



Consolidated Action Plan:

ACTION PLAN OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON THE GREAT LAKES REGION (ICGLR) ON THE ERADICATION OF STATELESSNESS: 2017-2024



1. Context

Globally, millions of people including many in the Great Lakes Region are stateless or at risk of statelessness, which limits their enjoyment of the full range of human rights. Among the causes of statelessness in the Great Lakes Region are gaps in nationality laws and policies that leave some people without recognition of the nationality of any State. Even though there is no comprehensive legal framework to address these gaps, efforts have been made by Member States of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) to resolve this problem, by amongst others, acceding to the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and/or the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness.

Furthermore, Heads of States and Governments adopted the Dar-Es-Salaam Declaration on Peace, Security, Democracy and Development in the Great Lakes Region on 24 November 2004 (so called Dar-Es-Salaam Declaration) and signed the Pact on Security, Stability and Development in the Great Lakes Region on 15 December 2006. These instruments address some dimensions of statelessness, like paragraph 68 of the Dar-Es-Salaam Declaration in which States commit to adopt a common regional approach for the ratification and implementation of the UN Conventions on Statelessness, harmonize national legislations and standards, and to provide refugees and displaced persons with identification documents enabling them to have access to basic social services and exercise their rights. The Declaration on Peace, Security, Democracy and Development crowned by the entry into force of the Pact on Security, Stability and Development in June 2008 is a historical instrument and a milestone in the fight against statelessness in the Great Lakes Region. The Declaration was adopted during the first summit of Heads of States and Governments in Dar-Es-Salaam Tanzania from 19-20 November 2004 under the auspices of the United Nations and the African Union.

In the spirit of the Dar-Es-Salaam Declaration, the ICGLR adopted a regional programme of action on the Humanitarian and Social Questions in August 2016: "Framework of Durable Solutions on Humanitarian, Social and Environmental Questions in the Great Lakes Region". This programme translates the commitments of Heads of States and Governments into concrete actions in the areas of human rights protection and security. It sets out support measures the ICGLR and the UNHCR can provide to Member States as defined in the paragraph 68 of the Dar-Es-Salaam Declaration and point 4.1.1 of the Regional Programme of Action on Humanitarian and Social Questions relating to the respect of legal international and regional instruments on international human rights law, international humanitarian law, the issuance of identity documents to internally displaced persons, refugees and stateless. It includes measures which the ICGLR will adopt in order to ensure the monitoring of requests issued by Member States and national monitoring mechanisms on the implementation of each Member State.



2. Strategic objectives

Strategic objective 1: To ensure compliance with relevant legal, policy and institutional frameworks for eradicating statelessness

ICGLR Member States recognize that the adoption of a common regional approach in view of the ratification and the implementation of the UN Conventions on Statelessness, the harmonization of corresponding national legislations and norms and the provision of identity documents to refugees and displaced persons, enabling them to access basic social services and to enjoy their human rights are key elements in the prevention and eradication of statelessness in the Great Lakes Region. Three (3) States including Zambia, Uganda and Rwanda have already acceded to the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons while only one State (Rwanda) has already acceded to the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness.

Recognizing the necessity of harmonizing the nationality laws in the region and ICGLR's pivotal role in eradication and prevention of statelessness, ICGLR, in collaboration with UNHCR and the competent institutions of the African Union, will assist Member States by adopting common standards that will guide the reform of nationality legislation of the States of the Great Lakes Region, including *inter alia* the removal of discriminatory provisions in the transmission of nationality and the inclusion of safeguards against statelessness to ensure that every child acquires a nationality at birth.

Objective 1.1: Accession to the international conventions on statelessness

Activities	Performance Indicator	Responsible Authorities	Source of Verification	Timeframe
1.1.1 Undertake sensitization and information campaigns in Member States on the need to accede to the International Conventions on Statelessness for government authorities, civil society organizations and other relevant stakeholders	# of campaigns carried out	ICGLR Executive Secretariat of ICGLR, UNHCR, civil society organizations	Workshop reports	2023
1.1.2 Present a Memorandum to the ICGLR on the need to accede to the International Conventions on Statelessness	Memorandum presented to the Regional Inter-ministerial Committee (RIMC)	ICGLR Executive Secretariat	Memorandum; Report of the meeting of the Regional Inter-Ministerial Committee (RIMC)	End 2019



1.1.3 Accede to the two UN Conventions on Statelessness and deposit instruments of accession.	Acts of accession deposited ; Instruments of accession deposited	ICGLR Member States (excluding Rwanda)	ICGLR Executive Secretariat	2023
1.1.4 Domesticate the UN Conventions on Statelessness.	# national legislation on nationality revised aligned with 1954 and 1961 Conventions	Member States with the support of ICGRL and UNHCR	ICGLR Executive Secretariat	2023
Objective 1.2: Develop a Regional Protocol for the prevention and eradication of statelessness				
Activities	Performance Indicator	Responsible Authorities	Source of Verification	Timeframe
1.2.1 Draft a legal instrument on Prevention and Eradication of Statelessness.	Availability of legal instrument	ICGLR Executive Secretariat	Draft legal instrument	2020
1.2.2 Organize a meeting of experts to validate the draft legal instrument.	Expert meeting organized	ICGLR Executive Secretariat	Report of meeting legal experts	2021
1.2.3 Submit the legal instrument to the Regional Inter-Ministerial Conference	Submission of the draft legal instrument	ICGLR Executive Secretariat	Report of ministerial meeting	2022
1.2.4 Submit adopted legal instrument to the authorities of Heads of States and Governments for signature	Signature of the legal instrument	ICGLR Executive Secretariat	Publication of the legal instrument of the legal instrument in the official gazette of each Member State	2023



Strategic objective 2: Strengthening data management systems for effective response to the challenges of statelessness

There is no comprehensive information available on the causes of statelessness and the number and profile of stateless persons in the Great Lakes Region. In view of the urgent need to obtain more concrete information about the sources of statelessness and the obstacles to acquisition of nationality as well as potential ‘at risk’ groups, the ICGLR, in collaboration with UNHCR, will develop a standard framework for the collection of data that will help Member States to comprehensively document the situation of statelessness in their respective countries.

Objective 2.1: Research, analysis and dissemination of data				
Activities	Performance Indicator	Responsible Authorities	Source of Verification	Timeframe
2.1.1 Conduct a regional study on statelessness, assessing obstacles to acquisition of nationality, including birth registration, gender issues and access to proof of nationality by people residing in the country and outside the country.	Study on obstacles conducted ; technical meeting held	National Coordination and Collaboration Mechanism, UNHCR	Study published, recommendations report published	2021
2.1.2. Organize a meeting to validate the study.	Validation meeting held	National Coordination and Collaboration Mechanism, UNHCR, civil society organisations	Meeting report	2021
2.1.3 Develop a reference framework for national studies on statelessness.	Availability of reference framework	National Coordination and Collaboration Mechanism, UNHCR	Reference framework on national studies	2020
2.1.4 Organize a meeting to validate reference framework for national studies.	Validation meeting held	National Coordination and Collaboration Mechanism, UNHCR	Meeting report	2020
Objective 2.2: Institutionalize collection and dissemination of data on statelessness				
Activities	Performance Indicator	Responsible Authorities	Source of Verification	Timeframe



2.2.1 Develop a standard methodology for data collection on statelessness including during national population censuses.	Availability of standard methodology	National Coordination and Collaboration Mechanism, UNHCR	Standard methodology	2021
2.2.2 Organize a validation meeting.	Availability of report of validation meeting	National Coordination and Collaboration Mechanism, UNHCR	Report of validation meeting	2021
2.2.3 Organize training of national agencies of statistics on data collection on statelessness taking gender issues into consideration.	# of training sessions organized; # of personnel trained	ICGLR Executive Secretariat, UNHCR	Training reports	2021
2.2.4 Integrate the findings and recommendations of the above study (Objective 2.1) in the national action plans on statelessness.	-Technical meeting organized at national level, -Revised national action plan based on conclusions	National Coordination and Collaboration Mechanism, UNHCR	Revised national action plans	2022
2.2.5 Establish a regional database on statelessness	Database established and functional	ICGLR Executive Secretariat	Database	Ongoing

Strategic objective 3: Establish strategic and operational monitoring and follow up mechanisms

In order to assess progress and achievements in the implementation of the commitments made in the framework of durable solutions to the humanitarian, social and environmental questions in the Great Lakes Region (august 2006), monitoring and follow-up mechanisms will be put in place at the national and regional level, including all stakeholders involved in the fight against statelessness. The ICGLR and UNHCR support Member States with capacity-building measures and by sharing best practices.

Objective 3.1: Ensure that all states and key stakeholders have effective and operational focal points				
Activities	Performance Indicator	Responsible Authorities	Source Verification	of Timeframe
3.1.1 Designate Government Focal Points on statelessness and inform UNHCR and ICGLR Secretariat by <i>note verbale</i> .	- Government Focal Points on statelessness appointed; -UNHCR and ICGLR notified	National Coordination and Collaboration Mechanism	<i>Note verbale</i>	2017 Done
3.1.2 Develop terms of reference for the Government Focal Points.	-Technical meeting held; -TORs developed and shared with States	ICGLR Executive Secretariat, UNHCR	TORs	2018 Done
3.1.3 Provide training on statelessness to the Government Focal Points.	Annual training delivered; # of focal points trained	ICGLR Executive Secretariat, UNHCR	Training reports	2018 Done
3.1.4 Convene regular meetings with the Focal Points to share best practices, inform strategies and policies and to assess progress.	At least one meetings conducted per year	National Coordination and Collaboration Mechanism, ICGLR Executive Secretariat, UNHCR	Meeting reports	2019 Done
3.1.5 Designate officially a structure/ resource person within ICGLR as regional focal point on statelessness.	ICGLR focal point appointed, Member States and UNHCR notified	ICGLR Executive Secretariat	<i>Note verbale</i>	2017 Done
Objective 3.2: Ensure that all States adopt and implement a plan of action on the eradication of statelessness based on harmonized methodologies				
Activities	Performance Indicator	Responsible Authorities	Source Verification	of Timeframe



3.2.1 Develop standardized methodologies for the development and adoption of national action plans.	Technical meeting held; methodology developed and disseminated	ICGLR Executive Secretariat, UNHCR, National Coordination and Collaboration Mechanism	Methodology shared	2018 done
3.2.2 Deliver training on development of national action plans for national focal points and national committees on the eradication of statelessness.	# of trainings delivered; # of countries where trainings took place	ICGLR Executive Secretariat, UNHCR	Training reports	2020
3.2.3 Adopt national action plans on the eradication of statelessness.	# of countries that have adopted national action plans	National Coordination and Collaboration Mechanism (Member States of ICGLR)	Publication of state policies	2020
3.2.4 Develop and maintain an e-learning resource centre for Member States as a means of ensuring information sharing and capacity building.	Webpage available and regularly updated	ICGLR Executive Secretariat, UNHCR, civil society organisations	Webpage	2023
3.2.5 Develop specific methodologies in relevant areas in support of Member States' implementation of their action plans (in the areas of legislative reform and Model Laws, linkage between local services for efficient birth registration, determination of nationality in trans-border areas etc.)	-Technical meetings with ICGLR, UNHCR, and Government Focal Points held; -# of methodologies developed and shared	ICGLR Executive Secretariat, UNHCR	Methodologies shared	2021
Objective 3.3: Institutionalize monitoring and evaluation mechanisms				



Activities	Performance Indicator	Responsible Authorities	Source Verification	of	Timeframe
3.3.1 Develop a standard reporting template on the implementation of the national action plans.	-Technical meeting held; -Template developed and shared	ICGLR Executive Secretariat, ICGLR Member States, and UNHCR	Report template		2019
3.3.2 Convene a yearly follow-up conference to review the progress in the implementation of the Action Plan.	Conference held; # and functions of participants	Commission in charge of humanitarian and social issues of the ICGLR, ICGLR Executive Secretariat, ICGLR Member States, and UNHCR	Outcome document		Continued on annual basis
3.3.3 File periodic reports on the implementation of the national action plans during the yearly follow-up conference.	# of States reporting; # of reports received	ICGLR Member States	Reports		Continued on annual basis
3.3.4 Report on nationality and statelessness to ICGLR parliamentary sessions once a year	# of States reporting; # of reports received	ICGLR Member States	Reports		Continued on annual basis
3.3.5 Synthesize and analyse Member States' annual reports on implementation of action plans and provide feedback and guidance for Member States.	Analysis conducted; feedback provided	ICGLR Executive Secretariat and UNHCR	Analysis and feedback report		Continued on annual basis
3.3.6 Organize annual meetings to review reports of civil society organisations on statelessness (combined with 3.3.2).	# of meetings organized	Commission in charge of humanitarian and social issues of the ICGLR, Civil Society Organisations, and UNHCR	Reports		Continued on annual basis



3.3.7 Organize meetings once a year between UNHCR and ICGLR Executive Secretariat to evaluate implementation of the action plan of ICGLR on the eradication of statelessness.	# of meetings held	Commission in charge of humanitarian and social issues of the ICGLR, ICGLR Executive Secretariat, UNHCR and Civil Society Organisations,	Meeting reports	Continued on an annual basis
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Strategic objective 4: Guarantee access to proof of legal identity, including birth certificates and nationality documentation

Lack of proof of legal identity, including birth certificates and nationality documentation, significantly raises the risk of statelessness in the Great Lakes region. Those most affected include descendants of pre-independence and other long-term migrants, border-dwelling and nomadic populations, minority groups, children of refugees and migrants including those in an irregular situation, and children separated from their parents, or whose parents are unknown. Civil registration is crucial to preventing statelessness because it creates a legal record of a person’s family relationships. Birth registration and certification is particularly important because it documents where a person is born and who the parents are – usually the most important information needed to establish which country’s nationality any person is entitled to. Rates of birth registration in countries of the Great Lakes region are generally low. Even if all births are registered, however, individuals with an entitlement to nationality under the law can be exposed to statelessness or a risk of statelessness if in practice they cannot acquire nationality documents, including nationality certificates, national identity cards or passports. Without such documentation they may be unable to access basic rights.

It is therefore of utmost importance that birth registration is timely, universal and free, and that those with an entitlement to nationality are able to acquire the documents normally issued as evidence of nationality. Improving access to birth registration, certification and nationality documentation protects the best interests of the child and helps to ensure access to basic rights, including rights to education and healthcare. Universal birth registration is an obligation of States under international and African human rights instruments.¹ Actions 7 and 8 of the Global Action Plan to End Statelessness call on States to ensure birth registration and access to nationality documentation, while Target 16.9 of the Sustainable Development Goals requires all States by 2030, to provide legal identity for all, including birth registration. For the Great Lakes Region, paragraph 27 of the

¹ These standards include: Article 6 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; Article 24(2) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; Article 7 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child; Article 29 of the Convention on Protection of Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families; Art 18 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; Article 6 of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child; and Article 7 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, as interpreted by their respective treaty bodies.



Outcome Document adopted by ICGLR States at the High-Level Meeting of Ministers in Charge of Refugees on 7 March 2019 acknowledged that “access to legal identity documentation, particularly birth registration, is critical to prevent and reduce statelessness, in line with the ICGLR Brazzaville Declaration on the eradication of Statelessness.”

Objective 4.1: Strengthen civil registration systems and ensure universal birth registration				
Activities	Performance Indicator	Responsible Parties	Source of Verification	Timeframe
4.1.1 Develop and implement a regional policy and programmatic framework on civil registration, including birth registration for the prevention of statelessness	Regional policy and programmatic framework established and approved	ICGLR Executive Secretariat in collaboration with ICGLR Member States, UNHCR, UNICEF, and civil society organisations	Publication of the regional policy and programmatic framework by the ICGLR	2019 – 2023
4.1.2 Reform national legislation related to civil registration to bring it in line with relevant international and regional standards.	# of States whose legislation is not in line with relevant international and regional standards that reform their legislation	ICGLR Member States	Promulgation of law/legislation amendments	2023
4.1.3 Ensure availability of birth registration services at the time of birth or as soon as possible thereafter	# of States having birth registration system that is interoperable with the health system	ICGLR Member States	State reports to ICGLR under activities 3.3.4 and 3.3.7	2023



<p>4.1.4 Ensure availability of free and simple late birth registration procedures for all persons born in the country on equal basis</p>	<p># of States that have a specific provision to facilitate access to late birth registration</p>	<p>ICGLR Member States</p>	<p>State reports to ICGLR under activities 3.3.4 and 3.3.7</p>	<p>2023</p>
<p>4.1.5 Improve access to civil registration systems, particularly for populations where low rates of civil registration are prevalent.</p>	<p># of new initiatives since 2019 in place to improve access to civil registration systems</p> <p># of States where the % of civil status records have increased compared to 2019 levels (including but not limited to birth registration)</p>	<p>ICGLR Member States</p>	<p>State reports to ICGLR under activities 3.3.4 and 3.3.7</p>	<p>2023</p>
<p>4.1.6 Sensitize populations in which low rates of civil registration are prevalent and build the capacity of local authorities and community leaders, to actively promote birth registration, particularly amongst those populations.</p>	<p># of local authorities and community leaders sensitized</p>	<p>ICGLR Member States, ICGLR Executive Secretariat, UNHCR, and civil society organisations</p>	<p>State reports to ICGLR under activities 3.3.4 and 3.3.7</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>



Objective 4.2: Issue nationality documentation to those entitled to it				
Activities	Performance Indicator	Responsible Parties	Source of Verification	Timeframe
4.2.1 Develop a regional strategy and policy guidelines on accessing nationality documentation (including but not limited to nationality certificates, national identity cards or passports).	Strategy and policy guidelines developed and approved	ICGLR Executive Secretariat in collaboration with ICGLR Member States, UNHCR, and civil society organisations	Publication of the regional strategy and policy guidelines by ICGLR	2021
4.2.2 Promote practical measures to enable citizens living abroad to access civil registration services (where applicable, the transcription of civil status records established abroad) and nationality documentation through consular and administrative assistance.	Guide of good practices developed	ICGLR Executive Secretariat, UNHCR, ICGLR Member States	ICGLR Member State Report	2024
4.2.3 With the preliminary agreement of the States concerned, establish bilateral or multilateral commissions to confirm nationality where it is in doubt, including among border populations and those in a migratory or nomadic situation, and to provide access to nationality documentation.	# of bilateral or multilateral commissions established	ICGLR Executive Secretariat, ICGLR Member States	State reports to ICGLR under activities 3.3.4 and 3.3.7	2024

