

### Figurations of displacement in and beyond Tanzania: reflections on protracted displacement and translocal connections of Congolese and Burundian refugees in Dar es Salaam

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# TRAFIG

Transnational Figurations of Displacement

## Figurations of Displacement in and beyond Tanzania

Reflections on protracted displacement  
and translocal connections of Congolese  
and Burundian refugees in Dar es Salaam

C. Wilson, B. Msallam, J. Kabyemela ,  
M. Demirdirek, J. Sanga and J. Ruhundwa

## SUMMARY

This *working paper* investigates the livelihoods, trajectories, networks and self-generated opportunities of vulnerable migrants in refugee-like situations in Dar es Salaam. Its main purpose is to arrive at a deeper understanding of protracted displacement through a ‘figurational approach’, which stresses the networks and the interdependencies of urban refugees in Dar es Salaam, across Tanzania, and across national borders. Refugees’ social relations do not unfold in a vacuum but are shaped by the regimes of aid and asylum that govern their lives. In a context of constant fear of imprisonment and deportation, this *working paper* gives particular attention to the alliances that the vulnerable migrants build within Dar es Salaam. It underlines their agency and coping strategies, as they bring with them many valuable skills. Capitalising on these skills can result in longstanding partnerships between vulnerable migrants and locals. Spaces of freedom where displaced people do not need to live in a perpetual state of fear and uncertainty are equally important. More than focusing on constraints, this *paper* underlines the urban refugees’ agency and survival strategies. We pay particular attention to the mobility and connectivity of female urban refugees, also within a digital context. Through (social media) entrepreneurship, women in refugee-like situations have managed to overcome immobilisation and create new opportunities for themselves. By analysing a variety of life situations throughout this *paper*, we seek to recognise and promote urban refugees’ agency and dignity.

### KEYWORDS

(Female) urban refugees, agency, mobility, connectivity, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

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## Introduction

Between the 1960s and the 1990s, Tanzania's refugee policy distinguished itself by its open-door nature, namely the exceptionally liberal manner the young nation welcomed refugees from neighbouring countries who had fled persecution and insecurity. Over time Tanzania's refugee policies have become fairly restrictionist. A strict encampment policy that 'illegalises' refugees living outside its refugee camps is in force. Nevertheless, Tanzania continues to attract and host a considerable number of refugees in search of more peaceful horizons, also to its cities. As at March 2021 the total refugee population in Tanzania stood at 264,475 (UNHCR, 2020). This *working paper* is based on a corpus of data that was gathered to document and analyse the experiences of urban refugees in Tanzania, thus gaining a deeper understanding of the protracted nature of displacement with the aid of a 'figurational approach' which stresses the networks and the interdependencies of urban refugees across national borders and in Dar es Salaam (Etzold et al., 2019). It investigates the livelihoods, trajectories, networks and self-generated opportunities of displaced persons (both recognised refugees and other vulnerable migrants in refugee-like situations) of Congolese<sup>1</sup>, Burundian and Rwandan origin living in Dar es Salaam.

This *paper* is a result of a collaboration between DIGNITY Kwanza, a Tanzanian human rights and advocacy non-governmental organisation (NGO) with a longstanding relationship with vulnerable migrants living in situations of protracted displacement, and two scholars in the field of mobility and connectivity in Africa working at Leiden University in the Netherlands. In contrast to a discourse and literature that focuses on victimhood, vulnerability and, admittedly, resilience, we, the authors of this *paper*, consider refugees independent thinkers and individuals who, despite the restricting structures in which they find themselves, make conscious choices in shaping their lives. As such, next to vulnerability, protractedness, dependency and passive position, there is room for self-reliance and creativity. The analysis takes place in a context where displaced people are often reluctant to openly show their identity. Yet, despite great odds, manage to turn exile into their (temporal) home. In this situation, local connectivity and mobility (within the city), but also translocal, and even digital connectivity and mobility are pivotal. Those who are connected and mobile are able to create employment opportunities and livelihoods (as refugee entrepreneurs), and those who have been immobilised search alternatives to keep on moving, albeit not always physically and not always in the preferred direction. By underlining the urban refugees' agency, we consciously acknowledge their dignity.

### "Sisi ni wakimbizi": Defining a 'refugee'

One of the biggest challenges was finding a term by which to define the displaced people with whom DIGNITY Kwanza worked. Many experts have attempted to re-define, fine-tune and critically question the omnipresent yet obscuring term 'refugee' (Behrends, 2018; Feldman, 2012; Fresia, 2007; Kibreab, 1999; Turton, 2003; Zetter, 1991, 2007). We acknowledge the struggle to find a neutral and satisfactory term. For the purpose of this *paper*, we will use the following terms interchangeably: 'people in situations of protracted displacement', 'displaced individuals', 'vulnerable migrants in refugee-like situations' and, especially, 'refugees'. Even though from a legal point of view, a refugee refers only to an individual that has been recognised as such by the United Nations Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the host country, in this case Tanzania, we will employ the term refugee beyond its legal definition. The majority, albeit not all, of the individuals who were interviewed were not legally recognised as refugees. In popular discourse, the term refugee is readily employed for anyone who was, or rather felt, forced to leave her or his country.

Our choice for 'refugee' above other terms is based on two arguments. First, the people with whom DIGNITY Kwanza works, i.e. the clients, to use the legal jargon, self-identify as refugees, even if they do not have the legal status to prove it. Hence the title of this section "*sisi ni wakimbizi*" which is a translation from the statement in Kiswahili (Swahili language) "We're refugees". Second, these clients arrived in Tanzania because, in all cases, they were forced to leave their country. In other words, we use the term urban refugees more broadly, regardless of whether these individuals reside lawfully or unlawfully in the country. Moreover, we believe that if asked to register as refugees, most of DIGNITY Kwanza's clients would accept under the condition that they were not forced to go back to the refugee camps in the western regions of Tanzania. In fact, the requirement to reside in refugee camps prevents many vulnerable migrants from registering. Regarding the qualifier 'urban', most refugees interviewed in Dar es Salaam were born in an urban area or had been living in a city for many years or decades before fleeing across the border to Tanzania. Hence, in this context, 'urban' refers to refugees who have fled an urban life and found refuge in an urban environment, more specifically, in Dar es Salaam. In any case, our purpose is to highlight the existence of a group that is not known to many, and whose existence is even questioned: The vulnerable migrants in refugee-like situations, whether recognised as refugee or not, within the confines of Dar es Salaam.

<sup>1</sup> In this *working paper*, Congo refers exclusively to the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

## Structure

Before delving into the core of this *paper*, the first two sections will set a canvas on which to place the findings on protracted displacement and translocal connections of Congolese and Burundian urban refugees.

Section 1 deals with the empirical design of this study, including how DIGNITY Kwanza's corpus of data came about, as well as the relationship between DIGNITY Kwanza and Universiteit Leiden staff, and the challenges we encountered.

Section 2 provides a historical background and draws a general picture of the protracted displacement situation in Tanzania, with a particular focus on Dar es Salaam.

Section 3, the core of this *paper*, explores the key dimensions of figurations of displacement, divided into four themes: 1) The urban refugees' navigation through governance regimes, with particular focus on the encampment policy; 2) The challenges of living in a plural limbo with regard to schooling, housing, medical assistance and income-generating activities; 3) The urban refugees' networks of connectivity and mobility inside Dar es Salaam and across, at times intercontinental, borders; and 4) the inter-group relations between urban refugees and their Tanzanian hosts. It is important to underline that these themes are intertwined; the division is analytically inspired. As such, topics relating to insecure livelihoods, for instance, equally touch upon inter-group relations between refugees and hosts and vice versa.

Last, and considering that the majority of the corpus of data is written about women, Section 4, deals with gender issues and, in particular, women refugees' use of social media for entrepreneurial purposes.

# 1. Empirical design and limitations of the study

## 1.1 Exchange and capacity-building

This *working paper* is based on a corpus of data collected in Dar es Salaam by the staff of DIGNITY Kwanza in 2019 to 2020. Born out of a local office of the international non-governmental organisation (NGO), Asylum Access Tanzania (AATZ), which had been active in Dar es Salaam since 2009, DIGNITY Kwanza became a recognised Tanzanian NGO in 2018. It works with refugees, asylum seekers, vulnerable migrants and stateless persons. DIGNITY Kwanza literally translates into “dignity first”, and its mission is to advocate that once people’s dignity is safeguarded, everything else, such as the opportunity to achieve social and economic self-fulfilment and the possibility contribute to nation-building, will fall into place.<sup>2</sup> The organisation promotes education, support and empowerment for the hosting community and the people seeking refuge in Tanzania. DIGNITY Kwanza’s most important pillar is legal support, regardless of their clients’ protection status. Legal support touches different domains of daily life ranging from residence permits, access to work, health and education and assistance with civil status. One example of legal intervention benefitting the refugees can be illustrated by the issuance of peasant permits, which will be discussed in detail in Section 3.1. A second important pillar of DIGNITY Kwanza’s work relates to advocacy and education. DIGNITY Kwanza organises seminars, focus group discussions (FGD) and workshops around topics that relate to asylum and refugees. The organisation targets different groups, including urban refugees, stakeholders from the relevant Tanzanian institutions, (vulnerable) women and Tanzanian civil society.

Wanting to broaden its knowledge about refugees outside Tanzania, employ academic tools to analyse data and interested in learning new methods of collecting information, DIGNITY Kwanza collaborated with academics from Leiden University. Conversely, these academics were interested in investigating possibilities of co-creating knowledge with actors outside universities’ ivory towers. This *paper* is thus the result of an exchange between two different epistemological traditions, or more broadly speaking, of how civil society (in this case lawyers) and scholars can co-produce knowledge. In this exchange, the role of the academics was to share competence on the structured collection of information and contribute to DIGNITY Kwanza’s analysis and writing of their own body of knowledge. In this way, DIGNITY Kwanza and University Leiden complemented one another in their areas of expertise. The former brought in contextual and detailed knowledge on the experiences of the Congolese and Burundian urban refugees written in a set of

case studies (what is referred to as the corpus of data). The latter contributed in placing these concrete stories against a broader historical and theoretical background.

The team involved in this joint endeavour (reflecting upon methods, analysis and writing) consisted of three DIGNITY Kwanza legal advisers and two academics attached to Leiden University. Each of the legal advisers looked into one particular topic of interest: Joan Kabyemela investigated migrant youth’s future aspirations; Bishara Msallam focused on women heads of household and issues related to gender-based violence (GBV); and Jovin Sanga studied the economic aspects of the refugees’ livelihoods, including the different businesses of vulnerable migrants. DIGNITY Kwanza’s team was joined by Mira Demirdirek, a graduate student of African Studies, working as an intern at DIGNITY Kwanza in early 2020. Mira Demirdirek focussed on the migrants’ use of social media. In the context of capacity-building, all four were supported and supervised by Catherina Wilson, a post-doctoral researcher working on mobility and refugee issues in Central Africa at Leiden University. More concretely, capacity-building relates to, first, two training workshops in Dar es Salaam in 2019 and during which qualitative ethnographic techniques of interviewing, observing and visual data collection were discussed. Second, capacity-building entailed multiple online meetings and sessions of joint data analysis; as well as supervision in writing throughout a period of 24 months.

## 1.2 Corpus of data

The corpus of data on which this *paper* is based consists of 41 detailed case studies describing the trajectories and livelihoods in protractedness of 41 clients and seven protocols that resulted from seven focus group discussions (FGD). While the documentation of the case studies is not a one-on-one reflection of DIGNITY Kwanza’s legal counselling practices (that would be a breach of confidentiality vis-à-vis DIGNITY Kwanza’s clients), it does derive from formal conversations with clients. As such, they represent an extension of DIGNITY Kwanza’s legal service provision with the purpose to better understand urban refugees’ past and present experiences. Consent to interview, record audio, take pictures and make videos was explicitly sought for and given, or declined, orally at the beginning of each visit. Building on DIGNITY Kwanza’s relationships of trust with their clients, the corpus prioritised quality over quantity. The information used in this *paper* is treated anonymously.

2 <http://www.dignitykwanza.org/> (accessed on 14 April 2021)

Besides the urban refugees, conversations were held with a network of clients and members of the receiving communities to better comprehend the refugees' experience of protracted displacement. This *working paper* equally includes ethnographic insights from field visits and participant observation in Dar es Salaam and notes on informal conversations, including conversations by telephone and observations on social media, in particular WhatsApp and Instagram. Taking into account that the urban refugees are scattered all over Dar es Salaam, travelling across the city and transect walks helped to better contextualise the realities in which the displaced people live. Places visited include migrants' homes, work and worship places, as well as the more neutral locations such as quiet roadside bars. Follow-up calls to verify certain information were frequent. In the context of DIGNITY Kwanza's usual advocacy work, seven FGD of around ten people each were held in January 2020. A majority of the urban refugees who participated in the interviews equally took part in one of these FGDs. The participants were divided into the following groups: One group of young adult women, one group of young adult men, another group of adult women, a fourth group of adult men, two mixed groups and finally one group consisting of Tanzanian citizens who had already been in contact with urban refugees. Each focus group discussion was documented in a protocol to later triangulate information gathered in personal case interviews with information collected during the FGDs.

Overall, the majority of the participants were women. Within refugee and migration studies in Africa, there has been a tendency to focus primarily on men (Malkki, 1995; Sommers, 2001a; Turner, 2010), often young urban men; the experiences of children and adolescents have also been studied (Mann, 2008; Hart, 2009). Our focus on women contributes to a growing field of studies on female refugees. Moreover, the majority of the interviewed clients in Dar es Salaam were Congolese nationals (29 persons), eight were Burundians and two Rwandese. The clients' protection status is mixed but most were unregistered. Protection status is not a static category but one that keeps on changing. During our analysis of the corpus of data, three refugees left Tanzania, two resettled, one through family reunification, and one was deported.

### 1.3 Challenges encountered

We encountered three major challenges over the course of this collaboration. The first one is related to complications in securing a research permit. An application was submitted to the Tanzania Commission for Science and Technology (COSTECH), a commission that falls under the Ministry of Education) in July 2019, after almost two years of mail exchanges and follow-up calls with different governmental instances. DIGNITY Kwanza

received a final response in March 2021 that the request for the application for a research permit had been rejected. The document provided no further explanation. Many of the data collection methods that were originally foreseen, including semi-structured and biographic interviews and a survey, could thus not be carried out. As a consequence, this *paper* limits itself to the corpus of data collected by DIGNITY Kwanza's staff members in their role as legal advisors. Ironically, the Tanzanian government's summary response points at issues that stood at the very heart of the research..The first relates to the narrowing space in which urban refugees and organisations working with refugees navigate and discloses an ever-increasing securitisation discourse and attitude. The second, more generally, is connected with the heightened sense of opaqueness most policymakers adopt in any pre-general election period, reticence in granting permission for research on topics considered controversial<sup>3</sup> Incidentally, the difficulties encountered in obtaining research might be a reflection of what urban refugees encounter whenever they stand in need of permits.

The second challenge we encountered was in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Initially, Tanzania had responded by putting restrictions on public life. This decision affected many of the urban refugees working in the informal sector. But in June 2020, the government officially declared Tanzania COVID-free (Wasike, 2020). Information pointing to the the presence of COVID-19 circulated in the communities and on social media. The fact that the government did not take any measures to prevent the virus from spreading meant that the responsibility of not contracting it was to be carried by the individual. The population was divided between those who believed there was no COVID and those who believed there was, complicated further by conflicting information by all manner of experts and clerics. The pandemic hampered physical access to the refugees, especially as the DIGNITY Kwanza office closed down for a couple of months.

The third challenge is linked to biometric SIM card registration, which we will discuss in more detail in sub-section 4.2. Even if applied to all, being locked out of communication circles further immobilised and marginalised urban refugees. Consequently, DIGNITY Kwanza lost contact with many of its clients over the course of 2020, simply because they could no longer be reached by phone.

<sup>3</sup> During the time of writing, Tanzania's former president, John Magufuli, passed away. It still needs to be seen if, and how, the discourse with regard to refugees and foreigners in Tanzania will change under current President Samia Suluhu.



## 2. Protracted displacement in Tanzania

Within East Africa, up until today, many potential migrants and refugees consider Tanzania a country with no war, a haven of peace (Perullo, 2008). The corpus of data corroborates this. In fact, displaced individuals have found refuge in pre-independent Tanzania since the 1940s with the arrival of Polish and Jewish victims of World War II. In the first decades after its independence in 1961, Tanzania followed an open-door policy in which refugees liberally settled in urban areas. *Ujamaa na Kujitegemea* (Tanzania's socialist blueprint), gave birth to agricultural and cooperative villages (Kraler et al., 2020). In 1972, after the first cycle of genocide in Burundi, Tanzania was engulfed by an overwhelming number of Burundian Hutu refugees. Colloquially known as *wageni wakaazi*, or resident visitors (Ruhundwa, 2019), they were mainstreamed into Nyerere's rural development programme. Burundian refugees who were housed in Mishamo settlement, for instance, grew their own food. As a result of their agricultural activities, malnutrition, a common plague in refugee camps worldwide, was unheard of in Mishamo (Kraler et al., 2020). Mishamo became a successful model, a prototype of a new generation of refugee settlements (Armstrong, 1986; Malkki, 1995). During the 1970s and 1980s, Tanzania was even commended by humanitarian agencies and academics for its hospitality towards refugees (Turner, 2004) and won the prestigious UNHCR Nansen award in 1983. Today, Mishamo and two former settlements (Katumba and Ulyankulu) still exist and are administered by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA)—they are referred to as old settlements. The majority of the former Burundian refugees living there have received their naturalisation certificate, which grants them a formal status as Tanzanian citizens.

Since the 1990s, the reasons why refugees fled their country of origin have expanded. This was reflected in toughening policies towards refugees in Tanzania resulting from a combination of external and internal factors. On the one hand, the country was overwhelmed by the influx of refugees who entered Tanzania in the mid-1990s from Burundi, Rwanda and Congo, testing the capacity of the border regions (Rutinwa, 1996). On the other, the regression of the Tanzanian economy in the post-Nyerere period, the challenges confronting *Ujamaa* and its connected integration of refugees, the liberalisation programmes and the many political reforms led to an unstable political atmosphere and fear among the population. Internal issues played a determinant role in the Tanzanian government's perception of refugees (Van Hoyweghen, 2001), which would later ensue in new refugee policies.

The change in public perception increasingly meant that refugees began to be viewed as a threat to national security. Refugees came to be linked to growing crime rates, price hikes, deteriorating environmental situations and the saturation of the labour market (Nimpuno, 1995; Turner, 2004). In 1995, Tanzania officially ended its open-door policy for refugees (Rutinwa, 1996). This decision resulted in a strict Refugees Act in 1998 (Kamanga, 2005) that did not tolerate urban refugees and enforced a policy of encampment. The 1998 Refugees Act made it an offence to live outside camps without a permit. As a result, (some) urban-based migrants were forced to go underground. Refugees became a vulnerable group that was unable to assert their rights and seek protection from injustice (Arevalo-Carpenter & Ruhundwa, 2011). The securitisation trend and discourse persist until today.

As of March 2021, there were 264,475 registered refugees in Tanzania, 70 per cent of whom were Burundian and 29,8 per cent Congolese. Only 437 refugees (which amounts to 0,2 per cent) had fled other countries such as Rwanda, Yemen or Syria (UNHCR, 2020). The number of Rwandese refugees in Tanzania is thus very limited. While in the mid-1990s, many Rwandese had fled to Tanzania, most of them were repatriated to their country in the late 1990s. Almost 85 per cent of refugees live in refugee camps (UNHCR, 2020). Three operational camps are managed by the Tanzanian government—Nyarugusu, Nduta and Mtendeli. All three camps are situated in the Kigoma region in north-western Tanzania, close to the borders with Congo and Burundi. The three camps first opened in the 1990s, but whereas Nyarugusu remained open, the two other closed down following the repatriation of Burundian refugees in the first decade of the millennium. After 2015, during the most recent influx of Burundian refugees, Nduta and Mtendeli had to be re-opened as an emergency response to receive 40,000 Burundian refugees relocated from Nyarugusu. While Nduta and Mtendeli serve, almost exclusively, refugees from Burundi, the refugee population in Nyarugusu is mixed with a majority of Congolese refugees (over 78,000) versus a minority of Burundian refugees (53,000).<sup>4</sup> While the vast majority of refugees live in camps, there are three exceptions:

1. Twenty-one thousand five hundred and seven self-settled refugees live in villages in Kigoma, that is 8,1 per cent of the population of concern (UNHCR, 2020);

4 Numbers retrieved from Reliefweb.int and worldofcamps.org accessed on 24 March 2020 and updated on 17 August 2021.

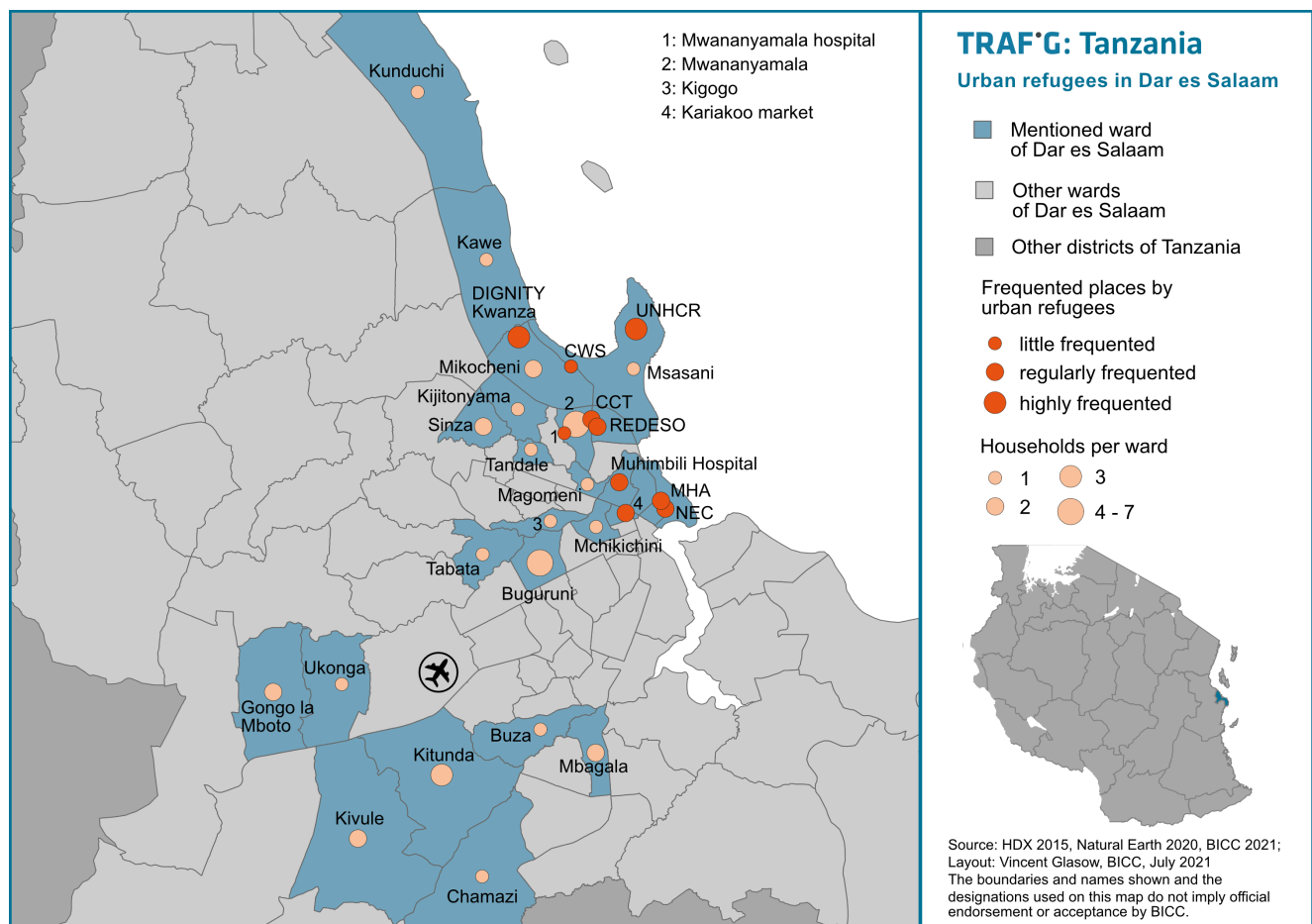


2. Eighteen thousand nine hundred and fifty ‘1972 Burundian refugees’ who were not naturalised live mostly in the ‘old settlements’ of Katumba, Ulyankulu and Mishamo, that is 7,2 per cent of the population of concern (see also sub-section 2.1); and
3. a small minority of urban-based refugees live in Dar es Salaam.

The focus of this *working paper* lies on this last group, which consists of only 183 individuals living officially in Dar es Salaam (UNHCR, 2020). This number, however, is unlikely to be exact and does not reflect the actual number of vulnerable migrants living in a refugee-like situation, with or without a recognised status, in Dar es Salaam. According to a recent estimate, at least 10,000 vulnerable migrants, mostly of Congolese

and Burundian origin, are residing in the city (O’Loughlen & Bwami, 2018). Considering that Dar es Salaam counts around 6.7 million inhabitants in 2020<sup>5</sup>, 10,000 urban refugees represent only a minuscule portion of the total population. Why, then, has the discourse that aims at ‘othering’ this displaced group become so prevalent? Even though urban refugees in Dar es Salaam share similar experiences with thousands of displaced persons in other cities across the continent, their experiences reveal several unique characteristics—and this is why we are studying them more closely.

Map 1: Urban refugees in Dar es Salaam



5 See <https://worldpopulationreview.com/world-cities/dar-es-salaam-population>

### 3. Figurations of displacement in Dar es Salaam

In this section, the key dimensions of figurations in which urban refugees in Dar es Salaam navigate are discussed. These figurations are first of all informed by the regimes of aid and asylum that govern refugees' lives. Governance regimes of aid and asylum are shaped by international treaties, domestic laws and policies. They are operationalised by the Tanzanian government, international humanitarian organisations and a plethora of local and international NGOs.

Sub-section 3.1 briefly discusses the different actors that shape the governance regimes, as well as the changing laws that impact the refugees' (im)mobility. As mentioned before, Tanzania abandoned the open-door policy and adopted a more stringent policy legal framework, ultimately influencing the perception of the general public towards refugees. Negative political discourse permeates through the national media and affects societal attitudes. The second part of sub-section 3.1 will shed light on how and why some refugees prefer circumventing the camp and seeking refuge in the city rather than remain confined in camps. Governance regimes push urban refugees to live a life in conflict with the law and thus in a situation of limbo.

In sub-section 3.2, the different layers of that limbo will be discussed. Sub-section 3.3 will address the multiple cycles of displacement, the past, present and often unfinished trajectories of individuals in protracted displacement, starting from when they first fled their home country (or city in the case of internally displaced people—IDPs) up to today. Here, the authors will show the trajectories' temporal aspects (including the multiple journeys) and the translocal networks that shape them. Throughout history, strangers have been either embraced or rejected by host societies. The stories in this *working paper* present both sides of this coin.

Sub-section 3.4 will finally turn to how urban refugees, despite issues of mistrust, encounter Good Samaritans (people who help them during their journey or on arrival in the city) and manage to build alliances with Tanzanians. It focuses on the local networks between urban refugees and Tanzanians (including local organisations) on the one hand, and among refugees themselves, on the other. Through participation in the host society, vulnerable migrants in refugee-like situations create new opportunities and re-acquire a dignified existence.

#### 3.1 Navigating through governance regimes of aid and asylum

##### Regulations and governance regimes

Tanzania has signed and ratified major international treaties on refugees. They include the 1951 UN Convention, the 1969 OAU (Organisation of African Unity) Convention and the 2006 Great Lakes Pact. At a national level, the first refugee legislation in Tanzania, the 1966 Refugees (Control) Act, was replaced in 1998 by the Refugees Act (Ferreira et al., 2020). While the 1998 Refugees Act is far more forward-looking in terms of wording and explicit mention of both UNHCR and OAU as well as the welcome inclusion of certain rights and freedoms of asylum seekers and refugees compared to the 1966 Act, (Kamanga, 2005), it also solidifies more restrictive policies—as does the 2003 National Refugee Policy (NRP) (Chimanda & Morris, 2020). Ferreira et al. warn that even if the “1990s ushered in forward-looking refugee specific laws, current policy and practices betray a pattern of restrictionism and securitisation of migration to the point of marking a clear departure from the ‘open door policy’ ” (2020, p. 25). Guidelines in the 2003 NRP, for instance, eschew any notion that immigration can lead to positive developments for the local population; on the contrary, the policy rather focuses on the ‘burden’ of hosting refugees (Ferreira et al., 2020).

Signs of the abandonment of the open-door policy can also be found in the Tanzanian ruling party's 2005 election manifesto included a pledge to make Tanzania 'refugee free' by 2010 (Kuch, 2019). It claimed that “there wasn't enough international aid to support the camps and that the camps were having a negative impact on neighbouring host communities and Tanzania's security situation” (Kuch, 2019). Two years later, in 2007, the Tanzanian government, in partnership with the Burundian government and UNHCR, adopted the Tanzania Comprehensive Solutions Strategy (TANCOSS), which outlined a plan for durable solutions for the first caseload of Burundian refugees who had been in Tanzania since 1972 (Kekic & Mseke, 2016; Kuch, 2016, 2018; Thomson, 2009). Initially, TANCOSS included three pillars: Voluntary repatriation to Burundi, processing of citizenship applications for those who opted for naturalisation in Tanzania and relocation of the naturalised refugees from the refugee settlements to other regions of Tanzania. Seventy-nine per cent of refugees opted for Tanzanian citizenship, while 21 per cent opted for repatriation. In October 2014, Tanzania granted citizenship to over 170,000 Burundian refugees who had opted for naturalisation (Ruhundwa, 2019). In 2016, there were still 40,000 applications pending (Kuch, 2016).

The formal status of these refugees continued to be uncertain for some years, but “after many delays, more than 150,000 naturalisation certificates were eventually distributed” (Manby, 2021, p. 522). A 2017/2018 verification process found that almost 70,000 long-term Burundian refugees ‘remained without a ‘durable solution’ to their situation (Manby, 2020). The number does not seem to add up, but it has to be taken into account that the 70,000 refugees include people who were never captured in the original process (including a number that disqualified for not being linked to the 1972 refugee group) but also applicants who were refused, children born after their parents had applied for naturalisation and before naturalisation was granted and others who had not collected their naturalisation certificates (including people reported as deceased) (Manby, 2020)

Despite the encouraging steps adopted during TANCOS, Tanzania’s stance vis-à-vis refugee integration has once again become more restraining (Kekic & Mseke, 2016). Tanzania was to take part in the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework’s (CRRF) pilot programme, but the government decided to withdraw in early 2018, citing again security concerns and a lack of donor support (Ensor, 2018; Hansen, 2018). UNHCR expressed “concerns about numerous factors [including forced return] making refugees’ lives difficult” (Human Rights Watch, 2019). In October 2019, Burundian refugees were pressured into returning to their country (RFI, 2019). According to Kuch, the decision by the Tanzanian government to (voluntarily) repatriate refugees was not happening in a political void but emulated the policies implemented by some Western countries. The decision to repatriate Burundian refugees reflects a growing global attitude towards refugees and other migrants (Kuch, 2019).

Individuals who cross the Tanzanian border unlawfully, that is without documents, have seven days to express their refugee claim to the authorities. The Refugee Service Department, which operates under the purview of the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), is responsible for the administration of matters concerning asylum seekers and refugees. The National Eligibility Committee (NEC), established by the Refugees Act, provides recommendations to the minister about asylum claims, requests for family reunification and resettlement (Ferreira et al., 2020). Unlawfulness is considered a serious offence. Those who fail to obtain a permit in time or whose application has been rejected risk imprisonment (usually six months), fines and deportation. Despite this, many individuals find themselves unlawfully in the country and have developed different strategies to blend in (these will be discussed in more detail in the sections to come). Conversely, within the Tanzanian governance regime of aid and asylum, international treaties are not fully implemented either (Kamanga, 2014). Moreover, implementing the proof of individual persecution as it is required by the 1951 Refugee Convention, for instance, has become virtually impossible (Ruhundwa, 2019). Since the adoption of the 1998 Refugees

Act, the government can respond by granting groups of displaced people *prima facie* status, which grants the entire group refugee status without having to verify each claim of persecution (Ruhundwa, 2019). Two past examples include those who had fled war in Congo in the late 1990s (Betts, 2013) and Burundians who had fled their country in 2015. In 2018, even though the government officially emphasised its commitment to continue to offer asylum to those who need it, new asylum applications were in practice discouraged. This is not the only dissonance between law and practice. The 1998 Refugees Act, for instance, “has not been followed up by the adoption and gazetting of Rules and Regulations” (Ferreira et al., 2020, p. 24). Betts (2013), too, based on a case study of refugees from South Kivu in Kigoma, points at the discrepancies that exist within the position of the Tanzanian government. Betts argues that while at the national level, the government cooperates with UNHCR and refrains from repatriating Congolese, at the local level, the opposite is true: The regional commander insists on the return of new arrivals. Here too, law and practice do not correspond as local and national politics seem to contradict one another.

Besides the Tanzanian government and UNHCR, other organisations are committed to protecting urban refugees living in Dar es Salaam. Despite a lack of funding, these organisations offer services that refugees can access, in theory, without fear of negative consequences (Saliba & Bleuer, 2017). In practice, the fear amongst refugees of approaching these organisations persists, ultimately leading to a lack of access to reliable information (Saliba & Bleuer, 2017). In addition to DIGNITY Kwanza (and its predecessor Asylum Access Tanzania, AATZ), other NGOs, both local and international, active in Dar es Salaam that offer services to refugees include: Caritas, Tanganyika Christian Refugee Services (TCRS) and Church World Service (CWS), Tanzania Women Lawyer Association (TAWLA), International Organization for Migration (IOM), Legal and Human Rights Centre (LHRC), Children Education Society (CHESO) and Relief to Development and Society (REDESOS). Out of this list, only REDESOS is an implementing partner of UNHCR and works with Congolese and Burundian refugees both in Kigoma and the urban caseload in Dar es Salaam.

### Circumventing encampment and moving to the city

As we have seen above, the overwhelming majority of refugees in Tanzania are hosted in camps. Encampment within ‘designated areas’ is mandatory (Kamanga, 2005). According to the Refugees Act, encamped refugees do not enjoy freedom of movement outside of the camps unless they obtain a permission (Ferreira et al., 2020). Unauthorised departure constitutes a punishable offence. One way to circumvent encampment was a peasant permit. The peasant permit was a two-year, renewable permit issued by the Tanzanian government to long-standing undocumented migrants who the government or UNHCR had

not recognised as asylum seekers or refugees, but who had been living in Tanzania for more than two years. These permits were issued initially exclusively in the Kigoma region, home to Tanzania's encamped refugee population but also a region characterised by irregular cross-border movements. However, due to the advocacy efforts of different actors dealing with refugee issues in Tanzania, in November 2011, the Immigration Services Department of MHA expanded the issuance of peasant permits to immigrants living outside of border regions, including those living in Dar es Salaam. In other words, the peasant permit, an affordable two-year permit, 'legalised' undocumented migrants' status and allowed formerly unrecognised refugees to engage freely in income-generating activities without fear of arrest or refoulement. Peasant permits helped refugees to circumvent policies and administrative procedures. For unregistered urban refugees, it was an opportunity to regularise their stay in Dar es Salaam. Many undocumented migrants were able to receive these permits, some with legal or financial assistance from organisations like the then AATZ. Some persons who had not registered with the government or UNHCR to have their refugee claims assessed were able to apply for these permits. Since 2012, however, MHA stopped granting these permits. For Dar es Salaam, their issuance lasted, thus, less than two years, while in Kigoma, it existed for a longer period of time. Since then, almost all issued permits have expired. The halt on issuing new peasant permits constitutes a retrogressive measure in breach of Article 6 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). It impedes, rather than progresses, the full realisation of the right to work for everyone in Tanzania. Even though the government has not shown any plan to revive the peasant permit, those who were in possession of these permits still live in Tanzania, including Dar es Salaam and are not harassed by the government.

Refugees who move to the city do so with a purpose. Some prefer to join family members who live in the city. Others are looking for appropriate medical treatment for themselves and their loved ones. Security concerns in camps push refugees from camps to cities, too. Finally, the search for economic opportunities and greener pastures also lure refugees into moving out of the camps. Moving to the city does not necessarily differ from the pull factors that attract rural Tanzanians to the cities. Dar es Salaam is, in fact, one of the fastest-growing cities in Africa, whose population expanded on average by six per cent per year from 2002 to 2012. Internal migration from other parts of Tanzania accounts for more than 70 per cent of this increase. Even with Dodoma being proclaimed the capital of Tanzania in 1973, Dar es Salaam remains the country's largest city, both in terms of population and business activity (Collier & Jones, 2015).

For people who have fled from towns and cities in their home country (such as Bujumbura and Rumonge in Burundi, Bukavu, Goma, Lubumbashi, but also Butembo, Uvira, Kindu, Kalemie and other places in Congo), leaving an urban life behind to adapt to the life in a camp situated in a rural area can prove to be a challenge. Most urban refugees interviewed in Dar es Salaam were born in an urban area or had lived in a city for many years or decades before fleeing their country. Hence, many are 'urban' displaced persons in two ways: they fled an urban life and they found refuge in an urban environment. They are used to the ways of the city and the opportunities and lifestyles of urban contexts. For many, adapting to the ways of a refugee camp, situated in a rural area and lacking certain educational and health facilities is extremely difficult.

Yet, leaving or bypassing the camp often brings about its own legal implications. Ordinarily, one can only be recognised as a refugee while within the premises of a camp. In addition, one is only entitled to humanitarian assistance inside the camp. Well-off refugees who can easily afford private education and health services, often tend to bypass the refugee camps. For others, the camps offer reliable education and health services, or at least more reliable than that they could access had they been living out of the camps. Furthermore, while there is access to primary and secondary education in the camps, there are no colleges or similar schooling beyond secondary school open to refugees there.<sup>6</sup> Basic medical facilities are available, yet more complicated and permanent health issues cannot be treated in the camps. Ironically, some villages near refugee camps often do not have the medical facilities of the quality found in the camps. Hence, Tanzanian villagers go to there for medical treatment. Ideally, villagers could send their children to schools in camps, however, considering that refugees in camps are taught their home country curriculum, Tanzanian villagers see no reason why they should enrol their children there.

Despite Dar es Salaam's hardships, which will be discussed below, the city continues to act as a magnet for vulnerable migrants who prefer the uncertainties of life in the city to the secure but yet predictable future without prospects in the camps (Turner, 2015). For example, Jane<sup>7</sup>, a 35-year old Congolese Gospel singer from Beni, is repulsed by the idea of having to live in a camp to be a recognised refugee and is not willing to become dependent on humanitarian assistance:

*Why should I go to the camp and depend on UNHCR assistance while I can work and earn a living? I can't stand a life of hardship in refugee camps. In the camp, people*

6 There are donor-funded scholarship programmes, like DAFI (Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative), that grant refugees the opportunity to continue their studies beyond secondary education. These scholarships are very few and very competitive, only a limited number of refugees can get them.

7 The names in this *paper* have been anonymised.



*are suffering. How will I survive in the camp? Here in Dar es Salaam sometimes I am invited to sing on different occasions, and I get paid for that. In the camp, I won't be able to work (BM-11-20191111).*

Often, neither city nor camp are final destinations, but there is movement back and forth between the two. Vulnerable migrants who had initially opted to stay in Dar es Salaam realised life in the city was too hard and moved back to the camps in Kigoma region. Emmanuel, a man in his late twenties, fled from war in Congo in 2000 and came to Dar es Salaam as an eight-year-old boy with his family. There, he was able to enrol at a French-speaking school. He studied up to sixth grade (last year of primary) until the school was closed down in 2006. Emmanuel's father looked for alternatives but could not afford to pay for another private school. After a year of staying at home, Emmanuel and his sister were sent to Kigoma to proceed with their studies in the refugee camp in 2007 (see also Map 2 in sub-section 3.3). To do so, they registered under another name, as children of a friend of his father. They were located at Lugufu camp first and later, in 2009, relocated to Nyarugusu camp. Life at the camp was not easy for Emmanuel and his sister, but they managed to attend free education in French. They would spend their holidays with their family in Dar es Salaam. In 2013, Emmanuel completed his studies and was granted refugee status under the name of his father's friend (see also Box 1 on p. 25 on enrolling children at school with an alien name). He returned to his family in Dar es Salaam. Emmanuel's sister, however, decided to stay in the camp (JK-13-20200213).

Several of DIGNITY Kwanza's clients have fled due to the security situation. Targeted political persecution of their own person or their loved ones is common. In Burundi, for instance, individuals are persecuted, albeit indirectly, by their government, while in Congo, other actors involved in political strife, such as the different rebel factions, threaten them directly. Due to these security concerns, staying in camps located close to the border is not an option. Rumours of cross-border nightly incursions are prevalent. One such case is that of Juma, a Burundian refugee in his sixties. The night that Juma fled Burundi in 2014, armed men were looking for him at his homestead. When they did not find him, they decided to arrest his brother and sons and left the women there. Juma's brother was murdered in prison. This fatal event pushed Juma to flee Burundi immediately. He crossed Lake Tanganyika to Baraka in Congo, where he rented a house (for an illustration, see Map 3 in sub-section 3.3). But, as he explained, Burundian armed men co-opted the Congolese police, who then led the former to the place where Juma was staying. He managed to escape again by crossing into Tanzania. Juma said he knew that if he stayed in the vicinity of Burundi, the armed men would continue to look for him. If he was followed across the Congolese border, he asked, what would deter the men from crossing the Tanzanian one? (BM-1-20190717).

In the end, Juma preferred the challenges of living in Dar es Salaam over the risks of living in a Tanzanian refugee camp close to the Burundian border.

Unable to abide by encampment and the restriction of movement, the urban refugees, on whose stories this *paper* is based, find themselves caught in legal limbo. To fit in, on the one hand, they want to abide by the law and encampment. On the other, they desire freedom of movement and, especially, freedom to make their own decisions—decisions on shaping their lives. By moving out of the designated encampment areas, urban refugees cannot help but to breach the law. Not being able to legalise their status—in fact their status is constantly put into question by the authorities—places refugees in limbo. It is to this limbo that we will now turn.

#### Key findings

- *Tanzania has shifted from an open-door policy for refugees to a more restrictionist regime.*
- *Legal recognition and access to humanitarian assistance are mostly limited to those refugees living in the official refugee camps in the Kigoma region.*
- *Refugees' onward movement from camps to the cities is formally forbidden, yet people who lived in cities before displacement also prefer moving to a city.*
- *The peasant permit was a legal circumvention of the official encampment policy for unrecognised refugees to move freely and engage in income-generating activities. However, it was cancelled in 2012.*

## 3.2 Living in limbo

### Plural limbo

Vulnerable migrants are caught in legal limbo. On the one hand, they come to Tanzania escaping violence and looking for a more secure environment. On the other hand, after arriving in Dar es Salaam, refugees often feel unwelcomed, are afraid and live under the radar: "It takes courage to be a refugee" (Bwami, 2012). It takes courage to live unlawfully in a foreign city in constant fear of imprisonment and deportation (Arevalo-Carpenter & Ruhundwa, 2011). While the unrecognised refugees know that they are living unlawfully in Tanzania, multiple scenarios are characterised by doubt and opacity. Living outside camps has led some recognised urban refugees to question whether they deserve the 'refugee' label or whether they are protected against deportation. Even if there is no legal confusion over their status (recognised refugees just need to renew their permit with the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) regularly), in practice, there is a general confusion over whether they fall within the mandate of international agencies, local civil society, nationality-based associations or migrant rights

advocates. Recognised refugees who used to have a permit while residing in the camps but who were not able to renew it in the city and decided not to return to the camps become undocumented migrants. Recognised urban refugees in Dar es Salaam, too, feel they are trapped in legal limbo (Arevalo-Carpenter & Ruhundwa, 2011). Those migrants who can afford it, never register as refugees but live on visa and expensive resident permits, which they need to renew on a regular basis. Living on a temporary visa is one of the many strategies to regularise one's status in the city.

The situation of Happy Kagera, a Rwandese refugee in her mid-thirties living with her husband and four children in Dar es Salaam, illustrates how refugees find themselves in a situation of legal limbo. Happy's family fled Rwanda in 2019 for political reasons. Her husband was the first to flee; alone, travelling through Uganda and Kenya before arriving in Tanzania. Two months later, Happy and her children joined their father and husband in Tanzania. When they applied for refugee status at the MHA in Dar es Salaam, their application was first rejected because her husband had transited through another country before coming to Tanzania. According to the Refugees Act, a "person shall not be considered a refugee if prior to his entry into Tanzania he has transited through one or more countries" (Government of Tanzania, 1998, Section 4e). After this first rejection, they went to UNHCR for registration. Unfortunately, just before registration, they were arrested by the police for living in Tanzania without a permit. UNHCR and DIGNITY Kwanza intervened, and they were released with the condition to report to immigration once a week. Once when they were on their way to report to the Immigration Department, they were detained because they did not have any proof that they were living in Tanzania under UNHCR mandate. Again, with the aid of DIGNITY Kwanza they managed to get a letter from UNHCR proving they were living in Tanzania under UNHCR's mandate and were released (BM-13-20191119). Even though they had a claim to be legally in the city, Happy's family could not prove their legality on the streets. In their case, theory (having a status) and practice (not having any document to prove this status) did not coincide. Not being able to prove their status resulted in arbitrary detention and thus uncertainty. In this case, Happy's family was caught between having the right to be a refugee and not being provided with the documents to which they were entitled to prove their lawfulness in a timely fashion. This is just one example of how urban refugees fall between the cracks of the system. It proves that there are vulnerable migrants who do not opt to live in Dar es Salaam without proper identification documents but are victims of circumstances beyond their control. In Happy's case, they were residing lawfully in the country but had no official documents to prove this.

In fact, the limbo in which the urban refugees in Dar es Salaam find themselves is not only legal, but it influences political, economic, social, physical and even psychological aspects of navigating uncertainty. The first additional layer of that limbo is physical and relates to housing. As illustrated in Map 1, the urban refugees described in this *paper* are scattered all over Dar es Salaam (see also Mann, 2008).<sup>8</sup> It must be noted that the map is a snapshot. Urban refugees see themselves forced to move houses recurrently, for instance, when they fail to pay rent in advance, as we will see in sub-section 3.2. Many live in popular areas that lack urban infrastructure. In some cases, the wards are situated far away from the centre of town, beyond the airport (such as Chamazi or Kivule). In other cases, the wards are more central (such as Mikocheni, Sinza or Kinondoni) but still lack basic infrastructure. Neighbourhoods within wards differ greatly, yet refugees tend to live in lower strata wards (such as Magomeni or Buguruni), some of which are prone to flooding and outbreaks of cholera during the rainy season.

Interesting overlaps emerge when comparing Map 1 to other maps. During the cholera outbreak that officially lasted from August 2015 until May 2016, for instance, Buguruni had one of the highest numbers of Cholera cases (Picarelli, Jaupart & Chen, 2017). Regarding flood risk zones, parts of Magomeni, where two people whom the DIGNITY Kwanza team spoke to live, are categorised as being under high risk (Erman et al., 2019). A more detailed comparison falls beyond the scope of this *paper*, but we can deduce that refugees, as part of the urban poor, living in these areas are marginalised by poor urban planning. Urban refugees account for only a small portion of those living in such precarious conditions. It must be noted that a small minority of urban refugees can afford to live in decent houses in better-off wards of the city. In addition to housing, Map 1 indicates points of encounter and places often frequented by the urban refugees that the DIGNITY Kwanza team spoke to. Some of these locations will be further discussed in the *paper*.

Besides physical limbo, a second layer relates to the social and relational spheres. Discrimination by Tanzanians is not uncommon, and many urban refugees do not know whom to trust and to whom to turn for help. As we will see later on in this *paper*, different cases of abuse have been reported that result from not having trusted the 'right' person. These cases, for instance, relate to money matters not being paid (back) for a sold good or service but also to sexual abuse, as in Joaria's case described in sub-section 3.4. Lyytinen (2017) stresses the need to pay attention to the refugees' "orientation of trust." Two are relevant for our analysis: "generalized social trust" and "institutional trust". The former "focuses on the individual tendency (or lack thereof) to view strangers as trustworthy (Jasinski in

<sup>8</sup> The number of households differs slightly from the total number of participants. In a couple of cases, participants belong to the same household, in other cases their residence was unknown or they had been deported or resettled.



Lyytinen, 2017a, p. 496). The latter refers to “people’s trust in institutions” (Möllering in Lyytinen, 2017a, p. 496). Both are informed by previous experiences. Not being able to trust is reflected in the “refugees’ embodied practices of (mis)trust” (Lyytinen, 2017a, p. 497), such as hiding, and eventually places the refugees in a situation of limbo.

Third, urban refugees find themselves in an economic limbo by neither being legally entitled to work nor to own a business and are thus forced to earn a living informally. Finally, we observed psychosomatic states of limbo, too: Migrants need to hide who they are and where they come from. This has repercussions not only for their sense of belonging sense of identity and state of mind. Happy Kagera, whom we mentioned above, expresses this psychosomatic limbo in the following words:

*Sometimes when someone is coming from behind I get shocked and scream, sometimes I faint, this problem worries me a lot, I am so worried about my children what will happen to them if anything happens to me (BM-13-20191119).*

## Schooling and higher education

Just like well-off migrants can afford to pay for visas and resident permits, better-off urban refugees prefer to enrol their children in private schools. There are exceptions, however. Originally from Bukavu, the Rusozi family, for instance, has modest means to get by but, being recognised refugees in a vulnerable position (and placed on a resettlement list), the schooling for their children is financed partly by UNHCR and partly by a Dutch NGO in collaboration with DIGNTY Kwanza. The founder of this NGO was once a volunteer at AATZ. She sympathised with the family, and once she went back to her home country, she decided to establish an NGO to support refugees. Due to this support, Jeanne, Jacqueline, John and James Rusozi joined a private secondary school, and the other four younger siblings were enrolled in a primary school. Unfortunately, they could not proceed with school after having attended it for one year due to a language barrier. They said that their classmates used to laugh at them because they did not understand nor speak English, so they dropped out of school. Instead, they attended English and computer classes at REDESO (Relief to Development and Society), which also poses a challenge as they often had no money to pay for transportation.

During one of our visits in July 2019, the four complained about being bored—they often sit at home. It must be noted that the two elder sisters had commenced training as hairdressers in the first months of 2020 before the COVID-19 pandemic broke out. James and John work informally as taxi drivers from time to time. In addition to these, one of their main activities is going

to church and singing. The first five siblings are all part of the choir of a Pentecostal church nearby where the Rusozi’s can go by foot (the role of the church will be discussed under Theme 4).

Peter, a young Burundian vulnerable migrant who was born in the eastern Kigoma region in Tanzania, also attended a private French school run by Congolese in Dar es Salaam. Peter was able to complete his primary education and proceed with his secondary education at this school. But, when he was about to complete form five, his parents faced financial difficulties. When Peter started form six, they could no longer afford to pay for his school fees. Peter did not drop out of school, as the administration allowed him to attend classes, but he was not permitted to sit exams. He explained:

*I was allowed to attend classes but not to sit the exams because I did not complete paying my fees..... There are also other classes that I completed, form three and form four, I do not have my result slip because till now I have not completed paying their fees (JK-12-20191120).*

Not being able to complete his studies, Peter returned home and engaged in various activities as he refused to stay idle. He tried to apply to another school to study computer science, but he was not selected because he needed to present a form four certificate, which he did not have at hand—his French school (which followed a Congolese curriculum) only issued form six certificates.<sup>9</sup> Peter could not present the needed certificate:

*It was difficult for me to be accepted in other schools because I did not have my form six certificate. I even tried to apply [to a vocational school], but they did not accept me because I did not have my form six certificate. If I wanted my form six certificate, I would have had to return to my previous school and complete my studies. When issued the certificate, I have to convert it according to the Tanzanian system because the certificates are issued from Congo (JK-12-20191120).*

Frustrated, Peter started to attend meetings with his father at REDESO, and from there, he began attending their classes. He attended French, English and computer classes but soon got discouraged: “I used to attend French, English and computer classes but I stopped because I can already speak and read in both languages” (JK-12-20191120). With regard to computer science, too, Peter was ahead of the classes that were offered, so he felt there was no point in attending.

<sup>9</sup> In the Tanzanian schooling system, which is based on the British one, pupils can obtain a school degree after completing form four, that is the fourth year of secondary education. In the Congolese schooling system, which is based on the Belgian one, pupils can only obtain a school degree after completing six (and not four) years.

## Housing and transport

In general, migrants are tenants—their status does not allow them to own property—yet a few do own a house even if the law does not allow them to do so. One way to build one's own house is through a Tanzanian partner, as in the case of Jean Charles who had fled Congo in 1996 due to the civil war. After spending some time in Kigoma, he soon moved to Dar es Salaam where he married a Tanzanian woman and started a new life. Jean Charles was a successful businessman, yet all his businesses were registered under his wife's name. The couple had two children and began building a house together. Life turned difficult when Jean Charles and his wife divorced, and she, being the legal owner of the house, continued occupancy. Today, Jean Charles had to vacate the house and is facing difficulties gathering enough money to pay for his rent and often asks acquaintances for assistance. All Jean Charles has been left with are debts. His wife took over the shops that were not closed because she is the official owner—all businesses were under her name (JS-7-20190819).

In Dar es Salaam, as elsewhere in Africa, landlords ask tenants to pay for six months to a year rent in advance. This practice is also common in Congo. However, due to the current economic situation, many accept monthly payments. While some migrants rent only one room, others can afford to rent a house within a compound. In most cases, electricity does not pose a problem while water, on the other hand, might have to be fetched outside the house. Toilet facilities vary but are often shared. Due to the COVID-19 crisis, the income-generating activities of some of the refugees have come to a standstill. Not being able to pay three months rent in advance, as arranged with her landlord, Consolata was forced out of her house in April 2019. She was surprised since she was on quite friendly terms with her landlord, who lived next door and knew Consolata and her daughter well. Consolata then moved to a cheaper, smaller and less comfortable house next to a busier road. Her new landlords accepted two instead of three months of rent in advance. She explained over the phone:

*I was not at peace. It was a turbulent time [referring to the first weeks of the outbreak of COVID-19] for me because where I was, I was paying for three months [in advance each time], so it was 80,000TZS that I paid monthly, so 240,000TZS. But when this difficult period started, I asked my landlord if I could pay two months, the same amount, but two months. He didn't want to, he just wanted me to pay three months as always. I had a very difficult time because he wanted me to leave the house at all costs, with my child. [...] I paid [my new landlord] yesterday and today I'm waiting for the vehicle to move. I found a house that is not so nice, well, just a house, two rooms. The location is not that good, but because times are difficult, the*

*price has been lowered. I found that house and together with my daughter, we will live there. These are difficult times, it's a turmoil, but I know it will pass by. God will be gracious to me. God will be merciful (WA message, 9 April 2020).*

Residents of these areas face a lack of road infrastructure (including dirt roads and potholes), congested buses and high transport costs in their daily mobility. When they have to renew their status, for instance, or join a meeting at REDESO or DIGNITY Kwanza or buy goods at the central Kariakoo market, refugees need to take two or three buses (in one direction) to get to the city centre.<sup>10</sup> Dar es Salaam's infamous *foleni* (traffic jams) pose an additional problem. During peak hours, queues for buses are long, and just the trip downtown can take those urban refugees living at the city's outskirts, such as Kivule or Gongo la Mboto (see Map 1), up to two hours. Once again, it is important to underline that urban refugees are not the only ones to face these challenges, nor be stuck in traffic; other residents of Dar es Salaam's outskirts who have no private transportation do as well (Demirdirek, 2021).

## Medical assistance

A common complaint that emerges in many of the stories told to DIGNITY Kwanza relates to health issues and medical care. Recognised refugees in camps get medical assistance at the camp and financial assistance by UNHCR. Refugees who reside with a permit in Dar es Salaam are equally entitled to medical assistance by UNHCR, and they are treated in government hospitals. Registered urban refugees describe the procedure during a focus group discussion:

*When a person is sick, they have to go to REDESO first and inform them that they are sick. Only then can they go to the government hospital, but they have to cover their own bill first. After getting medical treatment, that person has to take the receipt back to REDESO and wait for one to two weeks to get reimbursement. It is so hard because sometimes we do not have money, which means we cannot get the treatment on time, at least not until we manage to raise money and wait for reimbursement (FGD-6-20200130).*

However, many urban refugees are not in a position to pay for their medical treatment up front. Those who do pay, often incur debts. Urban refugees complain it takes too long before REDESO pays back the bills. Moreover, paying medical bills is

<sup>10</sup> One bus ride varies between 400 TZS to 750 TZS. Some destinations require changing of buses, adding extra transport costs. If multiplied by six, for instance, i.e. three buses on the way to the centre and three buses on the way back (which is not uncommon), the trip amounts to 2400 TZS to 4500 TZS. That is between 1€ to 1.90€.

not the only worry. Refugees complain that patients who need to take medication to recover also need to eat a balanced diet and enough quality food, which comes at a cost. Spending a lot of money on medication leaves some of them without the means to buy enough (and healthy) food.

There are no specific hospitals for refugees in urban areas. Most of them go to public hospitals that treat everyone. They can start the treatment in smaller district hospitals and, if necessary, are referred to bigger public hospitals in the city, such as the Mnazi Mmoja hospital. Those who can afford the costs prefer to get treatment in the more expensive private hospitals, where patients are generally treated faster than in public hospitals. Foreigners pay higher fees. During the focus group discussion mentioned above, one of the participants gave an example of a fellow migrant who fell ill and was taken to a district hospital. Due to her condition, she was referred to a bigger public hospital. During the admission process, the patient presented herself as a Tanzanian, but when the pain became unbearable, she started crying out in Lingala<sup>11</sup>. The doctors understood she was not a Tanzanian and charged a higher rate (FGD-6-20200130).

### Income-generating activities

Typical jobs of vulnerable migrants were tailor, water seller, musician, day labourer, bricklayer, woodcarver, church leader, rent-exchanger, hairdresser, sofa maker, domestic worker, gardener, construction worker, street vendor, clothes and colourful African prints or cloth (*vitenge*) seller, bartender, mechanic and security guard according to a 2010 survey of 122 vulnerable migrants in a refugee-like situation in Dar es Salaam (Arevalo-Carpenter & Ruhundwa, 2011). It is interesting to juxtapose this list with the list of jobs the migrants used to hold in the country of origin: businessman, government official, church leader, lawyer, mine detection engineer, small business owner, football player, taxi driver, security guard, electrician, cameraman and teacher (Arevalo-Carpenter & Ruhundwa, 2011).

From the first list, many of the jobs mentioned for vulnerable migrants in Tanzania could count as small business owners, yet the informal nature and their business size do not necessarily allow them to be self-sufficient. In many cases, forced displacement has led to a social and economic downgrading of most of these migrants. It is not the same for a Congolese/Burundian to operate in the informal economy of Congo/Burundi (where they may more easily abide by social customs, use the right language, make important contacts and have a more active network), than for a Congolese/Burundian to operate in the informal economy of Tanzania. For instance, it is not the same

being a security guard for a politician or an opposition leader to being a random security guard. Even if guarding is formally the same job, the exploitability and limited choice in jobs for vulnerable migrants in Dar es Salaam make a big difference. Teaching is another clear example. It is not the same being an assistant lecturer at a recognised higher education institution in one’s home country as being an informal French teacher who offers private courses at one’s home.

### Work permit

To apply for a work permit in Tanzania, migrants have to possess a valid residence permit (unless there has been a special waiver offered to the individual or a group of migrants, for instance a peasant permit). Paying for both permits can be a costly procedure and out of bounds for the vast majority of vulnerable migrants. According to the 2015 Non-Citizens (Employment Regulations) Act, there are currently five classes of work permits for non-Tanzanians, as presented in Table 1.

**Table 1: Work permits for foreigners living in Tanzania**

| Class   | For whom?  | Price (US \$) |
|---------|--|---------------|
| Class A | <i>Investors and self-employed</i>   | \$1,000–3,000 |
| Class B | <i>Non -citizen in possession of prescribed profession</i>                                 | \$500         |
| Class C | <i>Non -citizen in possession of other profession</i>                                      | \$1,000       |
| Class D | <i>Non-citizen employed or engaged in an approved religious or charitable organisation</i> | \$500         |
| Class E | <i>Registered refugees only</i>  | No fee        |

Class A and C include mainly the well-off migrants who can afford to pay for private education, have enough capital to invest in their own business and can afford to pay for resident and working permits. Among DIGNITY Kwanza’s clients, only one person, Axis, falls into Class A. According to his estimates, he spends over US \$3,000 on permits: US \$2,000 for the residence permit, US \$1,000 for the working permit, plus an additional US \$600 penalty fee for applying from within Tanzania. Axis comes from a well-to-do family in Congo. After studying in Sweden, he moved back to Congo and decided to join his family who had moved to Goma. Shortly after, in 2004, Axis fled violence and headed towards Tanzania, where he initially applied for refugee status. Ultimately, after years of waiting, Axis managed to regularise his stay. Today, he lives a comfortable life in Dar es Salaam. Axis is self-employed and managed to create a niche for himself in the local music market.

<sup>11</sup> One of the four national languages in Congo, spoken mainly in the west and in Kinshasa. Lingala stands as a symbol of being Congolese and thus it is also widely understood in the eastern parts of the country.

The regulations and the fees of migrants who fall into Class B, such as French teachers, are cheaper and thus easier to pay. There are also a many non-citizens who move to Tanzania after being employed by a recognised religious organisation. They fall into Class D. For them, the fee is lower and often paid by the employer. This is the case of Nathan. Before moving to Dar es Salaam, Nathan, a man in his late twenties, lived in Butembo (Congo), where he sang in different choirs and played in religious youth orchestras. They recorded songs on DVDs and, in combination with invitations to perform on different locations throughout the region, including Kigali (Rwanda), Nathan's choir made a name for itself. The choir's DVDs also reached Tanzania, and Tanzanian church ministries would travel there and meet other congregations during religious meetings and the like. A Lutheran church in Tanzania invited Nathan's uncle, Moises, a musician, composer and music teacher, to teach music and train their choir in Dar es Salaam. With time, Moises brought over other musicians and musical technicians from his extended family in Butembo: A drummer, a pianist, a second guitarist and thus also Nathan. His regular residence is in Dar es Salaam; he depends on the church for his residence and working permit, which need to be renewed every so often. He leads a decent life with his young wife, whom he married in Congo and is respected in the church community.

Article 18 of the 1951 UN Refugee Convention accords all refugees and asylum seekers who are lawfully in the host state the right to engage in self-employment. Only recognised refugees may apply for work permits for free (Class E). It must be noted that the encampment policies prevent refugees from exercising their right to self-employment through small-scale businesses outside the camp. Very few refugees live legally outside of the camps. Article 18 only applies to a very small number of vulnerable migrants in refugee-like situations who live in Dar es Salaam. This small number of refugees faces even more challenges. In practice, it hardly happens that a refugee is granted such a permit as the regulations to do so have not yet been put in place. In fact, the procedure's logic for getting a working permit seems upside down. To apply for a work permit at the MHA's commission of labour, the refugee needs to first present a concrete job offer from an employer. The application will then be forwarded to the Labour Ministry, which will grant the working permit. In other words, future employers need to assist their refugee employees to get their working permit. Recognised refugees are as such made unattractive to employers who, due to ignorance of the law and a poor understanding of refugees' rights, prefer to avoid bureaucratic complications and engaging refugees. If the procedure's logic were overturned, i.e. if refugees received their working permits before receiving a job offer from an employer, it would increase their chances in the Tanzanian labour market. As it is, this procedure leads to unemployability and further marginalisation.

Such is the case of John, a Congolese doctor from Bukavu. After having treated a general who had fallen out of grace, he came to be persecuted by the government. John's family fled Bukavu in 2017; he followed his wife and children a couple of months later, arriving in October 2017 in Dar es Salaam. The family reported to the MHA to legalise their status. They were issued an asylum seeker letter that instructed them to go to Nyarugusu refugee camp. The family refused to leave Dar es Salaam and tried to apply for a permit to stay in Dar es Salaam, without success. In the context of a camp, John would be legally employable, in the city he even came close to being recruited as a doctor by an international NGO. Unfortunately, as discussed above, the working permit's procedure dissuaded the NGO from hiring John, and another candidate was offered the position. This was a blow for him. John started working voluntarily as a watchman and a cleaner at the church the family attends. The church is located in Kitunda, far from where they used to live. At the time of writing, John does not receive any salary, but sometimes fellow churchgoers pity the family and offer John money or food. Not enough to support a family of seven dependents, so Hilda, John's wife, decided to take matters into her own hands as we will see below.

Several other highly educated, vulnerable migrants and refugees with degrees cannot put their knowledge into practice. This does not only increase their vulnerability (in terms of no income), but it produces a lot of psychological stress and damages their self-esteem as they are not able to care for their family as they used to. Unemployment and underemployment touch both men and women migrants, however, from our examples, women respond to the challenges differently than men—of course personal health and personality also plays a role. These examples will be discussed below. In addition to gender differences, it must be noted that all over, even highly educated Tanzanians struggle to find employment. Unemployment and underemployment is a common problem for Tanzanians and migrants alike. Nevertheless, the job opportunities for migrants will always differ because of the lack of documents to access formal employment, the lack of a Tanzanian educational background and contextual knowledge to obtain certain jobs.

#### Informal economy

Recognised refugees and vulnerable migrants with and without status work in informal businesses that are not regulated,<sup>12</sup> just as many Tanzanians. Migrants learn to fend for themselves even if it means circumventing the law, for instance, working without a permit. Fearing exposure, displaced people impose limits on their own business space. Surviving in the informal economy poses a real challenge. Isaac, a Burundian refugee in his sixties, and his family have lived in Dar es Salaam for

<sup>12</sup> Recently, the government started issuing IDs for Tanzanians engaged in the informal businesses that may be easier for refugees to obtain.



almost twenty years. They used to hold a peasant permit that granted them a regularised status to live in Dar es Salaam, but since it expired and was not renewed, they have been living as unrecognised and marginalised refugees in the city. For many years, to get by, Isaac used to sell roasted cassavas, a local snack, from early morning until night. At the time of writing, he and his wife are ambulant vendors who own a bicycle they place every morning along one of the city's main arteries from where they sell soft drinks and small snacks. This petty trade enables them to pay partly for their son's school fees, but it does not suffice to provide for all their living expenses. In Tanzania, street vendors are colloquially known as *machinga*<sup>13</sup>, (literally, marching guys), people who walk around for their subsistence. The examples of these street vendors among DIGNITY Kwanza's interviewees abound and include roadside restaurants, hairdressers, manicurists and beauty specialists, African printed cloth (*vitenge*), clothing and jewellery sellers, taxi drivers and woodcarvers.<sup>14</sup>

Compared to 2011, however, there is one important change. The *machinga* are not only active on Dar es Salaam's physical streets but also on its digital pavements. Petty trade has been extended into social media, not necessarily as a replacement to physical petty trade but as an addition to it. We will explore the use of social media among vulnerable migrants in Dar es Salaam to promote goods and services further below. Similarly to the physical sphere, though, displaced people continue to be vigilant of not revealing their identity to anyone. During one of our focus group discussions, one of the participants mentioned that she would only share pictures of the products she sold through social media with people she knew as she did not have a permit to sell and did not want to expose herself to others (FGD-2-20200121). But for now, let us turn to the local and translocal networks which urban refugees navigate, among others, for business and livelihood purposes.

#### Key findings

- *Congolese and Burundian refugees in Tanzania experience a plurality of limbos: legal, social, economic and psychological.*
- *Fearing discrimination, recognised and unrecognised refugees, as well as other vulnerable migrants, conceal their identity. Hiding their identity leads to the urban refugees' socio-economic marginalisation and their housing situation.*
- *Medical treatment in the city must be paid for in advance and is reimbursed afterwards, which precludes some refugees from getting any treatment in the first place.*

### 3.3 Following the networks

#### Multi-layered trajectories

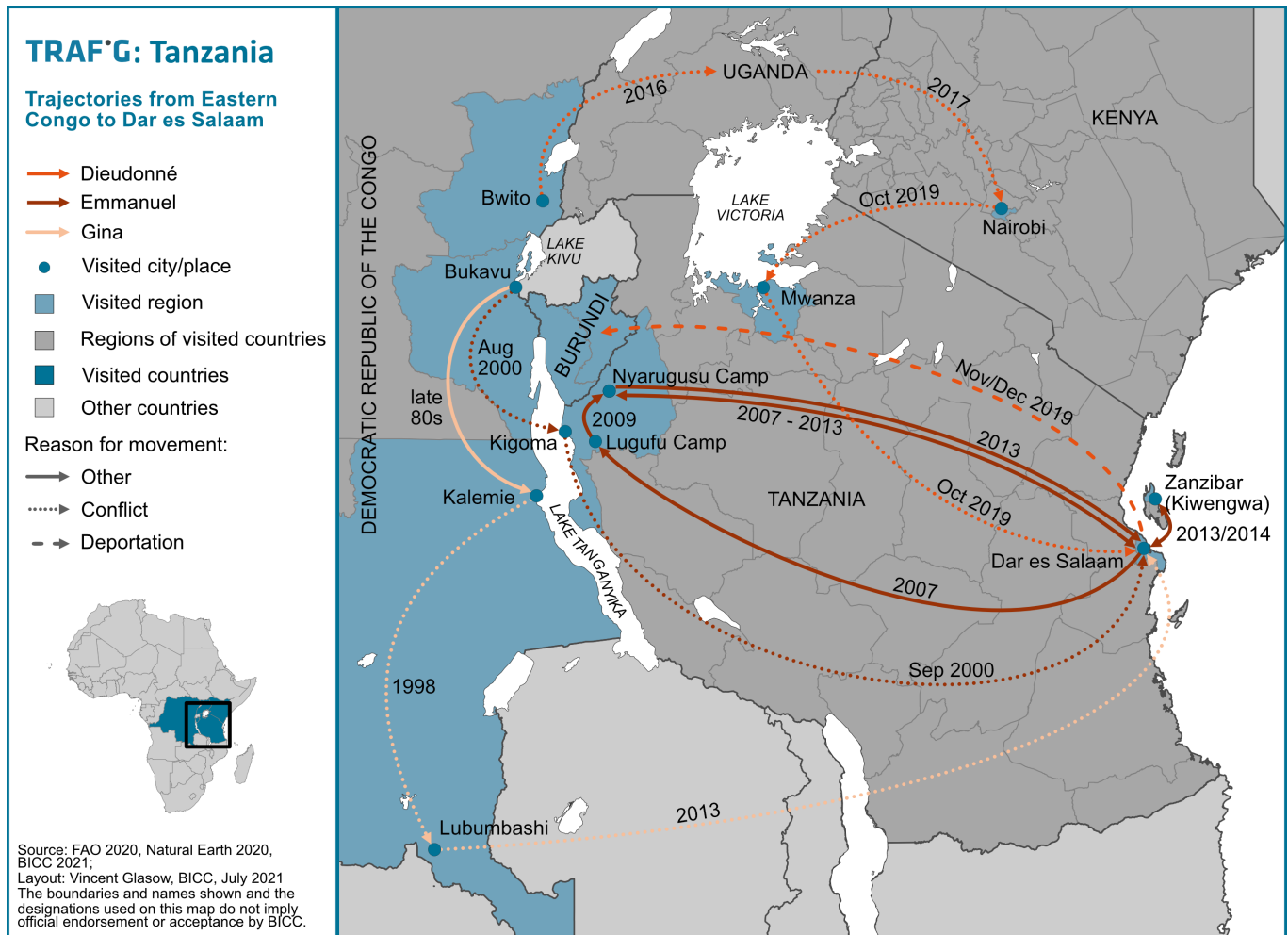
Before we discuss translocal connectivities and describe the networks in which displaced people in Dar es Salaam are involved, it is important to look at their mobility trajectories—the past and present journeys that have brought migrants to Dar es Salaam. We use the concept of trajectories to point at the complex, multi-layered journeys that are contingent in nature and change constantly. Trajectories, more than mere journeys from home to host country, include onward movements, periods of emplacement, detours, transit statuses, waiting, entrapment, serial decision-making and continuous navigation (Schapendonk, 2020; Schapendonk et al., 2018). This concept has been criticised for not taking emotional and temporal aspects into account (Weima, 2021). Therefore, in this section, we will include back and forth trajectories that repeat themselves over time, yet for different reasons. Different layers of forced displacement are also taken into consideration as individuals can be forced to flee (and become a potential refugee) more than once in their lifetime.

Trajectories are personal, unique and idiosyncratic. Some go through refugee camps, others do not. Some travelled together with family members, while others travelled alone. In most cases, trajectories are never straightforward. This being said, in the corpus of data, one can find three recurrent patterns or major 'routes,' especially with regard to the Congolese urban refugees—illustrated in Map 2 below. The first (or northern) route, illustrated by Dieudonné's trajectory in orange, departs from North Kivu province (often, but not exclusively, passing through Goma, an important gateway on the border with Rwanda). From there on, the trajectories on this route differ greatly, crossing Rwanda, Uganda and/or Kenya before entering Tanzania. This route is travelled overland by bus. Dieudonné, who was born in 2003 in Bwito, travelled across the border into Uganda in search of refuge in 2016. There, he worked in a casino and restaurant, but upon receiving the news that his family (who had fled Congo in 2008) was in Nairobi, Dieudonné decided to find them and left for Kenya. In October 2019, Dieudonné and his family fled, again; this time due to personal threats. They travelled together overland via Mwanza to Dar es Salaam. In Dar es Salaam, Dieudonné and his family sought assistance from UNHCR. They were told to return to Nairobi but refused out of fear. Not having any legal status to remain within the country, Dieudonné and his family were deported to Burundi (instead of Congo!) by the Tanzanian Immigration Department. DIGNITY Kwanza has lost contact with him ever since (JK-10-20191107).

<sup>13</sup> Ethnic group of people originally from an area in Southern Tanzania

<sup>14</sup> The job market in the informal sector has not changed that much between the time the survey was taken in 2011 and the TRAFIG research in 2020.

Map 2: Trajectories from eastern Congo to Dar es Salaam



The second, central, route crosses Lake Tanganyika from the Congolese to the Tanzanian shore. This lake route is also used by Burundians, crossing from Burundi to Congo first, before crossing again to Tanzania. There are different departure points (most notably Bukavu, the province’s capital, but also Bujumbura and other towns along the Burundian shore of the lake) that merge in Uvira, a Congolese harbour city, from where displaced people cross to Kigoma city<sup>15</sup> in Tanzania before heading to Dar es Salaam. On Map 2, this route is represented by Emmanuel’s trajectory in dark red. Emmanuel, who was discussed in sub-section 3.1, fled Bukavu in 2000 as a young boy. After a three-week trip, he and his family arrived in Dar es Salaam. As shown above, Emmanuel first lived in Dar es Salaam for seven years before moving to the refugee camp

to further his secondary education. He moved back to Dar es Salaam in 2013 with a diploma in hand and soon after having moved to Zanzibar to work in Kiwengwa for a year. He returned to Dar es Salaam in 2014. A third, less frequent route, but worth mentioning nevertheless, leaves Lubumbashi in southern Congo and crosses Zambia before entering Tanzania. On Map 2, this southern route is illustrated by Gina’s trajectory in light salmon pink. Merchants importing Congolese goods to Tanzania from Lubumbashi (including *vitenge*, jewellery, therapeutic ginger drinks, bags and others) frequent this route. There seems to be even a daily bus connection between Lubumbashi and Dar es Salaam.

Families can travel together, yet often, they travel separately or separate along the way. In some cases, the father or eldest son (male members) travel ahead first and call other family members to join once they have managed to establish themselves. This

15 Interestingly, Ujiji, the oldest town in western Tanzania, is situated less than ten kilometres south of Kigoma and is de facto incorporated in Kigoma. It was an important stop on the 19th century caravan route that brought slaves from the central region of Africa. Kigoma and Ujiji have been a door to eastern Africa for merchants and forcibly displaced people for centuries.



is what happened in the case of Dieudonné and Emmanuel. As mentioned before, Dieudonné fled Congo in 2016, eight years after his stepfather, mother and siblings had fled to Uganda. While Dieudonné's trajectory led him from urban area to urban area, his family members moved from camp to camp. First, in 2008, to Nakivale Camp in Uganda, where they lived for five years, and then to Kakuma camp in Kenya in 2013. They stayed there for one year. Dieudonné and his family met again in Nairobi in 2017; from there, they moved together to Tanzania before they were all deported to Burundi. Likewise, Emmanuel's father was the first to leave Congo in 1999. He left to pursue theological studies in Arusha and to prepare a place for his wife and children, who would follow a year later. Even if their trajectories are different, they met in 2000 in Dar es Salaam. In other cases, the women travel with their children first, and their husbands join them later on. Different migrants fleeing violence described how they lost sight of their loved ones in the process. The corpus of data also contains accounts of children moving either with their mothers, their families, sometimes even without an adult (thus only siblings). However, there are no accounts of minors travelling only with their fathers. Hence, when it comes to taking children along, escaping seems to be gendered.

## The historical dimension of trajectories

The collected data also show trajectories of forced displacement are historically multi-layered. Journeys start, end, and restart again; so-called departure points are not always clear-cut. Gina, who arrived in Tanzania through Zambia, had already fled as a child in 1998 (see her trajectory on Map 2 above). At that time, Gina and her family became, in fact, IDPs in their own country. Gina grew up in Kalemie, but when she reached the second year of high school in 1998, the Congo war became such a serious threat that she and her family fled to Lubumbashi. They first lived in Kamalongo IDP camp (see also Kabwe-Segatti & Landau, 2007). In 2013, Gina, fearing the rumours and uprising of the Mai-Mai (rebel groups active in eastern and southern Congo) in and around Lubumbashi<sup>16</sup> saw herself forced to flee for a second time in her life.

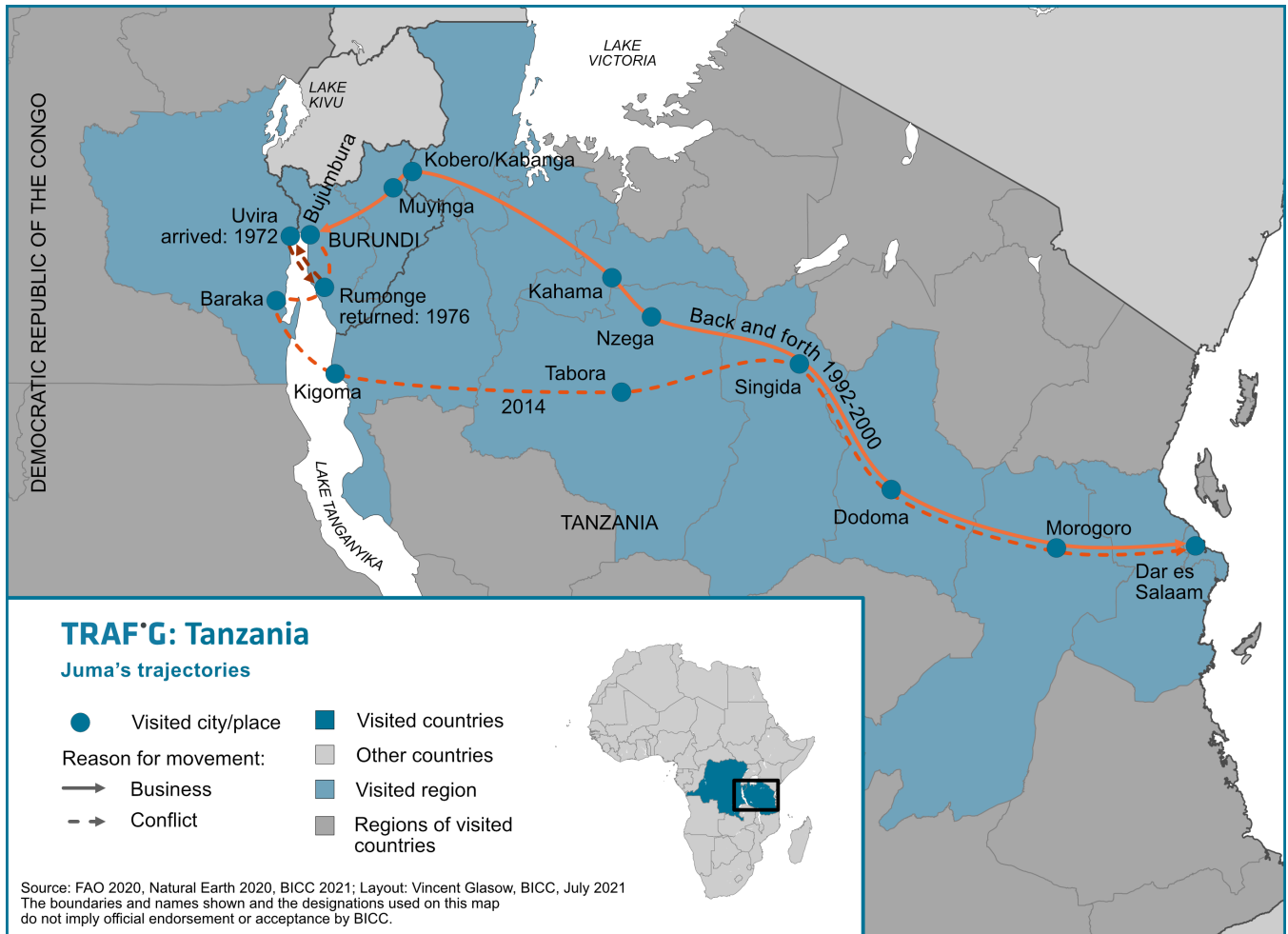
Isaac's trajectory is equally illustrative of the historical layeredness of trajectories. As a young adolescent, Isaac, who has been introduced above, first fled Burundi in 1972 and found refuge in southern Rwanda. During his stay in Rwanda, he was schooled in Zaïre (as Congo was called at the time) and used to cross the border every day to attend class. Even though he did finish secondary school, Isaac, being a refugee, was not entitled to a school diploma. Instead, he received a so-called *preuve de fréquentation* (proof of attendance). His French is impeccable. Isaac met his wife in Rwanda, where they married and had

their first child. They briefly returned to Burundi in 1993 as he hoped that the elections that installed Ndadaye as president would bring positive change. During an attempted coup d'état, Ndadaye was assassinated, and many civilians fled Burundi again, among them Isaac and his family. They found refuge in Rwanda. Unfortunately, as the 1994 genocide took hold of the country, Isaac and his family fled once again, this time across the Zairean border. When the Congo War started in the aftermath of the Rwandan genocide in the late 1990s, Isaac and his wife were displaced southwards to Kazimia. Because violence did not subside in Congo but spread throughout the east of the country, they fled once more and crossed Lake Tanganyika to Kigoma in 1996. They found themselves in a refugee camp in Kasulu, where his wife gave birth to their second son in 1999. A year later, in July 2000, the family left the camp and moved to Dar es Salaam, where they have lived as unrecognised refugees up until this date. The irony is that Isaac, who first fled Burundi in 1972, could fall under the first cohort of Burundian refugees in Tanzania. If this were the case, he could have applied for naturalisation. Unfortunately, the layeredness of Isaac's trajectory, the multiple times he had had to flee, as well as the multiple locations where he had been a refugee jeopardizes his claim to naturalisation. Isaac is a 1972 Burundian refugee, originally, but not a 1972 Burundian refugee in Tanzania. Isaac's trajectory, and eventually life, is characterised by repeated displacement, but also by "fleeing the wars of others", a narrative often encountered among mobile people in Central Africa (Wilson, 2019, p. 184).

Like Isaac, Juma, whom we introduced twice before, fled Burundi as a young adolescent. He and his mother spent four years in Uvira (Zaïre) between 1972 and 1976. Their trajectories are illustrated in dark red on Map 3. Unlike Isaac, Juma did not flee Burundi in the 1990s. In fact, between 1992 and 2000, Juma was in the automobile business. He used to buy cars and spare parts at the Dar es Salaam harbour (Burundi is a landlocked country) to resell them at home. During these years, he regularly travelled between Bujumbura and Dar es Salaam, as illustrated in light orange in Map 3. These two experiences, his refugee experience in Zaire and the business trips to Dar es Salaam, informed Juma's last itinerary as a refugee, illustrated by a dotted dark orange line in Map 3. As mentioned above (sub-section 3.1), Juma fled Rumonge in 2014 and first sought refuge by crossing Lake Tanganyika (during the night!) to Baraka in Congo. As he was persecuted there, too, he saw himself forced to cross the lake again to Kigoma. It might come over as counterintuitive, but evidently, Juma deemed a double and risky lake crossing more secure than crossing a porous and surveyed border between Burundi and Tanzania by land. From Kigoma, he travelled overland by bus until finally reaching Dar es Salaam. Both routes, across the border by boat, and overland

<sup>16</sup> The Mai-Mai Kata Katanga rebels invaded Lubumbashi in March 2013. This rebel group calls for the secession of Katanga and has remained active in the region.

Map 3: Juma's trajectories



to Dar es Salaam, were known to Juma before. His past trips demonstrate that not all trajectories are solely informed by violence and forced displacement, however. The corpus of data shows that mobility patterns are linked to, for instance, previous business and (religious) journeys. Previous experiences can inform routes and shape current trajectories.

### Connections with relatives outside Tanzania

The majority of the urban refugees communicate with their relatives, friends or business partners outside Tanzania (country of origin, another African country or outside the continent) through social media, especially WhatsApp and Facebook. Besides the countries of origin, relatives of the participants described in the corpus of data live in the diaspora in the following countries: United States, Canada, Sweden, Austria, Kenya, Uganda and South Africa. Keeping in touch through social media includes keeping up to date through their statuses as well as viewing the statuses of others (Demirdirek, 2021, p. 19). Some do not communicate with their relatives because

they lost track of them and their whereabouts when they fled. Even though social media act as a connector—and many refugees are avid users—it is hard to find loved ones after losing contact during the years of forced displacement and following refuge.<sup>17</sup> Additionally, not everyone uses their real name on social media accounts. In the case of Consolata, whom we introduced above, after her husband disappeared without a trace, she explained that she keeps her contacts to a minimum to not overexpose herself and her daughter. Yet, at the same time, somewhat contradictorily perhaps, she keeps a Facebook account with her real name.

Keeping connected to fellow Congolese and Burundians worldwide has an emotional and a functional purpose, such as receiving support, or contributing to support, either from one's home country, e.g. parents, or from a third country. Connectivity is a

<sup>17</sup> Next to the more obvious social media channels, displaced people can still try to find their relatives through the Red Cross network. This popped up in only one of our interviews.

resource (see chapter 4 in Demirdirek, 2021). Yet, remittances are a double-edged sword: For those who receive them, it is a welcome support, but for those who (see themselves forced to) send remittances, for instance, back home, they can turn from a joyful responsibility to a noose around one's neck. This is the case of Jean Charles, whom we previously discussed in sub-section 3.2. When he first arrived in Dar es Salaam, Jean Charles used to be a successful businessman and sent remittances to his family in Kasongo (Congo). After having divorced his Tanzanian wife and lost his businesses, however, he still felt compelled to send 'something' back home as his relatives still depended on him. With not enough money to cover his own expenses, this became a real burden (JS-7-20190819).

It is important to underline, once again, that, like trajectories, personal networks differ, are complex, contingent in nature and constantly changing, as the following cases show. Jeanne Ruzosi, whom we discussed above, married a Congolese man who lived in Canada in the summer of 2019. DIGNITY Kwanza assisted them with the legal papers. While living in Dar es Salaam, Jeanne used to receive money from her new husband (they lived separately during their first year and a half of their marriage). During one of our conversations, one of Jeanne's brothers told the team that he had once received a small amount of pocket money (five US dollars) from his brother-in-law. In another case, Hazina and her young brother received support from their uncle in Austria after they first arrived in Dar es Salaam. She had lost her parents at a young age and fled the war in North-Kivu with her younger brother. They found refuge in Tanzania. Once in the city, they managed to trace their uncle through Facebook. James, Hazina's uncle, was happy to hear that Hazina and Jerome were alive. He started sending money to support them, and he even came to Tanzania with his wife intending to take Hazina and her brother to Austria. But as the family reunification process turned complicated, James changed plans and decided to assist Hazina financially in starting a business to support herself and her brother (this business will be described further on).

Conversely, the case of Laura shows that it is not only the diaspora but also the family at home that provides crucial support. Laura lives in Dar es Salaam and regularly renews her visa. She is a businesswoman, living off commissions that she earns from guiding fellow Congolese with their shipments entering Tanzania. At the time of the interview, Laura went through some financial difficulties and needed to renew her visa. Even though her brother is a student in the United States, Laura preferred asking her mother who lives in Butembo (Congo) for support (MD-120200220). Juma, the Burundian refugee in his sixties, equally receives help from his children who are spread all over the continent. Juma has married twice and has 12 children. This includes the children of his late brother whom Juma had taken under his wing. Seven children live in Congo. The six youngest ones live with Mariam, Juma's second wife, in Uvira. Juma has

another daughter, with his former wife, who lives elsewhere in Congo, Juma did not specify where. Three other children live in Cape Town, where they recently moved to from Durban. One of them is married to a Burundian man whom she met in South Africa. Amina, Juma's first-born, used to live in Libya, where she studied computer science. She met her current husband, a Ugandan Nubi, while at university. After Gaddafi's fall in 2011, they left Libya and moved to Kampala, where they settled and had three children. The last one of Juma's daughters had also fled Burundi with her family but returned to Bujumbura. She manages Juma's land in Burundi. In the past years, she sold some of his plots to send him money for paying rent. Juma uses WhatsApp and other social media outlets to keep in touch with his family. His daughter sent him the money of the sale of his land through Mpesa, a mobile phone-based money transfer service active since 2007 (BM-1-20190717).

Family members living outside Tanzania not only support refugees, they also enter into business partnerships with them. Emmanuel, whom we presented previously, has many Congolese friends who have been resettled to the United States. He keeps in touch, especially with one of them, a man who lives in Kentucky, with whom he grew really close when they lived and went to school together in the refugee camp. As Congolese living in the United States long for Tanzanian/Congolese products, such as clothing and food, the two friends saw a business opportunity: Exporting African (food) products. For two years, their business was flourishing, but one day, Emmanuel decided to stop after a client who had ordered dried sardines (*dagaa*) never paid the bill. Emmanuel called the client numerous times, but she would not pick up his calls and even changed her phone number. He never received his money, and is, therefore, no longer willing to invest in this type of business.

Several informants are involved in similar business activities to and from Congo. For their businesses to thrive, they need to keep their network in Congo alive. Many of the female interviewees sell, or sold, African printed cloth (*vitenge*). The *vitenge* is bought in different Congolese cities, depending on the network. Consolata used to be active in the *vitenge* business, which she imported from Lubumbashi. Recently she has switched to smaller items, such as jewellery. *Vitenge* is heavily taxed by customs, whereas smaller items are easier to pass unnoticed in a bag. For someone who does not have much starting capital, jewellery is a more profitable and less risky option. Of course, the networks of refugees living in Dar es Salaam comprise Tanzanians, including the staff of NGOs, as well as, even if in a small percentage, its international partners.<sup>18</sup> It is to these local relations that we will turn to in the following section.

<sup>18</sup> This network includes former NGO workers who have returned to their home countries. As scholars with affiliations to universities, institutions and NGOs, we cannot pretend to remain neutral, but become part of the network too.

### Key findings

- *Urban refugees undergo continuous cycles of displacement. Their trajectories are multi-layered, not only geographically, but also temporally.*
- *Previous experiences of forced displacement and migration inform decisions on routes and colour trajectories.*
- *Social figurations in displacement are in constant change; there are different types of networks. The connections within these networks might be strong and subsist periods of disconnectivity, but they can also be weak and become brittle when business endeavours turn sour.*
- *The flow of remittances between host and home countries is bilateral. Urban refugees at times receive money from family members in the country of origin; at other times, they send back remittances to their family members.*

## 3.4 Building alliances and blending in

### Hiding one's identity

Fearing arrest, fines and deportation if caught, vulnerable migrants without status in Dar es Salaam try to keep a low profile by hiding their identity. They make great efforts to blend into the local community. Some choose to stay indoors as much as possible, while others are careful to keep their mouths shut (as to not reveal their foreign Kiswahili accent). As mentioned before, this attitude is shared, to different degrees, by all: Unrecognised refugees, registered refugees and migrants who have the authorisation to live in the city. This behaviour is a reaction to the lack of permission to live and work in the city but also to discriminative practices of the host population (see also Saliba & Bleuer, 2017). Refugees are stigmatised and looked down upon. In many cases, stigmatisation results from ignorance. Even if Tanzania has not known war like many of its neighbouring countries, Tanzanians do worry about it. This worry is fed by an omnipresent national security discourse that gives way to generalised perceptions and stereotypes. Tanzanians perceive these forced migrants who come from war-torn countries as intrinsically violent or fight provokers. In many cases, they are unwanted in society, as this quote from a member of the host community exemplifies: “If they [the refugees] are fighting in their country, they might also cause a fight here in Tanzania” (FGD-5-20200123).

Even if vulnerable migrants in refugee-like situations are seen as ‘the other’, refugees’ experiences in ‘fitting in’ differ. The following sub-section shows that age plays an important factor in, for instance, acquiring the local language: The younger adapt to and learn the local idiom much faster than the older ones. Nationality, too, is a case in point: From our observations, displaced Congolese seem to be less afraid to share their

identity than their Burundian fellows, but only in very particular settings. Pentecostal churches are one example of such a setting. The mere existence of the Congolese Community in Tanzania (CCT), and no Burundian counterpart, is also telling. Additionally, even the government's treatment of the two populations is testament to further dissimilarities. There is, for example, a distinct emphasis on the return of Burundian, but not Congolese refugees. Also, livelihood activities are allowed to a larger extent in Nyarugusu camp (a Congolese refugees camp until the 2015 Burundian refugees influx) but severely restricted in the Nduta and Mtendeli camps (which host Burundian refugees only). The situation in Kigoma is different to that of Dar es Salaam. In Kigoma, the feeling among the host community members towards refugees is mixed. There, Burundian refugees are much appreciated for their hard work and agricultural skills (Weima, 2021), even if they are feared for their 'vengeful nature' and the likelihood of engaging in criminal activities when lacking the option to use their energy to earn income legally. Locals in Dar es Salaam, on the contrary, appreciate the Congolese for their musical and entrepreneurial skills (as we will see under the sub-section “Migrants initiatives and churches”). In both locations, when discussing issues of irregular migration, the examples given are usually of Burundian refugees and not Congolese. This could be because it is easier for Burundian refugees to get to Kigoma than for Congolese who have to cross Lake Tanganyika. It could also be because locals generally do not associate Congolese with violence. In any case, fear among locals is exacerbated by a national security discourse.

In Kiswahili, the term for refugee, *mkimbizi* (plural *wakimbizi*), literally, “the one who has fled”, is used pejoratively by Tanzanians (Mann, 2002). During one of the focus group discussions, a participant explained: “If the community knows that you are a refugee, some of its members will not even greet you” (FGD-6-20200130). Another refugee stated: “It is better to be recognised as a ‘Congolese’” than as a refugee (FGD-6-20200130). Other focus group discussion participants find it hurtful to be discriminated against as outsiders in any form, as the following examples show:

*At the place I stay, I braid hair. My neighbours know that I braid hair, so when I step outside the house, you will hear them calling me 'mkongomani', 'you Congo woman'. I do not like it when they call me you Congo woman, it's as if I carried the whole Congo country on my back. So when they call me you Congo woman, I reply you Tanzania woman. (FGD-2-20200121).*

Beyond the name-calling, the Tanzanian host community also tends to segregate and discriminate against vulnerable migrants (FGD-6-20200130). At times, they might misuse their position of power (in terms of citizen versus non-citizen) to exploit them. On more than one occasion, vulnerable migrants reported



that when they joined informal financial support groups in their neighbourhood (colloquially known as *mchezo*), they were skipped when it was their turn to receive the money (FGD-6-20200130). In other cases, knowing that refugees dare not to file a formal complaint, they are charged higher rents or receive lower wages as labourers or customers would even refuse paying if they knew they were dealing with a refugee:

*I was employed as a street vendor selling chipsi<sup>19</sup>. I had no problems with my boss but the customers were the ones giving me a hard time especially because at that time, I was not good at speaking Kiswahili fluently. There was a day, I served a plate of chipsi to a customer; he refused to pay because he knew I was not a Tanzanian (FGD-7-20200130).*

In the most upsetting cases, young female urban refugees have been sexually harassed by Tanzanian neighbours and acquaintances (see, for instance, Joharia's case discussed under section 4). According to Article 13 (1) of the Constitution of the United Republic of Tanzania, "All persons are equal before the law and are entitled, without any discrimination, to protection and equality before the law" (Government of Tanzania, 1977). This means that even unregistered migrants should not be discriminated against and are entitled to protection under the law. In theory, they can file a case against the perpetrator. In practice, however, citizens and refugees are ignorant of the law, and the former fear that their rights will not be respected because they lack a residence permit. Unfortunately, even if the urban refugee in question were to win the case, it does not prevent the Tanzanian state from filing a second case against them for illegal entrance and presence in Tanzania. The urban refugees' fear is not unrealistic, and it is exacerbated by past personal experiences and stories of others. Why bother to call for unnecessary attention if standing up for oneself and speaking out means to expose oneself to the authorities?

Even when keeping a low profile, it is impossible to withhold one's identity from everyone. Landlords, close neighbours, business partners, fellow churchgoers and (potential) friends will find out about the foreign identity sooner or later. Hiding is only a partial strategy. An alternative strategy is to present oneself in the most favourable light: being extra friendly and overly polite, underlining one's usefulness under the scrutinising eyes of the community. Consolata explains how she invests in having good relationships with the people in her neighbourhood. She tries to never pass people without greeting neighbours courteously or making a joke. Recognised refugees face the same discriminatory treatment and fears as their unrecognised peers and, where possible, keep their identity to themselves. Juma, the Burundian refugee in his sixties whom we introduced

above, lives in Dar es Salaam as a recognised refugee. He socialises with the local community, attends mosque prayers and is friendly to his neighbours. Even though he is a legal resident, he is in constant fear of what could happen once people knew about his refugee status. He believes people would treat him differently by creating obstacles in terms of housing or business opportunities. Like Consolata, he too makes sure to keep friendly relations with his neighbours. In one of our visits to his house, we witnessed how neighbours walked in and out to use Juma's iron. He also avoids being late with the rent payment at all costs, up to the point of having to sell his land in Burundi to pay several months of rent in advance (a general practice in Dar es Salaam and other cities in Africa).

## Language and assimilation

Looking at the urban refugees' efforts to blend in from a linguistic perspective provides interesting insights. It is commonly known that despite the existing linguistic diversity of the region, Kiswahili is the most widely-spoken lingua franca in East Africa. Kiswahili is not only the official language in Tanzania, it is equally used, albeit not exclusively, in the eastern provinces of Congo, Burundi, Rwanda, Kenya and Uganda. However, this widely-spoken language is subject to regional variations. Congolese Kiswahili is impregnated by French loan words while that of Kenya and Uganda has a lot of English in it (and other local languages, of course). Tanzanians consider their own Kiswahili as the correct variety and often joke about the Kenyan and Congolese accents. Unfortunately, these regional variations have implications that go beyond humorous anecdotes. Urban refugees are discriminated against on how they use the language. In an attempt to circumvent stigmatisation, some Congolese and Burundians present themselves as belonging to the ethnic group of the Ha. The Tanzanian Ha originate from Kigoma, a region that borders Burundi and Lake Tanganyika. Their Kiswahili accent is the regional variation of the 'Kiswahili of Kigoma'.

Young people, in particular, make an effort to learn the local variety of Kiswahili. The younger they are, the easier it is to adapt to the local variant. Even to the point that it can become difficult to distinguish young Congolese or Burundian pupils from their Tanzanian classmates, merely based on their pronunciation of Kiswahili. The youngest daughter of the Rusozi family who with her sister and two brothers attends school, is teased by her elder siblings (who do not go to school) because of her *Kiswahili bora*, her 'pure' Kiswahili. Consolata, a single mother, jokingly recounts how her daughter (who is seven years old) sees herself as a Tanzanian and does not speak any other languages except Kiswahili. The daily experience and degree

19 French fries

**Box 1: Enrolling children at school with an alien name**

To reach "education for all", State schools in Tanzania are free of charge. Yet, there is still a gap between low- and high-income families because of extra costs, including school uniforms, study material, transport and parental contributions. According to Lindsjö (2018), although the plan of abolishing school fees pledged to eliminate these parental contributions, the schools cannot manage with the government's grant per capita only. To cope with increasing enrolment rates, households are asked for contributions to cover the expenses, including administrative costs (Lindsjö, 2018). Registered refugees, especially in the camps, profit from free schooling. Non-registered refugees pay schooling costs—just as Tanzanians have to. Unlike Tanzanians, urban refugees pay bribes to dissuade staff from reporting their unregistered children to immigration authorities (Arevalo-Carpenter & Ruhundwa, 2011).

To fulfil the requirement of a Tanzanian birth certificate for school enrolment, urban refugees forge documents for their children. Parents change the names of their children to resemble Tanzanian names. Sometimes, they co-opt their Tanzanian friends or neighbours (often, but not necessarily, against a fee). The latter either 'lend out' their name to the migrant children or register the child as one of their own. Recognised refugees can use their original names but in practice often refrain from doing so to avoid discrimination:

*My neighbour, who is a Tanzanian, took my child to school and changed his name so that he can be registered in Tanzanian schools. Now my child has two names, one is the original name, and the other is a Tanzanian name. Except for us, his family members, no one knows his original name (FGD-4-20200122).*

This is a viable solution in the short term—in the long term, however, these children will have certificates with different names, leading to future administrative and even legal complications, jeopardizing future careers and clouding their identity. Many urban refugees' children grow up believing they are Tanzanian. Parents regret forcing their children to believe they are Tanzanian while they are not:

*We are not Tanzanians, and we believe that one day we will go back to our countries of origin. How will we tell our kids that we were lying to them? Also we cannot tell them the truth because they might disclose this information to other people, and we don't know how they will use that information. It is really painful (FGD-2-20200121).*

To facilitate communication, some urban refugees also translate their French-sounding (and difficult to pronounce) name to a Kiswahili or an English-sounding one. The purpose here is not always to hide one's identity, even if it can contribute to that.

of marginalisation differ per generation. Nevertheless, discrimination is still felt in schools. Taking into account that French is the official language of schooling in Congo and Burundi, young refugees have been laughed at by their classmates:

*We as Congolese, our Kiswahili is different from Tanzanian Kiswahili, so it is easy for someone to notice that we are not Tanzanians. My child in school, whenever she speaks, her classmates will tell her, you are not Tanzanian. Some of the teachers will also tell her that she is not Tanzanian, and they discriminate her in class (FGD-2-20200121).*

This does not only relate to the pronunciation of Kiswahili but equally of English. Children are mocked and parents fear that reporting any kind of problem can end up in their children being even more bullied, or worse, banned from school altogether (Arevalo-Carpenter & Ruhundwa, 2011). To protect their children, some parents prefer to send their children to other schools. Consider the following two examples:

*When I was in class, teachers may enter class, ask a question in English and call me 'you refugee, answer it'. Because the English language was difficult for me, so, when I tried to answer, my fellow classmates would laugh at me. That made me feel uncomfortable and uneasy. The treatment continued until I decided to quit school (FGD-1-20200121).*

*My child's identity was exposed in his first school, so because he was discriminated against and mocked for being a refugee, I decided to shift him to another school that teaches a Congolese syllabus (Burundian respondent, FGD-4-20200122).*

**A 'Good Samaritan' as one's friend**

Saliba and Bleuer (2017) rightly point out that given their lack of access to formal service channels (and one could also add the fear to go and look out for these channels in the first place), vulnerable migrants form important small-scale support networks. Neighbours and community members can play a crucial role in facilitating access to government services, the banking system



or employment opportunities. Accordingly, social capital is critical to the lives of the urban displaced (Saliba & Bleuer, 2017). It is important to remember that none of these alliances are established in a vacuum but shaped by the socio-economic, political and cultural contexts of Tanzania and Dar es Salaam, its hierarchies and inequalities in the physical, symbolic and also digital spheres.

Not all relationships between Tanzanians and refugees are informed by exploitation; neither do all Tanzanians consider refugees a threat. Besides those who exploit and abuse migrants in vulnerable positions or ignore what vulnerable migrants have had to endure, some Tanzanians consider them as people in need of support. Stimulated by religious (both Christian and Muslim) and humanistic values, these Tanzanians are willing to give support and already support displaced people in need. In some cases, these persons, referred to as ‘Good Samaritans’ (or *msamaria mwema* in Kiswahili), have assisted newly arrived migrants with first-hand housing for a couple of days, food or money for transport. As the migrants moved on, they lost touch with them. In other cases, particularly among women, these Good Samaritans have grown to become close friends and confidants of the newcomers. Good Samaritans play a key role in facilitating access to governmental or public services and in the participation of refugees in the host society. Solid relationships between Tanzanians and refugees have grown throughout the years.

Ana Lokwa, a Congolese woman in her sixties who has been living in Dar es Salaam for over two decades, has grown close to one of her neighbours, Fatima, herself a rural migrant to the city. While Ana arrived in Dar es Salaam escaping war, Fatima migrated to the city as a young married woman from the rural hinterlands. The two women of about the same age live in separate studios in a shared compound. They sometimes eat together, Fatima leaves her four-year-old grandson in the care of Ana Lokwa, and they go to church together. Ana even introduced Fatima to her church, and Fatima ended up converting to Christianity. Both women know they can count on each other. Ana Lokwa is not the only one to have a good Tanzanian friend. Miriam, who arrived in Tanzania in 2000, has a similar experience. A couple of years after losing her husband in 2011, who had brought Miriam to Tanzania, she joined a group doing voluntary work at a hospital. In this group, she met Hasna, who has become a good friend, so much that Hasna claims she cannot fall asleep before hearing Miriam’s voice.

Helping out refugees can also be motivated by possibilities of future cooperation. In a focus group discussion (FGD) with a group of Tanzanians, it stood out that the Tanzanians cherish refugees’ entrepreneurial skills and innovative ideas. They felt they could learn and benefit from their expertise when partnering with refugees in business (FGD-5-20200123). Such is the case of Hazina, the young woman we introduced in sub-section 3.3. who runs a beauty parlour. As an unregistered migrant, she is not allowed to own a business. To exercise her job and provide for herself and her brother, Hazina works in collaboration with a Tanzanian celebrity who, officially, is the owner of the beauty parlour. In reality, the beauty parlour is completely run by Hazina, who plays the role of a Tanzanian ‘employee’ instead of a Congolese ‘owner’. This collaboration seems to result in a ‘win-win situation’ for both. Hazina has the chance to run her own business, while for the celebrity, having a saloon with her own name benefits her image, her reputation—it becomes like a brand of her name—without actually having to put in any work (MD-2-20200310). However, Hazina is not respected by her colleagues, who often come in late to work and make disdainful comments to her. As she cannot address them on their behaviour as their boss, Hazina feels she is not respected as the rightful owner.

Even though they do not reflect the notion of a Good Samaritan per se, mixed marriages are another side of Tanzanian–refugee relationships. Marrying a Tanzanian is a potential but bumpy road to accessing services and rights. Miriam, who had met her Tanzanian partner in Congo, followed him to Tanzania when the situation in her home country became dire. They married following the local customs in Congo and later legalised their union. Unfortunately, Miriam’s husband passed away before the couple started the procedure of Miriam’s naturalisation, to which she was entitled. Miriam remarried a Tanzanian, almost ten years later, in 2020. Once again, she is entitled to apply for naturalisation, and they hope to legalise Miriam’s status. But, considering she has been living in Tanzania without a permit nor a refugee status, the process for a Tanzanian citizenship will cost US \$5,000(!).

Interestingly, simplified naturalisation by virtue of marriage<sup>20</sup> only applies to women who are married to Tanzanian men. In this particular aspect, Tanzanian law is gender-biased and discriminates against men. If a non-Tanzanian man marries a female Tanzanian citizen, he is not entitled to simplified naturalisation; he has to meet all the requirements any other foreigner would be required to meet before he can apply and be considered for naturalisation. As a non-national, he cannot be

20 It is a simplified process as some requirements, such as the time of stay in the country before applying for naturalisation, are waived. Non-Tanzanian men marrying Tanzanian women have to meet all requirements; marriage to a Tanzanian woman does not give him any advantage as far as naturalisation is concerned. The Citizenship Act Cap 357 R.E 2002 s. 11(1)

self-employed<sup>21</sup> or own a business without a permit nor own a house. An example of this is the case of Jean Charles, who, as we saw above, was forced to give his Tanzanian ex-wife all of his assets.

### The role of local NGOs: DIGNITY Kwanza

Beyond the relationships with Tanzanian individuals, it is important to underline the role of local organisations in the refugees' process of refugee participation in Tanzanian society. DIGNITY Kwanza plays an important role in assisting its clients to live a secure, fulfilling and dignified life in the host society. A concrete example of DIGNITY Kwanza's role for empowerment was the "business pairs" project implemented between 2018 and 2019 under the community empowerment programme. The project involved business skills training for refugees and host community members alike. After the training, the participants were asked to form pairs of two individuals each (one refugee and one Tanzanian of their own choice). The pairs were then assigned to come up with a joint business plan. Twenty-five pairs, and thus 25 business plans, joined a competition in which the best eight business plans were awarded two million Tanzanian shillings (about 800 EUR) as a kick start package to invest in their small business. The awarded businesses included a small road-side restaurant, a seamstress' shop, a beauty salon, a second-hand clothes business and a grain merchant. While the Tanzanian can legally register the business, the refugee is able to put his/her know-how into practice. While this programme does not protect the refugee partner against possible future conflicts with his Tanzanian counterpart, it is an incentive for Tanzanians to develop good relations with their refugee partners. Refugees can teach Tanzanians different skills and thereby help the Tanzanians to become good entrepreneurs (FGD-5-20200123). If successful, the business programme benefits both partners. In addition to contributing to livelihoods, this DIGNITY Kwanza project promotes the relationships between Tanzanians and non-citizens. One of the businesses that is still running is Consolata's and Rose's restaurant. Rose has supported Consolata for many years. They received a kick-start money package that helped them improve their restaurant, which they run every Friday, on market day, in a neighbourhood on the outskirts of the city. Adjacent to the restaurant, a small shop sells daily products, including tinned food, biscuits, Tanzanian printed cloth (*khanga*) and the like. Through this programme, existing friendships have been consolidated, and new partnerships have been created.

### Migrants' initiatives and churches: Spaces of freedom

Created in 1999 by Congolese migrants residing in Tanzania, the CCT (Congolese Community in Tanzania) regroups Congolese living in Dar es Salaam regardless of their status. Aside from being Congolese, the only requirement for being part of this community is to pay the annual fee. CCT members are provided with a membership card. Not all Congolese are members though; some are afraid to be part of a recognised Congolese community. Situated relatively close to the city centre, the CCT collaborates with the Congolese embassy and is a registered bureau known to the Tanzanian authorities. Its premises are clearly visible to passers-by. This bureau aims to assist members of the community in social matters, such as funerals and illnesses. CCT can also intervene and mediate, in a limited way, in the procurement of a working permit. When Clément's mother passed away in July 2019, for instance, leaving him and his younger siblings behind, Clément's neighbours and members from CCT supported them financially and in organising the burial of his mother (JK-4-20190815). Interestingly, this membership card endows the vulnerable migrants with a sense of recognition, even if vague, and a feeling of limited protection. When arrested by the police, for example, Congolese migrants show their CCT ID. Even if it does not help them, it provides them with a point of reference. CCT leaders might accompany them to the immigration office for (moral) support in such an instance. Carrying a CCT membership card cannot protect irregular migrants and is no guarantee for safety. Vulnerable migrants, thus, find support in their own community. It must be underlined, once again, that a majority of the interviewees are Congolese; we did not observe any comparable Burundian or Rwandan community offices in Dar es Salaam.

Pentecostal churches in Dar es Salaam offer non-registered individuals a space of refuge. These spaces are not exclusively for refugees but welcome both citizens and non-citizens. Several migrants receive or have received support from (members of) a church or the pastor or have met Good Samaritans through the church. The other way round is also true: Good Samaritans wanting to help but not knowing what to do, take migrants to the church. Congolese migrants, in particular, seem to be involved in a high number of prominent churches. They often take an active role as either religious entrepreneurs, preachers, musicians, choir members and music technicians, or simply, as members of the congregation. It is interesting to note that

21 The Non-Citizen Employment Regulations of 2016, Regulation 13(5)(c), provides room for a non-citizen who is legally married to a Tanzanian and whose marriage has subsisted for a period of not less than three years to apply for an exemption of the application of the Non-Citizen Employment (Regulations) Act of 2015, which requires that every non-citizen who wants to work in Tanzania has to acquire a work permit.

within these churches, especially the choirs attract Congolese refugees (for a similar case in Kigoma, see Quigley, 2018). This does not mean that Burundians do not attend these churches. Drawing on research on Burundians in Dar es Salaam and Pentecostalism, Sommers claimed, twenty years ago, that urban refugees would become contributors to change in Africa (Sommers, 2001b). Several members of the Congolese congregation are either preachers or choir members, if not themselves, then one of their family members is. We will address some of the social and economic drivers for joining these churches in the paragraphs that follow.

Five out of the eight children of the Rusozi family sing in a choir in the nearby church where their father had been given a position as one of the pastors. Besides mass on Sundays, the choir holds rehearsals on Tuesdays and Saturdays. The Rusozis hence frequent the church at least three times a week. The church's band is composed of ten members: One lead singer, one guitarist, one pianist, one drummer, six choir members (among whom all of Rusozi's children) and a sound technician. Except for the drummer and the sound technician, all the others are Congolese. John Rusozi, one of the children, teaches choir members to play the piano. At times, the choir also performs in different functions organised by UNHCR. Not far away from this church, in a big Lutheran church, we see a similar pattern. Here, the choir is bigger and is composed of many Tanzanian but also Congolese members. It is in this church that Nathan, whom we saw above, is active. But, conspicuous in this case, the technical team, which does the sound and films and streams the services live on YouTube, is also composed of Congolese. A twenty-minute ride from this second church, another church (run by a Tanzanian couple who are both preachers) stands in a big compound with cassava plants and many fruit trees. Axis, the successful music teacher described earlier, trains the choir every Sunday after mass on a voluntary basis. Two long bus rides and one motorbike ride away from downtown, at the extreme outskirts of Dar es Salaam, one can find another half-built iron-roofed structure. This church, run by Congolese, is surrounded by trees and situated in an open landscape. It offers Bible teaching sessions, different prayer services and long Sunday masses (followed by a meal for its attendants). In addition to the Congolese preachers (including one woman), its choir includes a mix of Congolese musicians, sound technicians and other choir members.

There are different reasons why these churches attract vulnerable migrants. First, they are meeting places for people with shared experiences. Second, they provide urban refugees and other vulnerable migrants with answers to their questions of ontological insecurity in a modern and urban fashion (Meyer,

2006). Third, for those gifted with entrepreneurial skills, it offers opportunities of self-growth. As such, these churches offer 'refuge to refugees'—an urban "space of freedom". The term spaces of freedom is borrowed from slavery studies where it refers to "spaces where runaway slaves could realistically attempt to establish a permanent base for themselves in informal freedom" (Pargas, 2017, p. 276) or, in other words, "sites in informal freedom where refugees tried to live as if they were free, even if they had no legal claims to freedom" (Müller, 2020, p. 7). In the context of Dar es Salaam, spaces of freedom are understood as spaces where vulnerable migrants can be free, not because they escaped captivity, but because they do not need to hide their identities, as they do elsewhere. These spaces of freedom offer the migrants a certain social, psychological and spiritual freedom to express themselves. Pentecostal churches are one of those spaces of freedom. Russell (2011) and Lyytinen (2017) have come to similar conclusions about Congolese refugees living in Kampala. Russell believes hopes for the future are recreated through Gospel music (Russell, 2011), and Lyytinen employs the term 'places of protection' to refer to the communities, one being the church, to which refugees expressed a sense of belonging (Lyytinen, 2017b, p. 1003). In the Pentecostal churches, vulnerable migrants from Congo do not shy away from singing in their native Lingala or performing *ndombolo* dance moves as part of their choir choreographies. Through songs and prayers, many refugees find a way to express their emotions, their (Congolese) identities and channel their frustrations, also physically. Espérance, a sixty-year-old Congolese woman who arrived in 2016 in Dar es Salaam after fleeing Goma, explains:

*The only places where I am comfortable to expose myself is the church where I get help and the Congolese community here at Dar es Salaam. Apart from that, I live a very private life, fearing that if my identity is exposed then I will be segregated or treated badly because I am a refugee (BM-15-20191205).*

Moreover, in the space of the church, the musical capacities of vulnerable migrants from Congo, in terms of artistic and technical skills, are highly valued and coveted among the residents of Dar es Salaam (FGD-5-20200123). Because Tanzanians appreciate the Congolese music skills and the entrepreneurship of the church leaders, there is a certain degree of tolerance towards them in Dar es Salaam. Churches offer business opportunities: Not only for the entrepreneurial preachers but also for the volunteers seeking potential financial partnerships. Yet, it's not all peace, love and understanding, as abuse does take place in the church setting too with economic successes of the one at the expense of the other (which we will not discuss in the scope

of this *paper*). For Espérance the church is a double-edged sword: While she considers it a space where she can express herself, she also mentions being exploited (working without remuneration) on more than one occasion by one of the leaders at the church she used to pray at:

*My job was to go to Mbeya<sup>22</sup> and find a person selling rice for a low price and negotiate with that person, then I was to send that person's phone number to the pastor so he could transfer money through mobile money. After that, I was to arrange for transport and take the rice to Dar es Salaam. So I went to Mbeya and negotiated with one person and sent the phone number to the pastor. The pastor took five days to send the money. I did not have money for accommodation or food. I had to sleep at the bus stand where one lady was selling food. In the morning, I had to assist the lady in her business because she was giving me food and a safe place to sleep. [...] That was not all: He [the pastor] also used to call me to his house so I could help either with his laundry, cooking or cleaning when the pastor had guests in his house, but he did not pay me; he only gave me food to eat (BM-15-20191205).*

There is another space that equally offers a certain degree of illusory, yet needed, freedom of expressing oneself: That of the bar. In Dar es Salaam, it is not uncommon to listen and sway to the sounds of Congolese rumba and *ndombolo* rhythms while Congolese musicians and dancers hypnotise the audience with their tunes, gentle lyrics, swinging hips and acro-erotic moves. In the space of the bar, there is room to express oneself kinaesthetically, that is through body movement, performance and appearance. Here too, Congolese musicians are tolerated and their art highly sought-after. Considering Tanzanians' love for Congolese music, as well as the long relationship between Congolese musicians and the Tanzanian government and general public (Perullo, 2008), it seems unlikely that these spaces of freedom are at risk. The importance of churches and bars are reminiscent of their role in Congo itself, as eloquently illustrated in Van Reybroeck's (2010) chapter entitled "beer and prayer".

#### Key findings

- *The role of the Tanzanian Good Samaritan is critical to the reception of urban refugees in the host society. Good Samaritans contribute to building alliances between refugees and host communities and allow refugees to blend in.*
- *A combination of local Tanzanian organisations, initiatives created by the vulnerable migrants themselves and churches helps to keep displaced people afloat. This is particularly noticeable within the Congolese community. These organisations, initiatives and churches offer a safe and peaceful 'space of freedom' in which the urban refugees can express their own identity.*
- *Urban refugees are not necessarily a burden to society. On the contrary, many are eager to contribute to and fit in the host society and tend to go out of their way in doing so. Conversely, Tanzanians covet the skills of the refugees. Congolese bring along entrepreneurial, technical and musical skills, Burundians are valued because of their hard physical work and agricultural skills.*

<sup>22</sup> A city in southern Tanzania, known to be surrounded by rich agricultural ground.

## 4. Cross-cutting findings and emerging trends

### 4.1 Gender dimension

This section focuses on female vulnerable migrants and issues related to gender-based violence (GBV). More than half of the in-depth cases this *working paper* is based on deal with women who are between 20 and 60 years old. From the corpus of data, it can be deduced that while men tend to flee alone, in many cases leaving their wives and children behind, women flee with their children. Women who flee by themselves have not yet married nor given birth. Even if there are cases of men fleeing with their families, there are no examples of men fleeing with children alone and leaving mothers behind. Children who have fled without their parents often lost them before they fled or along the way.

The corpus sheds light on rape and sexual abuse in the country of origin and in Tanzania. Joharia was raped by her neighbour when she was just 13 years old (he was 17 years old at the time) in her home in Dar es Salaam. The incident happened when Joharia's mother went out of the house to braid someone's hair and left her daughter alone at home doing homework. When the mother came back, she found the door locked from the inside. She heard sounds of two people fighting inside and started calling for Joharia in vain. The mother went to look for help, a few neighbours came and managed to force the door. The boy walked out of the room nonchalantly, in fact, one of the neighbours who had come was the offender's brother. When the mother entered the room, she found out that her daughter had been raped. The next morning the mother took Joharia to the local government authority to get a letter to go to the police to file a complaint. She was told to bring the documents proving that she is living in Tanzania legally. Since she did not have them, she returned home defeated. When the mother asked other neighbours for support, they refused to help her because the perpetrator was a local, a boy from the neighbourhood. In fear of being reported to the authorities, Joharia and her mother preferred to keep quiet and to take the matter no further (BM-10-20191107).

Around one-third of the interviewees are female heads of their households. Many were not head of household before they fled their country but became so during their displacement. There are several reasons for this. For some, their relatives could no longer support them outside their country of origin, others lost their father, husband or relatives due to the conflict or while fleeing, yet for others, displacement reversed the roles in their

household. Such is the case of Hilda. Hilda married John, a medical doctor (whom we discussed above under 3.2), at a very young age. They lived in Bukavu, where she gave birth to five children. In Congo, John used to be the family's breadwinner, even though Hilda was also active in commerce. In 2017, the family was forced to leave the country and headed to Dar es Salaam, as they refused to stay in a refugee camp. As we saw above, John has not been able to find a decent means of income and cannot provide for his extended family (in Dar es Salaam, Hilda gave birth to two more children). Despite having health issues and being less schooled than her husband, Hilda had to assume the role of head of household. She is a petty trade businesswoman in the informal sector. After their arrival to Dar es Salaam, Hilda opened a small restaurant with some capital money she had taken with her. She did not require any certificate, so she rented a house and started cooking and selling *chipsi* (French fries), fried chicken and fried fish. Her business went well and allowed her to pay her children's school fees, the house rent and other basic needs. Unfortunately, she fell ill and had to stay in bed for up to eight months. During this period, she was unable to work and used up all of her savings and capital to pay for medication and the household. After her recovery, Hilda found a job at the Ubungo bus stand as a passenger agent. It did not last for long because she started suffering from high blood pressure and had to quit her job again. Since then, the family has been experiencing much hardship (BM-7-20190925).

Even if vulnerable, most female migrants are resilient and find ways to deal with their situation. Consolata, like John, has not been able to put her university degree in psychology, nor her impeccable French skills, into practice. To get by and take care of her daughter, she has turned herself into an ambulatory merchant of imitation jewellery and perfume. Recently, she and a Tanzanian friend started to operate a roadside restaurant on Fridays, market day. Consolata underlines that the only solution to their refugee situation is self-determination and acceptance. As a vulnerable migrant whose asylum claim has been rejected, Consolata has no choice but to struggle. Acceptance, adaptability and self-determination are the secrets to her success and happiness. Consolata believes that this state of mind results from her education; she has put her degree in psychology in practice in unexpected ways, applying it to her own experience: "Life has to keep going on" (JS-2-20190726).



## 4.2 Social media

Considering the urban refugees' experience with multiple forms of immobilisation, we have observed that one way of navigating immobilisation is to use mobile phones and social media (see Demirdirek, 2021 for a more in-depth study). Mobile phones and the new forms of digital mobility allow compressing space, distance and time. As concerns the livelihoods of vulnerable migrants, mobile phones and social media platforms have become an addition to physical marketplaces. Vendors showcase their products or services on social media platforms (particularly Instagram, WhatsApp and Facebook) to attract prospective buyers' attention. This digital showcase does not require registration nor a high investment. Thus, social media platforms open new avenues for vendors whose access to other forms of commerce has been hampered by legal, temporal, financial, spatial or gender-related constraints.

Despite her young age, Hazina has proven to be hard-working and incredibly entrepreneurial. She is constantly thinking of expanding the range of services her beauty parlour offers. She soon understood the empowering potential of social media and used it to her own benefit:

*What I can say just... I can just tell those people who are using social media for bad things to not do so, not do that. I advise them to use it for their benefits. We can use social media for our benefits and get what we really want. You can use it to get friends, but you can use it to get money. Like the one who made it, he uses it to get money. So, you can also take that way, so for me, Facebook or whatever, Instagram, or YouTube, today has helped me to eat and to survive with my family you see, so I advise you to do the same (MD-2-20200310).*

Hazina has a wide audience with 98,000 followers. Peter, the young Burundian who was born in Tanzania, has proven to be particularly handy with social media, too. Peter creates Instagram accounts, builds up a remarkable number of followers to then sell them to potential customers. This is a revenue source. The accounts have different prices. Peter saves the money he earns through this self-created job to pay for future education in engineering (FGD-3-20200122).

The relevance of social media and the business opportunities attached to them makes clear why the compulsory biometric SIM card registration was a heavy blow to the urban displaced. This new requirement was introduced around 2019, yet January 2020 was the deadline after which the SIM cards were to be

switched off. The reform required SIM card holders to register with fingerprints and national identification documents and is the latest policy measure emphasising the changing importance of civil registration. Many vulnerable migrants lack such documents, and even if the majority has found alternatives to circumvent this policy, some have lost their phone numbers and are not reachable. Eventually, disconnected phone numbers could be re-opened through registration. Tanzanians, who have not registered their SIM cards have also had their numbers disconnected, as each person is only allowed to have one SIM card per network provider. Claudine, a vulnerable migrant in her fifties from Congo, feared the consequences of not being able to register her SIM card and thus not being able to use a mobile phone:

*I really depend on my phone because all my customers communicate with me through my mobile now [...]. I have moved from Kurasini where my office was, and not all my customers know where they can get me (BM-9-20191106).*

Throughout 2020, DIGNITY Kwanza lost contact with clients who have had their numbers closed, sometimes even permanently. This was particularly worrisome during the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. DIGNITY Kwanza members feared that displaced people were not able to receive information on what was happening because their phone numbers had been blocked. The biometric SIM card registration reform is only one measure in the context of a global rollout of digital identification systems that displays the reinforcement of exclusion of already marginalised social groups, including vulnerable migrants, through technology. It jeopardises their access to vital means of income, intensifies their exploitability and consolidates already existing power relations (Demirdirek, 2020).

### Key findings

- *In a context of displacement, women have become heads of household, reverting the traditional male–female roles within the families.*
- *Regardless of their legal status, women are generally considered the more vulnerable migrants. At the same time, they adapt more easily to new environments. Women have proven to be more resilient.*
- *Social media is an additional platform where urban refugees can navigate more freely and create new livelihood opportunities. Restrictions through biometric SIM card registration preclude refugees from participating.*

## Conclusions and outlook

Since the 1990s, refugee policies in Tanzania have become increasingly restrictive. The open-door policy has been abandoned in favour of encampment policy. Nevertheless, the urban refugees described in this *working paper* prefer relocating to the city and living below the watchful eyes of the authorities than being confined in refugee camps. The unintended consequence of this situation has been the creation of an ever increasing body of irregular city migrants.

Urban refugees in Dar es Salaam, mainly from Congo, but also from Burundi and Rwanda, live in a situation of plural limbo—legal, social, economic, physical, psychosomatic—, leading to their marginalisation. Nevertheless, there are different experiences of marginalisation. Marginalisation and its opposite, that is blending in and participating in Tanzanian society, are informed by age (younger vs older generations), nationality (Congolese vs Burundians), occupation (offline vs online entrepreneur) and gender. Because there are so many different situations in which one can find oneself as a vulnerable migrant, it adds to the confusion of those who do not need to hide but still experience life as living in limbo. As such, recognised and unrecognised urban refugees fear discrimination and feel that they need to conceal their foreign identity.

As to trajectories, even if the stories on which this *paper* is based are unique, we can say that there are roughly three escape routes from eastern Congo/Burundi to Dar es Salaam. A northern, a centre and a southern route. In any case, fleeing is layered, and refugees seen themselves forced to, more often than not, flee two or more times during their lifetimes. As such, we call to take temporal aspects of the trajectories for forced displacement into account. In addition to temporality, individuals also move motivated by business, studying or other reasons. Fleeing conflict should not be analysed separately but should be regarded in connection with other mobility motives. Moreover, trajectories are not unidirectional. Similarly, the flow of remittances between the country of origin and the host country, and at times a third country too, is not unidirectional, either. Some urban refugees in Dar es Salaam receive money from relatives back home, while some send remittances to their families who have stayed behind in their home countries.

In addition to their transnational connectivities with family members and acquaintances in the home country, urban refugees in Dar es Salaam do their best to blend in and actively try to build alliances with members from their host communities. The role of the Tanzanian ‘Good Samaritan’ is critical in this process. Business partnerships and even friendships result from more intensive exchanges with Tanzanians. In various cases, the latter acknowledge learning from the refugees’ skills and

value the know-how refugees bring along. In addition to these more personal relationships, a combination of local Tanzanian organisations, initiatives created by the migrants themselves and faith-based organisations helps to keep displaced people afloat by offering ‘spaces of freedom’, safe spaces where refugees can move more freely, express their identity and vent their frustrations.

Regarding gender, fleeing one’s country of origin tends to revert the roles within the families as women become head of their household. Even if women are generally considered the more vulnerable migrants, many of the female urban refugees described here have adapted more easily to new environments than their male counterparts. Women have proven to be more resilient, regardless of their status. This adaptation is translated into social media entrepreneurship. Social media act as an additional platform where migrants can navigate more freely and create livelihood opportunities. However, one needs to be careful when describing the advantages of social media. The government imposed SIM card registration and its requirement of proper identification documents has pushed many urban refugees further into the margins.

This *paper* is qualitatively rather than quantitatively inspired and by no means aims at generalising the trends that have been highlighted throughout. Nevertheless, it offers some insight into the lives of a group of people trying to eke a living at the margins of Tanzania’s biggest city. Every refugee has their own story, their trajectory is unique and complex. Stories of sorrow are combined with stories of success as the local population can be both welcoming and inhospitable. Urban refugees are not necessarily a burden: They can also be viewed as contributors to the host community. It is only when people’s dignity is safeguarded that the opportunities to achieve their social and economic self-fulfilment and the possibility contribute to nation-building will fall into place.

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## LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

|         |  |
|---------|--|
| AATZ    | Asylum Access Tanzania   |
| CCT     | Congolese Community in Tanzania                                |
| COSTECH | Tanzania Commission for Science and Technology                 |
| CRRF    | Comprehensive Refugee Response Frameworks                      |
| DRC     | Democratic Republic of the Congo                               |
| FGD     | Focus group discussion   |
| GBV     | Gender-based violence  |
| ICESCR  | International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights |
| IDP     | Internally displaced people                                    |
| IOM     | Organisation for Migration                                     |
| MHA     | Ministry of Home Affairs                                       |
| NEC     | National Eligibility Committee                                 |
| NGO     | Non-governmental organisation                                  |
| NIDA    | National Identification Authority                              |
| NRP     | Tanzania National Refugee Policy of 2003                       |
| OAU     | Organization of African Unity                                  |
| REDESO  | Relief to Development and Society                              |
| TANCOSS | Tanzania Comprehensive Solutions Strategy                      |
| TZS     | Tanzanian Shilling   |
| UNHCR   | United Nations Commissioner for Refugees                       |

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### Project-related information

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TRAFIG (Transnational Figurations of Displacement) is an EU-funded Horizon 2020 research and innovation project. From 2019 to 2021, 12 partner organisations investigate long-lasting displacement situations at multiple sites in Asia, Africa and Europe.

TRAFIG provides academic evidence on refugee movements and protracted displacement; analyses which conditions could help to improve displaced people's everyday lives and informs policymakers on how to develop solutions to protracted displacement.

## Partners

BICC (Bonn International Center for Conversion), Germany

### (Coordinator)

Addis Ababa University, Ethiopia

Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece

CMI (Chr. Michelsen Institute), Norway

Danube University Krems, Austria

Dignity Kwanza – Community Solutions, Tanzania

FIERI (Forum of International and European Research on Immigration), Italy

ICMPD (International Centre for Migration

Policy Development), Austria

SHARP (Society for Human Rights & Prisoners' Aid), Pakistan

Leiden University, The Netherlands

University of Sussex, United Kingdom

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