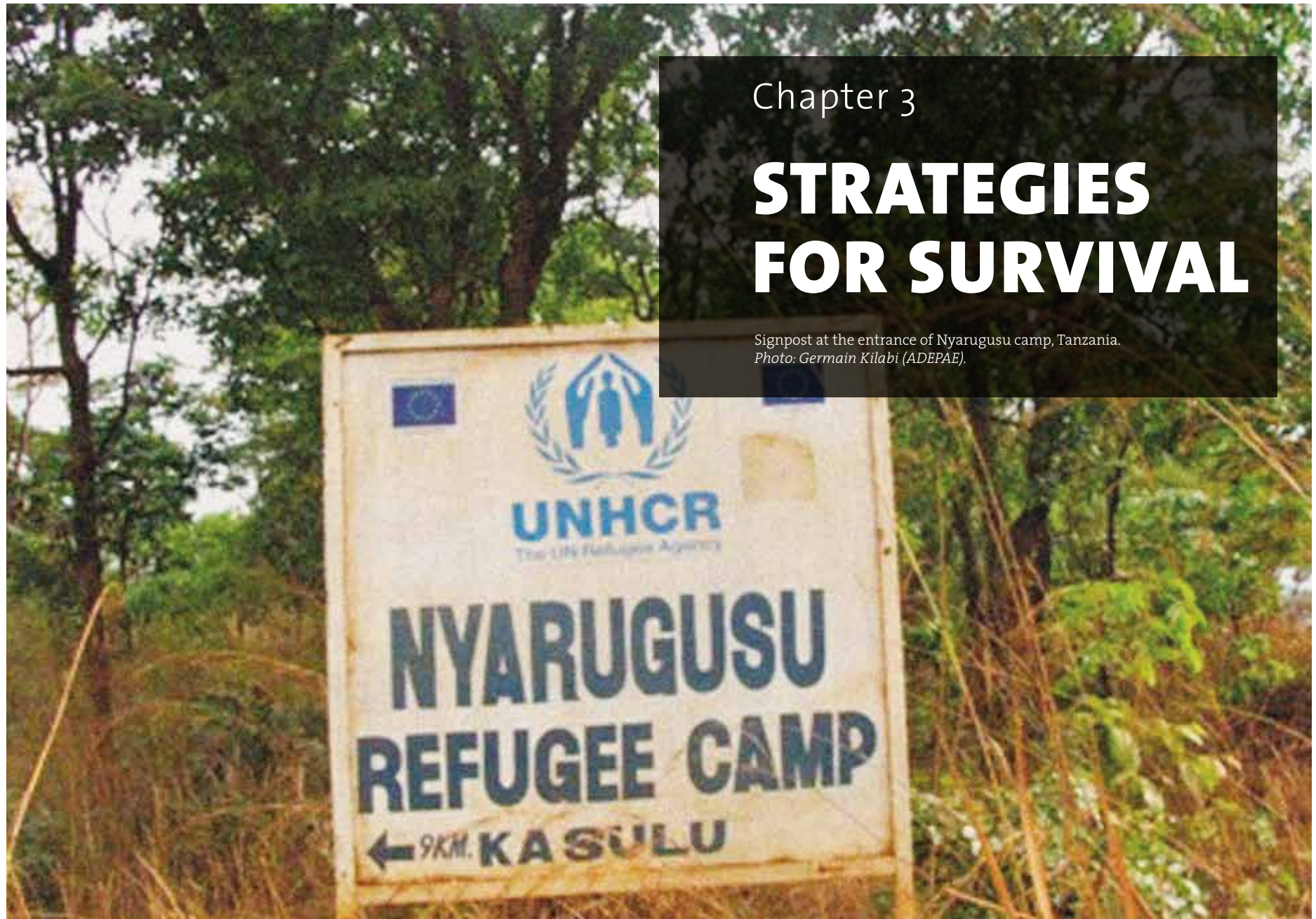
Other refugees will adopt even more extreme strategies to focus UNHCR's attention on their case. Five Congolese refugees in Nyarugusu camp admit having changed their identity and borrowed Burundian names in the hope of being chosen for resettlement at the same time as the restricted group of Burundians transferred from Mtabila camp, whom they saw as a priority for resettlement<sup>115</sup>. Burundian refugees in Mtabila also admit passing themselves off as Tutsi or Twa, thinking that these two minority ethnic groups will also be a priority for resettlement<sup>116</sup>. Other refugees have developed more desperate strategies to draw attention to their cases, like a man who burnt down his house in Mtabila, or another who threw a grenade at his<sup>117</sup>. A refugee from Bwagiriza camp knows of someone who bound and gagged himself to make himself out to be the victim of a kidnapping, and to convince UNHCR that he warranted immediate resettlement<sup>118</sup>. Others, especially those without files, turn in desperation to prayer, believing that selection for resettlement will only be "*by the grace of God*"<sup>119</sup>.

Testimony about the precariousness of the refugees' economic situation and their social and political vulnerability reveals a significant gap between the normative frameworks of assistance and the day-to-day reality. The difference between the basic needs of the refugees and the humanitarian 'package' provided to them increases the inequalities between refugees, accentuates their vulnerability, and seems to be at the root of many social changes. These differences explain the misunderstandings and confusions about normative frameworks of assistance, resulting from what seems to be lack of transparent and accurate information about available options, but they also explain the unrealistic expectations, born of despair with day-to-day living, that refugees have with regard to their future. In this context, refugees have no other option than to develop alternative survival strategies to counter this vulnerability.

## Chapter 3

# STRATEGIES FOR SURVIVAL

Signpost at the entrance of Nyarugusu camp, Tanzania.  
*Photo: Germain Kilabi (ADEPAE).*



In the face of the day-to-day struggle to meet their needs and those of their families, refugees often have little choice but to find alternative, more or less legal, strategies for survival. Whether in camps or in an urban setting they find food, shelter, medical care and schooling for their children by developing strategies to find employment and other means of livelihood. The energy of social groups and networks, whether ethnic, religious or political, helps to arm them against the major disruptions caused by displacement, so that they rebuild bonds and solidarity and overcome daily difficulties together.

## I. BETWEEN RESOURCEFULNESS AND CIRCUMVENTING THE RULES

### 1. Finding employment

In the camps, competent and resourceful people are able to find paid employment working for a humanitarian organisation like UNHCR or one of its agencies. Some refugees earn money as nurses, teachers, community mobilisers, guards, instructors or cleaners; these jobs are very sought-after, and only a small minority manage to obtain such work. Salaries vary according to the type of work and the responsibilities involved, and provide a more or less satisfactory addition to the allowances received. For example, a young Congolese refugee who teaches in Nyarugusu camp earns 24,000 Tanzanian shillings per month, which is barely 15 USD. She supplements this amount by working for a local association several afternoons a week, but stresses that without the humanitarian aid these amounts would not be enough to enable her to support her family<sup>120</sup>. A Burundian refugee in Mtabila camp is less lucky: her husband was a teacher in the camp and lost his job when the schools there were closed in 2009. Despite her nursing qualifications she has been unable to find a job other than as a cleaner, which she says is badly paid<sup>121</sup>.

Jobs in the aid agencies are not the only source of revenue for refugees in the camps: some of them manage to set up small businesses, or become hairdressers, tailors or bakers, particularly in Bwagiriza and Nyarugusu. A Congolese refugee in Bwagiriza camp says that her job as a baker supplements her rations from UNHCR, but that she struggles because of the poverty of other refugees<sup>122</sup>. The small money-making enterprises often come up against the lack of money in the camps, which means that clients are rare and takings meagre. Some of their owners have borrowed money to set up their businesses and soon run the risk of bankruptcy and inability to pay their debts. A young refugee in Nyarugusu working as a foreign exchange dealer states that only a revolving credit system ('tontine') protects his capital<sup>123</sup>. For less fortunate people, the risk of being cheated is high.

### 2. Alternative livelihoods

In Nyarugusu camp, refugees have resorted to subsistence farming, growing vegetables on their parcels of land to complement the food distributed by UNHCR which enables them to buy other things (clothes etc.). Some find land outside the camp and grow larger quantities in order to sell the surplus, but they are limited by restrictions as to the scale of such activities. They are not allowed to sell their produce beyond a certain radius of the camp, whereas profits are higher in the towns within that forbidden area<sup>124</sup>. This is the complaint of a Congolese woman from Nyarugusu, who says, *"I manage to grow a few things, but then am not at liberty to sell them, which I find very demotivating"*<sup>125</sup>.

Other strategies adopted by the refugees to satisfy their needs or augment their income involve circumventing the restrictions, or manipulating the opportunities available in the camps. The first is to break restrictions and find lucrative work where refugees are not legally allowed to do business, like the Burundian refugee from



Nyarugusu who admits that his search for work outside the camp could cost him six months in prison. Until then, “[he] contents [himself] with growing a little amaranth to eke out [his] meagre rations from UNHCR”<sup>126</sup>. Some refugees do business in the prohibited areas and risk paying fines or having their merchandise confiscated by the police. This is the case for some Congolese refugees in Bwagiriza, who accuse the Gitega police of taking their goods away from them and threatening them with prison<sup>127</sup>.

Another strategy used is that of food token trafficking. The refugees receive their food aid in the form of tokens which are distributed by UNHCR staff, and some manage to register more dependants than they really have, trusting either in the carelessness of the staff not to notice, or by paying bribes<sup>128</sup>. Those refugees who manage to cheat the food aid system then sell on their surplus food at inflated prices, often in the form of loans at exorbitant interest rates, varying from 20% to 50%. The families accepting this type of loan are those unable to manage their food aid, and who find themselves in a state of food insecurity. On food distribution days, they have to repay the food they have ‘borrowed’, plus the interest, which in turn makes them even more dependent on loans. The lending family, on the other hand, benefits by accumulating more and more food<sup>129</sup>. A real black market for food thus operates in the camps, and deepens the inequalities between the refugees: the rich make illicit profits from aid, while the poor are caught in a spiral of debt and a more and more vulnerable situation every day. A number of cases like this are reported from Nyarugusu and Bwagiriza camps.

According to some refugees interviewed at Nyarugusu, the aid black market not only concerns food, but also medicines. When medical centres are out of stock of medicines, it is apparently still possible to buy them on the black market. The refugees accuse the medical per-

sonnel of taking bribes to fuel this trafficking. Here again, it is the most vulnerable families who are the worst affected<sup>130</sup>. In Mtabila, it is reported that medicines have to be bought from illicit pharmacies where storage conditions are dubious and the medical personnel not qualified<sup>131</sup>.

Although the refugees who live outside the camps receive less regular aid than those in the camps, they manage to circumvent the restrictions imposed by the host country much more easily. They have better opportunities to find local work, even if this is not always easy. A wider range of remunerative activities is available to those living outside the camps, depending on whether they are in urban or rural settings. In the village of Kenya in DRC, for example, Burundian refugees live mainly from fishing, farming and cattle breeding; whereas in towns like Bujumbura, Bukavu or Kigoma there are greater opportunities for business – even if semi-urban farming and animal husbandry still continue.

All refugees seem to develop their own ways of making money, according to their skills and capabilities, their networks and their creativity. As is the case for the host country nationals, jobs and activities occupied by the refugees outside the camps are relatively many and diverse, although limited by a narrow socio-economic context and an often precarious personal situation. Because they lack capital, many refugees have no choice but to sell their labour cheap, most often in farm work. A young woman refugee in the village of Kenya recounts that she works in someone else’s fields, not for money but for a part of what is harvested, with which she feeds her five children<sup>132</sup>. Better-off refugees generally rent land from nationals. The whole harvest is then theirs, and they can sell the greater part of it. A Congolese refugee in Kigoma, who has been in exile for 39 years, rents fields at a cost of 100,000 shillings (60 USD) per acre per year<sup>133</sup>. If the harvests are good and profitable enough, he can

employ farm workers on his fields and so diversify and expand his activities. Refugees are not allowed to become legal owners of land because of their status; this means that they are obliged to rent, which is really lost money, and for which they depend wholly on the national farmers<sup>134</sup>.

Beyond subsistence farming, refugees living outside the camps can be found in all areas of the local economy. They may sell produce, fish or palm oil, work as hairdressers, dressmakers, pastors or teachers. They often undertake several activities at the same time, for example combining farming, breeding and small trade, or other manual work, to guarantee a greater financial stability – if one of their enterprises should fail, they can fall back on the others<sup>135</sup>. One of the refugees interviewed in Kenya, DRC, works as a farm labourer for a Congolese farmer; also as a grower in his own right; by cracking palm nuts whose stones he sells on to local soap manufacturers, and also by cutting logs for firewood, which he sells at the local market<sup>136</sup>. All these strategies, put in place by the refugees in order to survive in a situation where aid is practically non-existent, can be summarised as resourcefulness. In an environment where everything is uncertain, every little counts.

## II. SOCIAL NETWORKS IN EXILE

Belonging to social groups and networks is another way refugees deal with the problems of everyday life. Whether through the extended family, the community, the church, refugee committees, affiliation to a political party of the home country, or integration into the local population, the refugees' social networks fulfil an important role in their daily life: economically, socially, psychologically and to give them a sense of identity.

### 1. Family ties

The extended family is a particularly important bedrock of solidarity in exile. Although the experience of displacement can often weaken or even break the links between family members, many refugees still count on more or less regular financial help from relatives either still living in their home country or settled abroad. Many Congolese refugees in Nyarugusu say they count on relatives settled in the West and in Australia, who send them money when they need it. In Bujumbura, some have brothers or friends abroad who rent them houses and send them money to pay for their food rations<sup>137</sup>. Elderly people report that they have been able to leave the camps to find better living conditions in towns thanks to assistance from their children settled in other countries. One such case is that of a Congolese widow who has lived in Kigoma as a refugee for 16 years, who says that she lives solely on financial support from her daughters, who have been settled in Kigoma for some years<sup>138</sup>. Aside from this support from relatives from afar, solidarity among those family members living together is evident in their everyday lives: each one does certain tasks for the good of the home; the children go to the well for water, or to find wood outside the camp, or run small errands for the family. In such situations of financial uncertainty, family solidarity can nonetheless lead to short-term solutions, such as when young children end up having to work and give up school. This is the case for some Congolese children working in restaurants and cinemas in Makere, 5 km from Nyarugusu<sup>139</sup>.

The immediate and extended family suffers great turmoil on the route into exile: children and parents may die on the journey or in exile; others find themselves separated by events and are left with no trace of each other. These tragic events often lead to new family structures: when a family member disappears, new members, usually orphaned children, may be adopted. Acceptance and care of these vulnerable new members is another illustration of the soli-



darity shown by family groups. This is the case in Bwagiriza, where there are large families with some 8 to 10 members, having taken in orphans or elderly people they are now looking after<sup>140</sup>.

## 2. Community attachment and political leanings

Beyond support from the family, the community to which the refugee belongs provides a further basis of solidarity he or she can rely on. This primarily takes the form of membership of an ethnic “*mutualité*” or association which insures all or part of the same community in a given place, either in the camps or in town and serves as a social solidarity fund. Each member contributes regularly and the *mutualité* uses the funds to assist those in need, for example in the case of illness, or for a funeral or a wedding. As well as providing this base for solidarity, it also brings together the leaders and elders of the community, who advise and set rules and instructions pertaining to the problems it is confronted with. It thus contributes to the general strategy of social - and possibly political - reinstatement as well as strengthening the perception of identity. In this way, it helps to anchor the refugees by integrating familiar points of reference from their country of origin, and to give them some sense of security and comfort. As an example, among the Congolese refugees in Nyarugusu there are several different ethnic *mutualités*: Bembe, Bafulero/Bavira (joint), Rega, Banyamulenge, Bashi and Babangubangu.

As formal associations, these *mutualités* do not necessarily impact directly on the day-to-day life of the refugees. As testified by a Congolese refugee in Nyarugusu, it seems that the *mutualité* is called upon in the case of real problems, but the tendency is to rely on oneself in daily life. He says, “*the mutualité works well, but when there are no difficult situations, each person lives their own life*”<sup>141</sup>. However, some refugees denounce possible discrimination within these associations when it comes to the distribution of financial

assistance, people of more comfortable means seeming to benefit from more favourable treatment<sup>142</sup>. Despite the overall beneficial aspects of this, membership of an ethnic community also has an important influence over the social relationships between refugees – particularly in the camps, where the geographical organisation is by ethnic group. This grouping of the refugees results directly from the events leading to their displacement, particularly in the case of a mass exodus. In Bwagiriza camp, for example, the refugees are mainly Banyamulenge, whereas in Nyarugusu the Babembe are in the majority. This can lead to a repeat of the inter-ethnic tensions existing in the home country and cause feelings of frustration for the minority groups in the camps. A Congolese Bembe in the Bwagiriza camp clearly expresses this frustration: “*We try to live tolerantly between the different communities in the camp. But the Banyamulenge are nasty and resentful.*”<sup>143</sup>

These community dynamics can lead to competition for paid or shared work within the camps. In Bwagiriza, for example, the representative of the Bembe community claims that the Babembe are treated unjustly compared with the Banyamulenge, apparently “*favoured*” by the UNHCR and given priority for the paid jobs available<sup>144</sup>. Frustrations are not limited to inter-community tensions, but are also seen as a result of nationality: many Congolese in Nyarugusu are indignant following the appointment as coordinator of the camp schools of a Burundian refugee recently arrived from Mtabila<sup>145</sup>. These tensions and frustrations pervade all the social relationships of daily life, from ethnic insults in queues at the well, to fights following football matches. The same refugee from Bwagiriza reports that football matches in the camp always end up in fights, and that when the Banyamulenge lose, they jump at the opportunity to accuse the other communities of being behind the Gatumba massacre in 2004<sup>146</sup>. In this way, membership of a community can indeed be a source of solidarity, but also of rejection by other

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“The situation is still fragile and worrying [...], so we have decided to wait.”

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communities, and thus perpetuate the tensions experienced in the home country. Ceremonies designed to reinforce a sense of identity and solidarity by celebrating events from the shared history of a certain group, for instance (e.g. commemoration of those killed in a massacre), may well enhance that group's sense of identity and solidarity, but at the same time may be appreciated differently by other communities who see only a desire for revenge. This is the case for the anniversary ceremonies of the Gatumba massacre organised by the Banyamulenge in Bwagiriza<sup>147</sup>.

If social relationships are formed around ethnic origin, this also applies when it comes to political developments in the home country. In spite of a legal ban to organise or participate in any political activity, refugees tend to follow political and security developments at home in order to judge whether it is safe to return. The *mutualités* provide the platform for judging the political and security context in the home country, to discuss and decide collectively the opportunities for a return home. One Congolese member of the Rega community explains that the *mutualité* is a centre for analysis, discussion and collective decision-making, and that she thinks that for the time being, “*the situation is still fragile and worrying [...], so we have decided to wait*”<sup>148</sup>.

Through the elders and leaders within the *mutualité*, communities can take position on important political events in their home countries even in exile, deciding on what line should be followed by all the members. For example, the Congolese elections of 2011 were followed closely by the different communities in exile. During the campaign, flags of the different parties, like that of the PPRD (the party in power in DRC), the UDPS (opposition party) or others, were flying in Nyarugusu camp. Many refugees went home to DRC to register for voting and then back again on voting day. Again, the *mutualités* had encouraged their members to fulfil their civic obligations in Congo in spite of their status as refugees. Political leanings, and thus choice of vote at elections, are often influenced by community concerns. In both Congo and Burundi, the purpose of the vote is first of all to ensure that political leaders of the voter's community are in the running for the general election, so that the community is properly represented and defended at government level.

### 3. Refugee committees and the Church

Whether in camps or in urban areas, refugees organise themselves into committees in order to ensure their representation to the aid agencies and to the Congolese, Burundian or Tanzanian national authorities. The committees are mixed, and their members elected democratically by the refugees<sup>149</sup>. However, their power is limited as far as political or policy discussions are concerned: their role is purely consultative and limited to giving an opinion on decisions taken and policies implemented by the different refugee authorities. They are not permitted to have a say in any final decision. Their power to influence political decisions, which are the prerogative of the governments, is therefore virtually non-existent. This powerlessness to exert any influence on key decisions having a direct bearing on them leads many refugees in Tanzania to claim that the committee is not independent, but controlled by the Tanzanian authorities<sup>150</sup>.

In spite of this, and apart from their role of representing their members to the various authorities, these refugee committees play a part in peace-building and mediation when tensions, ethnic or otherwise, arise between refugees. In Mtabila, it is these committees which intervene in family problems when the family itself cannot solve them<sup>151</sup>. They also contribute to the resolution of conflict, in which they benefit from the support of some international NGOs. In Nyarugusu, the refugee committees serve as mediators where inter-ethnic tensions arise. On this more micro level the committees have more power and control, and decisions related to camp management are taken in collaboration with UNHCR.

In the same way, churches play an important social and psychological role for the refugees; they provide a source of solidarity and assistance to the faithful and help to develop a feeling of belonging based on their common beliefs. This is often described by them as a source of psychological and emotional comfort. Belonging to a religious group with whom they share the same faith and values, and with whom they meet regularly to celebrate these, comforts the refugees and helps them find the courage to deal with their daily problems. This is borne out by a Congolese refugee from Kigoma, who explains that in the absence of work or official papers, she is helped by receiving financial support from members of her protestant congregation to be able to feed her family and integrate into her new town, despite the fact that she lives there illegally<sup>152</sup>. Another refugee in Kigoma has been taken in by his local pastor, who gives him board and lodging as payment for work and services. This same pastor also helps members of his congregation to obtain legal papers and legalise their situation<sup>153</sup>. In Nyagurusu, Jehovah's Witnesses provide material aid to their members from time to time.

#### 4. Assimilation into the local population

Integrating into the local population of the host country is another way to improve conditions of daily life and make the most of economic and social opportunities. This is often easier for those living in towns, but even refugees in the camps can develop relationships with local residents. This seems to be the case in Tanzania, and is illustrated by the use of Tanzanian Swahili by Congolese refugees, and also by the cultural and linguistic affinity between Burundians and the Tanzanian Baha community. Many of the Congolese refugees point out that they share some cultural characteristics with the Tanzanians, for example solidarity in the case of mourning or marriage<sup>154</sup>.

On the other hand, the frequent formation of social and cultural 'ghettos', imported from the home country, can be an obstruction to long-term integration. As a Burundian refugee in Mtabila says, *"Here in Mtabila, it's like a little Burundi"*<sup>155</sup>. The social discrimination suffered by the refugees compared with the neighbouring nationals is not always conducive to integration either. It either encourages the refugees to close in on themselves, or forces them to pretend to be nationals, as seems to be the case of the Burundian refugees in Bukavu. In such a case, it is only by hiding the real identity that integration into the local population can be possible, given the strength of the prejudice against the Burundians<sup>156</sup>.

In spite of this, mixed marriages between refugees and the local population, particularly in Kigoma and Nyarugusu, are relatively common. They seem to be more frequent in Kigoma, which is an open environment in which Congolese can mix with Tanzanians without hindrance or restriction, contrary to life within the camps. These mixed marriages involve Tanzanian and Congolese men and women equally, and are viewed differently by the refugees themselves, who do not always look kindly on them. As the Congolese

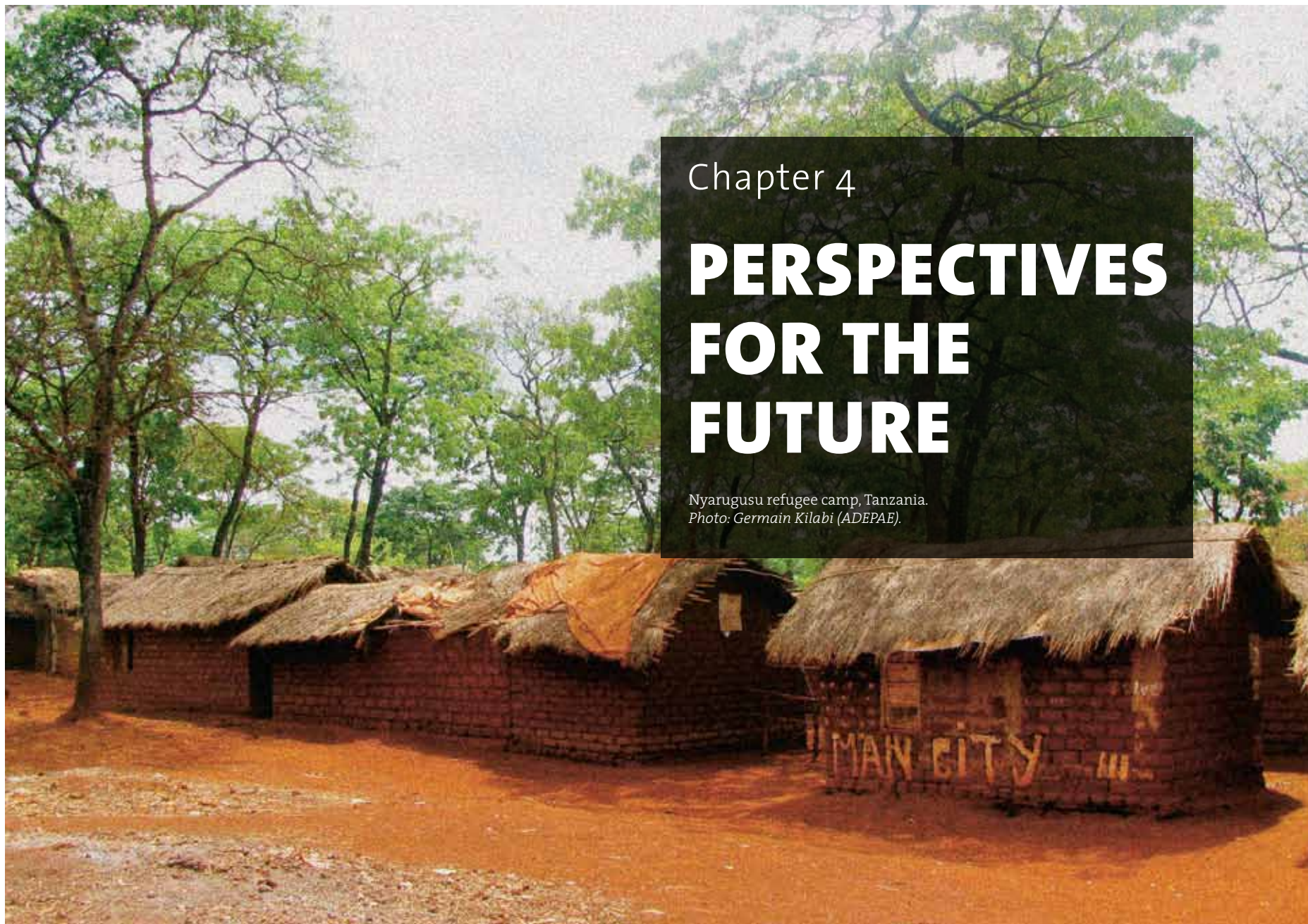
families are generally poor, it is simpler and cheaper for them to arrange a marriage with a Tanzanian girl rather than with a Congolese one<sup>157</sup>. Another advantage is that a Tanzanian spouse can facilitate relations with the local authorities, particularly with the Tanzanian police, who are more indulgent during checks, curfew or cases of expulsions<sup>158</sup>. It is evident that for those refugees who do not intend to return to DRC or Burundi, marriage is a particularly effective means of integration into the local population. It is for these reasons that some refugees criticise these marriages as “*unions linked to circumstantial interests*”<sup>159</sup>. Other refugees pretend not to understand the motives for such unions, or interpret them as the result of cultural uprooting and of loss of original identity.

Another sign of integration is the possession of host country identity or election cards. This is the case for Burundian refugees in DRC, and Congolese refugees in Burundi. In Tanzania, this is much less common and only happens very discreetly, mainly in Kigoma. In Congo and Burundi, these cards are very easy to come by: in DRC, Burundian refugees pass themselves off as members of Congolese families when registering for voting. This is done with the blessing of the local authorities. In Burundi, Congolese refugees pay small amounts of money to Burundian acquaintances who obtain identity cards for them. They then have freedom of movement, access to employment, and can more easily claim certain rights.

Notwithstanding the trials endured, the inadequacy of humanitarian aid and the uncertainty of a life of suffering and poverty, the strategies employed by the refugees in circumventing the system show to what extent individual and communal resources can be enlisted in the face of such uncertainty and daily problems. These strategies demonstrate the huge diversity in the experience of exile, and the fundamentally dynamic element of the refugee status. To understand the reasons inciting a refugee to choose a voluntary re-

turn home or, on the contrary, to resist it at all cost, it is necessary to understand his own personal journey as well as his personal capacity to gather resources to his advantage and evaluate the relative advantages of his daily life and his future options. If the strategies he develops to improve his daily lot as a refugee contribute substantially to this calculation, his decision is also based on his perceptions and a specific analysis of his options to return in the short, medium and long term.





## Chapter 4

# PERSPECTIVES FOR THE FUTURE

Nyarugusu refugee camp, Tanzania.  
*Photo: Germain Kilabi (ADEPAE).*



The refugees' appreciation of their options for the future is for the most part governed by their personal experience and journey into exile, and in general depends on the quality of life and safety they knew in their home country - the memory of which is often weighed down by fear, uncertainty and mistrust. Consideration of future options for a return home is also affected by the relative advantages of living in exile, and this is an important part of the decision on whether or not to go. The interviews carried out during this study reveal the persistence of numerous obstacles to a return home. This is not reflected by the approach of the governments of the region, who tend to promote the reintegration of refugees into their countries of origin. The interviews suggest that the return options envisaged by the refugees, based as they are on a very personal analysis of their quality of life, cannot be reduced to a 'one size fits all' solution, and indicate that different and varied solutions must be found, adapted to the needs and aspirations of each individual.

## I. OBSTACLES TO A RETURN HOME

### 1. Insecurity and political context in the home area

The opinions formed by the refugees on the safety conditions in their home country are largely based on the different sources of information available to them in exile. Local and international radio and television stations (for the most part independent) are their main source, and the refugees make sure they are permanently equipped with a ready supply of batteries for their radios<sup>160</sup>. Mobile phones are another important means of maintaining regular contact with the country of origin; they call friends or relatives at home or contact the diaspora abroad to obtain as much information and analysis as possible. Some make illicit visits to the return area, living in villages with their families for weeks at a time with the aim of getting a real idea of conditions there<sup>161</sup>. Others use written corre-

spondence, exchanging news and photos with their loved ones<sup>162</sup>. In Mtabila camp, refugees regularly keep up to date with developments in their home country by consulting the internet (email, Facebook, etc.).

In general, news received by the refugees on safety in their home area is not encouraging. In Eastern Congo, there are still many armed groups, leading to regular clashes, as well as the problems of lack of discipline within the Congolese army. These are key reasons for the refugees' decision to remain in exile, and Congolese refugees accuse the present Congolese authorities of being incapable of ending the war and of setting up transparent and functional political institutions<sup>163</sup>. A Congolese refugee from Nyarugusu regrets that *"nothing works in Congo. If Kabila stays in power for another 5 years, none of us will ever go home"*<sup>164</sup>. This negative perception of the Congolese authorities is accentuated by the attitude the latter show during speeches on 'return awareness' in the camps. The refugees feel that the authorities are not at all interested in them, nor do they seek to find solutions to their problems. Another refugee from Nyarugusu openly says, *"I am not going back to Congo because the Congolese authorities make no effort to assist our social and economic resettlement at home"*<sup>165</sup>.

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*"I am not going back to Congo because the Congolese authorities make no effort to assist our social and economic resettlement at home."*

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Many refugees speak of their distrust of the national institutions, giving this as a prime reason for their reluctance to return. Such feeling is particularly strong among Congolese refugees from Fizi and Uvira in the Nyarugusu camp; these are areas in which the opposition party won high scores in the 2011 presidential elections, particularly within the Bembe community. This community voted massively for Tshisekedi, the direct opponent of Kabila. The re-election of Kabila is thus a big disincentive for these refugees to return, the majority believing that the vote was rigged<sup>166</sup>.

Continuing conflicts between local communities over land or customary power also reinforce the feeling of insecurity within these communities, and provide a far from favourable social environment to which to return. Several Congolese refugees have expressed such fears. The Ruzizi Plain in South Kivu, which is in the heart of one of the main return areas of the province, is illustrative of this: there is continuing conflict there between the Bafulero and Barundi communities on land management and customary power. Some of the refugees in the Nyarugusu and Bwagiriza camps are from these communities, and all those met in this study give the situation in the Plain as the reason for not returning<sup>167</sup>, as, according to them, *“it is not a nice place to live”*<sup>168</sup>. For the Banyavyura, Congolese Tutsi Banyamulenge who lived in the area of Vyura in North Katanga, the situation seems to be even worse than that in the Ruzizi Plain. The North Katangan population virulently rejects the Banyavyura, calling them foreigners, or even Rwandan invaders, and refuse to let them return to their lands. The local Moba population (North Katangan) has apparently already organised demonstrations in protest against the return of these refugees, causing extensive damage, even to the local UNHCR offices. Under these conditions, the Banyavyura fear for their safety, even though it is their dearest wish to return home. It is impossible for them to envisage settlement in another part of DRC<sup>169</sup>.

The political situation in Burundi presents the same obstacles to a return to the home country. For Burundian refugees, it is the authoritarian excesses and repression by the party in power that are given as the main reason for their resistance. Above all, they fear the Imbonerakure, the militant youth of the CNDD-FDD (the party in power), described as the master weapon for intimidation of the opposition. As summarised by a Burundian refugee in Mtabila, *“we receive discouraging news, and in spite of the fact that I own land in Burundi, I will never feel safe enough to live there”*<sup>170</sup>. Others mention their fear of the Burundian police and intelligence services<sup>171</sup>. The firmness of the authorities' attitude results from political developments following the 2010 Burundian elections, and in particular from the departure into exile of Agathon Rwasa, leader of the FNL, whose armed group has remobilised from the DRC. The Burundian authorities thus hunt down anyone with links to the FNL. This does not inspire confidence in the refugees as to their future should they return home one day.

Another major obstacle to the refugees' return is linked to the trauma experienced at the time of leaving. For one Burundian refugee in Nyarugusu, the pain of her displacement is still so raw that she can only consider Burundi *“like a morgue”* and cannot imagine ever being able to return<sup>172</sup>. Most of the refugees interviewed explain logically enough that what stops them returning is exactly what led them to leave. The trauma caused by the violence they suffered combined with the conditions of insecurity existing in their home country prevent many of them from envisaging return as a viable option. This is because these trauma have never been meaningfully and durably addressed by any kind of psycho-social support.

## 2. Economic uncertainty

Another obstacle to returning is the relative advantages exile provides compared with the financial and land-related insecurity

awaiting them in their countries of origin. Most of them lost everything in their flight; some have had to sell their belongings in a hurry on leaving their villages. They have no idea how they will be able to recover their land or homes, in spite of the national commissions set up to settle these questions and the conflicts (disputes for land and agricultural plots etc.) which may ensue. In the context of an essentially agricultural economy like Eastern Congo and Burundi, owning no land is an economic disadvantage too important to let the refugees take such a risk.

The above problems have been expressed mainly by the Burundian refugees because of the land tenure problems in their country. A Burundian refugee in Kigoma explains very honestly that his decision to stay in Tanzania is because he has access to much more land there than in Burundi. He concludes by saying, *“it is why I am hoping to obtain Tanzanian nationality and settle permanently here”*<sup>173</sup>. Another Burundian refugee from Kigoma is well-informed about the procedures to follow in Burundi to recover his land, but he is not confident: his brother has already tried without success to recover property, and his son is closely following up a file he has with the CNTB, so he is waiting to see how their situations develop before making his decision. In the meantime, he admits to having submitted an application for Tanzanian nationality<sup>174</sup>.

The fears expressed by the Burundian refugees on the subject of land ownership are sustained by the controversies in Burundi around the workings of the CNTB, transmitted to Tanzania and DRC by the local radio stations. The CNTB is accused of making decisions with no long term or legal value, and this criticism is a further argument for the refugees not to attempt to return home<sup>175</sup>. Resistance to returning is also reinforced by the experiences of their fellow countrymen who went back several years ago and have great difficulty adapting to a new life in Burundi. As summed up by a Bu-

rundian refugee in Mtabila: *“I don’t understand why they want to repatriate us when there are already internally displaced people who don’t want to go home, perhaps because they know that peace has not yet been restored”*<sup>176</sup>. Another refugee complains that only two months after having returned to Burundi, his daughter was back in the camp, because *“the assistance was inadequate”*<sup>177</sup>. Others have to accept that their houses may have been occupied by neighbours in their absence, and that they will be under threat of death if they return to claim them. Several Burundian refugees in Mtabila testified along these lines, like this Burundian woman who says, *“I’m afraid to return because I know that people have taken my land. If I return, I risk being killed at any moment. So I prefer to stay here so as not to put my life at risk”*<sup>178</sup>.

The Congolese refugees have the same fears. One refugee from Nyarugusu is emphatic about the importance of having guarantees for proper social and economic reintegration: *“A good social reintegration policy for returnees, with a field to farm and a piece of land on which to build a house, would be a strong incentive to return”*<sup>179</sup>. Many Congolese refugees bemoan the socio-economic conditions existing in the return areas, not only because of the land problems but also where public infrastructure is concerned. This applies particularly to both medical care and schooling for children. Medical costs and school fees are often put forward as disincentives to return, given that the refugees would be unable to pay these costs, at least for the first few years of resettlement<sup>180</sup>. For most of the families, remaining in the camps is the only possible opportunity for them to educate all their children without exception: they know that the day they return home, they will have to take some of the children out of school and put them to work. As a Congolese refugee in Nyarugusu says, the choice to stay in exile is based on a simple equation: a mother or father will obviously wait until their child has obtained (free of charge) a diploma before returning. In his case, he

adds, “if my brothers have been able to go to university, it is above all thanks to exile”<sup>181</sup>.

## II. DREAMS AND ASPIRATIONS: BETWEEN HOPE AND DESPAIR

In these circumstances future prospects are relatively limited, evaluated by each individual according to personal living conditions and specific needs. Basically, refugees are presented with three options by the aid organisations and governments: a return to the country of origin; integration into the host country; or relocation to a third country. Although one group intends to return home one day, there are very strict conditions to be met before they entertain the idea of returning. Another group prefers to stay and integrate into the host country, although this applies mainly to those refugees having been able to forge solid links there over a more or less long period of time. A third group, mainly the young and the particularly vulnerable, has such a negative vision of their situation that their only desire is to seek a better life in the West or in Australia. Then there is another smaller group of people, disillusioned and traumatised by their experience of exile, who seem unable to envisage any long-term future and who put their lives in the hands of God or the UNHCR.

### 1. Prerequisites for voluntary return or local integration

Many of the refugees interviewed in Mtabila and Nyarugusu consider that their only option is a return home, but they require that certain conditions be met before return can even be considered. While still mentioning insecurity, the weakness of political institutions and the risk of future violence as major obstacles, they say they would return immediately if basic living conditions improved

in the return area. In Mtabila, Burundian refugees want to see the return of opposition leaders from exile, the restoration of a fair justice system, and the return of internally displaced people to their home villages<sup>182</sup>. In Nyarugusu, a prerequisite for Congolese refugees to return is the speeding up of the integration of armed groups into the FARDC; that city centres be turned into demilitarised zones; and that the communities in Fizi (South Kivu) and Katanga live together peacefully<sup>183</sup>. They feel that these areas are so rich in natural resources and potential livelihoods that they would then be able to live normal lives on their return. Some doubt the legitimacy of the institutions in DRC and suggest that free and credible elections would reassure everyone and encourage them to return<sup>184</sup>.

For the majority of the refugees, the need to improve the quality of education is the condition sine qua non for a guaranteed future in the return area. This means free education for the returning children, or the possibility of waiting until their studies are completed before going home<sup>185</sup>. Some refugees insist on the need to see a fair and equitable process in place for the recovery of their property (mainly land) when they go home. On the other hand, those who have not worked the land during their 20 years of exile want the State and UNHCR to set up alternative social and economic mechanisms, not dependent on farming, so that they can earn a living using the techniques and competences learned in exile. For them, a wider range of revenue generating activities is a prior condition for a viable return.

A second group sees local integration into the host country as their sole option for the future. This concerns primarily those refugees having lived for many years among the local people in towns and villages. They claim that they still lack some key things that would guarantee their long-term integration and satisfactory quality of life: they mention the granting of applications for identity or voting

cards, and obtaining the nationality of the host country. For Burundian refugees in Bukavu, Congolese nationality means being able to work as freely as the Congolese nationals and avoiding the administrative red tape they face today. For the Burundian refugees in the village of Kenya, obtaining Congolese nationality means that deeds of ownership and status as official owners of the lands they farm are guaranteed, whereas now they are only tenants. Burundian refugees in Kigoma want to be able to obtain dual Burundian/Tanzanian nationality in order to enjoy the economic advantages offered by both countries: living permanently in their host country would mean being able to work legally and stay with their children (born and educated there), and at the same time being able to return occasionally to their home and property (mainly land), thus keeping in touch with family members who have returned. This applies especially to those refugees whose families straddle the two countries.

## 2. Towards a better future?

A third group of refugees declares never wanting to go back to their country of origin, but not wanting to integrate locally either. This is so that their children gain a higher level of education in foreign schools and universities of renown, and to improve their quality of life with better prospects for professional and intellectual development and employment. These aspirations are born of the desire to escape from the interminable cycle of conflict in their region and to attenuate the trauma suffered through exile. Following the example of those who have left before them, they hope to make a new and better life for themselves in a new country, far from the painful memories and daily difficulties of exile, and to earn enough to be able to help their families back home. Most of these refugees have already filed applications for resettlement to UNHCR protection departments in Kigoma, Bukavu, Bujumbura or Bwagiriza. Most are optimistic that their applications will be accepted one day<sup>186</sup>. Some are aware of the difficulties that might await them in a foreign

country, while others imagine arriving in an ideal place. This is the case of a Burundian refugee in Bukavu, who says, *“I want to live in a country where there is no ethnicity, where there are no conflicts, and where I can find work without worrying about the jealousy or resentment of others”*<sup>187</sup>.

Those who have no dreams or prospects for the future in the medium or long-term and who seem unable to evaluate their situation beyond the present are much less optimistic. In the course of these interviews, several people admitted that they never think of a better future, but simply live from day to day on their limited resources. These refugees are the poorest: widows, elderly people, members of minority communities or evangelical churches, incapable of being proactive in the management of their future. They say they are depressed, traumatised, tired of being in exile and unable to take a proactive role in taking charge of their destiny. It is disturbing to hear them emphatically describing their total lack of options and their powerlessness to play any part in their own future. According to them, this is entirely in the hands of the UNHCR or God. This is borne out by the cases of a Congolese refugee in Bwagiriza, who confides that *“(her) destiny will be decided by the UNHCR”*<sup>188</sup>, and a Burundian widow in Mtabila, who concludes that she is resigned to living in the camp for the rest of her life<sup>189</sup>.

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*“I want to live in a country where there is no ethnicity, where there are no conflicts, and where I can find work without worrying about the jealousy or resentment of others.”*

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# CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMEN- DATIONS

Nyarugusu refugee camp, Tanzania.  
*Photo: Germain Kilabi (ADEPAE).*

The main object of this study was to give a voice to Congolese and Burundian refugees in the Great Lakes Region by offering them a unique space to tell their stories and to analyse their condition as refugees, the difficulties they experience in exile, and the dreams and aspirations they have for their future. With a view to reducing the all too frequent gap between the normative frameworks of protection and assistance at the regional level and the reality of daily life in exile, the study also sought to bring the main beneficiaries of these frameworks back into the centre of the debate. A second objective was to bring a regional perspective to the problems of displacement, by explaining the cross-border nature of the journeys, and the links between forced displacement, conflict and security in the region. The third and final objective was to highlight the limitations of the policy options within existing normative frameworks at the national and regional level, in order to propose realistic solutions suited to the needs and aspirations of the refugees.

Based on the testimonies and perspectives presented in the report, a number of conclusions and recommendations for the future can be reached. Firstly, the study acknowledges the need for a more systematic inclusion of the refugees' perspectives and contributions when formulating national and regional policies for protection and assistance, in order to take proper account of the diversity of their experiences and specific needs. One important observation which comes out of the interviews is that the refugees need to share their pain, and currently do not have a proper forum in which to do so. Through the interviews, they have been able to be listened to and feel valued, and have confided that, for the first time since their departure, they feel they have been able to play a role in a reflection on their future. The opportunity they have been given seems to have been unique, as it appears that UNHCR and the authorities of their countries have not taken an interest in the precise reasons for their displacement, or in the reality of their daily lives, and their dreams

for their future. However, the study clearly shows that the refugees, far from being passive victims, have definite ideas on their options for the future, as well as remarkable reserves of energy and the ability to mobilise the resources needed to improve a daily life that is painful and to engage in-depth reflections on the conditions of their lives.

The study also shows that the region's refugees are not a homogeneous group requiring a standardised response to identical problems. On the contrary, the testimonies reveal that the refugees all have a unique past, and different preoccupations and aspirations. Also, while they feel the pain of being seen as foreigners in their host country, they have no wish to lose their culture and identity. However, their current situation does not allow them to preserve this heritage and maintain the cultural values which define them and which they hold dear. As the study contains some shocking facts about the extreme despair felt by some refugees after long years in exile, it also reveals the considerable impact of the physical and psychological trauma of displacement which continues to affect the way refugees look at their future after fifteen or twenty years away. This trauma is not sufficiently targeted by current assistance programmes, and none of the refugees interviewed seem to have been monitored or supported in this area.

By prioritising the refugees' perspectives and points of view, the study also provides a critical analysis of the applicability of the three options – voluntary repatriation, local integration and resettlement – typically presented to them as durable solutions. Although voluntary repatriation to the country of origin tends to be favoured by governments and UNHCR – who consider it to be the most practical and 'healthy' conclusion to exile – this is far from being an ideal solution for all refugees. Since it does not take into account the range and specific nature of their experiences, or the trauma, fears and

individual vulnerabilities which can result from exile, this option is therefore not suitable for standard application to whole groups of refugees. Also, it is often inappropriate where there is limited commitment on the part of States to secure return zones, or to guarantee socio-economic conditions which support peaceful and lasting reintegration. Such is the case for a number of Congolese refugees who returned to South Kivu in 2007-2008 and have had to deal with constant insecurity and lack of livelihoods, or the case of the recently repatriated Burundians from Mtabila camp who now face the same constraints as do their compatriots who returned voluntarily in 2003. The experiences of South Kivu and Burundi show that the return option tends to perpetuate short-term approaches to humanitarian aid, with limited reintegration packages, no monitoring beyond the first weeks, the failure of socio-economic reintegration and, ultimately, a high probability of facing new departures in the future.

The option of local integration into the host country seems a largely untapped resource. Testimonies from refugees in Bukavu and Kenya show that this option could, however, solve a number of problems, especially in towns and villages where refugees and their families have lived for several decades. These refugees have clearly indicated that, as long as there is the possibility of naturalisation, or at least regularisation of their presence in the host country, they would favour this option over a return to their own country. For these individuals, whose main preoccupation is to access economic opportunities, formal integration into their host country would allow them to stabilise and secure their assets. The same applies to those who, after long periods in exile, have no intention of going back to a country with which they no longer identify or feel any cultural connection. It is astonishing that, up to now, this option has been so rarely used especially in such uncontroversial cases. Finally, the option of resettlement in a third country gives rise to expectations

out of all proportion to reality so that some refugees are just waiting and hoping, often pointlessly, without this being a realistic, or necessarily beneficial, option for them. Without clear and transparent information on the actual conditions of eligibility, this option as currently presented seems quite simply unrealistic.

Through its regional perspective and the many points of view collected from seven different geographical locations, the study highlights the many commonalities between the three countries and between the perspectives and behaviours of refugees in the various locations. It clearly demonstrates the regional nature of insecurity, and shows that the presence of armed groups at the borders, and the continued existence of rear bases from which these groups continue to operate, remain key factors in perpetuating the dynamics of conflict and displacement in the region. It also shows that the reasons for displacement overlap from one country to the other and, in most cases, indicate a direct confrontation with insecurity and with the conflict that affects all the countries in the region.

The study also brings up issues relating to regional citizenship and nationality, showing for example that the choice of place of exile is determined for the most part by affinities refugees have with the citizens of neighbouring countries, and by the geographical and cultural proximity of the dwelling-places and the various exile destinations. The non-linear character of the journeys and the fact that the trajectories followed by most refugees in the region have sometimes been very long, involving the crossing of more than one border throughout their journeys, also come out very clearly in the testimonies.

In addition, the study shows a general trend in thinking up alternative survival strategies for addressing the shortcomings of aid, and a remarkable capacity for mobilising a range of resources to attenu-

ate day-to-day vulnerability. In fact, the responses of the refugees, whether Burundian or Congolese, in camp or in town, seem to be the same. Similarities are equally clear in the responses to the existing normative frameworks, with all refugees being uninformed and frustrated at being removed from the decision-making processes at the local, national and regional level. This isolation, and the inability to exploit the opportunities offered by these frameworks, is as marked in the camps as in towns and villages. The comparative analysis underlines the fact that, although it is necessary to recognise the specificity and multiplicity of unique individuals' experiences, the solutions for their future also need to be envisaged through an integrated approach that bridges the gap between the local and the regional level.

### On the basis of these conclusions, the report recommends:

**1) An approach to protection and assistance which is both more humane and more inclusive.** Notably, UNHCR and the governments of the region should:

- a** Put in place systems that allow for refugees to make themselves heard, and allow for collection of testimonies and regular analysis of needs by means of consultation. This should involve setting up decision-making processes which are truly consultative, based on transparent mechanisms for representation at the local level. Regular workshops with the refugees should be organised in the different sites, and their contribution to debates and discussions at the national and regional level should be facilitated within the framework of tripartite meetings and sectorial and other groups. Reinforcing links with refugee associations on the ground should also be considered a priority.
- b** Establish aid programmes which take into account the specific vulnerabilities and personal trajectories of the refugees, by making the effort to capitalise on the skills and ideas they can bring

to strategies and to the search for solutions to their problems.

- c** Reinforce the psycho-social monitoring of refugees for whom physical violence and trauma has been part of the experience of exile.

**2) Increasing the options available for the future** and envisaging tailor-made solutions that take proper account of the individual vulnerabilities and aspirations of the refugees. UNHCR and civil society actors in the region should:

- a** Demand a definite commitment from governments to secure return zones, and refuse mass repatriation of refugees if the refugees are resisting it. Using the lessons learnt from Mtabila, a reflection could be set up on the type of process to follow and the conditions necessary when planning the closure of a camp.
- b** Propose a reflection with the governments of the region on joint poverty-reduction mechanisms which could play a role in preventing population movements and facilitating local integration of refugees who have been in the host country for many years and who do not want to go back to their country of origin. It would be important to capitalise on the notion of 'regional integration' envisaged by regional institutions such as the EAC, the CEPGL and the ICGLR, and to make use of any suggestions they have about economic integration, freedom of movement and regional citizenship.
- c** Ensure dissemination of trustworthy information about the conditions of eligibility and selection criteria for resettlement in a third country, and clarify the processes to be followed, but also the actual conditions of this resettlement. This could be done through awareness-raising campaigns organised in collaboration with refugee associations in Europe, the United States and Australia which monitor resettled refugees in their countries.
- d** Put in place better support mechanisms for refugees who have been waiting for a long time and who want to explore alterna-



tive solutions for their future.

**Defining integrated response strategies** implemented by stakeholders at the local, national and regional level. The governments of the region, UNHCR and civil society should:

- a** Engage in a reflection on a regional strategy for managing conflict and assistance which respects the particularities and individual vulnerabilities of the refugees. This would necessitate, among other things, reworking existing regional-level normative frameworks which deal with these questions in too vague a way and do not allow for adequate institutional frameworks of implementation. This should be modelled on bottom-up processes of consultation.
- b** Reinforce sharing of information and experiences amongst refugees in the region, and collaboration between humanitarian and policy actors in the various countries, in order to achieve integrated and harmonious strategies.
- c** Work together to translate regional-level protection and assistance frameworks into tangible strategies and realistic institutional implementation frameworks at the national level. This process of institutional reform should result in increased responsibility being placed with political actors and in a clarification of the roles of various public institutions at decentralised levels in the different countries.

The aim of these recommendations is to initiate a reflection with State and humanitarian actors involved in finding solutions to the problems of displacement in the region, and to allow for a more systematic dialogue with refugees in the three countries. They will also form the basis for a strategy of advocacy, consultation and awareness-raising which will be implemented by our four partner organisations by way of a follow up to this research.



# FOOTNOTES

Burundian refugee in front of her house, Kenya, DRC.  
*Photo: Germain Kilabi (ADEPAE).*



- 1 SVH and ADEPAE, *Congolese Refugees from South Kivu : Challenges of return in the territories of Fizi and Uvira*. June 2011. [http://drc.dk/fileadmin/uploads/pdf/IA\\_PDF/Great\\_Lakes\\_PDF/congolese\\_refugees\\_from\\_south\\_kivu\\_june\\_2011.pdf](http://drc.dk/fileadmin/uploads/pdf/IA_PDF/Great_Lakes_PDF/congolese_refugees_from_south_kivu_june_2011.pdf)
- 2 Rema Ministries, “*Umenga Ntitori Abarundi*”, *Rethinking Reintegration in Burundi*. May 2012. [http://drc.dk/fileadmin/uploads/pdf/IA\\_PDF/Great\\_Lakes\\_PDF/20120508%20Rethinking%20Reintegration%20in%20Burundi\\_Eng.pdf](http://drc.dk/fileadmin/uploads/pdf/IA_PDF/Great_Lakes_PDF/20120508%20Rethinking%20Reintegration%20in%20Burundi_Eng.pdf)
- 3 See M'bokolo, E. & J. L. Amselle (1985, Eds.) *Au coeur de l'ethnie: ethnies, tribalisme et Etat en Afrique*, Paris, La Découverte.
- 4 See report by Burundian NGO Rema Ministries: “*Umenga Ntitori Abarundi*”, *Rethinking Reintegration in Burundi*. May 2012. [http://drc.dk/fileadmin/uploads/pdf/IA\\_PDF/Great\\_Lakes\\_PDF/20120508%20Rethinking%20Reintegration%20in%20Burundi\\_Eng.pdf](http://drc.dk/fileadmin/uploads/pdf/IA_PDF/Great_Lakes_PDF/20120508%20Rethinking%20Reintegration%20in%20Burundi_Eng.pdf)
- 5 Not counting the internal displacements of nearly a million Burundians during the same period.
- 6 See International Crisis Group, Central Africa Report n° 12, 30 November 1999, p. 5.
- 7 See “*You will not have peace while you are living*”: *The escalation of political violence in Burundi*. Human Rights Watch report, May 2012.
- 8 See background to the Burundian situation after 50 years of independence, by Kris Berwouts : Burundi's 50 Years of Independence : « The Old Demons Aren't Dead, But At Least They Are Sleeping » on the blog African Arguments, <http://africanarguments.org/2012/06/01/%E2%80%9CThe-old-demons-aren%E2%80%99t-dead-but-at-least-they%E2%80%99re-sleeping%E2%80%9D-50-years-of-burundian-independence-%E2%80%93-by-kris-berwouts/> consulted 5 February 2013.
- 9 See article on this subject by RFI, *Tensions au Burundi autour de la commission chargée des conflits fonciers liés à la guerre*, 14 April 2012, consulted 5 February 2013 on <http://www.rfi.fr/afrique/20120414-tension-burundi-autour-commission-chargee-conflits-fonciers-lies-guerre>
- 10 On this subject, and generally on that of reconciliation in Burundi, see the testimony of Kris Berwouts on African Arguments: *Back To Musaga: Post-War Burundi, Seen From The Hood*, consulted 6 February 2013 on <http://africanarguments.org/2013/02/05/back-to-musaga-post-war-burundi-seen-from-the-hood-%E2%80%93-by-kris-berwouts/>
- 11 There are numerous detailed works on the history of the Congolese wars. For a recent update, see International Alert, September 2012, *Ending The Dead-lock: Towards a New Vision Of Peace In Eastern DRC*, available on <http://www.international-alert.org/news/calling-new-approach-peacebuilding-eastern-drc>.
- 12 Around 130,000 Congolese, the majority Babembe, left Fizi and Uvira territories

at this time for Tanzania, and, to a lesser extent, Burundi.

- 13 Interview with a Burundian refugee, Mtabila, 11 October 2012.
- 14 Interview with a Congolese refugee, Nyarugusu, Tanzania, 11 October 2012.
- 15 Interview with a Burundian refugee, Kigoma, Tanzania, 15 October 2012
- 16 Interview with a Burundian refugee, Nyarugusu, Tanzania, 13 October 2012.
- 17 Interview with a Congolese refugee, Bwagiriza, Burundi, 11 September 2012
- 18 Interview with a Congolese refugee, Kigoma, Tanzania, 10 October 2012.
- 19 Interviews with several Congolese refugees, Nyarugusu, Tanzania, October 2012.
- 20 Interview with a Burundian refugee, Bukavu, DRC, 9 October 2012.
- 21 Interview with a Congolese refugee, Nyarugusu, Tanzania, 10 October 2012.
- 22 Interview with a Burundian refugee, Kigoma, Tanzania, 12 October 2012.
- 23 Interview with a Congolese refugee, Nyarugusu, Tanzania, 12 October 2012.
- 24 Interview with a Congolese refugee, Bwagiriza, Burundi, 11 September 2012.
- 25 Interview with a Congolese refugee, Nyarugusu, Tanzania, 8 October 2012.
- 26 Interview with a Congolese refugee, Nyarugusu, Tanzania, 8 October 2012.
- 27 Interview with a Congolese refugee, Kigoma, Tanzania, 12 October 2012.
- 28 Interview with a Burundian refugee, Nyarugusu, Tanzania, 12 October 2012.
- 29 Interview with a Burundian refugee, Bukavu, DRC, 11 October 2012.
- 30 Interview with a Congolese refugee, Bwagiriza, Burundi, 5 September 2012.
- 31 Interview with a Burundian refugee, Kenya, DRC, 16 September 2012.
- 32 Interview with a Congolese refugee, Nyarugusu, Tanzania, 13 October 2012.
- 33 Interview with a Burundian refugee, Bukavu, DRC, 3 November 2012.
- 34 Interview with a Burundian refugee, Bukavu, DRC, 2 November 2012.
- 35 Interview with a Burundian refugee, Kenya, DRC, 17 September 2012.
- 36 Interview with a Congolese refugee, Nyarugusu, Tanzania, 4 November 2012.
- 37 Interview with a Burundian refugee, Kigoma, Tanzania, 30 October 2012.
- 38 Interview with a Burundian refugee, Kenya, DRC, 16 September 2012.
- 39 Interview with a Burundian refugee, Kenya, DRC, 17 September 2012.
- 40 For an analysis of the problems of identity on return from exile of Burundian refugees to Burundi, for example, see Rema Ministries and Danish Refugee Council: *Umenga ntitori abarundi. Repenser la Réintégration au Burundi*. May 2012. Available on [http://www.drc.dk/fileadmin/uploads/pdf/IA\\_PDF/Grea\\_Lakes\\_PDF/20120508%20Rethinking%20Reintegration%20in%20Burundi\\_Eng.pdf](http://www.drc.dk/fileadmin/uploads/pdf/IA_PDF/Grea_Lakes_PDF/20120508%20Rethinking%20Reintegration%20in%20Burundi_Eng.pdf).
- 41 Interview with a Burundian refugee, Kigoma, Tanzania, 16 October 2012.
- 42 Interview with a Burundian refugee, Kigoma, Tanzania, 15 October 2012.
- 43 Interview with a Congolese refugee, Nyarugusu, Tanzania, 3 November 2012.
- 44 In line with international standards, each refugee receives 10 kg flour, 2.5 kg peas or beans, 1 bottle of oil, 500 g salt and 2 bars of soap, per month.

- 45 Such as kitchen kits, plastic sheeting for making a shelter, and mattresses or blankets.
- 46 The protection includes provision of a refugee card and assistance in case of harassment or arrest.
- 47 For example, medical support for chronic illness, assistance for the disabled, etc.
- 48 Level of education, age, gender.
- 49 A representative from UNHCR explained to us that they can no longer hand these out because they need to provide for the mass arrival of refugees from Mtabila camp.
- 50 Totally or partially according to circumstances and the nature of the illness.
- 51 Registration of marriages, births, legal aid, etc.
- 52 In Bukavu and Bwagiriza camps, for example, revenue generating activities exist for the refugees, which is not the case in Kenya or Tanzania.
- 53 One refugee said : 'Even the hospital centre does not have medicines. If you need an operation you have to go to Kabango and, with the state of the roads, some people die on the way, while others who don't have the means for the journey are obliged to die here.' (Nyarugusu camp, Tanzania, 8 October 2012).
- 54 Interviews with Burundian refugees, Bukavu, DRC, October 2012.
- 55 Specifically Zone D of the camp.
- 56 Interviews with two Congolese refugees in Bwagiriza camp, Burundi, September 2012.
- 57 Interview with Congolese refugee in Bwagiriza camp, Burundi, 7 September 2012.
- 58 Interview with Burundi refugee in Mtabila camp, Tanzania, 13 September 2012.
- 59 Interview with Congolese refugee in Nyarugusu camp, Tanzania, 7 October 2012.
- 60 Interview with Congolese refugee in Bwagiriza camp, Burundi, 12 September 2012.
- 61 Interview with Congolese refugee in Nyarugusu camp, Tanzania, 8 October 2012.
- 62 Interview with Congolese refugee in Kigoma, Tanzania, 9 October 2012.
- 63 Interview with Burundian refugee in Mtabila camp, Tanzania, 12 October 2012.
- 64 Interview with a Congolese refugee in Bujumbura, Burundi, 3 September 2012.
- 65 Interviews with Congolese refugees in Bujumbura, Burundi, 4 September 2012.
- 76 Interview with Congolese refugee in Bwagiriza camp, Burundi, 5 September 2012.
- 67 On average a family of 4 children received a monthly sum of 70 USD, and 100% medical cover.
- 68 Interviews with Burundian refugees in Bukavu, DRC, 30 October – 5 November 2012.
- 69 Interview with Burundian refugee in Bukavu, DRC, 2 November 2012.
- 70 Interview with Burundian refugee in Bukavu, DRC, 3 November 2012.
- 71 Interview with a refugee, Bukavu, DRC, 31 October 2012.
- 72 Interview with a refugee, Bukavu, DRC, 2 November 2012.
- 73 Interview with Burundian refugee, Bukavu, DRC, 2 November 2012.
- 74 Interview with Burundian refugees, Mtabila camp, Tanzania, 11 October 2012.
- 75 Interview with a Congolese refugee, Nyarugusu camp, Tanzania, October 2012.
- 76 Interview with a Burundian refugee, Mtabila camp, Tanzania, 11 October 2012.
- 77 Example of an interview with a Congolese refugee in Bujumbura, Burundi, 14 September 2012.
- 78 Interview with a Congolese refugee, Bujumbura, Burundi, 14 September 2012.
- 89 Interview with a Congolese refugee, Nyarugusu camp, Tanzania, 12 October 2012.
- 80 Interview with a Congolese refugee, Bujumbura, Burundi, 11 September 2012.
- 81 Interview with a Congolese refugee, Nyarugusu camp, Tanzania, 11 October 2012.
- 82 Interview with a Burundian refugee, Mtabila camp, Tanzania, 11 October 2012.
- 83 Interview with a Congolese refugee, Bwagiriza camp, Burundi, 6 September 2012.
- 84 Interview with a Congolese refugee, Bwagiriza camp, Burundi, 6 September 2012.
- 85 Interview with a Congolese refugee, Bwagiriza camp, Burundi, 6 September 2012.
- 86 Interview with a Congolese refugee, Nyarugusu camp, Tanzania, 11 October 2012.
- 87 Interview with a Burundian refugee, Mtabila camp, Tanzania, 11 October 2012.
- 88 Interview with a Burundian refugee, Bukavu, DRC, 4 November 2012.
- 99 Interview with a Congolese refugee, Bujumbura, Burundi, 11 September 2012.
- 90 Interview with Burundian refugees, Bukavu, DRC, September 2012.
- 91 Interviews with Burundian refugees, Kenya, DRC, September 2012.
- 92 Interview with a Burundian refugee, Kenya, DRC, 17 September 2012.
- 93 Interview with a Burundian refugee, Kenya, DRC, 20 September 2012.
- 94 This came up in all the interviews with Burundian refugees in Mtabila camp, Tanzania.
- 95 Interviews with Burundian refugees, Mtabila camp, Tanzania, October 2012.
- 96 Interviews with Burundian refugees, Mtabila camp, Tanzania, October 2012.
- 97 Interview with a female refugee, Mtabila camp, Tanzania, 12 October 2012.
- 98 Interview with several Congolese refugees, Nyarugusu camp, Tanzania, October 2012.



- 99 Interviews with Burundian refugees, Kenya, DRC, October 2012.
- 100 Interviews with Burundian refugees, Kenya, DRC, October 2012.
- 101 Ten interviews with Burundian refugees attested to these problems. Kenya, DRC, October 2012.
- 102 Interviews with Burundian refugees, Kenya, DRC, September 2012.
- 103 Interview with Burundian refugees, Kenya, DRC, September 2012.
- 104 Interviews with Burundian refugees, Kenya, DRC, September 2012.
- 105 Tanzania has a long history of welcoming refugees from various countries in the region, which went up in 1961. The presence of refugees on Tanzanian soil reached its peak in the 1990s, when almost a million refugees were registered, 641,386 of whom were Burundian. This figure does not, however, include the 1972 Burundian refugees.
- 106 The process of repatriation was organised by UNHCR and the Tanzanian Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) in collaboration with the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the Burundian Red Cross, UNICEF, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), and NGOs. All these partners came together to guarantee that the process of return and welcome for the Burundians would take place in a humane and correct manner in order to avoid a humanitarian disaster. However, it was later found that some women had been raped during the first convoys.
- 107 Interviews with Burundian refugees in Mtabila camp, Tanzania, October 2012.
- 108 Interviews with Burundian refugees in Nyarugusu camp, Tanzania, October 2012.
- 109 Interview with a Congolese refugee, Bujumbura, Burundi, 11 September 2012.
- 110 Interview with a Burundian refugee, Bukavu, DRC, 2 November 2012.
- 111 Interviews with Congolese refugees, Bujumbura, Burundi, September 2012.
- 112 Interview with a Burundian refugee in Kigoma, 8 October 2012.
- 113 Interviews with Congolese refugees, Nyarugusu, Tanzania, October 2012; interviews with Burundian refugees, Mtabila camp, Tanzania, October 2012.
- 114 Interview with Burundian refugee, Mtabila camp, Tanzania, October 2012.
- 115 Interviews with Congolese refugees, Nyarugusu, Tanzania, October 2012.
- 116 Interviews with Burundian refugees, Mtabila camp, Tanzania, October 2012.
- 117 Interviews with Burundian refugees, Mtabila camp, Tanzania, October 2012.
- 118 Interview with Congolese refugee, Bwagiriza camp, Burundi, 9 September 2012.
- 119 Interview with Burundian refugees, Kenya, DRC, September 2012.
- 120 Interview with a Congolese refugee, Nyarugusu, Tanzania, 10 October 2012.
- 121 Interview with a Burundian refugee, Mtabila, Tanzania, 13 October 2012.
- 122 Interview with a Congolese refugee, Bwagiriza, Burundi, 4 September 2012.
- 123 Interview with a Congolese refugee, Nyaguruzu, Tanzania, 12 October 2012.
- 124 In Burundi, refugees are not allowed to do business beyond the province they live in. In Tanzania, commerce is restricted to a perimeter of 5 kilometres from the camp.
- 125 Interview with a Congolese refugee in Nyarugusu, Tanzania, 7 September 2012.
- 126 Interview with a Burundian refugee at Nyarugusu, Tanzania, 8 September 2012.
- 127 Interview with Congolese refugees, Bwagiriza, Bujumbura, 5 September 2012.
- 128 Numerous refugees claimed in the course of the research that the camp staff were easily corruptible, although these claims applied for the most part to applications for resettlement in a third country.
- 129 Interviews with Congolese refugees at Nyarugusu, Tanzania, October 2012; interviews with Congolese refugees at Bwagiriza, Burundi, September 2012.
- 130 Interviews with Congolese refugees at Nyarugusu, Tanzania, October 2012.
- 131 Interviews with Burundian refugees at Mtabila, Tanzania, October 2012.
- 132 Interview with a Burundian refugee, Kenya, DRC, 8 September 2012.
- 133 Interview with a Congolese refugee, Kigoma, Tanzania, 9 September 2012.
- 134 Interview with a Congolese refugee, Kigoma, Tanzania, 9 September 2012.
- 135 Interview with a Burundian refugee, Kenya, DRC, 11 September 2012.
- 136 Interview with a Burundian refugee, Kenya, DRC, 19 September 2012.
- 137 Interviews with Congolese refugees, Bujumbura, Burundi, September 2012.
- 138 Interview with a Congolese refugee, Kigoma, Tanzania, 10 September 2012.
- 139 Observed by researchers in the locality in which they lived in Makere. October 2012.
- 140 Interview with a Congolese refugee, Bwagiriza, Burundi, 4 September 2012.
- 141 Interview with a Congolese refugee in Nyarugusu, Tanzania, 10 September 2012.
- 142 Interview with a Congolese refugee in Nyarugusu, Tanzania, 9 September 2012.
- 143 Interview with a Congolese refugee in Bwagiriza, Burundi, 2 September 2012.
- 144 Interview with a Congolese refugee in Bwagiriza, Burundi, 4 September 2012.
- 145 Interview with a Congolese refugee in Nyarugusu, Tanzania, 8 September 2012.
- 146 Interview with a Congolese refugee in Bwagiriza, Burundi, 3 September 2012.
- 147 On 13 August 2004, more than a hundred Congolese refugees, mainly Banyamulenge, were massacred by armed men in the refugee camp in Gatumba, Burundi.
- 148 Interview with a Congolese refugee in Nyarugusu, Tanzania, 14 September 2012.
- 149 In Nyarugusu, elections are organised by village and by blocks, and are facilitated by the UNHCR and the MHA. At Bwagiriza, elections take place by units, quarters and sectors. The communities designate members to stand on the committee.
- 150 Interviews with Congolese refugees, Nyarugusu, Tanzania, September 2012.
- 151 Interview with Burundian refugees, Mtabila, Tanzania, October 2012.
- 152 Interview with a Burundian refugee in Kigoma, Tanzania, 11 September 2012.

- 153 Interview with a Congolese refugee in Kigoma, Tanzania, 8 September 2012.
- 154 Interviews with Congolese and Burundian refugees, Nyarugusu, Tanzania, October 2012.
- 155 Interview with a Burundian refugee in Mtabila, Tanzania, 14 September 2012.
- 156 See previous chapter.
- 157 Interview with a Congolese refugee in Nyarugusu, Tanzania, 10 September 2012.
- 158 Interview with a Congolese refugee in Kigoma, Tanzania, 8 September 2012.
- 159 Interview with a Congolese refugee in Nyarugusu, Tanzania, 9 September 2012.
- 160 Interviews with Congolese and Burundian refugees in Nyarugusu, Mtabila and Bwagiriza, September-October 2012
- 161 Interviews with Congolese and Burundian refugees in Nyarugusu, Mtabila and Bwagiriza, September-October 2012
- 162 Interviews with Congolese and Burundian refugees in Nyarugusu, Mtabila and Bwagiriza, September-October 2012
- 163 Interview with Congolese refugee in Nyarugusu, Tanzania, 3 October 2012.
- 164 Interview with Congolese refugee in Nyarugusu, Tanzania, 2 October 2012.
- 165 Interview with a Congolese refugee from Nyarugusu, Tanzania, October 2012.
- 166 Interview with Congolese refugees in Nyarugusu, Tanzania, October 2012.
- 167 Interview with a Congolese refugee from Nyarugusu, Tanzania, 7 October 2012.
- 168 Interview with a Congolese refugee from Nyarugusu, Tanzania, 7 October 2012.
- The conflict between these two communities goes back to colonial times and is around the sharing of customary power and the management of land. The Bafulero claim that the Barundi are not legitimate occupants of the Plaine ,because they originally come from Burundi, and refuse to recognise their customary rights over this land. This conflict escalated in 2012 with the murder of the Barundi customary chief a few days before he regained control of the chieftaincy, which had been in the hands of the Bafulero since the Congolese wars.
- 169 Interview with a Congolese refugee from Bwagiriza, Burundi, 10 September 2012. Other interviews with Banyamulenge refugees at Bwagiriza expressed the same views, reproaching the Katangan population for their refusal to allow them to return to their homeland.
- 170 Interview with a Burundian refugee in Mtabila, Tanzania, 3 September 2012.
- 171 Interview with a Burundian refugee in Nyarugusu, Tanzania, 8 October 2012.
- 172 Interview with a Burundian refugee in Nyarugusu, Tanzania, 9 October 2012.
- 173 Interview with a Burundian refugee in Kigoma, Tanzania, 7 September 2012.
- 174 Interview with a Burundian refugee in Kigoma, Tanzania, 8 September 2012.
- 175 Interview with Burundian refugees in Mtabila, Tanzania, October 2012.
- 176 Interview with a Burundian refugee in Mtabila, Tanzania, 11 October 2012.

- 177 Interview with a Burundian refugee in Mtabila, Tanzania, 12 October 2012
- 178 Interview with a Burundian refugee in Mtabila, Tanzania, 12 October 2012
- 179 Interview with a Congolese refugee at Nyarugusu, Tanzania, 8 October 2012.
- 180 Interview with Congolese refugees at Nyarugusu, Tanzania, October 2012.
- 181 Interview with a Congolese refugee at Nyarugusu, Tanzania, 8 October 2012.
- 182 Interviews with Burundian refugees in Mtabila, Tanzania, October 2012.
- 183 Interviews with Congolese refugees in Nyarugusu, Tanzania, October 2012.
- 184 Interviews with Congolese refugees in Nyarugusu, Tanzani, October 2012, and with Burundian refugees in Mtabila, Tanzania, October 2012.
- 185 Interviews with Congolese refugees in Bwagiriza, Burundi, September 2012.
- 186 Interviews with Burundian and Congolese refugees in Kigoma, Bukavu, Bujumbura and Bwagiriza, September – November 2012
- 187 Interview with a Burundian refugee in Bukavu, DRC, 4 November 2012.
- 188 Interview with a Congolese refugee in Bwagiriza, Burundi, 12 September 2012.
- 189 Interview with a Burundian refugee in Mtabila, Tanzania, 8 October 2012.







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