

Congolese Refugees in Burundi: Challenges and Future Prospects

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Abstract

Our research aims to analyze the way in which Congolese refugees in Burundi live on a daily basis and apprehend solutions to their situation of exile. Burundi began to welcome refugees during the colonial period in 1959. These were Rwandan refugees who fled the massacres in their country. Since then, the reception of refugees has never ceased and Burundi currently has 84,961 refugees, most of whom come from the Democratic Republic of the Congo. This is the largest number of people received if we look at the area of Burundi and its population. These refugees come from the east of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and are fleeing the insecurity caused by the armed groups that abound there. There are approximately 120 armed groups in the provinces of North and South Kivu alone. Since these refugees do not foresee returning home, most of them are looking towards resettlement. This research is thus devoted to the analysis of the current life of these refugees and the way they apprehend the durable solutions recommended to them. At the methodological level, field visits were conducted in the five refugee camps in Burundi and a total of 90 interviews were carried out. This sample takes into account gender, social status, degree of vulnerability and seniority. The analysis of these interviews led to the understanding that the life in the camps implies many difficulties. This is how most of them opt for resettlement in developed countries, which they perceive the only hope for their future.

Keywords

Refugee Camp, Durable Solutions, Resettlement, Burundi, Democratic Republic of the Congo

1. Introduction

Since the years of independence, political struggles for control of power have

forced populations into forced displacements in the Great Lakes region. This migratory movement has increased since the beginning of the 1990s, during which serious national political crises gave rise to active mobilizations of expatriate nationals, which led to an increase in new refugees: the years 1994-1996 transformed the region into one of the major poles of international humanitarian intervention for various categories of displaced and refugee populations, due to the concomitance of conflicts (Guichaoua, 1999).

In Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)—Zaire at the time—it was from 1996-1997 that significant waves of migration took place. These continued during the Second Congolese War (1998-2003) and continue today in the provinces of North and South Kivu, following repeated clashes between rebel groups and the regular army.

Currently, the majority of refugees in Burundi come from the DRC, mainly from the east. Indeed, several armed groups including the Mai-Mai and others are multiplying in eastern Congo (Belaid, 2019; Mathé, 2018). There are around 120 armed groups in the provinces of North and South Kivu alone, most of them small and mainly ethnocentric. More and more of them, however, are entangled in an unstable web of coalitions, sometimes including broader political and business networks (Stearns & Vogel, 2017).

This question of refugees, until today, has not yet found a solution. Thus, as of January 31, 2023, refugees and asylum seekers from the DRC amounted to 1,154,044: 46.5% of them, or 479,364, are in Uganda; 8.5% of them, i.e. 87,485, in Burundi; 7.8% of them, or 80,043, in the United Republic of Tanzania; and 7.0% of them, or 72,120, in Rwanda¹. The rest of the refugees and asylum seekers from the DRC are in 16 other different countries².

The purpose of this study is to shed light on the way in which Congolese refugees in Burundi live on a daily basis and apprehend durable solutions to their situation in exile. A similar study was conducted for Congolese and Burundian refugees in the Great Lakes Region by Action for Endogenous Development and Peace, Danish Refugee Council³. The aim of this study was to put the primary beneficiaries of protection back at the heart of debates on protection and humanitarian assistance, to bring a regional perspective to the issues of displacement, by describing the cross-border nature of the routes, and the links between displacement force, conflict and security in the region, to highlight the limits of the political options provided for by the normative frameworks at the national and regional levels as well as to propose realistic solutions adapted to the needs and aspirations of the refugees.

In addition, Congolese refugees were also the subject of the study in Gabon

¹<https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/drc?id=212>, (accessed February 25, 2023).

²These are: Zambia, South Africa, Angola, Malawi, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, South Sudan, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Namibia, Central African Republic, Eswatini, Lesotho, Botswana, Chad, Madagascar.

³Available on

<https://reliefweb.int/report/democratic-republic-congo/voix-d%E2%80%99exil-r%C3%A9alit%C3%A9s-du-quotidien-et-perspectives-d%E2%80%99avenir-de>, accessed 10/3/2023.

(Christian, 2010), but this study focused much more on their modes of movement and settlement in a border area.

During our study, we conducted interviews in five Congolese refugee camps in Burundi supplemented by those conducted with the staff of the National Office for the Protection of Refugees and Stateless Persons who monitor these refugees on a daily basis. The interview guide focused mainly on their daily life, the possibility of returning to their countries of origin, local integration and resettlement. These interviews reveal the difficult life led daily by these refugees and the hope of leaving it, turned not towards their country of origin, but rather towards countries of resettlement.

The study concludes not only on the need to improve the conditions of protection and assistance for these refugees, but also on the need to properly organize durable solutions. The study of Congolese and Burundian refugees in the Great Lakes Region led to almost the same result.

2. Methodology

The methodology is a part of the research procedure (scientific method) that follows the propaedeutics and that makes possible the systematization of the methods and techniques necessary to undertake it. It should be explained that the propaedeutic is the set of knowledge and disciplines necessary for the preparation of the study of a subject. The term comes from the Greek *pró* (“before”) and *paideutikós* (“concerning teaching/learning”)⁴.

2.1. Development of an Interview Guide

We first started by developing interview guides. Two types of interview guide have been prepared: one for officials of the National Office for the Protection of Refugees and Stateless Persons, and another for refugees. All these interview guides were written in French. Before all this, one prerequisite is essential: preparation for the interview. This relates to the construction of the object of study and the objective of the interview. The object studied, in this work, is centered on the way in which Congolese refugees in Burundi live on a daily basis and apprehend the durable solutions to their situation of exile. Interviews were conducted with the aim of identifying the ideas of the actors in this protection and of the refugees themselves in relation to the research question.

The interview guide takes into account the development of the questioning of the interviewees. For this, the interview with those responsible for the protection of refugees was based on the way in which they work on a daily basis: reception of asylum seekers, asylum application procedure, life of refugees in the camp, source of logistical means and finance, relationships with partners, training for RSD administrators, and board member appointments. On the other hand, the interview with the refugees was based on the way in which they were received

⁴<https://lesdefinitions.fr/methodologie#:~:text=La%20m%C3%A9thodologie%20est%20une%20partie,techniques%20n%C3%A9cessaires%20pour%20l'entreprendre>, (accessed April 30, 2022).

from their arrival in Burundi until their entry into the camp at the level of: reception, registration, maintenance, asylum authorities, decision-making, the appeal procedure, the procedure after the refusal of the status and life in the camp.

2.2. Survey Population and Sample Selection

In this research, the survey population consists of the staff of the National Office for the Protection of Refugees and Stateless Persons and Refugees. The staff of this Office was chosen because they are the ones who manage everything relating to refugees on a daily basis. As for the refugees, we conducted interviews with some of them to find out about their journey from their arrival in Burundi to the recognition of their status and their entry into the camp.

We then proceeded to identify respondents and make contact. At the level of the National Office for the Protection of Refugees and Stateless Persons, it was the coordinator who put us in contact with his assistants so that they could respond to our interview guide. We spoke with the assistant coordinator in charge of camp management, the assistant coordinator in charge of protection, as well as the assistant coordinator in charge of administration, camp security and refugees. The Assistant Protection Coordinator put us in touch with a Protection Officer who granted us an interview. In turn, the assistant camp administration and security coordinator put us in touch with the camp administrators, whom we visited.

A total of 90 refugees were interviewed during this study. The sample includes men and women, taking into account their social status (intellectuals, teachers, pastors, neighborhood chief in the camp, animators), vulnerability [people living with disabilities, single women (men) heads of households] and their seniority (former and new refugees).

The selection of interviewees varied from camp to camp. The camp administrator put us in touch with a guide who knew the camp and who could help us take all these criteria into account. Some camp administrators were interviewed.

2.3. Establishing the Data Collection Process

The research was conducted mainly on the basis of semi-structured interviews⁵. The research questions that guide this study have been popularized in order to ask refugees questions according to the following themes: reception conditions, daily life (food, health, schooling, exit permits, travel documents), as well as durable solutions (possibility of returning to the country of origin, naturalization and resettlement).

The themes had been identified as elements that could explain the journey of these refugees from their arrival in Burundi to the camp, as well as the level of their protection in the camp.

⁵The semi-directive interview is a data collection technique that contributes to the development of knowledge that promotes qualitative and interpretative approaches relating in particular to constructivist paradigms: definition available at

<https://lesdefinitions.fr/methodologie#:~:text=La%20m%C3%A9thodologie%20est%20une%20partie,techniques%20n%C3%A9cessaires%20pour%20l'entreprendre>, (accessed June 22, 2022).

The formula of the semi-structured interview made it possible to explore the way in which the refugees express themselves on these points and explain their perception of the current situation and their future.

In general, the interviews were conducted in an atmosphere of trust and good cooperation. However, at the level of the National Office for the Protection of Refugees and Stateless Persons, some interviewees refused to register. This forced us to resort to direct listening and transcription.

Finally, in order to use the language best understood by the interviewee, the interviews were conducted either in Kiswahili, or in Kirundi, or in French, according to their preference. All interviews conducted in languages other than French were transcribed into French.

2.4. Data Collection, Transcription and Processing Tools

To collect the data, we used a voice recorder (dictaphone and telephone), in order to be able to use these recordings later. We also had at our disposal a notebook in which we put certain details requiring clarification. Then we did the transcription. For data processing, we used Word, Excel and SPSS.

2.5. Research Limitations and Difficulties Encountered

Initially, we experienced difficulties accessing the data. Before arriving at the National Office for the Protection of Refugees and Stateless Persons, we requested access to refugee data from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), but the response received was that you had to go to the National Office for the Protection of Refugees and Stateless Persons. We then went to this office. There, we were told that we had to write a letter requesting access to the data to the Minister of the Interior. After submitting this letter to the ministry's secretariat, we were informed that we had to go and ask the National Office for the Protection of Refugees and Stateless Persons for a response. The coordinator of this Office directed us to his assistant in charge of protection. The process described shows the difficulties that researchers face in accessing data. The other challenge is related to recording during the interview. Some of the interviewees refused to allow us to record the interviews, which greatly complicated the task, since simultaneous transcription was necessary. Therefore, some details may have escaped us.

2.6. Research Area

The research was conducted in five refugee camps, as well as at the office of the National Office for the Protection of Refugees and Stateless Persons, with its staff.

Burundi currently has five refugee camps, which are Nyankanda Camp, Kinama Camp, Musasa Camp, Bwagiriza Camp and Kavumu Camp.

Kinama camp is the first camp to be opened. It is installed on the Kinama hill, in the commune of Gasorwe of the province Muyinga, since 2002. This camp is

established on 26 hectares.

The Musasa camp is located precisely on the hill of Musasa in the commune of Kiremba in the province of Ngozi. It covers an area of 28 hectares. It opened in 2007⁶.

The Bwagiriza camp⁷ is located in the center-east of Burundi, 170 km from the capital Bujumbura. It is built on an area of 60 hectares. This camp opened in 2009.

Kavumu camp, located in Cankuzo province, was inaugurated on May 15, 2013 by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees⁸. It has a capacity for 13,000 refugees.

Nyankanda camp is located on Munyinya hill in Butezi commune of Ruyigi province. It covers an area of 77 ha, with a capacity to accommodate 11,000 refugees. It was inaugurated on April 18, 2019⁹.

The Kinama camp is characterized by its age (2002), while the Nyankanda camp is the most recent (2019). (**Table 1**)

3. Results and Discussion

In the developments of this section, we will interpret the results collected in the field on the basis of international standards and practices in the field of refugees, as well as on the basis of what the national law provides for in the matter.

3.1. Reception Structures

UNHCR's Guidance for the International Protection of Refugees and Strengthening National Asylum Systems states that asylum-seekers in need are entitled

Table 1. Number of respondents by camp.

Camps	Frequency	Percentage
Bwagiriza	18	20.0%
Kavumu	29	32.2%
Kinama	13	14.4%
Musasa	19	21.1%
Nyankanda	11	12.2%
Total	90	100.0%

⁶<https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/WFP-0000069343.pdf>, (accessed April 12, 2022).

⁷<https://www.afro.who.int/news/seance-de-sensibilisation-des-refugies-au-camp-de-bwagiriza>, (accessed April 12, 2022).

⁸<https://reliefweb.int/report/burundi/le-hcr-inaugure-au-burundi-un-nouveau-camp-pour-les-r%C3%A9fugi%C3%A9s-congolais>, (accessed April 12, 2022); UNHCR PRESS RELEASE <https://www.unhcr.org/fr/news/press/2013/5/51936bb36/hcr-inaugure-burundi-nouveau-camp-refugies-congolais.html>, (accessed April 12, 2022).

⁹<https://www.iwacu-burundi.org/nyankanda-un-nouveau-camp-des-refugies-congolais-inaugure/>, (accessed April 12, 2022).

to adequate reception conditions that meet their basic needs and provide them with a standard of decent living in terms of health and well-being, pending a final decision on their asylum application. Providing them with a safe and dignified environment is a necessary component of fair and efficient asylum procedures¹⁰.

In Burundi, asylum seekers who cannot afford to take care of themselves are welcomed in a transit center in Cishemere. It is a center that has been welcoming Congolese asylum seekers since 2013. It is located in Cibitoke Province, bordering the DRC and Rwanda. But asylum seekers who want to settle in urban areas have a free choice.

As this transit center opened its doors in 2013, only 34.4% of my interviewees settled there. This is easily explained, because refugees who came before 2013 were forced to live in different places, in urban areas, while waiting for their status to be recognized. Some of them even stayed under the stars, on the grounds or in front of the offices, as shown in **Table 2** below.

3.2. Difficult Initial Integration

In sociology, integration is the ethnological process that allows a person or a group of people to come together and become a member of another larger group by adopting their values and the norms of their social system. Integration requires two conditions: an individual will and approach to integrating and adapting, i.e. the person's ability to integrate as well as society's ability to integrate through respect for differences and characteristics of the individual.

All the refugees we spoke to mentioned good neighborliness with the population living around the camp. But when they arrived at the camp, it was not easy. One of the refugees explains that: "When we arrived in 2009, the Burundians

Table 2. Number of interviewees according to their place of reception on arrival.

Place of reception	Frequency	Percentage
Cishemere Transit Center	31	34.4%
Kajaga Transit Center	5	5.6%
Land of the Storm	13	14.4%
Inside the country	12	13.3%
In front of the UNHCR, PAFE or ONPRA offices	17	18.9%
Urban	10	11.1%
Refugees camp	2	2.2%
Total	90	100.0%

¹⁰UNHCR, Guidance for International Refugee Protection and Strengthening National Asylum Systems: Jointly Prepared by the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2017, p. 66; UNHCR Executive Committee Conclusions No. 22 (XXXII) Protection of Asylum-Seekers in the Event of Mass Arrivals and No. 93 (LIII) Reception of Asylum-Seekers in Different Asylum Systems.

living around the camp were running away from us, but little by little, they got used to it. They told us afterwards that when we arrived, they thought the Congolese were cannibals and that was why they were running away from us. Currently, there is a good neighborhood between Burundians and Congolese refugees.”

The refugees shared the same fear before coming to the camp. One of the refugees mentions that: “When we were still in Bujumbura, we were told that in Bwagiriza they eat the men. But when we got there, we noticed that it wasn’t true.”

3.3. Humanitarian Assistance

Even if the 1951 Geneva Convention on the Status of Refugees stipulates in its Article 23 that the Contracting States shall accord to refugees lawfully residing in their territory the same treatment in matters of assistance and public relief as to their nationals, it is not so in Burundi. All assistance given to refugees is the responsibility of UNHCR. Such provision does not even appear in the Burundian law of 2021 on migration.

In the camps we visited, the assistance and protection provided by humanitarian organizations includes a food ration, non-food items, health care, access to schooling (primary, secondary and university) and certain social services for people with special needs.

Some refugees benefit from vocational training and university scholarships, according to specific criteria. For non-food products, they are distributed on arrival in the camp and their renewal is done irregularly thereafter. Some refugees said they received it only once. The distribution of clothes is done sporadically. During the last distribution of clothes, according to the testimonies of the refugees, they were given only one item of clothing per household. It even happened that this single garment received did not suit any member of the family. Thus, as some refugees testify, they have to sell part of the food ration received to buy clothes and shoes, especially for school children.

Frequent distribution of non-food items is therefore necessary for these refugees to alleviate their survival difficulties.

Nevertheless, to prevent refugees from remaining dependent on humanitarian assistance, Burundi, in collaboration with its partners, should take inspiration from Uganda by encouraging refugees to live independently. In Uganda, the Refugee Act 2006 and related regulations marked the shift from viewing refugees as recipients of aid to economic actors responsible for their own destiny. This law allows recognized refugees to move freely, work and start their own business, as well as benefit from Ugandan social services. Refugees are allocated land for their use (but not ownership) in a designated settlement area. They are authorized to build a semi-permanent dwelling there and to exploit the land for cultivation or breeding. This innovative approach strengthens social cohesion and integration and enables refugees and host communities to live together in

peace¹¹.

3.4. Rationing

The Geneva Convention relating to the status of refugees of 28 July 1951 stipulates in its article 20 that, in the event that there is a rationing system to which the population as a whole is subject and which regulates the general distribution of products for which there is shortage, refugees will be treated like nationals.

The 2021 Burundian law on migration has made no provision for this right to rationing. Only the internal regulations of the camps provide that refugees have the right to assistance in terms of food, non-food items, shelter and primary education for all children¹². These internal rules for the camps were signed on September 8, 2020 by the ONPRA coordinator and the deputy representative of UNHCR/Burundi. Such a rule did not exist before. In its preamble, it is specified that it was set up with the aim, in particular, of ensuring the optimal protection of refugees in a climate of security and mutual understanding; the need for all to comply with the laws and regulations of the country of asylum and to refrain from any activity likely to undermine the civilian, humanitarian and apolitical character of the camps and to establish a climate conducive to peaceful coexistence between the different components among the refugees, between them and the host population on the one hand; and to safeguard the respect of refugees towards partners working in the camp on the other hand.

For rationing, according to international standards in the matter, each refugee receives per month 10 kg of flour, 2.5 kg of peas or beans, 1 bottle of oil, 500 g of salt and 2 soaps¹³.

During the interviews we conducted in the camps, almost all the refugees interviewed said that the amount of food ration they are given is insufficient. It runs out before the distribution that follows, which leads them to contract debts which thus become an infernal cycle. As one refugee explained, “*In order for the trader to give you the money, you promise him that at the next distribution, you will give him a bag of rice. We thus find ourselves in endless debt. To settle these debts, refugees who have families or other acquaintances abroad ask them for money*”¹⁴.

Refugees who have no relatives abroad or who have no means of earning money sell part of the food ration received to obtain vegetables or proteins. In addition, almost all needs requiring the cash, including clothing, shoes, note-

¹¹UNHCR, Guide for International Refugee Protection and Strengthening National Asylum Systems, *op.cit.*, p. 222; UNHCR Executive Committee Conclusions No. 22 (XXXII) Protection of Asylum-Seekers in the Event of Mass Arrivals and No. 93 (LIII) Reception of Asylum-Seekers in Different Asylum Systems.

¹²Rules of procedure for the refugee camps in Burundi signed by the ONPRA coordinator and the deputy representative of UNHCR/Burundi dated September 8, 2020, points 5, 7 and 8.

¹³Daily Realities and Future Prospects of Congolese and Burundian Refugees in the Great Lakes Region, Report written by Alexandra Bilak, Director of the Great Lakes Program at the Danish Refugee Council, and Alexis Bouvy, independent consultant, p. 50, available on: https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Voix_d_exil.pdf, (accessed April 30, 2022).

¹⁴Comment by R. B., a refugee from the Bwagiriza camp, November 18, 2021.

books and medicine, are met after the sale of the ration. It cannot therefore meet the many needs of the refugees. This is also corroborated by the report carried out by the newspaper Iwacu dated 03/02/2022¹⁵. In this report, the UNHCR representative in the northern region, Hussein Abdallah, acknowledges the shortage of food. He explains that the UNHCR has a limited budget, which is why it is difficult to supply the refugees in sufficient quantities.

Apart from the food ration, the refugees interviewed say that even the briquettes for cooking they are given are not enough. This is how they have to buy firewood. We wonder here how this firewood or charcoal reaches them, given that, for ecological reasons, the internal regulations of the camps provide that the introduction and use of firewood and charcoal in camp are strictly prohibited as long as another fuel is distributed monthly to the refugees, in order to ban the cutting of wood outside the camp¹⁶. As the fuels distributed monthly are not enough, it is clear that such a ban does not apply. (**Table 3**)

For the food ration, apart from 4 refugees (4.4%) who mention that the quantity given to them is sufficient, all the other refugees answered that the quantity received is insufficient (95.6%).

The National Office for the Protection of Refugees and Stateless Persons and UNHCR Burundi should consider how to increase the quantity of the ration in order to improve the well-being of these refugees.

3.5. Health Care

Burundi's 2021 law on migration stipulates in its article 68 that refugees have the right of access [...] to health care in accordance with national laws and regulations in the matter. In Burundi, health care for children under 5 years and deliveries in public and similar health care structures are free¹⁷. If we refer to the provisions of article 68 of the Burundian law on migration, refugees should also benefit from this gratuity. Nevertheless, article 4 of the decree relating to the

Table 3. Satisfaction of respondents with the food ration received daily camp by camp.

Camps	Food ration	
	Sufficient Number	Not sufficient Number
Bwagiriza	0	18
Kavumu	3	26
Kinama	1	12
Musasa	0	19
Nyankanda	0	11

¹⁵<https://www.iwacu-burundi.org/les-refugies-congolais-des-camps-de-musasa-et-kinama-tirent-la-sonnette-dalarme/>, (accessed April 13, 2022).

¹⁶Internal regulations of the refugee camps in Burundi, *op.cit.*, point 31.

¹⁷Decree No. 100/38 of 16 March 2010 revising the subsidy for care of children under 5 and child-birth in public and similar care structures, Articles 1 and 3.

subsidy of care for children under 5 years of age and childbirth in public and similar care structures stipulates that “All women and children who benefit from another management or mutual insurance are not concerned by the measure only in proportion to the co-payment”. In addition, as the refugees are assisted in health care by the NGO *Gruppo di Volontariato Civile* (GVC), they are automatically excluded from the beneficiaries of this free treatment offered by this decree-law.

In the various camps visited, most of the refugees interviewed say that the medicines they are given are not enough. Thus, in order to recover well, they must buy the drugs in private pharmacies. One of the refugees mentions that: “For example, if a child is sick, they only give him a few tablets. These are not enough to make the disease disappear. For an adult person, they give him 2 paracetamols or 2 amoxicillins, and that is not enough to treat this person”¹⁸. (Table 4)

The problem related to the difficulties of access to health care is not only at the level of obtaining medicines. Transfer to hospitals is also not easy to obtain. Some refugees testify to having lost members of their family following the refusal of their transfer to hospitals so that they can treat them properly. This is the case, for example, of a refugee whose wife died in the camp because she was refused transfer to hospital. He states the following: “My wife had to give birth by caesarean section at Kiremba hospital. On the date set for the caesarean section, she was not transferred to this hospital. She stayed here at the camp. Five days after the scheduled caesarean section, she gave birth and died shortly after delivery”¹⁹.

Another refugee claims to have lost his father in the same circumstances. His father was ill, but he could not benefit from the transfer. After some time, his family members decided to take him to Kiremba Hospital for treatment. At this hospital, they were ordered to be transferred to Bujumbura. The disease worsened because he was not treated in time. He then died in Bujumbura, after the family had to pay a huge sum²⁰.

For fear of losing their loved ones, some refugees go into more debt to get them treated. Thus, unpredictable diseases become a financial burden for households, which accentuates the precariousness in which they were already immersed.

Table 4. Percentage of respondents’ satisfaction with medication received in the event of illness.

	Frequency	Percentage
Sufficient drugs	10	11.1%
Insufficient drugs	80	88.9%
Total	90	100.0%

¹⁸Comment by I. H., a refugee from Camp Kavumu, on November 26, 2021.

¹⁹Comment by V. I., a refugee from the Musasa camp, December 10, 2021.

²⁰Interview with N. D., a refugee from Camp Musasa, December 9, 2021.

Most of the refugees in the Kavumu camp mention that the doctor takes very good care of the sick refugees and easily signs the document granting the transfer. It is for this reason that in **Table 5** below, a significant number of refugees from this camp say they are satisfied with the drugs received.

An improvement in health care granted to refugees in the various camps is necessary. In addition, the doctors assigned to the different camps to treat the refugees should give them a warm welcome and be favorable to the transfer to other hospitals for those who require care not available in the camp.

3.6. Education

According to article 68 of the Burundian law of 2021 on migration, refugees have the right of access to education [...] in accordance with national laws and regulations on the matter. In Burundi, primary education is free and compulsory. But secondary education is chargeable. This provision is in line with the requirement of the 1951 Geneva Convention on the Status of Refugees, which stipulates in its Article 22 that Contracting States shall grant refugees the same treatment as nationals with regard to primary education.

Although free, education is not easy in the refugee camps, because the children in school have a lot of needs. All the refugees we spoke to say that only notebooks and pens are given to students, which notebooks are not enough. Parents sometimes find themselves having to buy other notebooks in addition. As at school, students do not wear uniforms, parents must also buy clothes and shoes for their children. So, to buy all this, they sell part of the food ration received. One of the refugees says: *“Some students are wearing torn clothes, others have no shoes. We only help them with school supplies, especially notebooks and pens”*²¹.

Another problem is at the level of the classrooms, which are few in number. One of the refugees explains that: *“In general, the number of students in the classrooms is overcrowded. For example, we can find a class with 70 students. There are also few classrooms. Primary school students and secondary school*

Table 5. Satisfaction of respondents with medication received in case of illness camp by camp.

Camp	Health care	
	Sufficient drugs Number	Insufficient drugs Number
Bwagiriza	0	18
Kavumu	9	20
Kinama	0	13
Musasa	1	18
Nyankanda	0	11

²¹Comment by B. G., a refugee from Camp Kavumu, November 26, 2021.

*students use the same classrooms. It is for this reason that primary school students study in the mornings and secondary school students in the afternoons*²². This arrangement undoubtedly hinders the normal progression of the school year.

At the university level, there is a higher education scholarship program, better known by the acronym DAFI, which supports certain students who have completed secondary school. This program is a major instrument enabling refugees from all over the world to pursue higher education. It also allows young refugees to reveal their potential by overcoming the main obstacles to accessing higher education. Undergraduate refugee students get scholarships that cover a variety of costs, from tuition to course materials, food, transportation, accommodation and other stipends. In order to support their academic achievement and skills development, DAFI scholars receive additional support through close supervision, preparatory and language courses based on their needs, as well as psychosocial support and opportunities for mentoring and of networking²³. This program is run in Burundi by the NGO Refugee Education Trust (RET). One of the refugees explained that to benefit from this DAFI scholarship, you must have obtained 60% in the state exam and be under 28 years old²⁴.

3.7. Professional Training

Vocational training is provided at the camp. As the refugees we spoke to explained, they are trained in tailoring, hair and beauty salons, baking, plumbing, masonry, each according to their preferences. But after the training, they cannot find capital to start the activities in which they were trained. Another refugee told us that it is very difficult for an illiterate refugee to be admitted to these training courses, because the selection tests are done in French²⁵. It is therefore difficult to pass these tests if you have not been to school.

3.8. Right to Work

The Geneva Convention on the Status of Refugees stipulates in its Article 17, paragraph 1, that the Contracting States shall grant to any refugee lawfully residing in their territory the most favorable treatment accorded, in the same circumstances, to nationals of a foreign country in with regard to the exercise of a salaried professional activity.

On this right of access to employment, article 66 of the Burundian law of 2021 on migration stipulates that refugees seeking employment on the territory of Burundi benefit from preferential treatment compared to another foreigner, as stipulated in national labor legislation. Article 67 adds that the refugee benefits, for the exercise of a specific liberal professional activity, from preferential treatment comparable to that of a foreigner who is a national of the country or of the

²²Comment by B. S. B, a refugee from the Musasa camp, December 8, 2021.

²³<https://www.unhcr.org/fr/bourses-dafi.html>, (accessed April 13, 2022).

²⁴Interview with a refugee from Camp Musasa, December 8, 2021.

²⁵Interview with G. D. J., a refugee from the Bwagiriza camp, November 18, 2021.

community which has concluded an agreement with Burundi or a more favorable memorandum of understanding. These two articles are more theoretical than practical.

Indeed, in the various camps we visited, we realized that access to employment is problematic. Refugees say that even for work carried out in the camp, refugee masons are rarely hired. Those who manage to be engaged only work in a haphazard fashion. One of the refugees interviewed affirms that: *“Once hired on a construction site, it is very difficult to work every day. We only work two or three days a week. For example, it may happen that activities on the construction site are limited. In this case, they will say to the refugee: “you, since you are here in the camp, you are not going to work”. Only the masons who come from outside the camp go to work”*²⁶.

Thus, most refugees who engage in income-generating activities turn to petty trade.

3.9. Right to Housing

With regard to housing, Article 21 of the Geneva Convention relating to the status of refugees stipulates that the Contracting States shall grant, insofar as this question falls within the scope of laws and regulations or is subject to the control of public authorities, to refugees residing lawfully in their territory, treatment as favorable as possible; such treatment cannot in any case be less favorable than that accorded, in the same circumstances, to foreigners in general.

This right has not been provided for in Burundian law on migration. Nevertheless, refugees who cannot find housing in urban areas have the right to go and live in camps where they benefit from housing access facilities.

Regarding access to housing, the refugees interviewed say that building a house is not very easy. The non-governmental organization Council for Education and Development (COPEd), which takes care of construction in the camp, gives them only metal sheets, raw earth, poles, nails and reeds. They must, from this material received, build the houses themselves. If they can't do it themselves, then they have to pay a mason to do it. However, the only way to obtain money is to sell the food ration or the non-food items received. The head of COPEd with whom we spoke specifies that in the camps, they only build 15% of the houses for the vulnerable. The other refugees build their own houses. They receive a complete kit for the construction, including sheets, raw earth, poles, nails and reeds. COPEd is there to provide technical support, to see if it respects the plan and the layout of the plots²⁷. We believe this is a way of encouraging refugees to take good care of the houses they have built for themselves.

3.10. Legal Regime for Refugees

With regard to the personal status of the refugee, Law No. 1/25 of November 5,

²⁶Interview with V. I, a refugee from Camp Musasa, December 10, 2021.

²⁷Interview with the head of the project operated by COPEd in the refugee camps, February 23, 2022.

2021 regulating migration in Burundi stipulates in its article 65 that the rights previously acquired by the refugee and resulting from the personal status in terms of civil law, in particular those resulting from marriage, are recognized for him.

Even if the law is very clear on this subject, some refugees interviewed say that they find themselves forced to contract a new marriage in the camp, due to the lack of documents attesting to a previous marriage.

On this point, the Geneva Convention relating to the status of refugees of July 28, 1951 stipulates in its article 12 in the second paragraph that the rights, previously acquired by the refugee and resulting from the personal status, and in particular those which result from the marriage, will be respected by any Contracting State, subject, where applicable, to the fulfillment of the formalities provided for by the law of that State, it being understood, however, that the right in question must be one which would have been recognized by the law of that State if the concerned had become a refugee.

It is therefore understandable that refugees are required to produce a document certifying their marriage, failing which, they are obliged to celebrate a new one.

For the registration of children born in the camp, there are facilities there, as indicated by most of the refugees interviewed. One of them affirms that: *“Before, we had to go to the commune, but for the moment, the registrations take place at the camp. Every Wednesday, there is a civil registrar who comes here to register births and marriages. But the celebration of the marriage takes place in the zone”*²⁸.

3.11. Travel Documents

The Geneva Convention relating to the status of refugees of 28 July 1951 stipulates, in its article 28, that the contracting States shall issue to refugees lawfully residing in their territory travel documents intended to enable them to travel outside that territory, unless there are compelling reasons of national security or public order; the provisions of the appendix to this Agreement will apply to these documents. The Contracting States may issue such a travel document to any other refugee in their territory; they will pay particular attention to cases of refugees in their territory who are unable to obtain a travel document from the country of their legal residence.

In addition, the UNHCR Executive Committee invites all States Parties to the 1951 UN Convention and/or the 1967 Protocol to take, if they have not already done so, appropriate legislative or administrative measures to implement indeed the provisions of these instruments concerning the issuance of Convention travel documents (Article 28 and annexes), including clear instructions to the competent national authorities concerning the issuance, renewal, extension of travel documents and the granting of visas to holders of Convention travel

²⁸Comment by M. B., a refugee from the Musasa camp, December 7, 2021.

documents²⁹.

In Burundi, the migration law provides that the travel document for refugees is issued by the General Commissariat for Migration, in collaboration with the UNHCR, to refugees residing in Burundi who meet the required asylum conditions³⁰. As it may happen that an applicant for such a document may not benefit from it, article 22 of the Burundian law of 2021 on migration stipulates that the person who is refused a travel document may appeal to the direct hierarchical authority and, if necessary, with the Administrative Court. As this law governs foreigners and refugees, we wonder if the refugee who does not obtain the travel document can also appeal to the administrative court.

On the ground, in the various camps we visited, the refugees say that it is very difficult to obtain this travel document. We then put this question to the Coordinator of the National Office for the Protection of Refugees and Stateless Persons, who specified that travel documents are issued by the General Commissioner for Migration with the authorization of the UNHCR. The refugee who needs such a document sends a letter to the UNHCR with a copy for information to the General Commissioner for Migration and to the National Office for the Protection of Refugees and Stateless Persons. This Office can plead for this or that other refugee who really needs it, so that he can benefit from it. The beneficiaries are in particular traders who go to get their supplies outside Burundi, sick refugees who have medical documents attesting to it, as well as refugees who study outside Burundi, especially those who have benefited from a scholarship 'study. For those who want to travel for the reason of family visit, they do not give these travel documents³¹. Fanciful requests are therefore not treated favorably. Curiously, the UNHCR Executive Committee reaffirms the importance of issuing travel documents to refugees to enable them to make temporary trips outside their country of residence and to resettle in other countries³².

We believe that there should not be such rigor in the attribution of this document in order to facilitate refugees in their right to movement, especially outside the country of refuge.

3.12. Right to Movement

With regard to freedom of movement, Article 26 of the Geneva Convention relating to the Status of Refugees of 28 July 1951 stipulates that any Contracting State shall grant refugees lawfully within its territory the right to choose their place of residence there and to circulate there freely subject to the reservations established by the regulations applicable to foreigners in general in the same circumstances.

²⁹Conclusion No. 49 (XXXVIII) Travel Documents for Refugees, UNHCR Executive Committee, 1987, d) Conclusions on International Protection adopted by the UNHCR Program Executive Committee, 1975-2017 (Conclusion No. 1-114), p. 101.

³⁰Law n° 1/25 of November 5, 2021 regulating migration in Burundi, article 16.

³¹Interview with the ONPRA coordinator, 28/2/2022.

³²Conclusion No. 13 (XXIX) Travel Documents for Refugees, UNHCR Executive Committee, 1978, a), *op.cit.*, p. 28.

At the national level, the 2021 law on migration provides that refugees lawfully on Burundian territory have the right to choose their place of residence and to move freely in accordance with national laws and regulations, as well as Conventions and International and regional protocols on the subject ratified by Burundi³³.

All the refugees we spoke to mentioned that they had to apply for an exit permit to go to other provinces. But for traffic in the vicinity of the camp, such permission is not required.

We consulted the internal regulations of the camp to see how the freedom of movement of refugees is regulated. Only freedom of movement within the municipality that hosts the camp is guaranteed without any requirement³⁴. Exiting outside the commune hosting the camp, but within the province, requires registration in the register kept by the camp administration on the outward and return journeys³⁵, while exiting outside the province hosting the camp is subject to obtaining an exit ticket issued free of charge by the camp administration, valid for a maximum of two weeks, unless special circumstances justify an extended absence from the camp³⁶.

As this freedom of movement is guaranteed, it may happen that a refugee crosses the border of Burundi to go to a country other than his country of origin without authorization. For the latter, he will be referred to the National Office for the Protection of Refugees and Stateless Persons in Bujumbura, for the purpose of explaining the reasons for his irregular departure outside the borders of Burundi, the country of first asylum. He will only return to the camp after having received a note duly signed by the Coordinator of this Office. Upon admission to the camp, he will receive a sanction of refusal of an exit ticket for a period ranging from six months to a year³⁷. UNHCR's Executive Committee explains why. These irregular movements of refugees and asylum seekers who have already found protection in a country are largely the work of people who, due to a lack of educational and employment opportunities, and in the absence of solutions durable goods such as voluntary repatriation, local integration and resettlement, feel compelled to leave³⁸.

As for the freedom of choice of place of residence, as stipulated in article 70 of the Burundian law of 2021 on migration, refugees who are regularly on Burundian territory have the right to choose their place of residence.

In any case, the refugee already installed in the camp must request authorization to go and settle outside the camp. If he decides himself, without valid reason or prior authorization from the National Office for the Protection of Refugees

³³Law No. 1/25 of November 5, 2021 regulating migration in Burundi, article 70.

³⁴Internal regulations of the refugee camps in Burundi, *op.cit.*, point 25, 1.

³⁵Internal regulations of the refugee camps in Burundi, *op.cit.*, point 25, 2.

³⁶Internal regulations of the refugee camps in Burundi, *op.cit.*, point 25, 3.

³⁷Internal regulations of the refugee camps in Burundi, *op.cit.*, point 27, 3.

³⁸Conclusion No. 58 (XL) Problem of Refugees and Asylum Seekers Irregularly Leaving a Country Where They Have Already Been Granted Protection, UNHCR Executive Committee, 1989, b), *op.cit.*, p. 120.

and Stateless Persons, to settle voluntarily outside the camp, he will be considered as irregular in the camp and will be excluded from any assistance given in this context³⁹.

We see here that freedom of movement is guaranteed in Burundi, even though there are a series of regulations. Article 12 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights is very clear on this subject. Restrictions provided by law, necessary to protect national security, public order, public health or morals, or the rights and freedoms of others, and consistent with the other rights recognized by the Covenant, do not take away its essence to this right to freedom of movement.

3.13. Sustainable Solutions

According to the UNHCR Executive Committee, the ultimate goal of international protection is to achieve durable solutions for refugees⁴⁰. The UNHCR Resettlement Handbook adds that there is no established hierarchy among these durable solutions. During UNHCR's early years, resettlement and local integration appeared to be the most viable durable solutions for many refugees. However, over time, most refugees wanted and obtained voluntary repatriation. These three solutions are complementary in nature and can, when applied together, form a comprehensive and viable strategy for resolving a refugee situation⁴¹.

Burundian law on migration stipulates in its article 127 that "UNHCR assists refugees to find durable solutions for their situations, in particular by organizing voluntary repatriation operations, by proceeding with resettlement in a third country and by playing the role of role of facilitating local integration procedures"⁴². It is very surprising that the Burundian legislator reserves this for the UNHCR. The Statute of the UNHCR stipulates in its point 8 letter C that the High Commissioner will ensure the protection of the refugees who come under the UNHCR by supporting the initiatives of the public authorities and private initiatives as regards the voluntary repatriation of refugees or their assimilation in new national communities. Here, it is very clear that it is the States that must take the lead. UNHCR only intervenes secondarily.

Let us see how refugees apprehend these durable solutions.

3.13.1. Possibilities of Resettlement

Resettlement is the transfer of refugees from one country, where they have found asylum, to another state that agrees to admit them as refugees and grant them permanent resettlement and the possibility of subsequently acquiring citizenship. Resettlement is the third durable solution that UNHCR is mandated to put in place, in cooperation with States, in accordance with its Statute and United

³⁹Internal regulations of the refugee camps in Burundi, *op.cit.*, point 27, 5.

⁴⁰Conclusion No. 104 (LVI) Local Integration, UNHCR Executive Committee, 2005, *op.cit.*, p. 290.

⁴¹UNHCR Resettlement Handbook, Division of International Protection: Geneva, revised edition July 2011, p. 32.

⁴²Law n° 1/25 of November 5, 2021 regulating migration in Burundi, article 127.

Nations General Assembly resolutions. Resettlement is not a right and no State is obliged to accept refugees for resettlement. Even when UNHCR submits a case to a State for resettlement, the final decision whether or not to grant resettlement depends solely on the admission criteria set by the country concerned⁴³.

UNHCR's Executive Committee insists that UNHCR seek to implement resettlement only as a last resort, when neither voluntary repatriation nor local integration proves possible, and when appropriate and in the best interests of refugees⁴⁴.

In general, we realized through the interviews collected that the possibility of resettlement is eagerly awaited by almost all refugees. This maintains a form of expectation and hope. The resettlement even sparks rumors about the frauds that would be seen during this process. One of the refugees affirms that: *"Sometimes, there are frauds which are observed. For example, if the child dies during the procedure; let's say there were five of them at the start of the procedure, next, they will put another person in the place of your deceased child. When you leave for the medical examinations and other procedures necessary for the trip, you will not see this person, but on the day of departure, you will finally realize that there is another person on your file. If it is a woman who was widowed during the resettlement procedure, she will leave with another man she does not know. On arrival, this person is welcomed by people other than your host family"*⁴⁵.

Another of the refugees interviewed testified the following: *"Here in Musasa camp, a certain refugee had a problem with the food ration. He came to make claims, but was told he was being resettled in America. He was surprised because he never left the camp. He is still here, in Burundi. We can therefore deduce that there is cheating in the resettlement"*⁴⁶.

Another refugee told us that: *"there is a refugee who was called by IOM for the flight to the country of resettlement, but was told that another had left under his name. He got angry and phoned those who were going to welcome him to America. The latter telephoned the IOM and the one who had left under his name, who was in Kenya, had to shorten his trip and this refugee was restored to his rights"*⁴⁷.

In general, refugees are not informed in real time about the progress of their file. Some speak of resettlement files that have been open for at least nine years and still remain unanswered. This is the case with the following testimony: *"Since 2013, I have been chosen to be one of the families to be resettled, but my file has not taken any steps to date. Those who were chosen before me have been reinstalled, those who were chosen after me are also already reinstalled"*⁴⁸.

A general observation drawn from the interviews conducted is that all refu-

⁴³UNHCR Resettlement Handbook, Division of International Protection, *op.cit.*, p. 38.

⁴⁴Conclusion No. 67 (XLII) Resettlement as an Instrument of Protection, UNHCR Executive Committee, 1991, g), *op.cit.*, p. 142.

⁴⁵Comment by N. A., a refugee from the Musasa camp, December 9, 2021.

⁴⁶Comment by B. S. B, a refugee from the Musasa camp, December 8, 2021.

⁴⁷Comment by N. A, a refugee from the Musasa camp, December 8, 2021.

⁴⁸Comment by Mr. B, a refugee from the Bwagiriza camp, November 19, 2021.

gees put their hope in resettlement to an *El Dorado*.

A refugee married to a Burundian who was refused any form of resettlement following this marriage, explains the following: “*If I die here in the camp, my wife being a Burundian, she does not know my country of origin, nor my family of origin. Even my children were born here in Burundi and therefore do not know the Congo. Don’t you see that my family will thus be able to live in difficulty and that thus, it is more than necessary that my family be resettled?*”⁴⁹.

We finally realize that the refugees do not know all the criteria taken into account in resettlement. This misunderstanding is linked to the fact that they do not receive information about it.

The UNHCR Resettlement Handbook shows the prerequisites for considering resettlement: UNHCR must first recognize the applicant as a refugee; then, all the possibilities of durable solutions must be studied and resettlement must be considered as the most suitable solution⁵⁰. (**Table 6**)

In total, 62.2% of our interviewees have not yet been chosen for resettlement. In the Nyankanda camp, the fact that, among our interviewees, there is no refugee already chosen, results from the fact that this camp opened its doors in 2019 and thus shelters refugees whose status has been recognized recently.

3.13.2. Naturalization

The Geneva Convention on the Status of Refugees stipulates in its Article 34 that the Contracting States shall facilitate, as far as possible, the assimilation and naturalization of refugees. In particular, they will endeavor to speed up the naturalization procedure and reduce the taxes and costs of this procedure.

Nevertheless, the UNHCR Executive Committee adds that local integration in the refugee context is a dynamic and complex, two-way process that requires the efforts of all parties involved, including the willingness of refugees to adapt to the host society without having to give up their own cultural identity and the availability on the part of host communities and public institutions to welcome refugees and meet the needs of a plural population⁵¹.

Table 6. Number of respondents selected or not for resettlement camp by camp.

Camp	Resettlement	
	Already chosen for resettlement Number	Not yet chosen for resettlement Number
Bwagiriza	12	6
Kavumu	7	22
Kinama	3	10
Musasa	12	7
Nyankanda	0	11

⁴⁹Comment by V. I, a refugee from the Musasa camp, December 10, 2021.

⁵⁰UNHCR Resettlement Handbook, Division of International Protection, *op.cit.*, p. 39.

⁵¹Conclusion No. 104 (LVI) Local Integration, UNHCR Executive Committee, 2005, *op.cit.*, p. 291.

In addition, local integration presents serious constraints. General socio-economic conditions, the desire to protect scarce resources, the risk of insecurity, problems related to migration and possible antagonism towards refugees and other migrants in general, are all obstacles to local integration of refugees. Barriers to local integration are amplified when, due to stagnant local economies, countries face increased competition in the labor market, an exacerbated struggle for already limited resources and a rise in xenophobia. Yet local integration can also have benefits for both the host country and the refugees. Refugees bring talents and cultural diversity that can help and enrich the host country and contribute to the socio-economic development of local communities⁵².

Burundi's 2021 migration law provides that a refugee applying for naturalization in Burundi must comply with the relevant legislation⁵³. On reading this provision, we realize that the Burundian law on migration does not make it easy for refugees to obtain this durable solution. This law, to which this provision refers, is Law No. 1/013 of 18 July 2000, reforming the Nationality Code. It stipulates in its article 18 that Burundian nationality can be acquired by naturalization. Refugees who so wish can thus integrate into Burundi by going through this naturalization process. All you need is a request addressed to the Minister of Justice with an undercover from the competent public prosecutor.

Even though the process seems easy, it is not that simple. The head of the Urban Center for Counseling and Orientation of Refugees (CUCOR) told us about the case of an urban refugee who applied for naturalization. He was sure of it and no longer considered himself a refugee. Years passed without this naturalization being granted. He ended up with deactivated refugee status and was forced to seek legal assistance to regain his rights as a refugee⁵⁴. We believe that this refugee had not gone through the National Office for the Protection of Refugees and Stateless Persons to submit such a request, because the Coordinator of this Office told us that no request related to naturalization has been submitted for the time being⁵⁵.

But naturalization is not a preferred solution for these refugees, all of whom only want resettlement.

3.13.3. Repatriation

Refugees should only be repatriated if they freely express their desire to do so; the voluntary and individual character of the repatriation of refugees and the need to carry out this repatriation under conditions of absolute safety, preferably at the place of residence of the refugees in the country of origin, must always be respected⁵⁶.

As most of the Congolese refugees in Burundi come mainly from the eastern

⁵²UNHCR Resettlement Handbook, Division of International Protection, *op.cit.*, p. 38.

⁵³Law n° 1/25 of November 5, 2021 regulating migration in Burundi, article 63.

⁵⁴Interview with CUCOR manager, 7/3/2022.

⁵⁵Interview with the ONPRA coordinator, 28/2/2022.

⁵⁶Conclusion No. 40 (XXXVI) Voluntary Repatriation, UNHCR Executive Committee, 1985, b, *op.cit.*, p. 79.

DRC and as there are, until now, armed groups multiplying there, voluntary repatriation is not a solution envisaged by these refugees. Some refugees interviewed mention that even those who repatriate, return shortly and start the asylum application process again, following the insecurity experienced after their repatriation. This is the case, for example, of this testimony: “*In 2013, there were a few refugee families who repatriated voluntarily. But in the information we have received, some of them have returned to seek asylum because their region of origin was insecure*”⁵⁷.

3.14. Clandestine Return to the Country of Origin

Due to the proximity of the DRC to Burundi, some refugees return clandestinely to their country of origin and this is not without consequences, because once intercepted, it is the end of the refugee status. We will cite here the example of three refugees registered respectively under the numbers 333-14C01017, 318-12C02371 and 518-11H00067. These three refugees left the camp illegally and went to their country of origin. When they returned to camp after several months of absence, they found themselves with names deactivated in the database. They filed complaints with the National Office for the Protection of Refugees and Stateless Persons, their files were sent to the Advisory Commission for Foreigners and Refugees, and the final decision was the termination of their refugee status in accordance Burundian asylum law (article 60, paragraph 4, of the law of 2008; article 113, paragraph 4, of the law of 2021). Even the appeal to the Appeals Committee resulted in the same decision.

All the refugees we asked if they had returned to their country of origin told us that they had never set foot there since their arrival in Burundi.

Faced with the behavior of some refugees who move back and forth in their country of origin without the knowledge of the camp administrators, the internal rules of the camp have not remained indifferent. Thus, any refugee who crosses the border to his country of origin will be considered as a voluntary repatriate according to the meaning of article 113, paragraph 4, which provides that: “The refugee status granted to a person ends if this person has voluntarily returned to settle in the country he left”. The database will be updated by applying the events REG 38 (spontaneous departure) and REG 36 (status closure). His admission to the camp will only be conditioned by a new asylum application in accordance with the law on asylum in Burundi⁵⁸.

Burundian regulations on the cessation of refugee status are in line with the 1951 Geneva Convention, which provides that the status ends if the refugee voluntarily returns to settle in the country he left or outside of which he is remained for fear of persecution⁵⁹. However, the UNHCR Executive Committee recommends that States, in implementing a decision to invoke the cessation clauses, always consider in a humane manner the consequences for the individu-

⁵⁷Comment by H. A., a refugee from the Musasa camp, December 7, 2021.

⁵⁸Internal regulations of the refugee camps in Burundi, *op.cit.*, point 27, 4.

⁵⁹1951 Geneva Convention, art 1, C, §4.

als or groups concerned, and that countries asylum and of origin to jointly facilitate return, in order to ensure that it takes place in justice and dignity⁶⁰.

3.15. Insecurity in Security: The Refuge of the Exile

Some refugees told us that even though they are in shelter, they still feel insecure. This is linked to the traumatic events they experienced in their country of origin. They fear that refugees in disguise may come and assassinate them at the camp. One of the refugees, who was in conflict in his country of origin with an MP for testifying against him, says that even though he is in Burundi, he still feels insecure, because if he sees refugees who come to ask for asylum in Burundi, he does not know who is on the MP's side. He claims that the deputy could send someone to seek asylum for the sole purpose of killing them⁶¹.

Another refugee explains that after the recognition of his status, he lived in Bujumbura, Cibitoke district as an urban refugee. At the place where he often rested with his friends, unknown men came and fired a lot of bullets. Apparently, they had come to liquidate him. He then asked to come and live at the camp. He says that when he was still in Congo, Mayi-Mayi rebels and National Liberation Front (FNL) rebels arrested him and beat him to death. When they heard that he was in Bujumbura, they would have come looking for him to kill him. He too feels insecure, even though he is in the refugee camp⁶².

4. Closing

The main objective of this research was to give a voice to Congolese refugees in Burundi so that they could tell how they were welcomed upon their arrival and analyze the challenges of their daily life as refugees, as well as their future prospects. As there are often gaps between the international, regional and national legal framework, as well as international practices and principles for the protection of refugees compared to the reality on the ground, it was necessary to place the refugee, the first beneficiary of these standards and practices, at the heart of debates on protection and humanitarian assistance. Also, this research aimed to clarify the limits of international standards and practices in the protection of refugees, with a view to proposing possible solutions adapted to their needs and aspirations.

Referring to the integration difficulties raised by some refugees, the observation is that these arise in the event of a new camp being opened. Thus, sensitization of the local population and the refugees should be done at the very beginning of the opening of the camp to avoid unfounded rumors which make integration more or less slow.

With regard to the diversified assistance granted to refugees, an improvement in quantity and quality is necessary. In addition to all this, Burundi should take

⁶⁰Conclusion No. 69 (XLIII) Cessation of Status, UNHCR Executive Committee, 1992, f), *op.cit.*, p. 149.

⁶¹Interview with B. B., a refugee from Camp Kavumu, November 25, 2021.

⁶²Interview with B. C., a refugee from Camp Kavumu, November 23, 2021.

inspiration from the Ugandan refugee law which allows recognized refugees to move freely, work and start their own businesses, as well as benefit from Ugandan social services. Refugees are allocated land for their use (but not ownership) in a designated settlement area. They are authorized to build a semi-permanent dwelling there and to exploit the land for cultivation or breeding. This innovative approach strengthens social cohesion and integration and enables refugees and host communities to live together in peace.

As for durable solutions, more particularly resettlement which seems to be the only implementation currently, the criteria taken into account for the choice of refugees to be resettled should be brought to the attention of all camp residents to avoid discouragement or rumors from those who have not yet been selected.

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Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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